

**LEEDS CITY COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Held on

Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> November 2008

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR  
(Councillor F Robinson)

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2008

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to the City Council meeting.

The first announcement, of course, is the one about your mobile phones. If you would just ensure they are switched off. Other than that, it might be an expensive penalty.

Incidentally, I heard that one of our local MPs actually brought the question of mobile phones up in the House of Commons and extolled the virtues, I believe, of Leeds City Council's system, but the Speaker did not seem to think that they could possibly enforce the rule. I am still waiting for him maybe to give me a ring to find out a bit of advice on how to cope with that! It was a good attempt. Thank you.

I think my first duty in announcements is to congratulate the election of a new Councillor, Andy Parnham, for the Farnley and Wortley Ward representing the Green Party. If you would just like to signify your presence I am certain we would all like to congratulate you. (*Applause*)

Just amongst my announcements I would like to mention that I attended the Yorkshire in Bloom awards and I was very pleased to accompany our many entries up to the platform to receive their awards. We in actual fact gained two golds, six silver gilts and 14 silver and that represents a fair proportion of the towns and villages in this city. I commend the efforts of Councillors present who supported these efforts and these awards.

I also had the privilege of going to Old Trafford and witnessing the Leeds Rhinos beating St Helens and I must say they bring great credit to the city. Some may wish to applaud! (*Applause*) I will not say any more about it because it is on your agenda further along, so we may hear more then.

My last interesting announcement, I would like to advise you of the engagement on 15 November of Councillor Rick Downes to Bev Stoneley. (*Applause*) The wedding will take place on St Valentine's Day in 2009, so we are all looking forward to it. Thank you.

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2008

THE LORD MAYOR: We will go on to Item 1 and call upon Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I move the Minutes be received, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? Thank you. Those against? Abstentions? No. Right. CARRIED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 2, Declarations. There is a list of written declarations on display in the ante-room and in the public galleries and I think you have all been circulated with them. I just invite any other individual declarations of interest.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Yes, Lord Mayor, it is on 9(a)(i) and it is because I am a Director of West North West Homes.

COUNCILLOR BEVERLEY: Lord Mayor, regarding the deputations I would like to declare personal interests in deputations three and four and personal and prejudicial interest in number five, pending the advice of the Chief Legal Officer, if possible, whether that is actually a prejudicial interest. It is just a deputation.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I am sorry to put you on the spot.

THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Corporate Governance): Councillor Beverley has asked whether he needs to declare a personal and prejudicial in item 5. I understand that is because a relative works in...

COUNCILLOR BEVERLEY: South Leeds Sports Centre.

THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Corporate Governance): South Leeds. The decision that the Council will be making is to receive the deputation and to refer it on to Executive Board so I do not think you can be said to have a prejudicial – more of a personal but not prejudicial.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Any more?

COUNCILLOR FOX: Item 10, White Paper, Regional Spatial Strategy. I am an ALMO Area Panel Member.

THE LORD MAYOR: Any more?

COUNCILLOR LATTY: Same declaration as Councillor Fox. I am not sure why but I am an ALMO Panel Member, so that is for Item 10, is it?

THE LORD MAYOR: No more? Right. Will you show that you have all read and received these? (*Show of hands*) Thank you.

### ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

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

### DEPUTATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 4, Deputations. I will ask the Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. We have five deputations this afternoon: the first relating to Post Office branch closures; the second to the Council's policy on the letting of external sports pitches; and the third, fourth and fifth to proposals with respect to Middleton Sports Centre, Garforth Leisure Centre and South Leeds Sports Centre.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Procter?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor, I move that all the deputations be received.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? Thank you. Against? That is CARRIED.

We will have the deputations.

### DEPUTATION ONE

#### Communities against Post Office Closures regarding Post Office Branch Closures in Leeds.

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Would you now please make your speech to the Council which should be no longer than five minutes and would you introduce the other people on your deputation?

SPEAKER: My lord mayor and fellow Councillors, I am addressing you today on behalf of Communities Against Post Office Closures and this is John Peckham. We are a community campaign that has opposed the closure of 22 Post Office branches across Leeds. Beeston has been particularly badly hit by the closures, with the loss of three in the area. However, Essex Council has reopened 15 out of 31 Post Offices that were closed and they have reopened them in their constituencies. Therefore, we would like Leeds City Council to negotiate with Royal Mail to reopen our closed Post Offices and we present you with a petition from your constituents, which we have got well over 2,000, by the way.

Post Offices serve some of the most vulnerable people in our city. The elderly depend on the local Post Office, so too those with disabilities and those living on benefits. Not only are Post Offices where these people access vital services, they are places where local residents meet and engage one another in conversation. As such, that they play a vital role in helping some overcome their isolation. They are the glue that bind our communities together and are essential for the maintenance of social cohesion.

The Post Office branches that have been left over after the latest cull are struggling to cope with increased numbers of customers. The people of Leeds are forced to endure a decline in the quality of the service. Not only do people have to travel further to their local Post Office but they have to queue for longer.

The closures of Post Office branches have not only affected their former customers. Small businesses nearby depend on the trade generated by local Post Offices. Many combine a visit to their local Post Office with a visit to their local newsagent, butcher or hairdresser. The closure programme can only have a detrimental impact on the trade of these small businesses and it will spell the end for many high streets and shopping parades.

Our Post Office network is first and foremost a public service. Deregulation and privatisation have allowed companies to cherry pick the most profitable parts of the service. Our Post Office branches should not have been axed. The bail out of the banks with public money has highlighted whose interests this Government serves. It is not the interests of the ordinary workers, that's for sure. It also shows that if the Government has the money to bail out these banks, it has money to maintain public services. They should not be lost to the pensioner, the person without a job, the single parent or the person in a wheelchair. The people of Leeds are looking to their elected representatives to help them in their hour of need. Reopen our Post Office branches. Do not let us down. Thank you. *(Applause)*

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Those in favour? Thank you. Against? That is CARRIED, thank you.

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

## DEPUTATION TWO

### Woodkirk Valley Football Club regarding the Council's policy for the letting of external sports pitches and indoor training facilities throughout the football season

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Will you now make your speech which should take no longer than five minutes and would you care to introduce your supporters?

MR M DILWORTH: My Lord Mayor and Members of Council, good afternoon. My name is Mark Dilworth, I am the Manger of Woodkirk Valley Football Club under 7s Team and I am accompanied by Mrs Alison Sherwood who is our Clubs Lettings Officer.

We are here today to highlight our concerns with the existing policy for issuing the lettings of external sports pitches and internal sports halls to Charter Standard Clubs such as ours. We would like to state that we are here to offer our advice and experiences to the Lettings Unit, who do a very good job. For the record, we would like to thank the Department for all their efforts and assistance over the years.

We are aware that our time in the Chamber is very limited this afternoon so we will be submitting supporting documentation that will be freely available to any Member from any Ward at the end of our Deputation, and we will be available to attend any meetings in the future to address our concerns.

Members of Council, we would like to ask the question, how are decisions made as to who receives lettings, via Education Leeds? What is the procedure, please? How is it, that a club who wish to be allocated a particular school hall for Under 6 years of age children for 6.00pm – 7.00pm is actually allocated a timeslot of 7.00pm – 8.00pm, yet the same said school and time is allocated to an age group of Under 10 years of aged children? Should the timeslots not be age allocated? This has impacted on us as a club and we have had to secure a private venue via MICE monies. We have had to appeal to our Morley South Councillors to allocate monies to us to secure somewhere private as, quite simply, 7.00pm – 8.00pm is too late a timeslot for the children.!

BSF and PFI Schools - how are the lettings for these schools monitored, allocated? Should there not be more involvement with the elected Ward Members? What agreements could be put in place prior to permission been granted for building these schools that would state what timeslots were to be made available to the local community? We are concerned that there is not enough transparency concerning how the allocations are made. Can we not work together to fine tune the procedures?

Most Clubs are geographically based. We would like to put forward to you that this needs to be looked at in detail. We ourselves are in a situation where we have to travel, usually by car, from the area where we are based near Woodkirk High School to schools in other areas such as Middleton and Rothwell, where we pass en route members of another Club who are travelling from areas to Woodkirk High School. There are many more examples of this that we can submit to you and this will be happening in your Ward. We ask the question, when deciding on which lettings are allocated, could the department not allocate on a geographical base?

Cancellations - of course there are always going to be circumstances that are beyond the control of any forward planning, but there are many circumstances where we are informed that the letting is not available, sometimes at a moment's notice and it is clear that the reason for the hall's use must have been known about weeks in advance - for instance, a hall closed due to extra curriculum studies night. We therefore request that in the Lettings Policy, which we have to sign up to, that there is a minimum amount of notice that must be given to the club that has the letting. It is courtesy ladies and gentleman. The children get upset when training is cancelled.

External Lettings. Members of the Chamber, we would like to propose that there is a complete overhaul of the way that these pitches are not only allocated but actually maintained. We propose that there should be closer working practices put into place between the department that maintains the pitches and the Lettings Departments. Many times we have been allocated a pitch that was quite simply not suitable to play on and we have had to then re-apply. Could we not work together on this issue?

Finally, my Lord Mayor and Members of the Council, voluntary clubs across the country and here in Leeds play a significant role in providing cost-effective and easily accessible, healthy, positive activities for young people. We cater for boys and girls from the ages of five and up to the age of 17. As a nationally recognised Charter Standards Club, we are committed to achieving the highest standards for the children that come to our club. In order for us and other clubs to thrive and continue to play a vital role in our communities, we need the support and assistance of the statutory bodies.

My Lord Mayor, Members of Council, thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for attending and for what you have said and you will be kept informed of the considerations which your comments will receive. Thank you and good afternoon.

If you just do not mind a moment, we failed to have a vote then and I have seen people waving their hands, so would you care to approve of the last speaker? Thank you. Anybody against? No. I apologise for that. CARRIED.

### DEPUTATION THREE

Middleton Community Group  
regarding the proposed closure of Middleton Sports Centre

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please will you make your speech to the Council but no longer than five minutes and would you mind introducing the rest of your deputation.

MS L BROOK: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, my name is Lynn Brook, I am here on behalf of the Middleton Community group – Save Swimming in Middleton and am a resident of Middleton. My colleagues are Mr Bill Crann, former Headmaster, Mr Ken Hepples and Ms Marie Ingledew, who are also residents of Middleton.

The people of Middleton are fully opposed to any proposed pool closure and handing over of dry side facilities to the voluntary sector.

To have a drastic proposal such as this has clearly not taken into consideration a number of very important factors. Middleton is an area of great social deprivation. The percentage of the school population that is resident in the 20% most deprived areas of the country for 2007/08 range from 53% for Sharp Lane Primary School to 95% for Windmill Primary School, both users of the pool. However, in spite of these statistics a number of schools have achieved the National Healthy School Standard in 2005/6 and 2006/7, which will be re-evaluated every three years.

The pool itself is ideal for teaching swimming and is a safe haven for children and parents alike to use during their leisure time. It will prove an invaluable resource to Middleton when the introduction of free swimming for the under 14s and over 60s arrives in Leeds, but without it will plunge an already deprived area into a further bleak future. In spite of its size it has produced swimmers who have gone on to elite status and Olympic selection.

Middleton undoubtedly provides community swimming for all, but also for some very specific groups. It is accessed on foot by a number of primary schools in the area, which not only results in our children achieving a healthier lifestyle through additional exercise, but also promotes the Council's climate pledge in reducing CO2 emissions but not using transport to reach the centre, and saves the schools money which would have to be used on transport to take the children elsewhere. It is used by a variety of other groups with physical and learning disabilities. Amongst them are Mooredale Day Centre, Broomfield School, and groups with visual disabilities. It is also used by Surestart, Blenheim and Vine, Asian Women's groups and residents of Middleton who are both able bodied and have disabilities such as arthritis and other complaints which benefit from the facilities which are provided at the centre, many of whom are sent through local doctors' referrals. The pool provides an ideal environment for all those who use it, with them being able to achieve an easy and dignified access and exit via the graduated steps whilst feeling comfortable with the size and warmth which creates a relaxing and welcoming atmosphere. The unconventional size of the pool is exactly what attracts people to return and use it time and again.

According to the report of 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 'A Draft Vision for the Council's Leisure Centres', a number of facilities require substantial investment to enable refurbishment and modernisation. We do not disagree with this in any way; indeed in 20 years the only major investment in Middleton has been to refurbish the roof this year. It lacks in the new changing facilities and bright interiors which new centres are providing, but this position is not irretrievable. Indeed, what it lacks in aesthetic beauty is more than made up for in the welcoming atmosphere, community spirit and fantastic staff who understand the needs of the public who use it.

The presentation at the well-attended consultation meetings said that the vision was to provide somewhere inviting to go that has the facilities you want, adjacent to Town and District Centres on main arterial routes. Middleton has all of these. The pool is the classic big thing in a little package. It had achieved in excess of 100,000 users in 2007/2008, accounts for the greatest part of the revenue achieved by the centre and has a two year waiting list for private swimming lessons. This is in spite of little promotion of the centre and poor signage. Indeed, although there are potentially thousands of new customers as a result of the New Forest Village estate being built close by, very few people who are new to the area actually know of its existence.

The dry side facilities will better serve the community by remaining under Council control, as we fear that by expecting a voluntary group to take over its running would only lead to this not being achieved and ultimately to its closure.

We would ask that all of the points referred to are given the utmost consideration, but most of all that the clear message from the people of Middleton is to allow our centre, the heart of our community, to remain open in its entirety, to continue to provide a much needed leisure facility to further promote and provide a healthy future for us and for our community. Thank you. *(Applause)*

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Thank you for attending and we will have a vote this time! Those in favour? Thank you. Against? No. That is CARRIED. We do thank you for your attendance this afternoon and all that you have said will be considered and you will be informed at a later date. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

#### DEPUTATION FOUR

##### Garforth Residents' Association regarding the potential closure of Garforth Leisure Centre

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. If you could give your presentation, a limit of five minutes, and would you like to introduce your supporter, please?

MR P DUNWELL: Thank you Lord Mayor, Councillors. My name is Philip Dunwell and this is my wife Karen. We are here to represent the members of Garforth Residents' Association and we want to speak about the closure of the sports facilities at Garforth and Kippax.

Following recent media coverage regarding the proposed plans for the closure of the sports facilities in both Garforth and Kippax, members of Garforth Residents Association, representing the interests of the community of Garforth are disappointed and concerned about the lack of consultation that Leeds City Council appears to have engaged in prior to the above announcement in the local press.

The facilities presently provided at Garforth Sports Centre are very well used, though thought by most to be less than adequate for the local population of 16,000 and those from the wider communities in the villages of Kippax, Micklefield, Aberford etc, which takes the population to about 35,000.



A recent report by the Director of City Development in September 2008 reflects this popularity of Garforth Sports Centre when it uses the measure of cost to the Council per visitor at 76 pence as opposed to, say, £3.98 pence per visitor at East Leeds Leisure Centre. Of course there are no swimming facilities at Garforth, which would increase the cost.

The nearest public swimming facility for Garforth is located in Kippax. The facility, which was opened in the early 1970s, is a dated, failing building with high maintenance cost. Not an inviting or attractive construction, this possibly deters people from using it. It has possibly run the course of its useful designed lifespan of about 35 years, the cost per visitor there being quoted at £2.32p.

The future health and wellbeing of all our people is a major issue, which is discussed nationally every day in news and current events, from diet to exercise and the future Olympic Games in 2012.

The report by the Director of Development identified that over the past 21 years 19 privately funded swimming pools have opened in the city, identifying a need plus a market for such facilities by those people who can afford to pay the fees and memberships rates charged. Perhaps we should be looking for more partnerships with the private sector and our Council in this area.

An example of such private funding and public co-operation exists in the Town of Tadcaster where there is provided for the whole community a privately funded swimming pool and a gym. The Tadcaster Swimming Pool Trust, a facility that has been open for 14 years, it is clean, smart, well organised and attractive building and a pleasure to visit.

The population of Tadcaster is 6,500 with a wider population of 35,000 when extended to Sherburn, Boston Spa and the suburbs of York.

The facility there is staffed by twelve full and part time staff, employees, supplemented by 70 volunteers sourced from within the local community; the volunteers, of ages from 16 to 80 years, who are willing to spend a few hours unpaid keep the facility running to the high standard it obviously enjoys whilst keeping cost down. The tasks they undertake include those of trained pool attendants and reception desk staff.

In considering the future of our sports facilities, we are asking that those who are tasked with making the final decisions take into account the human aspect, not just measuring the cubic meters of swimming pool water provided in the city.

Look at the facilities like those in Tadcaster. Yes, it was built with brewery money in 1994, but it is run at a profit with the enthusiasm of the people it was designed for. Take into account when adding the running costs the available useful resources available, eager to help and be trained in new skills.

We are suggesting that the facilities for the people of Garforth, be put into Garforth; that our well used sports centre be improved and extended; that the provision of a new swimming pool within our community boundary, not taken away to create a large expensive development miles away in Leeds City.

We are asking that the Council Leisure Services start again, broaden and extend their consultation process to include users of the facilities they are planning to close.

Think outside those usual constraints, take account of volunteer workers. Visit examples of facilities like those at Tadcaster; study their means of making their facility a success; steal some of their good ideas - they won't mind.

Ask those local groups - schools, clubs, organisations, community groups and individuals - what they want. After all, it is these people who use the facilities now, not just as a sports facility but also as a place for events meetings, gatherings.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you indeed, that has been very interesting. Your five minutes is up. Councillor Procter.

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. All those in favour? Thank you. Against? That is CARRIED.

Thank you for attending this afternoon, indeed, and all your considerations will be reported to the necessary committee and you will be kept informed. Thank you indeed. (*Applause*)

#### DEPUTATION FIVE

##### SPLASH regarding the proposal to close South Leeds Sports Centre

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. If you would now make your speech to the Council, no more than five minutes, and would you like to introduce your supporter, please?

MS S CIESLIK: My Lord Mayor and Councillors, good afternoon. My name is Sally Cieslik and I am here on behalf of Splashback, the campaign to keep South Leeds Sports Centre and its pool open. My colleague here is Phil Goodfield who also resides in South Leeds and is a member of the campaign group too.

It is hard to believe that we are having to go through this whole process again following the success of our first campaign, Splash, less than two years ago.

We all want Leeds to be a modern, healthy and progressive city. This will only be achieved if everyone, wherever they live, has equal opportunity to reach their potential. This should include South Leeds – specifically Beeston, Holbeck and Hunslet – areas of the city that have until recently been under-resourced and neglected where, along with the long-term residents, new arrivals to the city, transient families and the disadvantaged, live.

Families in this part of the city need to be able to access amenities locally to be healthy. We have the smallest ratio of cars to people in the country and many residents may not even be able to afford bus fares for anything other than essential trips. If you were in that position and wanted to give your children the best opportunity you could, then, alongside a good education, you would want them to learn and swim and play organised sports with other local children. These skills stay with us throughout life and keep us fit and healthy into an independent old age.

It is a fact that if you feel fit you are more likely to think positively and be successful in life. Life expectancy in South Leeds is the lowest in the city, obesity is rising and some of the children are amongst the poorest.

How can you say you are improving outcomes for young people when you are actively promoting the closing of a centre like this? We would argue that you are not "Narrowing the Gap" – you are widening it. Beeston, Holbeck and Hunslet are bereft of any other community sports facility or pool

It looks to us as though the maxims for South Leeds differ from those for the rest of the city or, indeed, the country. Rather than No Child Left Behind and Every Child Matters, it seems to me that Every Child is Left Behind and No Child Matters, or at least so far as sport and fitness go.

We do not have the private pools like those that are dotted all over the north of the city. We do not have schools with pools that can be opened to the public. We do not have big companies with facilities that workers' families and locals can access.

We do, as we all know, have a fantastic facility for the elite swimmers and divers from our region. That is great for them, but it does not provide the fun and friendly swim for young and old alike. It is likely to be closed when Olympic hopefuls come from all over the country for galas and competitions. These events would more than likely take precedence over everyday school and community sessions. Big events like these do add kudos to the city's national sporting profile, but it does not necessarily impact positively on the local community's sports access.

South Leeds has had its share of nationally and internationally renowned sportsmen and women over the years. If you ask any of them about how they became involved in their chosen sport, they would probably say that they started by playing for fun near to where they lived, and that their initial access to coaching and training was through membership of a local junior club or closed activity sessions laid on at their local sport centre close by.

You will not find many who started out by scraping together pocket money to occasionally have enough cash to take the bus (or maybe even two) on a journey that took at least 40 minutes (or maybe longer if the bus missed), to visit a pool or sports centre costing them yet more money, and then having to repeat the process to get home again. It is not very appealing is it? As a parent, it does not feel very safe does it? As a supporter of the planet's future it's not wonderful either and, as a way of engaging in sport and fitness, it is not going to be something you would be doing very regularly.

Therefore rather than closing South Leeds Sports Centre, we need to be improving and building on it.

This facility, by the Council's own admission, is "tired" and needs bringing into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and we are already almost a tenth of the way through that.

Millions and millions of pounds are earmarked to regenerate areas of South Leeds - the Holbeck Urban Village, Hillside and the Greenhouse, to name but a few. That is great news but surely as part of that plan there will have to be sports and swimming facilities.

We do not see closing the sports centre as an option for an area like ours – it would be detrimental to the whole community. We, unlike you, cannot even contemplate this action. We see improvement as the only way forward. We want to go down in

history as a group who are involved in sustainable and lasting improvements to facilities in our local area. We are disappointed that the council do not appear to want to do the same. Thank you. (Applause)

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for attending this afternoon. Vote again! All in favour? Against? Fine, thank you indeed. CARRIED.

Before you go, thank you, and your remarks this afternoon will be certainly considered and you will be kept informed. Thank you indeed. Good bye. Question

#### ITEM 5 – REPORTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5, Reports. I call on Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for a vote, then. Those in favour? Thank you. Those Against? Abstentions? No. Right, that is CARRIED.

#### ITEM 6 – QUESTIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: We come to Item 6, Questions. I call on Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Given the current economic climate, can Councillor Brett reiterate the importance of effective fiscal management within the Council in order to prevent unnecessary financial waste?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, the Council has for many years had one of the lowest Council tax levels in the whole country and can demonstrate that we are able to provide excellent services at low cost. We have an excellent record in achieving efficiencies within this Council. In the last three years we have achieved over £60m in efficiency gains, meeting the Government's three year target in just two years.

Within the Corporate Assessment we have been assessed by external auditors as providing good value for money. In 2006/07 they reported:

“Leeds City Council continues to demonstrate that overall costs and unit costs for key services demonstrate best value compared to other authorities providing similar service levels and standards of service.”

Value for money is considered in the Authority's annual budget setting round with a focus on reducing budgets whilst maintaining and improving service delivery. The Authority has improved value for money and achieved efficiency gains. It has produced and is delivering on its efficiency plans. It is exceeding its targets and has in place arrangements for monitoring progress.

We also safeguard public funds through our audit processes with a rigorous and thorough internal audit function which provides assurance on our systems through regular and systematic reviews. This is supported by the Council's independent external auditors, who review the work of our internal audit staff each year in coming to their conclusion on the Council's account – so the simple answer is "Yes."

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He could have said that at the start.

THE LORD MAYOR: Anything else, Councillor Lewis?

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. By way of supplementary, could Councillor Brett confirm that the council is spending £155,000 on a Reise(?) organisational charting tool and the purpose of this tool, if I can quote – and I think this is Councillor Brett, not David Brent, though I am not entirely sure – the purpose of this tool is to engage Chief Officers in working differently to deliver greater working and to ensure that management and leadership capacity is fully harnessed. Also, to provide a clear methodology for use across the Council in streamlining all structures at all levels and to facilitate change in other forums.

THE LORD MAYOR: A long question.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Could Councillor Brett also confirm that on top of the £150,000 (*interruption*) you are Leader of the Council, Councillor Brett, so you are accountable to Council. I am sorry if answering questions is a burden to you but it is part of the job that you do. Could you also confirm that on top of the £155,000 already being spent, another £45,000 has been allocated to this project whilst charges for older people, charges for burials, charges for car parking are ratcheting up at a much greater rate than inflation? (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for that long question. Councillor Brett?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, it is quite clear that the opposition do have somewhat different priorities to us. I cannot confirm the figure but Reise, I think, is the title that I have heard on our side, is a project which involves trying to make sure that we have the very best possible leadership and all the evidence that I have is that in any project, whether it is in the public sector or in the private sector, it will fail or succeed in some measure because of good leadership.

We regard senior officers as absolutely paramount to what we are doing. I cannot confirm the amounts he has quoted but I suspect he is probably right and I would say to this Council that is money well spent. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I call on Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Member for Children's Services care to comment on the recent Judicial Review judgment regarding court costs for Children's Services?

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am sure that a lot of Members will already be aware of this particular issue. For those who are not, the Ministry of Justice in its wisdom decided it was going to start charging Local Authorities an increase of something like 2000% on the fees that they already paid, so that Local Authorities could seek court orders to get children taken into care.

We, of course, in Leeds, as was the case in many other Authorities across the country, regardless of party, were also very, very concerned at this move, which

seemed to be particularly short-sighted and this Council, along with three others, took the Government to judicial review. Unfortunately the Judge in question decided that he could not judge in our favour, although he did make some very favourable comments.

Of course, as a consequence this means that this Council and others, of course, across the country, is going to be subject to a corporate caring tax so that now every time you want to take a child to court to get an order to make sure that they are in safe surroundings as opposed to sometimes being in a family setting which is not where you would want to leave them – which of course sounds worryingly familiar to us this week – we are going to get charged a lot more for it.

Of course, that means in the case of Leeds in particular that we will have to find an extra half a million pounds out of our Children's Services budget because I have to state now, Lord Mayor, that just because it costs more to seek a court order, it does not mean that this Council will be seeking any less orders or will be trying to ensure that a child stays within a family setting that we are not sure is the best place for them. I wanted to give that commitment to Members out there because I know that Members of all parties, all those that show an interest in corporate caring, will want to have that assurance.

Of course, it does mean that in other areas of Children's Services, Lord Mayor, we are going to be seeing challenges because, of course, half a million pounds is the equivalent of what we could spend on putting 30 foster care placements in place and also to pay for the running of a children's home over a year.

I just wanted to let you all be aware of that but to give you the reassurance that we will be making sure that our children are safe no matter what the cost.  
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, by way of a supplementary, could I ask the Executive Board Member which he would consider to be a bigger waste of money, paying more for court fees or paying for taxi fares for vulnerable children?

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: I thank Councillor Hamilton for allowing me the opportunity to raise this. I did see a very large headline in the Evening Post talking about £4.2m spent on transport costs for children. I want to give Council another reassurance, that wherever a child requires to have special transport, be it taxi or whatever, due to the fact that they have major disability or due to the fact that they may have behavioural issues or protection issues which means that we need to ensure that they are escorted to the door of schools, we will commit to doing that.

To answer your question directly, of course, trying to size up whether you pay for children to be safe or pay more to the Ministry of Justice because they feel that they are under pressure with the number of cases of child protection that come before them, I think you can judge by the tone of my reply that I go in favour of making sure that our children are transported safely to school.

I will say for Councillor Wakefield, who was quoted in that piece, I think he might have done so under a false impression about what that article was about and I am sure that at some point today he would want to clarify that he was bigger than the statement which was issued in his name. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Far too generous. That is not our interpretation.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Would the Executive Member for City Development update us on the current status of the Eastgate and Harewood Quarter development?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Yes thank you, Lord Mayor. In replying to Councillor Anderson, Members will be aware there has been some speculation in the press and, indeed, right up to an article in the Yorkshire Post this morning. I can tell Members of Council that along with senior Council officers I met with the Chief Executive of Hammersons, the lead developer, about the rumours in the press. Hammersons have confirmed their commitment to Leeds, as has the John Lewis Partnership, and the enabling works have just recently been completed. Additional to that, the compulsory purchase issues are continuing to be resolved and my understanding is that in the courts in London last week the fast tracking of some of the Government's approvals have been agreed, so the challenges to those will be progressing through the courts.

I do have to say that clearly we are in a very difficult economic climate and I do not think unwarranted speculation is at all helpful. However, I do not think it would take a genius to work out that it would be unlikely, as Leeds Town Centre Securities have said today, who are another of the developers involved, to for the main construction works to begin much before the end of next year.

What I am very pleased about is that there seems to still be – or very much seems to be – a real commitment to the city of Leeds in terms of this development which will ultimately employ an extra 6,000 going ahead in a reasonable time frame.

I know that some Members particular on this side whose wards are adjacent to this development realise how important these employment opportunities will be and I do sometimes get very concerned about some of the ill-informed comments in relation to the work that is being done to try and help relocate the few businesses that still operate in that area. If anybody truly believes that the area in which this development site will take place is at the moment operating at its optimum in terms of generating jobs and wealth for the city, I do not think they go down there very often.  
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Would the Executive Member like to make some comments on a lot of the unhelpful speculation that has been in the newspapers recently that some of us on this side are trying to do our best to get the Council and the citizens of Leeds through the economic problems that we now have? Do you not think that some of these comments have been very unhelpful in terms of what we are all trying to do cross-party to try and bring things to this city?

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Carter?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Yes thank you, my Lord Mayor. I just think that people in the city have a right to expect to know as much as possible about how developments are being put together. There comes a time when things get commercially extremely sensitive and when we are in very difficult economic times, as we know.

I do find it astonishing that one particular article on 11<sup>th</sup> November, there was a sub-heading, "Why didn't firms come clean to YEP?" in terms of the delays. I would merely comment on that, if somebody rang the managing director of Johnson Press from the BBC and asked to know the business plans of Yorkshire Post Newspapers because they wanted to tell everybody who listened to BBC Radio

Leeds programmes, I think I can guess what the response would be from the managing director of Johnson Press. I do think it is incumbent upon all of us to just use a sense of balance about this.

Further on in the same article Councillor Wakefield was asked to comment and he called on the developers to explain why they had not come clean about the potential hold up. They have come clean. They have been meeting with officers and, indeed, have now met with myself. Quite frankly, Councillor Wakefield, this administration has been in power four-and-a-half years. I have never heard Councillor Wakefield ask any question to me or to anybody else about how this major development for the city was progressing. If you want an answer, do not put a question in the paper, come and ask me or one of the senior officers. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I talk to Judith.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Rafique.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can the Leader of the Council confirm his commitment to fairness in the city?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, I was expecting my heckler on the right to tell me to say "Yes" immediately. The "Yes", sadly, must be qualified because fairness is something in my experience one sees through political glasses. I suspect what this side would say is fair may not be exactly the same as what we would say is fair. With that constraint I am happy to say "Yes".

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Rafique?

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: By way of a supplementary, Lord Mayor, and in view of his written statement to the Council and the promise to limit impact, does Councillor Brett think that increasing burial costs by nine per cent, prices above the rate of inflation, car parking at Beckett Street by eleven per cent and child care fees by 47% does not represent fairness, especially to the most vulnerable people in our city? (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I am not going to comment on the detail of some of the figures because I suspect (*interruption*) we could trade figures and it would not actually establish fairness or otherwise.

COUNCILLOR: It is your record.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: We have to, from time to time, put up charges and I will defend the record of this side in doing what we have had to do in the past and I fear may continue to do in the future, because this Council has to remain solid.

What I want to present to you is a piece of news that perhaps you would like to listen to.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Profiteering.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: This is a piece which is titled "Dire News for Women as the Pay Gap Widens." This is from the Director of that Fawcett Society, Katherine Rake, who says:

"In a time of economic difficulty women have today received particularly dire news. After years of painfully slow progress in closing the pay gap we have now actually gone into reverse gear



with the pay gap widening over 2008 for women working full and part-time. This sadly demonstrates that the Labour Government has failed to take serious action to combat discrimination still facing women in the Labour Party.”

COUNCILLOR: Answer the question. (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Where are all your women?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: How many women are on your Executive Board?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: They don't like it when the facts are presented to them.

Hear the end of the quote:

“In the light of this we are calling on the Government to make bold changes in the forthcoming Equality Bill. Today the Government has argued that companies and organisations should voluntarily check whether they are paying men and women fairly.”

We can argue till the cows come home about fairness and I think we are going to disagree. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: What a weasel.

THE LORD MAYOR: If it is nice and quiet we will go on to the next question. Councillor Hollingsworth.

COUNCILLOR HOLLINGSWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Board Member for Central and Corporate extend his congratulations to ICT staff who have been responsible for winning the Cabinet Office award – Contribution Towards ICT Professionalism in the Public Sector?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Brett.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, this is an area of support services where we have taken a clear view over five years that all our support services will have a standstill because we want to concentrate money as far as we can in the delivery areas.

Despite that, despite the poor limited resourcing going to ICT which we all depend on - and by heck, don't we know it when it fails – it is, I think, of huge note that in this service which we take for granted, there is recognition at the highest level when in the public sector that our ICT staff have taken a lead in staff development. This can only be of benefit through more effective service delivery in these very challenging times.

The ICT Division within the Council has been recognised nationally as an exemplar of how managing staff effectively and providing them with the right level of training and experience to do their jobs well is essential.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Pity Members don't get computers to match, isn't it?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: These staff are seen as our most important asset. During the last two years we have invested significant time and effort in ensuring that

we have the right people with the right skills in the right place. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hollingsworth, any contribution? Anything further? No. Councillor Lobley then.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Board Member for City Development comment on the recent decision made regarding the site of the Arena Development?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I have to congratulate my colleagues on the Executive Board for reaching an extremely sensible and wise decision. I have been delighted with the response from the general public. I think everyone agrees that a city centre site was the best bet in terms of regeneration. What we made very clear was that we have decided as a major policy from this administration that we would deliver the much-needed and much-awaited arena to the people of this city and we would find a suitable site.

It would have been easier had the competition which we entered into in good faith not coincided with the current economic downturn which clearly must have had some bearing on the bids that we ultimately looked at.

My colleagues decided – and indeed the officers and myself recommended – that having discontinued the development competition we should look at a public sector alternative on a site in the city centre that was affordable because whatever, it always had to be affordable. That is the conclusion we reached. I now look forward to that development moving ahead apace and meeting the timescales that we have set all along, which is for an opening in late 2012. There is no doubt that it will reap huge benefits not just in terms of being a popular music venue for over 12,500 people but massive benefits in terms of regeneration to the adjoining areas of Little London, but also bring a lot of new business to hotels, restaurants and shops in the city centre.

Do not forget, the city centre of Leeds generates in retail sales £1.6m a year. I have a horrible feeling – and I am sure it is shared by most people – that in these coming months, this next twelve months, the city centre of Leeds like everywhere else will be under considerable pressure, but I think the fact that this Council has the commitment and the determination to deliver a project of this sort beginning at this time gives a massive injection of hope to people who would develop in our city and people who live and work in our city. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Would the Executive Board Member for City Development advise us on the available transport links to the site, please?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Yes, I particularly welcome the supplementary because that, of course – there are always people who want to detract from things. That is the thing which people have lighted upon – what about transport arrangements.

I do not know how many of you were in Leeds last Thursday, the day after we announced this, but we estimate 35,000 people in the town centre watching the Christmas lights go on. I did not see any gridlock. I saw some very busy roads, just like there always are, but I did not see gridlock. Furthermore, the site we have selected is within a five, ten or 15 minute walk of virtually every major car park in the city - not just the two most adjacent - the bus station, the coach station and the railway station and to try and pretend that everyone will go to a venue all from one direction and by one mode of transport is quite frankly nonsense.

The officers have done quite a lot of work already on ensuring that it is accessible. We entirely believe that it is and we will develop more work as things go forward to ensure that this venue is as accessible as possible to the maximum number of people.

Do not forget, over many years this Local Authority has staged events, albeit of a one-off nature still pretty regularly, where thousands of people have attended sites outside the city centre and, indeed, within the city centre, so we are not novices and we are working with the developer of world repute.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call on Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can the Executive Board Member for Environment and Neighbourhoods please confirm the city's current recycling rates?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As at the end of the last fiscal year the rate of recycling in Leeds was 25.9%. The first six months of this financial year the figure has risen even further to 32% and in the months between July and September for the first time ever over a third of the region's household waste has been recycled or composted. *(Applause)*

September's monthly performance was the best ever with 34.4% of household waste being recycled or composted and in the first six months of this year we sent 9,261 tons less waste to landfill than in the same period last year, a fall of 7.1%.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you. By way of supplementary, could Councillor Smith please inform Council why non-contaminated rubbish in green wheelie bins has been collected with black bins in Kirkstall and other areas around the city and is then ending up in landfill sites and would he agree that his mismanagement of key environmental issues such as this might be one of the reasons why the city failed to make the UK's top twenty sustainable cities list?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I have outlined the figures for recycling at the moment and it is quite interesting, is it not, when you start a new project, if you were starting a new recycling project I think you would find perhaps the first ten per cent of the recycling would be easier to achieve than the second ten per cent and so on, so let us look at the record. In 24 years in power your lot managed to get to 14.9%. In four years we have doubled it.

I am not going to pretend that everything is perfect across the city. There are some problem areas and we are addressing those through education and awareness. We have done a large door-knocking exercise this year and we will be using the information gained from that to better educate people. Unfortunately there are some people who still are not aware of what needs to go into which bin, some people do it deliberately and in those circumstances it is necessary sometimes to put green bin waste which is not recyclable into the black wagons. We do want to improve that. As I have said, we have dramatically increased the recycling rate and we will continue to do so. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I call on Councillor Bentley.

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Whilst welcoming the current refurbishment and rebuilding works taking place across the secondary school

sector, would the Executive Member for learning tell us when we can expect a similar programme across the primary sector?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am pleased to be able to report to Council that the primary capital programme application that I told Council about at the last Council meeting has been successful, which means that we have been allocated £19.1m across the first two years.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: By the Labour Government.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I am not denying that, Peter.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Excellent.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: But I would also like to pay thanks to the officers of this Council for the work that they put in to achieve successful bids. It is worth pointing out to be nominated for three major awards, I think it is next week, in connection with the BSF programme, the amount of work that is done by officers of the Council and Education Leeds to secure these bids should not go un-noticed. *(hear, hear)* I think we also have to have an administration commitment to this. We do not get everything from Government. There has been a major investment by this administration in PFI and in the BSF programme and there will continue to be so.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is there a supplementary? No. Thank you. Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Would the Executive Member for City Development like to give us his views on the amendment that was approved by the House of Lords through the Conservative Party to the Planning Bill in respect of strengthening the powers of local Councils to protect urban space and gardens by restricting the power of the Government to interfere with Councils who want to protect their neighbourhoods.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Lord Mayor, I am delighted that this amendment to the Planning Bill was proposed in the House of Lords and, indeed, the Government were defeated.

I think it would do members well to remember when it was that changes were made to planning regulations to allow green urban space to be classed as brownfield. Contrary to what Colin Burgon and Paul Truswell reckon and tell their electors who complain about gardens being built on adjacent to their homes, it was not introduced by a previous Conservative Government – it was introduced by John Prescott in the year 2000, so let us hope when they get more complaints they will try and notify their electors factually.

Better than that, they can do something a lot better than that, because on 24<sup>th</sup> November, Councillor Anderson, for your information, this amendment will come before the House of Commons for ratification or rejection. We shall watch with interest how our eight Members of Parliament vote on the issue. I suspect I know how seven will vote – no, I know how five will vote; two will almost certainly be absent, as they normally are when anything contentious is being voted upon, but I have every confidence that your colleague will, of course, support this amendment because there is no Councillor in this Chamber who has not had complaints from their residents about cramming developments on garden sites and on small pieces of greenfield land which this Government have now classed as housing land. What we want, my Lord Mayor, is the power vested back in the Planning Authority to make the

right decisions, not in Whitehall where they do not even know where the pieces of land are. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Is there a supplementary then? No. We have now run out of time, I am afraid.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: They are running out of time fast as well.

#### ITEM 7 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 7. I call on Councillor Brett.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, I move in terms of the Notice.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I second.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I put my name down to speak on the Financial Health Monitoring Report before I knew of the Leader's statement to Council. Both statements have probably been prompted by similar matters.

One of the things which has struck me since joining the City Council is the excellence of its senior finance officers. That is the good news. The bad news is that none of them will be allowed to retire, resign or take any holidays for the foreseeable future because we may need them here. People have survived economic chaos before. In the 1970s we had to cope with annual inflation running up to 22%, lists of price increases notified by suppliers and manufacturers every day, unstable international exchange rates and pay adjustments two or three times a year. Survival then depended on close monitoring of current and projected budgets, constant adjustment and maintenance of flexibility. Fixed term or long term financial commitments could be fatal.

Mr Meeson's report reminds me quite a lot of those times though without most of the inflation. Received wisdom from the Bank of England for this week at least seems to anticipate low inflation, even deflationary price falls like those seen in the 1930s, but I do not think anyone can count on that. Banks would prefer inflation to deflation because it causes them less problems and causes less harm to the value of money.

There is a lot of bad debt in the economy. Writing off bad debt can lead to inflation but it lowers people's confidence in money. Also, inflation may be welcomed quietly by those who are just about managing to service their debt as it writes down the real value of what they have to repay.

My Lord Mayor, we should welcome the report for the expertise which it displays and study it carefully. There may be some merit in each meeting of Council receiving a similar report so that we can keep abreast of the Council's financial position, at least in brief outline. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Brett to sum up.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Very briefly, Lord Mayor, I welcome Councillor Leadley's comments. Particularly I would like to echo his comments in support of our finance staff who I absolutely agree with him are doing in difficult circumstances a wonderful job. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for a vote now. Those in favour? Against? Abstentions? That is CARRIED.

#### ITEM 8 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS COMMITTEE

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 8, Recommendations of the Constitutional Proposals Committee.

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

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: The vote. All those in favour please show. Against? Abstentions? That is CARRIED.

#### ITEM 9 MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 9 Minutes. Councillor Brett.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think as most people in the Chamber know, with the agreement of Party Leaders I am making a statement about the extraordinary situation that we have been through in the past year or so, in my view. I only learned that a copy of what I am going to say had been copied, Lord Mayor, a few minutes before I came to the Chamber and I am now advised that some at least of the copies that have been handed out may not be accurately reflecting what I am going to say, so it means that you have got to listen.

The past twelve months have, in my view, been quite unprecedented as a period in global economic history and the ever-changing difficult economic circumstances people have found themselves in have varied to a greater or lesser extent. Prices of essential goods such as fuel and food have fluctuated sharply, increasing and then falling again. Stock markets around the world have been volatile, dramatically falling in recent months, driven by the poor performance of many banks and financial institutions.

These are clearly very difficult times and it looks certain now that we will follow the US, Europe and Japan into recession. It is with this background and the agreement of all the party leaders that I address Council today.

What a different twelve months makes. This time last year the Government had announced its spending plans for the next three years and this was premised on annual inflation rates of 2.7%. Instead we now find ourselves with inflation well above the Government's target, a near failure in the whole banking sector and the prospect of a severe economic downturn.

The impact on Leeds is as yet unknown but the potential is that the next few years could be very damaging to our local economy, but rest assured, the Council will do all it can to try and limit the impact. We have already seen the potential impact of the merger of HBOS and Lloyds TSB on jobs. Around 5,000 people are employed in the city by these two organisations and we have to await the details of the merger – if indeed it does go ahead – to see what effect this will be on Leeds.

We are, as I say, committed to do all we can to assure that job losses in Leeds are minimised. To this end the Chief Executive is working with Yorkshire Forward and the rest of the City Region as part of a financial services task group.

The aims are to make the case for Leeds and the City Region as a critical part of the UK's financial services sector and to consider how best to respond to possible job losses in the financial sector.

It is important to consider, despite this doom and gloom, some of the background to the Leeds economy. Leeds has become in the last 50 years one of the most diverse and fastest growing economies in the UK, with the second largest employment total outside London. Leeds, as we know, is a major employment provider for the region as a whole, with an estimated 463,000 people working inside the city boundaries and 108,000 people commuting to work in Leeds from outside our district every day.

Leeds has created 50,200 jobs in the last ten years and is expected to generate 34% of the employment growth in the city region over the next ten years. It is therefore clear that there have been great developments in Leeds, developments we should all be proud of.

We cannot rest on our laurels. Just as Leeds has enjoyed great success, there are also particular risks. 83% of employees in Leeds work in the service sectors. Leeds has the largest centre for financial and business services outside London with 119,000 working in the centre as obviously a concentration in that area. That financial and business services sector contributes over £5b - which is just under a third of the total - to the Leeds economy, so as a city we are therefore particularly exposed to the current difficulties faced by the financial services sector.

We need to do all we can to ensure its future and that is why, as I have previously mentioned, Paul Rogerson is working with the Financial Services Taskforce to make the strongest possible case for Leeds and the wider city region.

We believe that Leeds and the City Region can offer a significant competitive advantage to both the UK and global financial and business service centres. The concentration of professional business services in Leeds over the last two decades has created a critical mass of business expertise to meet all but the most specialist requirements of businesses based regionally, nationally and globally.

To help the city emerge from the economic downturn would be to ensure that we have a diverse skill base that we have developed that with one clear voice standing up for jobs in our city and it is for that reason that all the political parties' Leaders in this Chamber came together recently and most of us went to Westminster to lobby Yorkshire's Regional Minister, Rosie Winterton. We asked her to look into providing flexibility in national programmes, particularly over Job Centre Plus, to meet specific local needs. We also asked her to support Leeds PFI bids in infrastructure investment in the Aire Valley, in transport projects and our next phase of building schools for the future.

Through these measures we will help to ensure that Leeds has the skills needed to remain productive and competitive, that it continues to attract and development investment into our local economy and improve and sustain employment prospects for all our residents.

The Council has itself, of course, experienced some of the impact of the recent economic conditions. We are seeing a decline in our income in a number of areas. The downturn in economic activity has seen a sharp fall in planning activity and there are some similar falls in our income. In addition to this, our costs have risen significantly in respect of energy and fuel bills.

One area of activity which has been very much in the public interest recently has been Local Authority investments. A significantly large number of Councils have found themselves in the difficult position of having invested substantial amounts of cash in Icelandic banks which have subsequently got into very serious financial difficulties. I am pleased to confirm that Leeds is not one of those Councils. Whilst no investment is risk free, I can reassure Council that officers continue to invest our funds only in organisations with the strongest of credit ratings.

Despite out different ideals, I know that all party Leaders want to ensure that Leeds's position as the driving force of the Yorkshire economy continues. It is to that end that our representation to Government also included a commitment to future spending plans in Leeds and a dossier of proposals includes securing funding for the new generation transport project the Environment Agency's major flood alleviation scheme and a fast tracking for PFI credit approvals, in order to move forward more quickly than previously on several of these projects. Investments like these will mean we have not only the skills but also the infrastructure to support our plans for Leeds's future.

Lord Mayor, that ends the statement. I am now pleased to move that the Minutes be received. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Are there any other comments?

(a) Executive Board

(i) Central and Corporate

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In moving this Reference Back, which concerns the clawing back of £11.5m from the ALMOs to support the Council's capital programme, I would just like to remind everyone that there was support across the Chamber for the ALMO option when it was mooted. Commitments were made at the time which should not be tossed aside at a later date. If they are, we simply add to people's cynicism about us all as politicians. Certainly we risk alienating the most patient of our tenants who have expected us to deliver what they consider decency in their properties and have waited for several years for that to happen.

We are going back on what people voted for, that we would modernise their homes and improve their neighbourhoods. They will not be impressed by weasel words about strict decency and definitions of decency, strict decency and other words.

One of the huge concerns that the council did not sit down with the ALMOs and say, "We are thinking of taking this money off you within a reasonable time period" but sprung this decision on them just prior to the Executive Board decision being taken at the beginning of October.

That is not my main concern. The main concern has to be about the impact on our tenants. In moments of weakness I feel that that lack of consultation was merely the administration trying to show some kind of real separation between the Council and the ALMOs.

If I can look at one ALMO in particular and that is Barry's ALMO, Leeds West North West, which he chaired until recently, but still Barry's in many ways. It is the one that is in the most serious difficulty because it is the one that is left with not



enough money to even reach strict decency, according to the report that came to the Scrutiny Board.

Here are some schemes that are already being pulled. Otley Phase 4 kitchens and bathrooms. Remember, Otley Councillors, that you do not have to have kitchens and bathrooms for properties to be strictly decent. Burley and Hyde Park, miscellaneous improvements, Phase 3. Same goes. Pudsey Waterloo - close to my heart - improvements to properties that have had very little done to them since they were built in the 1930s, which have serious damp problems owing to a design which places the kitchen, WCs and bathrooms all in a row on the ground floor, which is absolutely diabolical.

It is not just about internal works. Those of us who have some experience of housing over the years, whether it be on the ALMOs, the old Housing Committee or wherever, know full well that any work you do inside properties can be negated by skimping on environmental. Environmental is not just a little bit of hard landscaping there, a little bit of soft landscaping. It is far more fundamental than that.

Modernised properties can be unlettable because of what is happening outside. I feel that just folding our arms and saying decency has been reached is at best short-termism and at worst throwing money down the drain in some locations.

The other night I attended an Outer West Housing Panel. There was very little money to spend and an inch and a half of documents of bids from across the Outer West area - that is Pudsey, Calverley, Farsley, Farnley and Wortley. Most of those bids were about fencing and other security measures which were mainly to provide our tenants with defensible space. That is mainly about stopping kids ripping off downpipes outside your kitchen windows, or using that area as toilets or setting fires under what we call flying bedsits. I have to say that most of those schemes were actually in the Bournes, Butterballs, Whincovers, three of the most challenging areas in Outer West Leeds. I fear very much that the few schemes that were agreed the other night are now going to be pulled as a result of the Council's decision.

If ever there was an area when you need to spend to save, this is the kind of work you need to do and it is not just, as I say, the Farnley Wortley area. The design problems you have on that particular estate are replicated across the city on estates built from the mid 1960's onwards - Cottingley, Little London, wherever. You have huge problems that you have to design out one way or another. I think Members will all know them in their own particular wards.

Another scheme that was approved the other night which risks being pulled was to actually provide vehicular access to five bungalows for the elderly which have been awaiting that access for the past 20 years. You cannot even get an ambulance to these bungalows in Pudsey, and that scheme is going to be pulled.

Aid adaptations are also a clear victim of this decision and my colleagues will give you chapter and verse on this, but I do not think that you may realise that this may come to haunt you. This is work that is desperately needed to make people's lives bearable and it is not work that you can slow down because it is often time limited. It is about often ensuring some degree of independence and dignity for people with terminal illnesses.

I do not think, in short, that either officers or the leadership of this Council have realised what they have signed up to. If any of you are in any doubt about what I am saying, have a careful read through the report that went to Scrutiny because it is a classic piece of smoke and mirrors work. I have to say it made me really yearn for

the days when we used to get clear reports coming to Councillors on which to base decisions, which has clearly gone out of the window these days.

The report is full of plenty of “could”s, “would”s, “perhaps”s, “may”s, about where money will come from to fund the capital spending that the ALMOs clearly need to make in the coming months and years. ALMOs may be able to use money from reserve, or maybe not. Who knows? Certainly this document does not tell us. We have obfuscation instead of clarity and generalities where we should have detail. You have endorsed an option without considering the risks of what you are doing.

Then in that report there are references to things like lift maintenance that make you wonder, quite frankly, the level of understanding of the authors about what they are talking about. Lift maintenance is not capital spend, but replacement. If you do not replace lifts you spend more and more on maintenance, so you do not save yourselves any money. What really comes through the report is that officers have not bottomed the real cost of decency, strict or otherwise, for the city and that is because you have used the information from an outdated desktop exercise to justify what you are doing rather than having full and frank discussions with the ALMOs about your intentions and then coming to a proper conclusion.

I predict as more members get responses from ALMOs, as I have this week, saying there are no plans for kitchens or bathrooms for this or that street, or that the 50-year old doors on sheltered flats do not need replacing, or that we cannot do this adaptation this financial year, you will have and more discontent. The only way that you can reverse that is by referring back this particular decision.

I had one case referred to me by a colleague where we have officers saying in the Chapel Allerton area that kitchens that were installed more than 30 years ago meet the decency standard, or the strict decency standard. I am sorry, yes, perhaps depending on the way you look at things, depending on how you interpret regulations, that is the answer you come to but that is not the commonsense answer that tenants expect. Tenants have an expectation, particularly in areas like mine where they have waited years and years for improvements to take place, where they have sat back and seen other people get money spent on them - and Andrew is nodding his head because some of those schemes we discussed the other night in Brooklea, places like that in Calverley - they have waited for their kitchens and bathrooms; they are not going to be happy if we start to tell them at this stage “You are not going to get them”, or “You may potentially get them. You may perhaps get them at some stage in the future.”

We promised our tenants that we would give them decent homes. All of us made that commitment to people and it was common sense - it was not about some strict definition that we all make or rules that we will change. That was about a genuine commitment to solve the housing problems of this city and to come up with long term answers for the city that would solve a lot of the problems about crime and liveability that many of our tenants still contend with on a day to day basis.

Lord Mayor, I am happy to move this Reference Back. Thank you.

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

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Lord Mayor, I too want to talk about the same Minute 98 of the Executive Board of 8<sup>th</sup> October to which Councillor Lewis referred. I want to do so thinking both about what the decision was and how it was made. I do so with three different hats on - first of all as a ward member of probably one of the wards with the highest number of Council homes in the city and certainly to go with it

indices of social deprivation, poor health, under-achievement to match that indicates just what the needs of the area are.

I would like to start by talking about one of my other hats and that is that of being a member of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. It came to our attention as we looked at the decision which had been made by the Executive Board that in fact that decision was called in and by the time it got to two days into the call-in period, officers of the ALMOs had already been told that the money, the £11m to which Councillor Lewis has referred, they had already been notified that this money would not be available to them.

That I think is a disgrace. It says nothing of which this Council can be proud in terms of its governance arrangements and quite clearly we in opposition regard that very seriously indeed.

Unfortunately it was not the only incidence of call in being disrespected in this way which we uncovered at that meeting a couple of weeks ago and I do hope that we can get an assurance, first of all that no such practice will continue and, indeed, officers will not take for granted any decision in any way until the call in period and the proper procedures have been carried out.

Secondly, I am a member of the Aire Valley Homes Board, the ALMO for South and South East Leeds and, because of the social needs of the area, because we have large numbers of people living in homes that still need further improvement, in areas where the neighbourhood standards have still got to be improved - I was walking around one of them only this morning with ALMO officers - we know very, very well indeed that we have got to go ahead to make lots of improvements in those areas and, indeed, I have to say that the Board in our part of the city has been working on those proposals only to discover that the money is no longer going to be available, perhaps, to do those things and that, indeed, this has been done with no consultation with the ALMO Board, it has just happened, and we are then left to pick up what pieces we can.

That seems to me to be, if not a failure of governance, a failure of the kind of partnership of which this Council likes to boast, that we are working together with local people, with local organisations and doing things in the right way. I have to say that in this particular case we seem to have fallen flat on our faces.

Thirdly, and most importantly as far as I am concerned, the matter of being the ward member for an area like Middleton Park. The old Middleton estate is desperately in need of a massive regeneration and we local Councillors for the ward are committed to doing that. We see nothing in what has happened with regard to this decision which fills us with any confidence that you share those kinds of concerns. That, I think, is a disaster and it shows what the politics of that side of the Chamber are really all about. I move, Lord Mayor, that we support the Reference Back. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Lord Mayor, I too would like to refer to the Reference Back which is on page 63 and is indeed number 98. That item, Lord Mayor, is covered by the appendix, appendix A in that particular item and I must admit that I have to say I do not envy the job of Mr Gay and his department. To be faced with an £88m over programming issue between now and the coming years is significant. Let us hope that he and his department - and I have a great deal of confidence in that department - do better than what the banks in this country have managed to do in the recent past that the Leader of Council has referred to.

It has been decided in that appendix, Lord Mayor, that we do need to save a sum in the region of £51 and we could sustain an over programming element of £36m. I must admit that I am sure I am not like many other Councillors here that you will have a much greater financial understanding than I do. When I look down the list of where the savings are, some of the terminology I find to be quite baffling. I am confused, to say the least, not just about the £11.5m of the ALMO money that has been spent and will not be returned, but I see comments like the Arena £10m is going to be deferred, whatever, the ballet there is going to be £6m less, the City Varieties - I have a great affinity with that theatre - £2m is going to be moved, the LBA pension fund, the money that comes out of the sale of the airport has gone to be added into the pot and the highways, £3m expenditure there. It does mention, in actual fact, that those repairs will be done in 2012 and I have the feeling that the administration really feel that they will not be around in that period of time and it will be poor old Councillor Wakefield who will have to sort that out.

To be fair to the specific amount of the ALMO money, the £11.5m, I think it causes tremendous difficulties throughout the three ALMOs - we did used to have six in the old days but people did not listen and we have three and I think we all know where that is leading.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Your own Government, Ted, eh? They wanted none, I think.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: We appreciate in my own ward of Bramley that it is the West or North West Homes that looks after that one. The problem in the West we have had to face in the recent past with the very sad resignation of the Chair Councillor Anderson, you know that is an issue for us and I know we are not allowed to talk about the audit report at this moment in time for some strange reason or other, the new Chair has written to me to explain the situation but if it is under wraps it is under wraps.

It is the cut backs in my ward that really concern me. We have a situation, a scenario, where officers are going along and they are saying to tenants - and I quote the Fairfield estate as an example - that a kitchen that is 29 years old cannot be replaced; a kitchen that is 30 years old could be replaced. This is absolutely total, utter nonsense. The number of schemes - and the Councillor has referred to the number of schemes that has been cut out - is absolutely appalling.

The other major thing that concerns me is one that has just come up in the last two weeks and that is the issue of the wardens in the sheltered accommodation. I went to a meeting at Ashley Court, Lord Mayor, where people were quite happy with the works that were done in the recent past in that particular building. There was great concern regarding the ALMOs that were just getting rid of the responsibility of employing wardens. This to me, I think, is of great concern and I am staggered that the ALMO takes this decision, but there you are.

Others have mentioned the issue of Scrutiny. It staggers me that this is a decision, this is an important decision and one that should have been referred back, it should have been discussed again, it should have been thought about again. There is great worry but you decided on option one and I think not only have we let the tenants down but we are also really just riding over the whole issue of Scrutiny. It seems a nonsense to me. Lord Mayor, thank you very much. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: My Lord Mayor, I obviously disappoint a lot of members over there but I hope I do not over here when they hear the correct facts and not some of the nonsense they have heard today.

First of all, just as a matter of interest, a member over here for Otley reminded me of the time - you are talking about bathrooms and stuff - you would not even put inside toilets in, so do not start talking about what you did when you were in power.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Point of information, Lord Mayor. I am sure that every Council house in this city has an inside toilet.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: You sit down, you have had your say. Let me just go back as well. There is no such thing as decency or some other type of decency. There is only one decency and that is decency, but the decency, unfortunately, is laid down by your Government - not by us. They tell us what is decent and they will decide what is decent, not us. Indeed, they base the moneys that come to the Council on that particular basis.

Lord Mayor, he talks about what they plan to do. Let me just tell you something. He is talking about us taking money out of the ALMOs. Originally they planned to put £7m in from Right to Buy - their figure, not my figure. We have actually put £30m in from Right to Buy, so do not start telling me they have not done - it is no good whispering down there, that is what you did.

Lord Mayor, I just wonder which world this lot live in. Do they realise that there is a credit crunch?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: The tenants' world.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Do they realise we are in the worst situation since the 1930s? Do they realise the capital programme...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: That is when the houses were build, Les, in the 1930s.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: My Lord Mayor, can you stop them?

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: They do not stop you, Les.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: The Council's capital programme, my Lord Mayor, covers not just housing, it covers education and it covers social services. I will tell you what this lot wanted. This lot want to have a situation (*interruption*). Let me finish. This lot want us to have a situation...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Respect, Les, respect.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: ...where the ALMOs have £31.4m over the amount of money they require for decency sat in reserves. That is not my figure, that is the figure of the department.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Not true. Not true.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: The £11.5m brings that down to £19.75m, so they are still going to have £19m over what they need to get decency. It does not just stop there. They have also got £14.3m of unused reserves. I do not like saying this in front of the likes of Finance who might try and pinch some more money, though I do not think you can on this. There is £14.3m unused reserves. In addition to that, they have what is known as windfall. They have got £28m coming in the next two years but £10m of that has already been taken care of in the figures I am talking about. There is another £17.8m in windfall. My Lord Mayor, that comes to £51.8m.

Please, please, surely the people in Social Services, the people in Education deserve something. What you say is, "Oh, the £11m was never intended..." nobody had planned the £11m for doing the work you are talking about. They were holding it in reserves with the rest of the money, so do not start giving me that nonsense.

Let us now talk about management. Let us talk about the wind and weather situation that they had over the 24 years that they had.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Do you remember the Tory Government, yes.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: They had disrepair claims of £2m a year. £2m a year. Tenants were taking them to court and taking this Council to court and winning £2m a year. That is what we have saved.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: That was Maggie.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Do you remember Maggie, Les?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Let me talk about voids. They do not like it. Let us talk about voids. They have twice as many houses...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Stop re-writing history.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Twice as many houses empty as we have now. They do not like all these things. What has happened with this, my Lord Mayor, it means that we are building up reserves in the HRA. My Lord Mayor, next year we anticipate we will have (*interruption*). They will not listen.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Les, you are losing the argument. You are talking nonsense.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: We will have about £7.8 of reserves which can be used for three things next year. We can use that extra £7.8m for three things, and that is because of good management. One, we could use it for decency if it was necessary.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: We shall return.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Two, we could use it for affordable homes, if that was wanted, or we could use it for building Council houses. I am sorry, we plan. We do not sit on our backsides doing nothing for 24 years doing nothing. (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Tell that to the residents who are not getting kitchens and bathrooms.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: When somebody does something, you do not like it. You have never had an idea between your ears for the last 24 years. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Tell that to the tenants on the Waterloo estate who are not getting anything.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Can we just have a little peace for a moment? I will now call on Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think Les was the warm up for the Christmas pantomime and that is a shame because actually this should not be about blame. Let me just clarify to you, Les, that as Richard just said, he promised that everybody in this city would get kitchens and toilets inside their house, but we should not be going back about who said what and when. We should actually be talking about what we originally started this debate on. We are in danger of breaking a commitment that all parties made in 2003 of building a partnership with tenants across the city and to involve tenants in improving their homes and their communities. That was the thing that we all signed up in 2003.

If you look back, the £250m that we have got from a Labour Government has made significant progress along with the capital support of this administration, £41m. We supported you, Les, on the capital programme at Executive Board. What we said is that we wanted the ALMO capital referred to Scrutiny.

Let me just remind colleagues what Richard said, because he has raised a very valid point, not only on this report. I am not blaming officers, I am talking about elected members getting proper, balanced information.

Les, if you are not listening...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: I am not listening to you because you are talking rubbish.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I am sure the tenants will be delighted to hear that. The conclusion drawn from this extended piece of work on decency is that the decent homes standard can be achieved by the ALMOs without the need of £11.5m resources. That is what an officer said in Scrutiny. Never has anything been put so simplistically and so rigid about the £11.5m.

Let me just remind you, Les, not about history in the 1970s or 1980s but currently the problems we face now. That is why I think those problems are putting in danger our relationship with tenants.

First of all, as Richard mentioned at the start, we can no longer replace lifts. In East Leeds there are over 64 high rising flats. We are now talking about maintenance and not replacements. As we all know, a lot of our elderly and a lot of our young live in those high rising flats.

Les, we are also in danger of actually not being able to give people - and I have a case in Swillington that I am sure Andrea McKenna can talk about and other colleagues, Tom and Mark - who cannot get a ramp because it has been cancelled by the ALMO because they say the £11.5m has impacted on that programme. This is a woman who is dying of cancer. I am sure we have got examples. We cannot now even honour decency that we all understood. For a lot of people strict decency now means if your bathroom is shocking and your kitchen, you can only have one, so you can have the same bathroom that you have had for 35 years and it will not be honoured.

Let me remind you about some of the environmental work again that was mentioned earlier. Environmental work is not dressing up. It is actually saying to people that you need your pavements or your walls or your air improved to give you confidence in your own community. It is vital. What is even more important is that we ask local tenants to take decisions. We now have panels across the city with local tenants involved that have had programmes cancelled without any consultation with the. That is the kind of partnership we have got now with them as a result of Councillor Carter rather disgraceful diversionary tactics, why did he not address why

we are letting down tenants in this city who give up hours of their own time to commit themselves to improving their own homes, to improving their own communities?

I really want this not to be a mechanism Punch and Judy but actually to turn round and for Les to say, can we sit round a table and see what we can do to see whether it impacts like you and your colleagues have said and can we try to find a solution to it? Instead we had a disgraceful contribution from Councillor Les Carter here that completely missed the point and actually profoundly let down the tenants of this city who deserve more from this Council. I support the Reference Back, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Resign, Les. Resign. You are letting people down.

THE LORD MAYOR: Have you finished?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: He is a clown.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call upon Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I expected nothing more from Councillor Wakefield than the final few snide remarks addressed...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He was not listening.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: ...to Councillor J L Carter. Let me repeat, we have a capital programme now over the next however many years that was running out of control to the tune of something like £80. Why was it running out of control? Because your Government have completely destroyed the economy of this country. *(interruption)*

You laugh and you will go on laughing at the thousands of people who are going to be unemployed and these are the people you are supposed to represent.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: What do you do as a party? You are cancelling it. *(interruption)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: So do not laugh about people losing their jobs.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: The end of boom and bust.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Who was the man, my Lord Mayor, who said, "We have brought an end to boom and bust"? My God yes, he certainly brought an end to boom and he has brought us to bust and we may not be *(interruption)*

My Lord Mayor, the reality...

THE LORD MAYOR: Could we calm down because I cannot hear what is going on.

COUNCILLOR: You are very lucky, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: The reality of the situation is that this administration has to face up to the consequences of what has happened to the property market. We have a capital programme we have to bring back into some sort of balance. You cannot stand there pontificating as you have done without you tell



the people of this city where you would make the savings, which schemes you would postpone, what you would put on.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We will not be doing what Cameron has said.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Councillor J L Carter quite rightly said...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He was not listening.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Are you saying, then, that all the cuts should come in the Education sector; should come from the Social Service sector? If you are not, what are you saying then? You are saying we should spend money we have not got? Is that what you are saying? (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: We are saying don't steal the money.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Don't steal the money.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Or are you saying we should borrow, but unlike the Government, of course, we have got to get the borrowing back straightaway, so we would have to stick it on the Council Tax immediately this upcoming year. For us, we have not got Mr Brown's leeway of burying it away for two or three years till after an election and then putting taxes up. No, we have to go to the hard pressed people of Leeds and say we want a massive Council Tax increase because we are having to pay the interest on the borrowing that you lot are demanding we make, (*interruption*) because you have not made any attempt to tell us where the money is coming from. I am sorry, but the people of Leeds in totality deserve better. I can tell you, your little friend there is already crawling over the usual places that Labour cut - highways maintenance, for example. He is already... (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: If you can't stand the heat get out of the kitchen.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, you ain't going to fool anybody. Everybody knows the economic situation the country is in, every Local Authority is in a similar position. Everybody knows that we will only do what we can afford to do or the Council Tax payers will pick up the bill.

Have the decency and the honesty to match your spending budget with where you are going to make the cuts. Is it Social Services? Is it Education? Is it highways maintenance? (*interruption*) Is it the normal place you go to as well to reduce the amount you spend on improving people's property who have disabilities? You were spending £2m on aid adaptations four years ago - we are spending £6m. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Time to call on Councillor Brett.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: It is going to get even worse. The Three Musketeers.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: In an attempt to lower the temperature I am going to start by saying that I have no idea whether there were or were not irregularities in the call in process but, Geoff, if there were, that is wrong and we have to, as an administration, stick by the rules of these things. I have to say, the New Labour mantra "I won't take lectures from..." as far as Geoff is concerned, I am not sure if it is coherent enough to be a lecture but I certainly am not going to have him try to tell me that I do not care about deprived areas. Frankly he needs to understand that some of us represent areas which are just as deprived, possibly more so, than yours.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Les Carter.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: One of the things that characterised this debate, I have to say, has been a lack of listening.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Yes, Les.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: The plain fact is that if an opposition is ready to take over, they do actually care about the promises they make.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You will be waiting a long time.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Last year we had the spectacle when the airport of sold of a long term promise towards having an Arena being ditched and £1m being offered to the electorate in every single ward. They change their minds depending on where they are.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I think it was a good idea. Who had it?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You said that.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I know.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: We have been consistent in our priorities.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: That is true.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: As has been pointed out, and pointed out by Ted Hanley, there was a serious shortfall in the region of £88m or thereabouts in the capital programme that we had to do something about pretty quickly. We were in very unusual financial circumstances. It was not the sort of circumstance where you could say we will spend three months talking to the ALMOs and seek definition as to what might be the right thing to do.

COUNCILLOR: You have not talked to them at all.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: We have to put things like that straight pretty quickly and it does come down to choices. Let us be honest, it comes down to choices. I would love to do more for our Council properties in Leeds. I would love to do more for many of the substandard privately rented houses in Leeds. That is why Keith and I went to see the Minister the other week with other Leaders to say please could we have more help in this special circumstance of unusual economic times. We wanted to have more housing. Do not tell us that we are not interested in better housing or more housing. We are.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: So why steal the tenants' money? Why steal their money?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: We have to make a key decision. When we have spent hundreds of millions through the ALMOs on quite rightly making much needed improvements, we have heard a very clear promise - decency will be achieved. I actually think, Richard, it is appalling and a sign that you have not really got a decent argument, that you start criticising the report and the officers. We really have to have arguments at a higher level than that.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: It is a dreadful report.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: At the end of the day, we are not opposed to improving housing. What we are saying is the arena is a priority and we are going to have an arena. Mending the roads is a priority and we are going to mend them. That is the choice we have made.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Recorded vote.

COUNCILLOR GRAHAME: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: Right recorded vote.

*(A recorded vote was taken on the Reference Back)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I will make an announcement, if you are ready for the announcement. There are present 92, the "Yes" is 41, abstentions nil and "No" 51. *(Applause)* So the Reference Back is LOST.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: We shall return.

(ii) Development & Regeneration

THE LORD MAYOR: We go straight on to Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on Item 103 on page 64, which is presumably why the Chamber is clearing. It is an important issue as far as I am concerned. *(interruption)*

THE LORD MAYOR: It is quite unfair to speak against the background.

COUNCILLOR: They are bad losers, Lord Mayor, bad losers.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am sorry about that, Councillor Finnigan. Carry on.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: I am well impressed with my ability to clear a Council Chamber! However, going back to more interesting issues in some ways, page 64 item 103, which is Pudsey Bus Station. Just to congratulate our colleagues in Pudsey who have been able to deliver a new bus station. Clearly we have similar ambitions in Morley. We have for several years tried to look at locations that might be appropriate. Those have been side lined for all sorts of practical problems and difficulties, but we would certainly have a view that when we do identify an appropriate location in Morley that we will have similar support across the Council Chamber to bring a new bus station to Morley as well. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on Minute 105 on the meeting of the Executive Board held on 8<sup>th</sup> October, which is to do with the refurbishment of Lands Lane and Central Square, which I believe is the bit at the bottom end near WH Smiths.

You may have noticed that much of the paving in the northern parts of Lands Lane became so bad that it had to be replaced with tarmac, which is unsightly, though it is safe for pedestrians and needs fewer emergency repairs.

Recent paving done nearby in Albion Street and Albion Place has extended the area covered by new sandstone sets. It is to be hoped that Lands Lane will be

done to a similar high standard and that we will see the back of some of the clutter of street furniture left by Landmark Leeds. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on Minute 133 on page 76 regarding the arena for Leeds.

I am obviously extremely pleased, and I am sure everybody else is in this Chamber, that a site has been chosen for the arena. It is an achievement for a city Council in this day and age in these current economic times to be giving consideration to be building a £30m arena in our city centre which will help to regenerate the city and make sure that in these difficult times we still have a vibrant city centre.

It is estimated the new facility will be worth £28m a year to the local economy and when it is fully functioning create 300 jobs, which I am sure you will all join me in saying is a good thing.

However, I think what we need to bear in mind is whilst the construction work goes on, it will also create jobs for people in the construction industry who may be currently worried about their employment. I think we need to progress this scheme as quickly as possible and I do hope that the funding from Yorkshire Forward is made available. I know that our friends in Sheffield are doing their own little performance not in their arena, they are carrying on about Yorkshire Forward funding, or part funding the thing in Leeds, but I think it is essential that as the regional capital Leeds has an arena and in my view it should have had it some time ago.

The interesting thing for me is whilst our colleagues in Sheffield may be concerned about an arena in Leeds, I think it tells us one or two things; that Leeds definitely does need an arena and Sheffield is a bit worried about what they perceive may happen when that arena opens. However, arguably, it is easier to access Manchester from Sheffield than it is Leeds from Sheffield if you go over the Snake Pass, I believe it is called, you are in Manchester in no time at all. I find it interesting that Sheffield are the people who are complaining, for want of a phrase, about the new arena here in Leeds and I would think that if our colleagues in Harrogate had raised some concerns - they have an exhibition centre there - I would have seen more of a viable argument than the one presented from Sheffield.

Really what I would like to say is, I welcome the arrival of this news for the arena coming to Leeds, I think it is long overdue and much needed for this city and I do hope that we can expedite matters as quickly as possible with regard to its development. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Page 76, Minute 133. Can I echo Councillor Grayshon's comments about the arena? It is a very welcome announcement and I am looking round the room actually, which seems to have emptied fairly well, but I was thinking back to a Councillor meeting in 1978 and I am looking round the room and there are very few people who were here in 1978 - one or two I recognise. 1978, before you were born - maybe you were in short trousers then. We were having a debate, strangely enough, about an arena and the then Labour Leader of Council was in negotiations with a company that were going to provide us with an arena, it is going to be absolutely fantastic. At the time I thought to myself that would be good, because those of you who remember far enough back will remember a group called the Rolling Stones - I believe they are still going. At the time I thought they may be attracted to Leeds, I will be able to go and see them. Very good.

We did not quite get the arena in 1978 but do not worry because in 1988 we had a very similar debate in which the then Labour Leader of the Council said we have got a contract, we are all sorted out, we are going to have this arena, it will be up in three years. I thought good, because the Rolling Stones are still going and so there is a chance I will be able to see them.

I do not know what happened in 1998 because I was not here, but the Rolling Stones were still going and I was still looking forward to seeing them but I do not know what debate we had.

What I do know is that in 2008 we have got a different regime, and actually this is a regime that is going to deliver.

COUNCILLOR: Don't hold your breath.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I think about 30 years of us being promised an arena and this year we are going to deliver and, fortunately for me, the Rolling Stones are still going and so I may just, if we are quick, get to see them. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR MATTHEWS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am going to bring Councillor Campbell's speech a bit up to date, actually. I have got the Sunday Times supplement here and a good example is the Stereophonics. At the moment they are playing Glasgow, Cardiff, Manchester, Liverpool, Brighton, Birmingham, Sheffield, London - there is something missing.

I will let you into a little secret here. Councillor Hamilton here is taking his mum to see Barry Manilow in December. Unfortunately Barry is playing in Manchester so Councillor Hamilton has to take his mum all the way over to Manchester and, of course, we all agree it is time we had these sorts of events in Leeds. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on two minutes here. The first one is on page 65 and it is Minute 104 - that is the Sustainable Education Travel Strategy.

Sustainable Education Travel has come to Scrutiny twice, this year and last year. Last year it came to Resources Board chaired by Councillor Bentley when some Labour members questioned the tendering process for taxi contracts and the members of Scrutiny Board were quite happy with the way the department was dealing with it at the time.

It came back to my Scrutiny Board this year, it was the same report as that which went to the Exec Board. Members asked a lot of questions and were broadly happy with developments on sustainable education, including the taxi element of education travel, so we were surprised when Councillor Wakefield aligned himself up with the Taxpayers' Alliance, claiming that the money spent on taxi fares for children was currently being wasted and should be spend on children's education and the needs of people in our city.

Taxpayers' Alliance, in case you do not know, is a bunch of libertarian ex-Conservatives, run by a former researcher, Timothy Kirkhope, once of this Parish, and funded by large donors to extreme right-wing causes. They are very keen on closing schools. They say, for example...

COUNCILLOR LYONS: A bit like this administration.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: ... Local Authorities should not have any excess places and schools should be closed immediately. They demanded last year a ten per cent cut on all Council spending. Then they found out that that would not cut 10% off Council tax, so they then said they wanted a further 50% cut of Council tax. I will leave you to imagine what that would do to a city like Leeds. They also want to abolish Councillors' allowances, so I am sure Councillor Wakefield will happily sign up to that as well.

Having gone on record to say money to pay for taking some children with physical or learning difficulties to school is wasted, I am not holding my breath waiting for the Labour Party to say this to those kids' parents, but we will, however, make sure the people of Leeds know that the Labour Leader calls their kids' transport a waste and intends to cut it.

The other Minute I want to speak on is page 76, Minute 133 - it is the arena again. I come at it from a slightly different angle to my colleagues. The residents and the elected members of Burmantofts and Richmond Hill ward and, I think I can say fairly confidently, Hyde Park and Woodhouse ward - and as none of them are in here, City and Hunslet ward (the Councillors that is) - welcome the location of the arena in the city centre.

We will deal with potential problems with transport and access and congestion later on over the months and maybe years ahead, but I want to talk about employment. The arena, along with the Eastgate Harewood Quarter referred to by Councillor Carter, will bring employment opportunities to the people of those wards. In case you do not read the unemployment statistics, all three wards feature very high on the table of wards' unemployment in Leeds and this Council administration is committed to helping those people. I follow it fairly closely because Burmantofts and Richmond Hill is, needless to say, at the top of that list and the reason why it is at the top of the list is because we have a very high proportion of unskilled and construction workers in our ward and they are the people who are suffering in the current downturn. This Council is committed to helping those people.

What does the Labour Government do? If you look at today's paper you will see John Healey - remember nice John Healey who would not allow us to have the Working Neighbourhoods funds - he is directing employment help at Halton Moor and Gipton - not Richmond Hill and Burnmantofts, Hilary Benn's constituency, with the highest unemployment. He is directing it at Gipton and Halton Moor. Congratulations to the people of Gipton and Halton Moor but this rather echoes Gordon Brown's call at last year's Labour Party Conference of British jobs for British workers. I think it is a bit racist that your Government is not helping the people in our ward and lining yourselves up with the BNP, whose slogan you nicked in the first place. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to address Minute 134 on page 77, and that the money that has been available to refurbish Horsforth Library. First, a very big thank you to the administration for finding the route for the funding because we struggled for some time. Yes, Mick, you were part of the Council that new that Stanhope Drive had to be replaced. It was falling down then before I became a Councillor and it has been falling down ever since. The rate of deterioration is getting more rapid. The old lady needs to be replaced - has to be replaced. We were all unable to find the route to the funding till this paper found it through the Town and District Centres. I think it is a wonderful opportunity for my ward, for my village, to actually develop a community heart.

Yes, it is sad that Stanhope is going but maybe we have got a new Stanhope Centre, if that is what the people of Horsforth want to call it. We are going to have a

centre that can offer a lot more than Stanhope did - a lot, lot more. I want the people of Horsforth to come forward with the idea, not to have those in our community who are destructive, so I took the liberty this morning of going on to our MP's website because I am aware of the trouble he caused last time with the letters he sent out warning the people about the height of the flats they were going to get on that land and all sorts of spurious things, none of which could have possibly happen because we have put the checks and the balances in place to make sure it could not. I was horrified, Andrew, to find that yes, at eleven o'clock this morning, he does have Stanhope Drive on his website. The brilliant news is that he is supporting the campaign, the original campaign and yes, it has been on his website for two years.

How interesting, is it not? This is a Member of Parliament who claims everything happens because of him. There is the proof on his website at nine minutes past eleven this morning when I printed it off, that he does not even know, is unaware that we have got now almost £1m in to develop a building into a whole community centre, that we have already got in the last two years this £2m pulled into Horsforth - developing Town Street as the vibrant heart of Horsforth. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Referring to page 76, Minute 133, the debate about the arena. Just to emphasise that Labour has supporting the bringing of the arena into the centre and I think all of you remember that it was under our administration that we put together the group under Tom Walton, a cross-sector group that delivered the feasibility study.

The reasons are clear. There is public support for an arena and I think particularly in the centre with the importance and size of a city like Leeds, with Sheffield and Manchester taking young people out on a regular basis.

I think it is very important for us that we recognise if it is delivered correctly that it will be a regenerative tool and particularly in the sense of creating jobs in building the arena in the first place but actually running it, and I hope that we will see a real commitment from the administration to making sure that any jobs that are created through this arena are actually local and do go to local people. I think we have seen so many projects that have actually drawn people from outside of the city in and we want to see put in place training and the skills needed identified so that we can actually deal with that.

It is important that the transport issues are taken into account because if this is done correctly, the secondary spend from a facility like this should be millions of pounds per year. The music industry in Leeds as a whole I think delivers in terms of around £30m; it is a massive industry and Leeds is at the forefront to capitalise on this.

There are other issues, I think, that we need to bring into the debate. Apart from the facilities of the arena I think there is a discussion to be had about other uses that the building could be put to. I do not think any of us want the building to be sitting empty when the big concert facilities are not taking place.

The other thing that we have not had site of at all is the design of the facility and I think we need to take that into account when considering the uses.

There has been an enormous debate about transport running and I think in a general sense when we were talking about the arena going into Elland Road, we had a major debate about public transport and access. I would urge the administration to be quite open about the transport debate, make sure that a full impact assessment is had. There are issues around coach travel - where will coaches go to park when

people have been dropped off? I have to say, if you actually look at an analysis of the figures for Sheffield and Manchester significant numbers of people travel there by car. I think in terms of the sustainable city that we all hope to achieve in Leeds, we need to take account of the needs of our public transport and how we can actually encourage that in as many ways as possible.

Andrew, I am slightly confused, really. At Exec Board we were subjected to his usual mantra about keeping the development within the envelope of the money available, not a penny over the amount coming out of the public purse - you have heard it all before - yet in the paper we have a statement from Andrew saying to the business community that this Council will deliver the arena "no matter what." We have heard today the pressures on the capital programme, the fact that you are taking money out of houses to fund other projects that people in this city want to know exactly how money is spent and I just do not understand how in the one breath you can stand up and say that not a penny over budget and then to the business community you go out and say that you will deliver it no matter what.

I think the most important thing for the future of this city is that we deliver this project within best value and we take full account of the subsidy that is going in. Many members in this Council have absolutely no idea how much public money is going into the project yet. When we know we will be looking at it very carefully and with that, I will thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. First of all, let me just say that I join with other members in congratulating those members and officers who have brought about the arena proposals which are now going to happen, I am very certain of that, towards the end of 2012 and, as the current Chairman of City Centre Plans Panel, I think that both myself and the whole Panel is really looking forward to seeing some of those plans coming forward in the not too distant future. I think it really is a very good thing that we are now in a position to deliver on something that all of the other major cities already have.

Just referring back to what Councillor Matthews was saying about the sort of concerts that he would like to go to, he was saying that he would be going to see Stereophonics later on this year. Actually he told me earlier on that he was scouring this paper looking to see if Barbra Streisand was doing her come-back tour. She is not so he is content that he is wanting to see Stereophonics instead.

I am indeed taking my mother to see Barry Manilow in December. However, it was supposed to be a birthday surprise, so I would be grateful if you would all keep it quiet. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Laughter and applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I will ask Councillor Andrew Carter to sum up.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I do not know about the rest of you but I have great difficulty in detecting support for the arena from Councillor Blake. I felt a bit sorry for her, really. It is the problem we have got with the opposition - they cannot make their minds up about anything.

It is not so long ago that Councillor Gruen made it quite clear, jumping up and given another dose of his *ad hoc* economics, that he wanted to scrap the arena and put £1m into every ward in the city which probably left about 13 wards short, but never mind. He had not quite worked that out. Now we have Ted Hanley making similar comments.

At the Exec Board Councillor Wakefield - I think he was supporting it, I am not too sure - and now we have had Councillor Blake doing her best to try and have it



both ways. Sorry, you cannot. You either support the fact that this administration is going to deliver an arena, or you do not. You either support the fact that this city needs an arena because of the £28m a year investment it will bring in in the city region, or you do not. You cannot have it both ways and you are going to have to say at some stage whether you actually support it or you do not. I think it is a great pity if you do not.

I understand your frustration that for 20 odd years, even more than that, Colin demonstrated how you have had tried and failed to deliver the arena, like so many other things in this city that you tried and failed to deliver. I understand that you are feeling a little bit aggrieved about that and that we have been able to come up with what we all believe is a workable solution. By the way, nobody is saying we will deliver an arena irrespective of cost. You were not at the meeting you are referring to. What I said was that having a reserve site at Elland Road we had indicated that we had a site on which to deliver an arena and we do - that is why Elland Road is still in as a reserve, so nobody can be in any doubt that we intend to deliver an arena for the people of this city, because that has been demonstrated beyond contradiction that that is what people of all generations want to see us provide because of the jobs, the investment it will bring and because it will move the city forward.

I am glad Councillor Pryke commented on the Education Travel plan and, as he was able to introduce other matters, I feel able to respond. One of the things we have established - it is very difficult to establish anything that the opposition support or do not support - is that Councillor Wakefield actually does want to scrap the amount of money we pay out to transport disadvantaged, disabled, handicapped children to school. I think that is quite deplorable and I am prepared to give you the benefit of the doubt. Somebody earlier said he had made a mistake. It is a hell of a mistake to make.

If he cannot resist opening his mouth every time a reporter rings him up without knowing what he is talking about, he is in the wrong place. It merely underlines the fact that he is completely out of his depth as Leader of the Opposition.

My Lord Mayor, Pudsey bus station. Yes, of course we support Morley having something equally as important.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Of course you do. You need their votes.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Robert, I am sure that the five Morley Borough Independents will be far more effective in helping us to lobby for that than Dickie and Dotty from Pudsey South were in delivering a bus station because it went on for years and they gave us nothing, like the rest of them.

Lord Mayor, let us get to Horsforth - very important. I am delighted that the ward Councillors have been so supportive of the scheme at the library. I am told by officers that it is an exceptional scheme, that it will deliver the benefits that you have indicated and I am also glad you mentioned our Member of Parliament because, of course, as you know he was the man who, when he was a member of this Council, wanted to shut the Stanhope Youth Centre. He was Chair of Community Benefits and Rights. He wanted to shut the Stanhope Youth Centre with no money to invest anywhere else for anything in Horsforth.

This does entail the closing of Stanhope Youth Centre but it means that we have an excellent facility which I understand the ward members tell me the residents of Horsforth are greatly looking forward to having and, of course, in case Mr Truswell wants to misunderstand yet again, none of the memorial trees are to be felled, the

memorial is not to be removed - it never was. I hope we have a win/win situation for the residents of Horsforth and another snook cocked at Mr Truswell.

What else have we got? Councillor Grayshon, thank you very much indeed again. (*interruption*) and Councillor Campbell. We seem to have the support of everybody in Leeds apart from the Labour Group when it comes to the arena. Everyone is out of step but them, yet again. (*Applause*)

### (iii) Environmental Services

THE LORD MAYOR: We move to Environmental Services and I call on Councillor Lowe.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I would like Council to agree to my amendment to reference back the waste solution for Leeds which was given the go-ahead by the Executive Board on 5 November. It is page 78 Minute 136.

I have asked for this to be referenced back because I have got four major concerns that I would like to explain today. Firstly, more information needs to be provided as to how this contract will incentivise additional recycling. Our group has raised its concerns on many occasions about the evidence from other cities on the impact of incineration on recycling. We need a clear strategy on this area because if we do not promote recycling and ensure that this incinerator does not (*inaudible*) successes we have already heard about and in fact encourage more successes we are going to be in some difficulty, so that is my first problem.

Clarification must also be provided as to whether any new facility will be processing third party waste both from Leeds, in the form of commercial waste, and also from other Local Authorities. The report to Executive Board highlighted that we now require 20,000 less tonnage capacity than was originally thought when these proposals were first mooted. If recycling is to continue and improve and if the legislation on packaging, etc, is going to be successful as it has already started to be successful, clearly because we have got 20,000 tonnage, then we need to understand how we are going to feed the beast, because if you are going to be creating less waste to put in the incinerator, how will you feed the beast? Clearly we are going to be asking Local Authorities in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield, to give us their waste so that we can continue to feed this beast or possibly even pay a penalty charge, because I do not know how the contract is going to be set up and arranged.

I do not know about you but I do not want to be burning Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield rubbish. Would they burn ours? I do not think so, because if they would they could be burning it from now on and we would not need to have this incinerator in the first place.

The proposal to establish a waste transfer station in Kirkstall was produced without any consultation and this was both with local Councillors and with local community groups. I think this is unacceptable. I do not think that you can vote on something that has not been properly consulted on by local people. It is a total, I think, disregard for local people, the taxpayers of this city, and I do not think that it stands scrutiny, so I think you have got to go back and consult with those communities and Councillors and then, if they agree to it or, having had that consultation, you feel that you have met the statutory requirements, then you can come forward again.

Finally I think that the report raises major questions about the wider waste strategy. The document highlights the fact that the contract will not cover the

collection of waste and whilst this has some merits, at least from our perspective, I do think that the strategy needs to demonstrate how current quality issues are going to be addressed. This is really important and I am going to come to that at the end but I will give you some examples, some evidence as to why I think that there are major quality issues in the current service.

I receive numerous complaints from angry and frustrated residents about missed bin collections. They complain about rubbish overflowing, black bins, animals ripping things open and the consequent rubbish etc that is strewn around. Streets in my ward have been described by my constituents as disgusting, revolting, and it is not acceptable. This should not be the case anywhere in Leeds and particularly not in Armley. I have repeatedly reported these complaints so do not be saying go to the relevant officer because the officers will confirm that I have repeatedly reported these concerns.

It is not unique to my ward. Beeston - missed collections are a regular feature of life, for example in Cross Flatts Grove, Atha Crescent, Sunnyview area. Ask the Councillors from there and they will confirm that that is true. Residents from Kirkstall to Garforth, Pudsey to Methley, Middleton to Seacroft have contacted me to complain about their desperate situations.

Since January 2008 your contact centre has received a staggering 26,455 telephone calls from the public complaining that their bins have not been collected. This is not a new problem. Between January 2007 and December 2007 there were 21,275 complaints about missed collections. If the complaints continue to rise at the same rate, you will have received over 30,000 calls about missed collections by December - that is nearly a 50% increase on last year. This massive volume is not repeat callers. This year there have been 26,500 calls about new issues, so this is the public continuously coming to us about the very poor service that we are delivering.

What is more, residents tell me that when collections are missed, they are not just missed for one week but it is often for two or three weeks in a row. If you add to this the issue that Councillor Ogilvie raised earlier about the disposal of recyclable waste in the general waste collections, then clearly you can see that there is a potential crisis in the refuse collection service that really needs to be addressed if the strategy is going to be successful, and I will tell you why.

Bin collections will be a crucial part of the proposed waste solution for Leeds. If bins are not emptied the beast cannot be fed. We have already talked about the impact of that on us and the chance then that we will have to buy in waste from Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Wakefield *et al*.

You need to bring forward a paper that integrates both the front end and the back end of the waste management process and it has got to have re-use and recycling at the heart of it. Until you do this and until you do it in a way that also is consultative, asks not just the Council but the local people of Leeds what they think about it, then we cannot support this paper. I hope that other people who have heard me today also believe that they cannot support this report in its current form, that they need more information, more questions answering and I would like to ask those people who feel as I do that they will support my amendment to refer this back.  
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: To second that I call upon, for her maiden speech, Councillor Lucinda Yeadon. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR YEADON: Lord Mayor, in finally making my maiden speech I would like to second the reference back. As my colleague Councillor Lowe has outlined, we have a number of concerns which we believe justify this report being referenced back.

As a Kirkstall Councillor I have two particular concerns. Firstly, the proposal to establish a waste transfer station within my ward. My ward colleague, Councillor Atha, will be discussing the matter in more detail. However, I want to draw attention to the fact that the people of Kirkstall elected me, Councillor Atha and Councillor Illingworth to represent their views. I therefore find it unbelievable that you completely disregarded myself and my ward colleagues when you developed a proposal which will undoubtedly have a major impact on this ward. In doing so you have treated the people of Kirkstall with disdain and it is completely unacceptable.

With regard to the issue of recycling, within the Waste Solution for Leeds you state in paragraph 3.2 that you will have an evaluation framework which will incentivise additional recycling. I would suggest that before you start to incentivise additional recycling you should start to deal with the waste that residents already want to recycle.

I want to highlight an appalling situation that has recently come to light in Kirkstall. The situation in my ward shows that you are not even able to manage the current levels of recycling. Given my constituents' experience I would question both your commitment to encouraging people to recycle and your ability to deal with the increase in recycling.

Residents in Kirkstall are already committed to recycling. They are not committed to separating their waste because they have to; they are committed because they want to. These residents understand that if they do their bit it can really make a difference to the environment and they want to make a difference. Like many of us sat here today - at least those of us on this side - these residents know that tackling environmental issues is one of the biggest challenges currently facing people in all countries all over the globe, so what an absolute disgrace to discover that the Council has been taking their recycling and sending it to landfill sites.

I live in Kirkstall so imagine my horror when one of my constituents told me that they had seen bin men taking recycling from along their street and throwing it into the back of a truck with ordinary waste to be buried. Their carefully separated waste is now sat in the ground filling up valuable space when it could have been and should have been recycled.

I have seen it myself. I returned home to find my bin men attempting to throw my green bin into the ordinary waste. I asked the guy why this was happening and I was told that the bin was contaminated. I was astonished. I very carefully separate my waste. I have got special containers in my kitchen where I do it, so what had I done to contaminate my bin? Nothing at all, as it happens. When the bin man actually checked he agreed that in no way was it contaminated. Every bin on my street had been treated as if it were contaminated, so it is not surprising that there appears to be a problem contaminated bins in Leeds if it is assumed this is the case before they are actually checked.

Councillor Smith says it is a matter of education. It is not me that needs educating. I am very well aware of what can be and should be recycled and what cannot, so perhaps the education needs to come a bit closer to home.

What is more, despite the fact that mine and other bins were apparently contaminated, there were no stickers to - as I am told there should be - alert the

education team. What is the point of having an education awareness team if no-one alerts them to a problem with recycling?

This is where there is an attempt to collect the recycling at all. There is an 86 year old lady who lives in Kirkstall who attempted to get her recycling collected for four months. Every month her bin was forgotten and every month she rang to remind the Council. Instead of sending someone to empty her bin she was just sent a new green bin. By the time she contacted me she had three full green bins waiting to be collected. This appears comical but stories of residents struggling to have their recycling collected appear all too often in Kirkstall.

The whole process is shambolic. It is a complete disregard for procedure and apparently no interest in the environmental consequences by this poor behaviour. Residents have told me they feel angry, betrayed and let down by you and I will be honest - I feel angry, betrayed and let down by you.

Having spoken to constituents from other wards I am told it is not only Kirkstall that suffers this shocking service. For example, bin men routinely empty green bins in the same carrier bags in Greenwood Place at Armley and in New Forest at Middleton a family has only had their bin emptied once in 18 months.

THE LORD MAYOR: I thank you for that. I am sorry to cut you off.

COUNCILLOR YEADON: That is OK. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: To the other end of the scales, Councillor Atha.  
*(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I am not sure what you mean by that but I will take it as a compliment. I am reluctant to follow the Queen of the Bins, because actually she has made herself very, very conversant with the problems that we are finding and I will make one or two statements, not very much more, to complement what she said.

I live in Cookridge. The service there is absolutely excellent. Green bins go, black bins go exactly and religiously; the service is marvellous. What I do find quite abominable is the standard I experience in my place, at Cookridge I do not find at Kirkstall, where the problems are legion. Steve will know this because he gets regular - I suppose you and he are quite good friends across the IT because you are emailing him so frequently. It is a shambles in parts of Kirkstall and it is just not good enough. Despite the fact we have been trying for two or three years to improve it, we have not succeeded.

Then along comes, quite suddenly, this information to us, briefing to us, that it has been decided to have a waste transport centre in the old Kirkstall site. Those who are familiar with that old site will know that the people in Kirkstall round where the leisure park is were bedevilled by flies and noxious smells for a consistently long period of several years. It was a blessing when the place was burned down because at last the flies stopped and the smell stopped. Now the proposal is to regenerate that site as a transfer site and this was done secretly. We were told at the briefing after it had been decided that a detailed feasibility report had been undertaken which concluded that there are no considerations of proceeding with Kirkstall as a reference site - done.

That was done in secret. Richard, you are the Leader of the Council, or one of them. Andrew, you also pay tribute ostensibly, and I am sure really, to consultation. There was no consultation with the Kirkstall people before this detailed

report was prepared. There was no consultation with the local people. In other words, it is a dirty trick played on the people of Kirkstall. Why? Because it is in a Labour ward and there are no votes to be gathered. As you yourself said, Councillor Brett, when we were talking about another issues, you said, "There are no votes in that" so we did not go there.

This is not good enough. If we believe - John, you are shaking your head - if you want me to prove it I can prove it by producing the Evening Post report which, of course, the Evening Post, was being attacked earlier. Of course, if you do not believe the Evening Post - and I hope they realise just how little regard you have for their honesty as journalists, which is not a feeling that most of us do share.

I would say basically that the waste transfer at Kirkstall should be transferred to a place in Horsforth, which is in our ownership and which is miles away from any house, which is in the centre of an industrial estate, which is much nearer the places that are going to bring from Guiseley and places that side of the city into Leeds for transfer. It will be much closer for them to go. It would not harm anyone in Horsforth - a small town of which I am very, very pleased to be a regular visitor and a nice place I would like to keep unchanged because it is so nice, but this site would not affect anyone there. As you know I am sure, Councillor Cleasby, if you move down the ring road and you go into that dip where in fact we have a waste centre. Why don't we use that? It would be closer to the incoming traffic and it would deal with the major problem in Kirkstall, which is one of the busiest roads in the city. Here we are going to be bringing droves of wagons into the site and then huge wagons taking it out to the incinerator at Cross Green.

The incinerator - no, we mean whatever means we are going to use to get rid of it. I would ask not for any other reason that I believe it, I would ask you on that side, and even some of you who may have consciences from the dim distant past and not accept that you always be right or even the Greens might come up, standing on their own two feet and not go along like lapdogs after the Leader over there, who is so charismatic that they all follow you - Andrew, you must feel very proud of your powers.

What I would ask is that you accept this reference back and that we look again at the possibilities and possibly come up with an agreed - I was being flattering, Andrew. I know it is difficult for you to understand that and it was possibly said tongue in cheek...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Beware bit part actors bearing gifts.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Quite seriously, I just hope you will support this reference back not because of scoring points, it is the point of doing something sensibly and reasonably which we can do if we take away our political swords and shields. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on the reference back regarding the proposed waste solution for Leeds. Specifically focusing on the issue of third party waste, as members are well aware the Council is in the process of procuring a new waste facility - which we know is an incinerator - and as part of that process bidders have also been given the option to submit bids which include third party waste in their proposals.

The report which recently went to Executive Board talks about the scope of the new facility being around processing waste from within Leeds but - and this is important - the report goes on to say, and I quote, that any waste derived from across the city boundary would be reflective of current volumes. In other words, there is

scope, it would seem, for waste to be brought into Leeds from other Local Authority areas.

I think, Lord Mayor, residents will be somewhat alarmed to hear this, as we are on this side of the Chamber. We assumed that no way would waste from other Local Authority areas be processed at this facility and indeed, in January of this year Councillor Smith seemed to be of the same opinion. If you recall he said in this Chamber in response to Councillor Lyons, and I quote, "We will deal with Leeds's 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. We will deal with Leeds's rubbish in Leeds. We do not want anybody else's." That is what he said then.

I understand that Councillor Smith was somewhat confused on this issue when questioned by Councillors Blake and Wakefield at the recent Executive Board, so perhaps he can use the opportunity today to clear a few things up. Will the Council's new waste facility be taking rubbish from other Local Authority areas and, if so, which ones? What could the anticipated volumes of waste be from other areas? Finally, why the apparent change in Council policy on taking waste from other Authorities since the comments you made, Steve, in January?

I think, Lord Mayor, these are fundamental questions that need to be answered. The last thing that our residents want is additional lorry loads of rubbish from other Local Authority areas crossing through the city to the new waste facility in East Leeds. Perhaps Councillor Smith could now clear up the confusion. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am just going to speak about the reference back - we will be supporting the reference back. We are concerned about the larger amount of - the bid to propose additional capacity. This is because yes, that could be used to collect commercial waste but mention has been made about taking in also waste from other Authorities. I understand we do that a bit, there is some sort of cross function that goes on already but I am told that this would be a similar level as to what we do now, but it does worry us on this side, will it?

If we are going to have additional capacity, what are we going to do with it? If we are going to collect commercial waste, who is going to do it because at the moment as we all know and has been said, sometimes we have problems collecting the waste that we have now, never mind about commercial waste.

There are questions there, there is a worry there, if we are going for this additional capacity it opens up all sorts of possibilities and possibilities that are not made clear in this paper. Therefore we will be supporting the reference back. Thank you, *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I call Councillor Smith to sum up.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will start with Councillor Lowe because Councillor Lowe is the person who in 2007 made it quite clear that her solution was to scrap the whole of the waste strategy. She was going to take the whole budget away from it, so I just wonder what that would have done for the citizens of Leeds. It would have cost them millions and millions of pounds in fines. I am a little concerned about Alison's direction of travel on this.

I am also concerned about this, if packaging goes down then we are going to have to feed the beast, as she calls it. If we are recycling the packaging it is not

going to go to the beast, so that is a rather strange one. Kirkstall I will deal with a little bit later.

She says that she is concerned about the wider strategy. I suspect, I wonder if she has read it - I really do wonder if she has read it. If she reads it, it is a very, very comprehensive strategy, one which has been submitted to her own Government and who awarded PFI credits on the basis of it and a strategy which has received widespread acclaim, a strategy that has led to a significant number of bidders bidding for the solution, so maybe she wants to read it.

Councillor Yeadon, welcome to the Council. I applaud your commitment to recycling. You did say at the outset that there was a proposal to establish the waste transfer facility in Kirkstall. As a Councillor for Kirkstall I thought you might actually know it is an existing waste transfer facility that has been established for a number of years and has licences to process 400,000 tons of waste a year and if it were used for this in future, then it would be substantially less than that, substantially less, I suspect, than 100,000 tons.

Of course it is a reference site, which we are going to put here. Councillor Atha mentioned a better site. If there are better sites I am sure the bidders will recognise that and put their bid in on that basis, but whichever site it is it will be subject to planning rules and planning guidelines and I suspect it will be at such a level that it will go to the Planning Committee, so you will be able to raise your concerns there.

Councillor Atha says that they have been trying to improve the situation for two to three years. I refer back to my remarks earlier in Council under the Labour administration under 15% recycling; under this administration over a third, so I do not take lessons from him in how much we recycle.

Councillor Ogilvie - I am very pleased to have some contribution from Councillor Ogilvie. Of course, Councillor Ogilvie is on the Leaders' Waste Management Strategy Group. I can honestly say I do not ever recollect at any meeting of that group that Adam has made a contribution. He may correct me, I may be wrong but I do not certainly recall that and he chooses this moment late in the day to make this comment.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: That is totally irrelevant.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: I cannot understand why he is concerned - you are saying something now, I do not recall you saying anything at Executive Board, I do not recall you trying to get the paper changed them.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You are not dealing with the issue. You are just going round.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: You are leaving it a little bit late in the day.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We did raise it. You must be going deaf.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: No mention of Kirkstall.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I am sorry, you are wrong.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Third party waste is an important one. We do recognise the benefits of providing a more sustainable solution for dealing with other Leeds waste. There is some small amount of cross border transported waste and it



will be reflected in the contract that that has to be at a minimum level and it is likely to have a capacity in the contract. What are you doing to do? Are you going to have people on the side of the road stopping waste lorries on every road into Leeds, because that seems to me what you are saying.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: That is not what we said.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am sorry but we have come to the end, which now leads us to the vote and a call for a recorded vote, seconded.

*(A recorded vote was held on the Reference Back)*

THE LORD MAYOR: The result reads 91 present, for 42, abstentions 0 and "No", 49. The reference back is LOST.

#### (v) Children's Services

THE LORD MAYOR: Moving on then, Councillor Ewens, please.

COUNCILLOR EWENS: I wish to speak to Minute 108 on page 66, concerning the DPPO on Woodhouse Moor. I am very pleased that the Executive decision has been made that we shall have separate consultation on this because the DPPOs proposed for Woodhouse Square and Hanover Square and subsequently including Rose Bank and *(inaudible)* will now go ahead at the beginning of January and they have been held up for a long time because of the association of the Woodhouse Moor DPPO with them.

The Woodhouse Moor issue came from a bad weekend earlier on this year which was responded to with an immediate emergency meeting with officers and agencies various, but the two lots had already become associated. The original ones, which were proposed from evidence of residents who lived round the squares and from the people who were upset, very badly as a lot of us were, by the mayhem on the moor on that May weekend.

There is a difference because the original DPPOs on the squares were there because of not merely perceived but actually witnessed poor behaviour, antisocial behaviour, by people, some of them in need of rehabilitation treatment and some of them who just came for the ride from as far away as Halton Moor. Then there was witness evidence of the need for a DPPO down there, which controls the behaviour.

The fear has become amongst some people that the behaviour from the two squares will be transferred to Woodhouse Moor. We do not have any proof of this. The people who have misbehaved on Woodhouse Moor have not been people recognised as homeless or recognised as in need of rehabilitation. They are people who have gone along very foolishly, got drunk and behaved very badly and I am sure there are people here, as I have when I was younger and had parties and you could have younger people who actually did not behave very well in their own house when they had had far too much to drink. This is not a thing that only happens in the park; it happens locally.

We are having a new consultation, I can read you the details of that, and this will be as wide as possible and it has already started this last week. The DPPO for the two squares is already agreed for January 1<sup>st</sup> but at the moment we have got copies of the proposals which are out for people to consult on but it was started with at notice in the Yorkshire Evening Post and it is now in the various community centres, being mailed to community groups and individuals on the Area Management's mailing list. I have put copies in some of the local shops and it is on

the Council internet. I do not know how much more widely we could consult on that and I hope that everybody who has the opportunity to go to the consultation will do so. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: The clock now says quarter-to and I must now move to Councillor Brett to sum up.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Lord Mayor, it is traditional, I think, for Leaders to sum up after a debate which has been rather different from what we have had this afternoon where we have had two Reference Backs each of which had a summary at the end and relatively little that has been on standard minutes.

Having said that there are some remarks I would like to make. First of all, I was not aware, Colin, that you were an old fashioned rocker and that the Rolling Stones were what you wanted to listen to. I might put myself into the same category but for me the concert is Status Quo.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can we point out that both those came to Leeds at Woodhouse Moor, Status Quo and the Rolling Stones, when they were not half as big as they are now so you could have come and seen them then. You missed a great show and Madonna was absolutely magnificent. I am helping Councillor Brett.

COUNCILLOR: No you are not, Bernard. I know you would like to think you are but you are not.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: There has been a lot of discussion about the arena and I welcome many of the positive things that a number of members have said. One of the things that I think is widely misunderstood about an arena of the size that we are considering, 12,500 seats, as I understand it - it is a very carefully considered size and the work that officers have done to talk to Manchester and other places, we know fairly closely roughly how many cars are going to be needed to bring that audience to a concert and the evidence is that it is about 3,000 cars.

My understanding is that in the nearby parking that already exists there are around 2,000 car parking spaces. With the new Eastgate Harewood Quarter there would be a considerable addition to that, so even if you do not look across the wider city centre for the parking, one might argue that there is already in place sufficient parking to deal with an event that this arena is likely to hold.

Somebody - I forget who it was that mentioned this, it might have been Judith, apologise if this was not you, Judith, but somebody on the Labour side - questioned the building being empty between concerts and again I have to say that officers have done a great deal of work to try and make sure that we maximise what goes on in this arena. It is not put up a big venue and hope, and certainly the operator has, I think, said to us very clearly that well in excess of 100 days a year the arena will be in use, so we are not putting up something that might be used a few scores of days. It is going to be in substantial use and we are sure it is going to be successful

What I think may not have been sufficiently stressed - and again I pay tribute, Judith did mention this but I think the phrase, Judith, was "regenerative tool" - what it means is that a run down area of our city centre - and it certainly is, part of the Merrion Centre could do with a facelift - part of that area is likely to hugely benefit from the building of the arena but what is also important and what Councillor Pryke touched on is the effects in the nearby areas, in Little London, in parts of the Baywsaters, in Gipton and Harehills, and in Lincoln Green in my ward - all of these are in walking distance of this particular venue and the businesses that are near this

site, the housing that is near this site is likely to increase in value and desirability simply because of this one major project.

I think the assertion was that Andrew Carter had said - and Andrew dealt with this - that we would build it no matter what. Politicians have various ways of making it absolutely clear that it is a political imperative to get this job done and I believe, whatever the detail of what Andrew said, I am here reinforcing, we are absolutely clear we are going to do this. It is for us a long, outstanding piece of our cultural jigsaw that has been missing and that is something that I want to reinforce and make absolutely clear.

I want to say a bit more about the position vis-à-vis the waste and particularly the point that Adam was making about waste coming from outside Leeds. I think, Ann, you might have referred to this as well as one of your concerns. At the moment, we have a lot of difficulty being absolutely sure at any of our waste sites where the waste is coming from. There is no police who ask somebody coming in a private car, "Do you live in Leeds?" What we have given as a political commitment is, we will build a residual waste facility to deal with the waste from Leeds district.

If at the moment some waste - and I believe there is some and Councillor Smith I think ran out of time to explain this, but if there is some waste - from people who live in Leeds that actually goes over the border to Bradford, to Kirklees, to Wakefield, that is roughly speaking equalled by some household waste that goes the other way. All we are saying is that the residual waste facility will deal with the amount of waste that officers tell us is coming from households in Leeds.

I believe a year or more ago when we started looking at this the figure, if I remember it correctly - somebody will correct me if I am wrong - we were talking about 180,000 tons was the size of the facility that we needed to deal with the residual waste. I have to say that compares with the incinerators which are already in my ward which deal with over 100,000 tons, so what Mick denies all memory of dealing with years ago, is not a small, insignificant facility that Yorkshire Water already have.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: If you mention my name (*inaudible*) building railway station to bring rubbish in from other cities.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: We know how to deal with hecklers. He can have his say and carry on, as I am sure he will. The point I am trying to make to you, Mick, is that what we are now proposing, because of the success that Councillor Smith and the officers have had and many people around Leeds in recycling, the size of the facility that we now think we need has dropped by about 20,000 tons to 160,000 tons a year.

I hope I have made that a bit clearer. We are not going to have, because it would be too costly, a police force at the border of Leeds that stops every car and looks in the boot to see whether or not there is any waste going out or any coming in.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: That is not a bad idea, Richard.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I have to say, Ann, that we have been aware on our side for a long time about your concerns about this facility.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You have got no concerns.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: It was noteworthy again, nothing new, not that anything has changed here, that many on the other side have talked about an

incinerator because they think they know what the outcome of the process is going to be. On our side we are doing what the Government, what a Labour Government has asked us to do and be neutral on the technology. You understand very well that there is a number of technologies that could come out of this so I have to say, I am disappointed that you have decided to vote the way you have today.

Can I finish by saying I very much welcome what Penny has said about the DPPO on Woodhouse Moor. It is particularly unfortunately that two smaller squares, which would have had a DPPO some time ago, have had their schemes held up because of a group who we believe have over-reacted to a particular event. Yes, there were concerns but to over-react in the way that they have, all that they have succeeded in doing is putting back the solution for these two smaller areas and also for theirs, because assessing the smaller squares will be part of assessing whether we do need something bigger on Woodhouse Moor. Thank you, Lord Mayor.  
*(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Right, we come to the vote on the receipt of the Minutes. Would those in favour please show? Those against? Abstentions? Thank you, I think the Minutes are carried.

We now adjourn for a spot of refreshment and I would think it is about 20-past five we will have to reassemble. Thank you.

*(Council adjourned for a short time)*

#### ITEM 10 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 10, White Paper Motion in the name of Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Although this White Paper is badged up as being about the RSS, it is primarily about the housing crisis. The RSS is an attempt to try and mediate some of the problems of the housing crisis - successfully or unsuccessfully we all have our views on – but primarily the issues I want to talk about are those of the housing crisis.

It is obvious to all of us that we have a national housing crisis across all tenures. Social housing waiting lists are predicted to hit five million by 2010. I always use our free sheets as a kind of indicator of what is going on in the local housing market for social housing and what that tells me is there are areas where there are just not any properties being let. I cannot remember the last time I saw a Pudsey house to let and I am sure quite a few of you across the Chamber will be in the same position on that.

The housing market has been stagnant since well before the credit crunch. The estate agents who colonised all our high streets only a few years ago are really suffering and some of those are starting to disappear. Developers are laying off contractors mid way through building new developments. Other developments are just being mothballed. New flats in the city centre are left empty. We have some of our biggest builders in financial difficulty. People are struggling to get mortgages and, interestingly enough, half of last year's shared ownership properties, half of those properties built in the last year remain unsold. That is, I suppose, the bottom end of the market for sale. Half of those remain unsold, so what does that say about the housing market?

The Government is still talking about housing targets which were predicated on a booming housing market and I suppose I echo what Richard was saying earlier on about what a difference a year makes. We clearly have a very different position now to the one we were talking about last time we debated this whole issue.

When we last talked about planning targets we would have probably said that they were very challenging for the city, or some such phrase. I think we can all say with certainty, as the experts are predicting six hard years in terms of new developments, that they are completely unachievable. This is a national prognosis. It is the same for a huge number of towns and cities and Leeds's rapid growth over the past few years does not exempt it from what is happening nationally.

Our argument is simple – suspend the targets. If nothing else this downturn provides the opportunity to question some of the perversities of the targeting system, the main one being that you can hit your targets simply by building more and more flats when the real need was for a mix of properties with, clearly, a huge need for family housing in a city like Leeds.

Let us have a proper review of the system and come up with one that is fit for purpose from the point of view of local Government and central Government.

The real thrust of the White Paper is to highlight some of the things that Leeds City Council can do and should be doing, as well as the vital task of providing social housing. I was going to say that we can perhaps raise the tone of the debate but I think, perhaps, after the Reference Back a couple of hours ago that is a lost cause, but I still live in hopes.

It is not a comprehensive list but does try to address the problem of how we can make effective use of what housing stock we have in the city and give a boost to the building industry. It is nothing short of obscene if we do not put our minds to making optimum use of the housing that we have in the city, as well as talking about new build. Crucially, our problems are not about spending a huge amount of money. This is not a set of proposals that demands the Council spends £10m or hundreds of millions. It is about a practical list of short and medium term measures that could be adopted that will make a difference.

I have looked at the amendment that has been put down and I have to say that I think you have misunderstood some of the things that I was getting at, but I will try and explain a little bit why our thinking is as it is.

Firstly, the whole issue of leasing properties from builders. We have got builders who have stock that is unsold - that can mean whole estates, part of estates – and we have builders who are, as I said, walking away from mixed tenure schemes and leaving the social housing provider just effectively to pick up the tab for what is left.

Some of them bought homes in part exchange because they were so desperate to sell their new products and they are a millstone round their necks. Without being ideologically pure or proposing large additional capital spend, I believe we should look at how these houses can be brought back into use in the short term while the market is down, to be let to people on the waiting list. I remind people that housing that is built for the private market is not the same as housing that is built for the social sector. It is not built to the same high standard so you cannot just very easily say, "Oh, that was a private housing estate, let us buy it" without major considerations about how you adapt that stock to your use.

I have to say that, having read your amendment, to talk about purchasing properties as a Council when we are not even going to deliver those kitchens and bathrooms that we were talking about is nothing short of barmy, but that is your priority, because it is all about priorities that we are talking about.

City centre. There are vested interests in both talking the scale of the problem up and talking the scale of the problem down. While a lot of the property that was built some years ago has been sold, a lot of it is not necessarily occupied. Of the stuff that is coming off the stocks now a lot of it remains unoccupied and unsold. Schemes that a few years ago would have been sold off plan without any difficulty remain unsold and that is why we have got the big developers pulling out of schemes that we have seen in the recent past.

Buy to leave empty is no longer an attractive option at a time when prices are falling. These properties in the city centre, however, are not going to be appropriate in the main to house the people in most acute housing need because they tend to be families, but the Council should be active in seeing how these could be brought into used, particularly for key workers.

Another key area is advice to owner occupiers in difficulty. The people we tend to advise – and quite rightly and we do a good job on it – are the people who come through our doors saying, “I need advice, I am in bother”, but there are people who will look to easier options – the option of, “I do not want to talk to the officials, I have seen an advert on TV” and we can all watch day-time telly and pick up on these – where there is the wonderful option of saying “You can get rid of all your debts, you do not have to worry about those.”

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Will you tell me about it, please?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: You just have to sell your house, Mick. It is all right. You sell it to one of these firms.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: It is a Council one.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: They will let you live in it, Mick – they will let you live in it for a short while but then they do not give you that option to occupy for life that people often think it is. What people are often walking into is a deal that gives them little better than a short hold tenancy. I am very concerned that those people will eventually come knocking on our door and we need to be proactive in actually publicising the pitfalls of what is out there, so it is not just about the people who we do good work with who come through our door, but it is about giving a message across the city.

I will not go through all the points but another key one is lobbying for better tenants' rights in the private sector. It is 20 years since the assured short hold tenancy was introduced which reduced security of tenure for people in the private sector to effectively six months plus whatever the landlord chose to give them. That is fine for the student market, it is fine for people who want short term lets. It is not fine for a lot of people who we as a Council say, when they come through our doors say “What are my options? I want a Council house?” we say to them, “What about the private sector?” and the answer is, “I do not want to go into the private sector because I have got no security of tenure there” and if you are bringing up a family the last thing you are wanting to do is to go into a property that you are not guaranteed any long term occupation of.

It also contributes to problems in our communities. I think we all of us will have experienced those houses that are in short term occupancy on our estates

where that rapid turnover means that the whole area seems to start to go downhill. I am not arguing for the abolition of the assured short alternative, but what I am saying is that we should look and lobby for options that landlords are able to give to prospective tenants.

In the Republic of Ireland where they have gone effectively for a four year tenancy, the first six months of which are probationary. I think we can really learn from that in this country and it would be good for us as a Council if we could say to people, "Here is an option that makes sense to you. It is not giving you a cheap and nasty option. You will be able to go into that property and know you can stay there for a considerable amount of time." The answer I got back when this was raised with Council officials was, "We do not think we can really go along with that because the private landlords might not like it." I have to say, who do we represent? Do we represent the private landlords in this city or do we represent the people of this city? I would say this again is something that we can do that is cheap and is sensible. Thank you, Lord Mayor, I will happily sit down. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake to second.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor J L Carter to move an amendment.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I have listened very carefully to what Richard said. Just on the question of the RSS targets, my seconder, which is Andrew, is going to that so I am not going to refer to them.

The object of my amendment is to try to and ensure (a) what the city is doing and that you can see is proposed, the EASEL, the affordable housing, PFI, older people's housing, to say more in the private housing sector which is a new and very important paper which has come out, disabled facilities grant is something which again we have increased enormously and want and also to talk about waiting lists because I think waiting lists are quite interesting.

When Richard was with me some time ago we had a waiting list, or so-called waiting list - it is not really called a waiting list - of 30,959 people. Today we have 31,606. That is an increase of 647 people. However, when you look across the country, bearing in mind that it has risen in England, from 1997 the rise in the waiting lists have gone up from a million to 1,600,000, which is a 60% increase while we in Leeds have had a lot smaller increase than that.

However, we have done voids, there is a vast improvement in voids. In voids under Richard we had 1538 and under us you had 806. Homelessness - this is the key, in my opinion. The 31,000 is the people who want to get a house but the real key is the homelessness which is in that, people who are genuinely homeless. In 2003 we had 4948 people homeless. That is down to 1142. That to me is a great success. It is not final, it is not a great success.

Then when you look at why do we have such a large waiting list, I think we have got to look at something else. You have got to look at rents. Currently rent in Council houses and registered social landlords are, Council house about £62 on average, social landlords £68, private sector £122. Is there any wonder people are going to put their name on a list where you are going to pay half what you would? In fact you would be foolish not to put your name on the list.

I think we have got to be very careful when we are talking about crisis and where it is from, but I do believe that we are now in a very serious situation - not your

fault, not my fault but we are in a serious situation and we have to wait and see what does happen.

I think it is important what is happening already. First of all, can I say this to Richard, because I did not put it in mine. I said, just going on to this, lobbying central Government to introduce more security, that is what you said, to protect the private rented sector. I am quite happy to have a proper paper brought forward on that. I have no problem with that and if you had come to me, Richard, and talked to me, which you did not because of this stupid crazy situation of this Council...

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I always talk to you, Les.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: ...if you go and talk to an officer the officer is not able to tell me what you have been talking about, it is private and confidential, so unless you talk to me I have not a clue that you are interested in that particular aspect. It would help you a lot, I think, if you actually came to us because you might find papers, proper papers, are in the correct way and I will be quite happy to take that on board and have a look at it. I would not do it off a White Paper because I really do not know what it means in the sense of what effect it may have on rented accommodation and it is vital that we know what that is before we enter and say this is what we are doing. However, I would be prepared to have a paper brought which said, fine.

As far as approaching local developers, unsold properties, etc, we are doing this now, Richard. We are in the process of doing it now. The hope was to get some funding from Government which Government were talking about to help us to purchase various properties. We are still pushing ahead to do that. Leasing is more difficult. We did not say we would not lease but it is more difficult because is it a primary lease, what is the lease like - it does not mean to say it is ignored but it would be something which is looked at.

Working with local housing associations - we do that at the present time. Working with owners of empty flats, flats to bring in key workers. I think a must. Ensuring owner occupiers at risk of losing their homes. There is nobody keener on what you have said there than me. The financial services were introduced to stop people doing some of the things that you are referring to and quite honestly the best and most effective way if you come across these is to write to the financial services. If they are giving you false advice, unaffordable advice to people, then we need to jump on them and we can jump on them. I am not certain that we have got the capability to set up financial advisers all over the place for everybody in Leeds, I do not think we have, but I do not think you are quite saying that. We do give a lot of support to the Citizens Advice Bureau, we put £1m of finance into that which should give a lot of information. However, I accept the point that there may be different people than who are coming through our own situation at the present time and that we do need to be watchful, but please, when you are watchful, use the FSA. Really use the FSA because they can be in serious trouble.

Lord Mayor, I am not going to go on because it is not late but it is getting on in the night. As far as I am concerned I think there are many things which are in Richard's which we are already doing. I think the accepting of that is not going to make all that much difference because I think you will find a lot of those things are going to be done or are being done at the present time. Lord Mayor, I move my amendment. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I call on Councillor Andrew Carter to second.



COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Yes, Lord Mayor, I second and I am not going to reserve the right, I am going to speak now, because I do not think actually we are a million miles apart here and I do not see any reason why it needs to be an acrimonious debate.

I want particularly to refer to two things, really: the importance of regeneration through housing development and the very, very negative role of the RSS in its current numbers is playing in the situation.

The reason we have amended, or one of the reasons we have amended the White Paper to say scrap the RSS is because the RSS in itself is going to hold back development of brownfield sites and hold back regeneration in inner city areas on housing schemes. Why? Because we may think the buildings have got no money – certainly they are not building but it does not mean that they are still land banking land. Whilst this RSS stands at the ridiculous number of 4700 whatever, there are developers out there who will challenge us through the planning process, will seek to purchase land, greenfield and green belt land - because we have made it very clear to the Government they still have not taken it on board but they are going to have to take it on board – that the numbers they are expecting are unsustainable without building on greenfield and green belt sites.

Those builders, and you can understand why – I do not agree with it, I am absolutely opposed to it but you can understand why they do it - they are investing what money they have got in easy to develop sites that they think the Government will free up for them through the planning process. That is of no use to this city at all because it will put off the day still further when those developers will be able to really move ahead with the regenerations sites, such as EASEL, so the aspirations actually that all of us have had to regenerate is going to move back way beyond the end of this recession to Heaven knows when and what are we going to get first? Not the regeneration we want to see starting again but speculative building on greenfield sites and that helps nobody. It also damages our wish to see a more sustainable travel pattern in the city because people are living further out with no bus services, no proper infrastructure funded by the Government, despite the promises and even more difficulties coming. The whole thing is a nonsense.

Now the Yorkshire Assembly want to revisit and reassess the RSS again and I have to tell you when it came to the Executive last week, the Leaders all present of all three major parties just laughed. We said, “You want to do another reappraisal? Scrap it, it is a piece of fiction. It no longer is rooted in reality. Doesn’t anybody realise that?” The Government officials, I felt sorry for them, they got a right old going over and actually they are long doing what their political masters tell them to do. “Do you not realise there is no house building going on and that these figures were unsustainable to start with and now they are a complete impossibility?” We must focus on what we can actually achieve.

We are very open in this administration to look at any new ideas that come forward to protect people’s homes, to create affordable homes and please we will take no lectures about trying to get more affordable homes because this administration has done more than many an administration to move that agenda forward. How fast we can move it now in the current circumstances I do not know. We shall jolly well try and we have made it very clear we are prepared to intervene in the market if we can get some Government funding to do it.

I have to say, Richard, intervening in the market by purchase is a much more sustainable way of getting more affordable homes than leasing, because we have a capital asset at the end of the day. All these things, we have got to make sure we

are getting good value for money and ultimately, in the fullness of time, a return for the Council Tax payer. That has to be the case.

We look at all sorts of mechanisms but the first thing has to be that we must say to this Government, "These figures are nonsensical, you are living in a world of fantasy and you have to scrap them because the damage it is going to do to long term regeneration is untold." (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I would like to support both the motion and the amendment, though with qualifications. Quite obviously the motion's opening sentence does not make sense. It should have said that the Regional Spatial Strategy average yearly target for additional dwellings in Leeds from 2008 to 2026 was 4740 dwellings gross or 4300 net of demolitions.

Those planning facts are not really facts at all. They are pseudo-facts of factoids. It has been clear for a very long time that the Leeds housing targets in RSS were unachievable regardless of the state of the housing market and remarkably, and it is worth mentioning again, Leeds target was only slightly less than that of the whole of South Yorkshire.

RSS is worse than useless with regard to housing. If anyone tried to live by it, even in an active housing market, they would have failed, like men trying to sail the ocean with a badly drawn chart. We must have housing targets which are both ambitious and achievable in the long term so RSS must be re-written, not merely suspended.

Beyond that the initiatives mentioned by Councillor Lewis and Councillor Les Carter are to do with environment and neighbourhoods rather than city development or planning. The uselessness of RSS housing targets and the collapse of the housing market are not linked directly but one does tend to highlight the shortcomings of the other.

Some of the initiatives might not work or they might be of limited worth but all should be tried. It is likely that we have not yet seen the worst of it. As we speak many people will be falling into mortgage arrears or failing to sell properties without yet having reached the end of their tethers, so there is a need to act now because of what might be about to happen.

In Morley we have planning committee meetings twice a month. At the peak of the development boom we often looked at more than 20 new planning applications at one meeting, and once as many as 27. Last night we had three. One was for a barn conversion deferred from the previous meeting and which for all practical purposes was in Batley; the second was for a double garage; the third was for a city Council-led initiative for 23 low cost dwellings on the site of Glendale House, which is a demolished Council old folks' home. Although last night may have been a glimpse rather than a snapshot, it did tend to show that the construction industry is running on empty and needs some public sector support.

My Lord Mayor, I speak generally in favour of the motion and the amendment, though they are in two parts which are not really linked except that both have roots in the hysteria of the recent property boom. One further useful thing would be the removal of VAT from building renovations. Sometimes this has tipped the balance against worthwhile projects. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In supporting Councillor Lewis's motion there is just one issue I would like to highlight which is causing me increasing alarm. No-one here needs convincing about the seriousness

of the housing issue to be resolved but this is just another reason why this reference range is so urgent.

There are a number of people who in my casework recently have not just claimed that someone else has got the house that they were after, but complained that the person who got the house was not white or not British. I might try and explain as clearly as I can how choice based lettings work to try and show that it is an attempt, whatever it is thought, to be as fair as possible and that it is an attempt to decide without any reference to race but according to need but the person remains completely unconvinced and the resentment remains very deeply held.

Some of us – I do not know, maybe everybody – has recently received a leaflet from a certain political party which is entitled Racism Cuts Both Ways. This attempts to highlight a number of issues where people who are white may feel “disadvantaged”. One of the issues it picks on is housing and we can all see that housing is an area that could be picked on to try and whip up prejudice, hatred, because of this deep held resentment that I have referred to. This is a very complicated issue and it probably deserves a debate in itself, but I am only wishing to highlight this resentment that it seems to me, anyway, is on the increase.

As I say, nobody needs convincing that the housing crisis needs resolution. We all want decent housing for all of our citizens but an added reason, if we needed it, is this resentment will remain to be whipped up and whatever else it leads to, it will not be community cohesion. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to support the White Paper in the name of Councillor Lewis. Lord Mayor, the Killingbeck and Seacroft area is one of deprivation and neglect, an area where regeneration is badly wanted and badly needed. My ward is, in very simple terms, severely underhoused. On a daily basis my ward colleagues and I are contacted by people desperate to live in the area. In many cases they have been waiting months and months without success to get a home near their families and support networks and unfortunately they still will be waiting months before any suitable property becomes available.

Lord Mayor, the total stock of Council housing in Leeds is just under 59,000, with about 4,000 of those in my ward. People who have been granted priority extra status, the highest status that one can get, are waiting an average of about 41.5 weeks, or just over ten months, for a home in the area. Those on general needs have little hope of finding somewhere on the choice based letting system that Councillor Harington has just referred to.

In South Seacroft the average waiting time is 118 weeks and in North Seacroft 98 weeks. Yes, we are going to get benefit from a massive injection through EASEL but at the moment only those who are in a position to purchase will benefit from the affordable housing scheme being provided.

What about those on severely low incomes or those on benefits who do not qualify for mortgages and want to stay in the area? What chance do they have to stay in the community they wish to live in? Very little. This is why it is very important for us as a Local Authority to set up and use the powers that we have been granted by the Government to build more social housing in the areas where we really need it.

Lord Mayor, the White Paper makes some very positive proposals by which I am sure we will hope to solve the problem and I urge support for the White Paper. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR COULSON: Yes, Lord Mayor, I speak to Councillor Lewis's White Paper. What I am going to say is having looked at statistics for the whole of the city earlier today, I think most of the things I am going to say is affecting most areas but there is not a lot being said.

Housing has become one of the most frequently discussed subjects when I speak to local people about the problems and issues that they are currently experiencing. In Pudsey we have 1750 Council owned houses and a population of over 22,000.

We have nearly 2000 residents in receipt of Council benefits. We have families living in cramped conditions, living with parents in one-bedroomed flats with two children sleeping in the lounge, the parent on the sofa, waiting months for suitable Council properties and when I say months I would think the quickest we ever do is within five months unless there is something really flies out on the housing property.

The situation we face now with social housing in Leeds is critical. There is no doubt in my mind that we must start and build more Council houses. We are lucky in Pudsey. We have a little scheme started, not a lot of houses there but it is a start of joint building between the Council and an association but I think it is like feeding an elephant a currant bun for its dinner – that is the size of the problem. Everyone is struggling with the economic turn down particularly those on low incomes and the pressure grows ever stronger by the day. The once thriving housing market which boomed at the beginning of the decade has taken a downturn. That is not news – we all know that.

I have spoken to several estate agents in Pudsey. We have quite a lot in Pudsey, we have one on every street corner nearly. I think some will be vanishing before long. They are reporting that times are tough. Join the club. The local estate agencies and the market needs a desperate kick start. First time buyers are being described as the bricks at the bottom of the pyramid. Without them the pyramid will collapse. That is not my quote, by the way, but it is somebody in the business. We need to help first time buyers get their foothold on the housing ladder.

The Government has offered up many initiatives to help Local Authorities get a grip on the issue but I have yet to see any positive evidence of this happening in Leeds, apart from the one that I have just mentioned that will seriously make an impact on the crisis. We need to start building Council houses. We need to start building more affordable houses for first time buyers. There are thousands of empty properties, we see it every night in the paper. The Yorkshire Post loves to put it in about all the empty flats in the centre of Leeds that we built for the affluent people who cannot afford them. We need to harness the powers granted by the Government to use these properties for those in need.

We must make sure that everything we do we can support the housing market to get back on its feet. The people of Pudsey need to know that we are doing everything we can to deliver housing for the generations to come whilst at the same time accommodating the needs of today.

Could I just finish on one which I think is probably in Pudsey that I know of, we have a soldier who has been medically discharged from the forces. For the last four-and-a-half months he has been living with his parents at one side of Pudsey with his eldest child; the wife has been living at the other side of Pudsey with the youngest child. We have eight cases like that in Pudsey. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BALE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is clear, I think, from what Councillor Carter has said, that this administration has done a great deal to insulate Leeds from the worst of what must be regarded as a significant national housing crisis. I am afraid at the risk of damaging this unfamiliar move of consensus that seems to have broken out in the last few minutes, I am going to suggest this is a Government created national housing crisis. I am sorry, you really have to face up to it because unless we get the diagnosis right we will not get the cure right.  
(interruption)

Let me just give you a few facts. I will come to Mrs Thatcher. In 1997, Lord Mayor, the average house price in this country was three times average earnings. In ten years it rose from three times average earnings to six times average earnings. Your Government halved the affordability of housing in this country in a decade, undoubtedly, and that happened mainly because the man who is now your Prime Minister, then your Chancellor, introduced a new system of financial regulation which implicitly instructed the Bank of England to disregard housing costs when fixing interest rates. That created, yes, a housing boom but a financial boom, not a physical boom. Unless we are prepared to recognise the crazy situation we now live in, the affordability of housing halved in a decade – there has been a small correction and that correction in prices may well amount to 25% over two years but that will not affect the affordability because a lot of people will have lost their jobs and those still in jobs will be on lower incomes. The affordability of housing will still be half what it was when your Government came to power and you have to face up to that. Do not say it is an international problem. It is not. Our record has been worse than that of the USA.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR BALE: Our record has been worse than that of the USA. House prices in that decade rose much faster in Britain than they did in the USA. You created a bubble of debt and that bubble of debt has damaged the ordinary citizens whose chance of getting on the housing ladder now is much less than it was.  
(interruption)

What is more, Lord Mayor, it was published this week that in order to get on to the housing ladder now you need to have a deposit of about £16,500 on average. When your Government came to power do you know what the saving rate was in this country, the saving ratio? It was 10%. Do you know what it is now? 1.1%. People are now saving 1.1% of their income, they were saving 10%. How well equipped are those people now to buy houses? (interruption)

What about social housing? In 1995 13,000 Local Authority houses were built. 1995, remember what the Government was? In 2005 how many Council houses were built? One hundred. From 13,000 to 100. Housing Association houses, 31,000 were built in 1995, 17,000 in 2005.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: How many Council houses were sold?

COUNCILLOR BALE: This is your housing crisis but it is a crisis that affects every citizen of this city and we have got to face up... (interruption)

THE LORD MAYOR: Could we have only one speaker in the house? How on earth you can answer anything when we have got a dozen people...

COUNCILLOR COULSON: I thought we were talking about people not being able to get houses.

COUNCILLOR BALE: Precisely. You have created, your Government has created the housing crisis.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: What about Margaret Thatcher? Come on, get on to her.

COUNCILLOR BALE: I believe we should now, we must now work on the solutions that have been talked about to solve that crisis but we have also got to face up to where the crisis came from and it is crisis created by your lousy Government. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Follow that, Alec.

THE LORD MAYOR: For the next one, Councillor Shelbrooke.

COUNCILLOR SHELBRooke: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I will try and bring this calm everything down here. I actually want to address the very first paragraph in this White Paper, the amendment by Councillor J L Carter and about scrapping the Spatial Strategy. I think Councillor Andrew Carter is right, there is a lot of support in this Chamber coming in the same direction about the need for housing but the Regional Spatial Strategy was something which put this city at a huge disadvantage.

A huge disadvantage because, number one, it ignores – and you have heard me speak of this before – the reports and the findings which came out of the Core Cities Group set up by this Government to investigate whether an economic hub is where the housing should be and its conclusion was no, it should not and although Leeds is an economic hub which draws people from all over the area right down to Barnsley, right up to Craven, right up to Harrogate, to East Yorkshire, those people do not necessarily want to be living within the boundaries of Leeds. That does cause a major problem within this city. It has undermined that ability to bring forward brownfield sites. More importantly, when you are not allowing the brownfield sites to be developed, you are pushing the pass land and green belt land into areas to be developed which will have a fundamental effect on flooding in this city. I know Temple Newsam has a problem and within my own ward that is a problem and I know that there are areas of land in my ward, in Collingwood, which we wanted to be taken for pass land and put into green space and we were not allowed to do that. If they are built on and they flood regularly, they may be able to build flood defences around that piece of land but it is what happens further on down the river to the flooding which takes place.

The trouble with the Regional Spatial Strategy is that it did not take any notice of this. It did not take any notice of it at all. It is saying you must build this arbitrary type of house and we do not care where they go. Therefore on that slightly different tack my support of this White Paper is very much in favour of the first paragraph and that sentence because I do not feel that the RSS does anything to improve people's lives in this city and actually can have a very detrimental effect to a good many more. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to talk in particular about some of the issues that we face within Inner North West Leeds, an area which is actually very diverse in terms of the housing. Obviously we have Headingley with relatively large and many detached houses, substantially private properties; we have my ward, Hyde Park and Woodhouse, with a large number of student properties; and then in Little London, of course, we have the large Council estate which is subject to the PFI scheme and a huge amount of investment, so the

area as a whole is actually very diverse in terms of the types of housing and the type of population.

Our Area Committee about a year ago decided that we needed to look at a strategy for our area particularly given the unique situation that we have, and so over the course of the last year or so we have been developing a strategy to address some of the issues that we face; in particular the issues relating to the clear demographic imbalance that we have across the area. Parts of Inner North West have 60%, 70% students and the impact that has on the local services. We are also keen to look at how we might restore a more balanced housing mix, but also in so doing to try and kickstart a better functioning housing market both in terms of the private sector and the social sector.

The issues really in our area are very simple and very stark. We have something like – and these figures do change from time to time – 1100 empty bed spaces in my ward and the immediate surrounding area, so these are properties that are not occupied and could not be occupied by people. In the last five years we have had something like a thousand fewer social houses available in the area as a whole, so a thousand bed spaces and maybe a thousand fewer social houses. It seemed to us that we need to look at particular measure within our area to address that particular issue.

If we can bring those houses back into use and diversify the sorts of people that would occupy those houses, then that seems to me and seems to us to be a very good thing.

Of course, in recent months what we are probably going to see is a reduction in house prices being the issue in the area being massively inflated house prices given that landlords were buying them up for three, four, five and six years at huge prices. I think that is starting now to change in our area.

We have also seen recently, of course, a couple of the large landlords have gone bust. There is coverage in the papers about Simon Morris and his various businesses and RMP Properties, who also hold a lot a properties within the area, have also gone bust. What happens to those properties, given that those companies are no longer operating? They are presumably auctioned off. They may not sell, they may remain empty. Who knows what will happen? It seems that I think there is a real opportunity to intervene to try and deal with that particular opportunity as well as it being a big problem.

The strategy that has been developed – and we had a meeting yesterday, actually, to make the final touches to it – addresses, looks at a number of solutions, a number of things that we could do, some of which do not actually cost any money but it is actually about co-ordinating things within the area. We want to look at how we can encourage a more diverse population to move into the area, people feeling they are actually attracted to come and live in the area rather than it being seen as a student area and only an area of students, so that is the marketing job to be done.

We are also keen of course, and we have been keen as a Council for the last few years, to encourage purpose built student accommodation outside of the immediate area and in fact we got an appeal decision today on the Glassworks building at the bottom of Cardigan Road, an appeal decision that was an application to turn that into student flats. That has been dismissed, the appeal has been dismissed, which is really good news. That decision backs up the current Council's policy of the area of housing mix and the thrust of that, which is to encourage student accommodation outside of the area where there is the largest current concentration. That is one of the policies.

The other thing that the strategy looks at is looking at how we can use Section 106 money, using offsite provision rather than onsite provision for affordable housing, to take up some of these empty properties, to use the money in conjunction with social housing providers and possibly even some of the organisations within the area, how we can use that money to bring some of those empty properties back into use.

I think there is lots that we can do in the area in a very innovative way to address the wider issues that this White Paper looks at, so we are going to be taking the strategy to the next Area Committee, which I hope will endorse what we are looking to do and then we will be looking in the New Year how we actually implement some of the actions. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking in favour of the amendment but particularly to the first bullet point on Councillor Lewis's White Paper and it is the ninth on the amended version. It is the one that says we want to be approaching local developers to see whether unsold properties can be purchased by the Local authority or local Housing Associations. My immediate thoughts on that went to empty dwelling management orders, which people may not have heard about.

We and all the other councils in England and Wales have had the ability since 2006 to compulsorily take over empty properties and re-let them to people on our housing list or just generally. Most Local Authorities in England and Wales found it to be completely impractical because of the complexities of the system. Local Authorities all over have been asking for this power for a very long time. The Government took ages to get round to actually implementing it by Statutory Instrument and when Leeds came to look at it, we wanted the ability to take properties which had been empty for more than six months and make them available to people for housing. To do so we would have to manage them and we would have to charge a rent and we would have to pay a proportion of that rent to the owners.

The owners lobby, whatever, put about that councils can charge whatever they like for rent. They cannot, they have to charge the market rent. They can only charge their reasonable costs against the rent. In other words, we can deduct something from the rent and keep it for our management costs.

Leeds City Council does not have the capacity to do this across the city at the moment, so we approached, or our Environmental Health Department sub-section of Neighbourhoods and Housing, as it then was, approached the managing agents for private property in the city and none of them, not one of them, would take on the job for us, mainly because they would not get paid enough. The amount they would be paid is what the Government calls "reasonable" and the agents said it was not reasonable because they could not make any money out of it and pay the owners as well. That is where EDMOs fell down.

Much as we would like to take over the empty flats in the city centre that people always refer to - and by the way I am still waiting for a reply from Yvette Cooper as to why she thinks half the flats in Leeds are empty, because they are not, but she has not replied to us, never mind - so EDMOs probably do not work. We would need something different to make this bullet point work for us.

The Empty Homes Agency, which works with Councillors across the Richmond Hill area and also Hyde Park and Woodhouse, namely Councillor Ewens, advises everybody that EDMOs are not the only way of bringing empty properties back into use. Of course, Councillor Hamilton has just related something about that.



In Burmantofts and Richmond Hill at the moment we, Leeds City Council, are using enforcement powers to bring empty homes back into use which may involve a CPO and it could involve an enforced sale because the owner has sat on it and done absolutely nothing for a very, very long time, so we have the resolve to do that.

Apart from all that I want to back up what Councillor Bale was saying earlier on about statistics. (*interruption*) I thought that would elicit a bit of a response from over there. At one point he mentioned the Council housing stats, the building numbers, and Councillor Driver intervened and said how many have been sold. John did not get round to replying to that because you were interrupting a bit too much but I would want to remind the party opposite that in your years of Opposition you pledged to end the right to buy. One year before the Labour Government was elected, when your leadership had taken away your power to control your policy, they dropped that. The result has been since the Labour Government has been in power that the rate of Council house sales has been twice as fast as it was under the Conservative Party, so you are making it worse.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Look at them now.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I call on Councillor Taylor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Here we go. Sublime to the ridiculous.

COUNCILLOR A TAYLOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will be supporting this amendment simply because of some of the remarks that are made in it and in particular about the wide ranging plans to tackle poor housing standards in the private sector.

The other day one of my residents came to see me. Her windows are rotten, the attic window had fallen out, the slates were off the roof and the private landlord was doing nothing about it. It has got to the stage where Environmental Health were called in and enforcement action is going to be taken. She is typical of many people living in the back-to-backs of Harehills and I am pleased that this Authority has put in place the strategy for improving Leeds private housing sector, in particular in those back-to-back streets.

I am also supporting this amendment because of the commitment of this Authority to the EASEL project and that, I think, has been absolutely outstanding. It has brought aspects of regeneration to the area of Gipton and Harehills and that is altogether good.

I would just like to bring up one point which my colleague Councillor Harington made about his concerns on the allocation policy. Can I say that I share those concerns. Can I also say that some time ago I asked for a report to be made regarding some of those issues that Roger has raised and I am led to believe that that report is now in your hands, Councillor Carter, and no doubt Councillor Harington and I would be able to see it.

All these are factors that are making me move towards the support of the amendment. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I thought we were in danger of having a mature debate until John's intervention, I have to say. I think all of us here are driven by the casework that comes through for some of us on a daily basis. When we walk round our patch, which we do regularly, in the window we see

increasingly notices for repossession and all of those issues. I think actually this White Paper debate is really important in bringing the two strands of the different arguments together.

I think many of us have accepted that the RSS target numbers are over ambitious and I think it is quite right that we are calling for the suspension of those targets. I think there is always a risk from having such high targets but I think more than anything, for a Local Authority such as ours with its enormous geographical difference and breadth, that it makes it even more important that we continually assess and review our planning policies so that we are not at risk from rogue developers who come in and try and take advantage of a situation that is causing enormous harm and grief to many, many people in this city.

What we are asking for is a breathing space from targets and particularly, I think, to rethink the whole notion of where we go with housing in the city because there is no doubt at all that we face a housing crisis in our communities.

The other issue that has come forward from the credit crunch, if you like, is the fact that so many developers have walked off site. They have not just stopped building - in our ward they have actually stopped building houses that are half completed. They have made them weather proof and I hope that - it is debatable - vandal proof. I think that is another issue. Along with the ending of some of this building, of course, goes the end of the delivery of the 106 agreement which has been seen as one of the major ways of delivering affordable housing in cities like Leeds.

We have to, I think, look very carefully at the short term and I think that the points that Councillor Lewis has made in his White Paper are really pertinent and to the point about ways that we can actually look at what the Government has offered over the last few months and how we can make it work for our constituents here in Leeds.

There is investment available and we want to know what the detail of the response is, Les. I think you have come up with a very wide list of points and I have to say when I first read your amendment it smacked somewhat of complacency in a way. I know there is not space to give the detail but I was hoping in your response that there would have been more detail against the work that you say is actually going on so that we can go back to our communities and actually tell people where things are going and how the pressure will be taken off.

Only two days ago I had a call from a constituent who has a mortgage and was paying it quite happily. Her partner walked out on her and left his obligations to paying his share of the mortgage. She has been given a mortgage holiday by the company that she has a mortgage with but only on a temporary basis. I think if we do see unemployment rising by what we fear, then the pressure on the private sector on the inability to actually take our new leases is going to be severe.

What I am asking for, Les, please, is the detail and I welcome your comments about doing more work with private landlords. I think there is a real crisis in the city. Obviously it has been picked up on the work that needs to be done alleviating fuel poverty but I think there are far more issues around security and protection of tenants' rights as well.

I welcome the debate. I think we have got a lot more to do, a lot more discussion to have but I think it is important as a Planning Authority that we do not actually just give the impression that developers can come in and put in applications

on greenfield sites and therefore will get them, because actually if we do our job right, then we ought to be able to protect our communities. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Now I ask Councillor Richard Lewis to sum up.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It was quite surprising the way peace broke out there – I thought it was something the put in the tea. It certainly was not put in the sandwiches because I do not think any of us had enough, did we? (*Laughter*)

COUNCILLOR BALE: You do not like the facts, Richard, that is the trouble.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Hang on, John. The facts I thought were interesting, Pryke and Bale, both quoting specious statistics about right to buy sales. Right to buy sales are actually an economic indicator. They have gone right down now because the economy is in a mess. They will go up again when the economy goes up again. That is the way it is. That is not due to the Government. I was fascinated by John's view that it was nothing to do with the bankers. No, it was nothing to do with what has happened in America over the past couple of years, absolutely nothing. It is all down to Gordon Brown. Of course, we understand that is bound to be your approach, but clearly you are a market man, I cannot understand how a market man cannot embrace the market in all its craziness, John. Perhaps you can hold two ideas in your head at the same time.

There were some very positive things and I do welcome a lot of what Les has said. I do have concerns about the size of the crisis that we are facing. Having been there before I am only too well aware of how it can engulf you and certainly we were there from the late 1980s into the early 1990s in terms of housing we went from a housing bubble – you are old enough to remember it, John – it is a crisis and I think we are in that position where we are not quite yet aware of how many people are going to be coming through our doors and that is my concern.

I think there are some things that I want to see us deliver on and in your amendment you have congratulated yourselves on a number of things, such as new Council housing. Ideally we want to see that new Council housing. I will not even object if Andrew Carter and Les Carter have their name on the plaque, but can I remind you – if you do it in Pudsey we will put all of our names on, that will be nice.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: You can put yours on as well.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: We learned it from you.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I am glad you learned something, Andrew. The main thing is, let us see the houses and that is the most important thing. There is a danger, is there not, in what is happening to the housing market that that impacts on our ability to sell land and how it helps.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It has done.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: It is desperate that we work together through this to get that housing built and, as I say, I look forward to seeing that but do not congratulate yourselves until the bricks are on the ground and the roofs are on.

There are other concerns about EASEL and certainly in terms of the affordable housing element of EASEL because EASEL is not going to be immune from what is happening to shared ownership across the country and we need to be ready to react to that.

Not a huge amount that we would disagree with. More than happy in terms of things like the back-to-back strategy. We are very supportive of that paper. My concern is, and I have raised it with the Housing Partnership and got a kind of dusty response from one of the people from the Government office. I said we need to lobby as a special case on back-to-backs, along with Kirklees and Bradford, because we are probably the only three remaining Local Authorities that have significant back-to-back properties, so we are more than happy to work with you. Let us not have the re-writing of history from some individuals. It is all very well. Let us not quote these silly statistics which are utterly meaningless. Let us really think about history and let us think about the times, why did the number of Council houses go down? Because of Margaret Thatcher; Baroness Thatcher actually said you must not build the things. Let us not forget about those little things. Ronnie, you were around at that time because you remember it.

I also have huge concerns, and you congratulated yourselves on working with housing associations. We have been shafted on our housing corporation allocation this year and no matter how much people will talk up the result that we got, we got a very bad deal and again we are happy to work with the administration to argue for Leeds's case. We got the third lowest allocation, didn't we, Les? Only Selby and Doncaster got worse?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Wakefield and Sheffield seemed to get an awful lot.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Absolutely diabolical.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Tell our MPs how much.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: We should not be in that position where we are getting such a deal and you have to say if you are going to take the plaudits for the things that you have done, you have got to take the knocks for the things that you have not achieved.

Lord Mayor, in a sense of reconciliation and reasonableness, I move this resolution. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Now I shall call for a vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor J L Carter. Those in favour please show. Those against? Abstentions? The amendment is CARRIED.

We go to the substantive motion, and we shall again vote on that. Those in favour? Those against? None. Abstentions? None. That is CARRIED.

ITEM 11 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – BACKDATING OF HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS AND TAX CREDITS.

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 11, White Paper, Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, can I first of all ask under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 14.10 that I seek leave of Council to alter my motion by deleting the reference to Tax Credits and replacing it with Pension Credits?

THE LORD MAYOR: Second?

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes, you are wishing to withdraw and you want Council...

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: No, I wish to alter.

THE LORD MAYOR: You read it again, I could not hear it, I am sorry.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: I am sorry, Lord Mayor. I wish to alter the motion by deleting the reference to tax credits and alter that to pension credits, so that is the last two words on the first paragraph. It is just really a word from "tax" to "pension".

THE LORD MAYOR: Right. Does Council agree to that? (*Agreed*) Unanimous, right. Right, we can now start then.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am very concerned because on 6 October certain changes were made to the Social Security Regulations and one of these was to reduce the twelve months period which was previously allowed for the backdating of housing and Council tax benefits and this also affects pension credits. As I said, previously people who were in a position that they were claiming either housing benefit or Council tax could request their benefit to be backdated up to 52 weeks. It does not mean that they will necessarily get the request just like that but they could request it and some people do benefit by this but, as I said, from 6 October that changed and it has, for working age customers, now reduced to backdating of six months – in other words it has halved.

Also, from the end of next year it has down in the paperwork that they are actually going not change it again so that it reduces to three months, so it worries me. Why are they trying to hit people like this? We have said today, we mentioned today a lot about the credit crunch. We know that there will be a lot more people unfortunately claiming benefits, a lot of people are going to be out of work. We all know that, so why are we having these regulations changed now? To me they should not change at all but what a time to do it, you know. It really to me is beyond belief and so we are trying to penalise people who need our help the most, but what are we playing at? How can we be doing that, but we are and it has just gone through.

I, as a Councillor, it did not come up waving flags and bells to me and I do not suppose it did with other Councillors really, a lot of you will be unaware of it, but it is happening. It is happening now. That is why I am asking this Council to do all it can to reverse this threat so that we can allow people to ask for their Council tax and housing benefit to be backdated for 52 weeks again. I think it is imperative we do that, I hope that everybody in this room is going to back me on this one and, as I said, I want us to write to the Secretary of State for Works and Pensions in the strongest possible form and also I hope that I get backing from all the Leeds MPs on this one as well.

A plea from the heart here. All of you have got people that either are or unfortunately will be in this situation. Come on, let us back them. They need our help. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Finnigan to second.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is an absolute pleasure to second this particular resolution and perhaps it might be interesting to explore some of the history behind this whole thing.

1988 people may remember a gent called Norman Fowler.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Resigned in 1988.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: 1988. Thanks for that very constructive, positive contribution towards it. 1988, Neil, yes. Norman Fowler, who was the Secretary of State for Social Security under the Conservatives introduced a new set of legislation that restricting backdating to 52 weeks. Prior to that particular point you could backdate particular claims and you would get them as long as you could show continuous good cause. It is not an automatic backdate, it has never been an automatic backdate. You have always had specifically to have good reasons for backdating a particular claim. Norman Fowler, 1988, he decided that he would restrict the right to backdate benefit, particularly housing benefit – Poll Tax benefit as it was in those days, it turned into Council tax benefit in 1990 – to twelve months.

At that point the Labour Party was outraged as it quite rightly should have been and it was an attack on people who were the most vulnerable, who needed this sort of help and support and they were quite right at that particular point. They also attacked things like the Social Fund that was introduced at the same time which we have still got today.

During this particular 20 year period, 1988 through to 2008, we have had nine years of Tory rule, eleven years of labour Rule. We have still got the Social Fund, we are still having problems in terms of the backdating only regrettably the Government has decided to go a step further and restrict that even further. That is outrageous.

Clearly if you look at the previous resolution, when we are looking at people who are having difficulties, certainly people who are in the private rented sector, then restricting their rights to a back date at this particular point is just the wrong idea. It is penny pinching, it is nasty, it is vindictive, it is unnecessary.

Taking into account the fact that credit crunch, taking into account the fact that unemployment is going to soar, we are in a situation where people are entering the benefit system for the first time. It is a complicated system, it is a very difficult system and what they need is help and support, not a kick in the mouth. This is what they have got with this particular unnecessary restriction.

It is not just those who are actually in work. It is pensioners that are also lined up to get a good kicking from this particular change because pensioners used to be able to get their pension credit backdated for twelve months without too many problems and too many difficulties. That has been restricted as well. Pensioners are struggling, we all know that, they are struggling with fuel bills, they are struggling with all the other cost they have got to deal with. They are clearly having difficulties at this time.

Pension credit goes to the very poorest of pensioners and basically to suggest that it is fair, it is reasonable, it is equitable that they should restrict their rights to backdate at a point where for a lot of older people who do not want to claim benefit in the first place, a lot of them are confused with the process, you have to go through all the administration, it is not fair, it is not reasonable, it is short-sighted, it is penny pinching.

Certainly we are in a situation where as the demands will grow on the benefit system we need to look at ways of making sure that those people get the help and that support because a failure to backdate housing benefit in many cases, certainly in the private rented sector, will mean that we will have people who turn up on our

doorsteps as homeless and that puts more stress and more strain on families that are already struggling.

Ultimately, this is ill thought out. It is the start of a further step towards restricting the backdating of benefits. It is not fair, it is not reasonable, we should all be behind what Ann is suggesting at this particular stage and making sure that our MPs are clear that we expect some action, not just rhetoric on this, that they will do all that they can within their powers to dump this poor piece of legislation. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR SHEL BROOKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Once again, the problem with what is going on here – and I do support this motion – is that it is undermining, it is nothing to do with the work that we have to narrow the gap in this city. The Government are hitting some of the most in need by stopping this.

We know that systems are complicated, they are long winded at times, they are complicated but there is more to it than that. There is the fact that a lot of people live very busy lives, especially some people may have two, possibly three jobs. There may be changes in circumstances which come about. Finding the time in the day to actually sit down and go through this, often a lot of families can get left behind and it may only be situations now where the cost of living has gone up, where times are getting tight and people think, hang on, I am perhaps entitled to some more money and going back and looking over things and therefore cutting the time frame where you can go back is going to have an adverse effect on the work we have done to narrow the gap in this city.

I think also there are lots of other areas which need to be looked at at this time. It is a disgrace that people who have to go on to pre-paid gas and electricity meters are actually paying a far higher price for that resource than those who can pay by direct debit. On this side we more than welcome the Government's decision to not shut the Post Office Counter card scheme because that gives an opportunity for people without having bank accounts to actually have the access to get that cheaper energy which is so important to them all.

As I say, this piece of legislation which is going through will badly damage this city's work towards narrowing the gap, something which we have worked hard on in previous years, something which I think the whole Council supports and, indeed, cross party support has been there more often than not about narrowing the gap.

I wholeheartedly support this White Paper. I think it is important that we stand up for people, especially at a time when money is getting tighter, and let us just hope that in the current situation when the Government is struggling round for money they are not going to take it off those most in need. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I missed this and I must thank the movers and seconders of this motion that in researching this I have uncovered some things where I actually think we all might make a difference.

There has been consultation at national level about this change which was introduced by a statutory instrument. No debating in Parliament – that is why many of us were not aware of it. The people who were consulted were some of the relevant organisations – Help the Aged, Age Concern, Citizens Advice, Shelter. All were invited to comment, the LGA commented. The Social Security Advisory Committee recommendation was very clear that the proposals should be abandoned and they stated:

“We have concluded that the Department has offered neither adequate evidence to support its case for change or a convincing proposal for mitigation of the potential negative impacts of the change.”

Very clear.

I have been unable to get clear numbers for Leeds on what the impact will be but the last year for which we have figures nationwide from the DWP suggests that 2006/07 there were 270,000 new claims for pension credit nationally, 170,000 claimants had their claim backdated for less than three months which means that 100,000 – well over a third – had their claims backdated for more than three months.

This, of course, will affect immediately from October 6<sup>th</sup> any new claimants. Many of the people involved are elderly and are vulnerable.

In discussions today with Steve Carey I have uncovered a piece of red tape that I hope you would all agree with me we need to tackle. The number of pensioners who receive housing benefit and Council tax benefit are not getting pension credit. Many of these people should be getting pension credit. The data that Leeds City Council holds on pensioners claiming housing benefit and Council tax benefit is sufficient to calculate and award pension credit.

However, we are unable to use this data to get pension credit into payment for two reasons. First of all, the housing tax benefit and Council Tax benefit claim form is not accepted by the Pensions Service as a claim for pension credit purposes. It could very easily be amended to include a claim for pension credit. Secondly we, as Leeds City Council, have no authority, amazingly, to calculate and award pension credit. It is red tape getting in the way.

Addressing these two aspects would allow Leeds to make payment of pension credit far easier for pensioners and I have been advised today that were this piece of red tape to be cut through, it would mean a thousand pensioners in Leeds, is the estimate, would immediately benefit from this change so, with Council's permission, what I would like to try and do is get the letters, if this motion is passed, written with this included both to the Minister and to our MPs. Thank you, Lord Mayor (*Applause*).

COUNCILLOR CHASTNEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Firstly I would like to stress, of course, I support the motion and thank the proposer and seconder for raising it. It is quite clearly very, very time in the very difficult economic situation and it is a critical issue that has been highlighted. We all know what we are talking about here - some of the most vulnerable people and most difficult situations - and to make that situation increasingly difficult for them to claim back what they are entitled cannot be justified in any way that I can see. It can only be explained by the desire for the sake of cost-cutting but that is not, for me, a palatable reason and I do not think anyone should accept that as a palatable reason.

Clearly I support this and hopefully we will get consensus on that but this for me brought out a wider point which I thought I had to take the opportunity to raise in that the truth is across the country - and Leeds is no exception - there are staggering amounts of benefits on property being claimed, people that are missing out because of in some cases bad advice, sadly, but often just as sadly a knowledge gap.

The key concern there is obviously it is disproportionately high amongst the most vulnerable groups such as the elderly and the lowest income groups that are not claiming what they are entitled.



Whilst we are all here and the one thing that we need to recognise is that between all of us collectively we have the ability to reach pretty much everyone in the city and so we really need to take this opportunity to recognise that there are those people out there who are not getting what they entitled or are missing out due to that knowledge gap or the advice that they are receiving.

I feel there is a duty on us to make sure that people do not go without and to look into that. Really, given that we are in a unique position to go into our communities and inform and insist, then that is something I would urge that people go out and do especially - and this has certainly brought it to a head - if the window of time for people to claim back is ever narrowed, then that would make it even more important that that happens.

So that is what I would urge people to do and Councillor Carter used the phrase earlier in an unrelated topic of "incumbent upon all us". That certainly relates to entitlements and benefits and something that we really could do with representatives and it is incumbent upon all of us, and that is certainly relevant here, to do what we can to ensure that no-one is missing out because to help those in greatest need and to give a voice to those least able to speak is surely the best thing that we can do as representatives and I would urge everyone to do that. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will speak very briefly because I think it is important, though, that there is a statement that is said from our particular party because we are very happy to support Ann's White Paper. I would like to congratulate you and commend you for that White Paper and that research and, indeed, Richard's information today, because I do not think many of us in this Chamber were aware of those changes and it has been extremely useful.

Perhaps there is something that is missing in the communication between all those voluntary organisations and us. It is amazing that they have not brought it to our attention. This is not the first time that I think that we on this side have supported a case, even if it is against our party. We supported you on Post Offices, we supported you on the NRF fund and indeed this is another one we are happy to support.

I think the point that Robert raised about the reasons are extremely important. The reasons why people do not always apply for their benefit are many and varied. Some of it involves mental health problems and I think Councillor Lowe also briefed us on Monday about this and we have already written a letter to the Minister concerned expressing our opposition to it. The other reasons, of course, can be to do with domestic violence, that the fact that the person receiving this benefit is not in the place that she should be applying for and so on. Of course, there is just the basic reason that we all know, especially in the communities that we represent - some of the communities we represent - is they do not know. It is as simple as that. They just do not know, they have not got the awareness or the information system or the support. Whatever we try to do they just do not know about it.

I am very happy to support this on behalf of the Group. I think it is a matter of lobbying and letters and we are happy to sign up to that because, as people said, at this time during the time of winter and during the time of difficult times mentioned for all people, this is absolutely vital that we all do it. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I call on Councillor Ann Blackburn to sum up.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do not think this is going to take long because I have not heard anyone say that they do not agree with me with this. I would have been very surprised if they had, to be honest, anyway.

I appreciate everything that everyone has said backing me on this one and obviously Narrowing the Gap has been mentioned - yes, it is true, we are going against Narrowing the Gap if we did agree this.

Anyway, thanks everyone for their comments and I just hope now that we can change this by lobbying as much as we can and also lobbying the MPs. Thanks, everyone. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I wonder if Councillor would agree, before we actually do a vote, that the Chief Executive includes Councillor Brett's indication about writing? *(Agreed)* That is to include it. Is that all right? I will ask for the vote now. Those in favour please show. Thank you very much. Those against? Abstentions? That is pretty unanimous. Thank you indeed for your proposal. CARRIED.

#### ITEM 12 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT

THE LORD MAYOR: We come to Item 12, it is in the name of Councillor Andrew Carter but he has had to leave and so it is Councillor Campbell who will propose.

THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Corporate Governance): We do not have to give leave provided the original mover of the motion, Councillor Carter, authorises Councillor Campbell in writing. He has done that.

THE LORD MAYOR: We seem to have cleared it, Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I am mindful of the time, Lord Mayor, so I will be brief on this. Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. If you do not know what that is can I make two suggestions? One is you contact our Planning Department and actually get their briefing document because it is very comprehensive, and two, can I suggest you read it, because quite frankly you are about to be inundated with complaints, decisions etc, from your constituents because the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, which by law we have to maintain, allows any individual to nominate any piece of land anywhere for proposed possible housing development. You could have the ludicrous situation where an enterprising developer may decided that Roundhay Park, for example, would look much better under housing than it does at the moment and actually can put forward a proposal to include Roundhay Park within the land designated to the Strategic Housing Land Assessment.

We as a Local Authority, however ludicrous it seems, are not allowed to say "You cannot do that." We have to - we have to - accept that. We have to include it within the list.

I do not actually believe anybody would put forward Roundhay Park - I do not know these days - but quite frankly any green space in your ward now becomes fair game to be included in this list of housing availability land. In fact, it is quite specific, part of the document, because quite specifically it mentions the SHLAA, as it is called, should identify additional sites with potential for housing - dah-de-dah - and that includes suitable green field sites.

We have had a long discussion earlier in the day about the Government's housing policy and its efficacy or otherwise and I think this was a response to the situation earlier in the year when there appeared to be a shortage of housing land available and the Government brought this legislation in really to free up more space, more land. Obviously this has changed, the world is a completely different place this week than it was earlier in the year, and quite frankly the need for a SHLAA is at best academic.

What I am really concerned about is the fact that by allowing any developer to put a portion of land on to this list you are creating an area of concern for residents that development may take place, even though actually that piece of land, such as Roundhay Park, could not be developed. Therefore I would urge you to support the resolution. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Second Councillor Anderson - quickly!

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am looking at the clock. Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Just in time! I want to just explain very briefly what the amendment is about because we agree with the vast majority of this White Paper I think if you read on the top of page 18, I think you will agree that in order to get all party agreement with what is a sensible, rational White Paper, if you just take out those few words which would make it impossible for us to support the Paper. We cannot be talking about stealth tax and that kind of stuff.

I hope you will accept and withdraw that and then we can all vote for the same White Paper together. I move the amendment.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: I second formally because of the time, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: Lord Mayor, I wish to speak generally in favour of the motion, though with one or two qualifications. Firstly, I think the amendment should be accepted. The original does seem to imply political malice or cunning where I think ignorance or incompetence are more likely. *(Laughter)*

That is not to say that Councillor Gruen was personally responsible for the policy - obviously it is a Government policy. Everyone should agree by now that the Leeds house building target set out in the recently adopted Regional Spatial Strategy was not realistic. It is clear that the long-term annual net target of 4,300 initial dwellings or 4740 gross when set against demolitions was unachievable regardless of the state of the housing market, and it is only when taken together with the RSS house building target that the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment becomes dangerous as it could give rise to exaggerated claims by land speculators seeking releases of greenfield or green belt land.

If we had a target which was ambitious though realistic and achievable, the Assessment would present few difficulties. There was a similar Assessment which was the Urban Capacity Study, which was done to support the City Council's case at the UDP Public Review Inquiry and the main difference is now that the new Assessment would look at the whole of Leeds, not just the main urban areas of land closely associated with them, and it would be associated with much higher house building targets.

As Andrew Carter said in his original motion, the terms of the new Assessment may raise false hopes which might not be refuted easily in the context of over-inflated house building targets. Leeds might have to set its own unofficial targets, otherwise planning policy will drift, with no realistic driving force behind it.

One of the main aims of the green belt when devised in the 1930s and 1940s was to check urban sprawl both river(?) development and speculative housing estates in the middle of nowhere so that new building could be served efficiently and economically keeping it sustainable, in modern terminology, as well as protecting open country within and around the major conurbations.

If land speculators manage to breach weak and ill-judged land supply policy, we would be at risk of seeing a lot of un-co-ordinated and wasteful use of land.

In conclusion, I support the motion as amended with the qualification that the whole story is a bit more complicated. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Right of reply now. I call Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am conscious that time is moving on and I accept the amendment in the spirit I think it was put forward.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Andrew can leave early again!

THE LORD MAYOR: We will do it this way. We will vote on the amendment. All those in favour of the amendment? Those against? Abstentions? The amendment is CARRIED and that moves now to the substantive motion.

Those in favour of the substantive motion please show. Those against please show. Abstentions? No. Right. I am pleased to say that has been CARRIED.

#### ITEM 13 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - POLICING GREEN PAPER

THE LORD MAYOR: Time marches on and we are now formally moving the White Papers that remain, so I call upon Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Straight vote. I call for those in favour? Those against? Abstentions? None, so the motion is CARRIED.

#### ITEM 14 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - LEEDS RHINOS

THE LORD MAYOR: We now come to item 14, not for debate but reference to Leeds Rhinos. I will call upon Councillor Parker.

COUNCILLOR PARKER: I move this White Paper motion as printed on the Order Paper, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: I second.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour please show? Cheers, thank you. Those against? No Castleford supporters? Any abstentions? No. The motion is very pleasingly CARRIED.

ITEM 15 - WHITE PAPER MOTION - MINIMUM SIZE STANDARDS FOR  
FAMILY HOMES

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 15, we have got Councillor Monaghan.

COUNCILLOR MONAGHAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move in terms of the Notice.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. We will vote on that. All those in favour please show. Thank you. Those against? No abstentions? Right, the motion then is CARRIED.

Seeing that there is nothing left on my papers, I do not think, that means that today's Council meeting comes to a close and I thank you for your attention throughout.

*(The meeting closed at 7.07 p.m.)*

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