

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday, 23rd February, 2011

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(COUNCILLOR J McKENNA)

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23rd FEBRUARY, 2011

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon, Members, ladies and gentlemen. I am sorry about the belated start but perhaps suffice to say we live in interesting times.
(laughter)

Can I remind you to switch off your mobile phones when you are in your seats. There will be a couple of announcements, perhaps, before we get going. We did intend to have some film crew panning the Chamber – I am not sure where we are with that one - not now, no – which was agreed with the Whips, but I am sure they got the photographs they needed during the occupation.

I regret to announce the recent death of Mrs Joyce Wainwright née Hollis, the wife of the late Liberal MP Richard Wainwright, who represented the West Yorkshire seat of Colne Valley from 1974 to 1987. Joyce was a Trustee of a family charity, the Scurrah Wainwright Trust, which donated to many charities including providing £105,000 to fund the statue of our RAF hero Arthur Aaron, which is sited on the Eastgate Roundabout in Leeds, and commissioned by the Leeds Civic Trust in conjunction with the Yorkshire Evening Post and Leeds City Council.

As many present here today will know, the city hosted what was possibly the last freedom parade of HMS Ark Royal on Saturday 12th February 2011. The event was a great success and was witnessed by a large and appreciative crowd in front of the museum and along the route of the march. It was a very enjoyable occasion for all and we can only hope that some time in the future another ship will bear the name Ark Royal so that the city can continue its links. In the meantime, it has been suggested that a Friends of Ark Royal Group could be established and I feel this would be worthwhile pursuing. If you have any thoughts on this, please let me know so that we can see if it is possible to go ahead with this.

Can I also draw Members' attention to pages 25 and 27 on your green sheets and appendix 2a and 2b. This confirms the robustness of Councillors Carter and Golton's budget amendment as confirmed by the Director of Resources.

Can we then go on to the agenda, please? Thank you.

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 19TH AND 26TH JANUARY 2011

THE LORD MAYOR: Could we go on to Item 1, please? Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I move.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I second, Lord Mayor.

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

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Could we go on to Item 2, Declarations of Interest. Are there any further declarations? Councillor Grahame, please.

COUNCILLOR R GRAHAME: Page 85, item 74, GMB issue, personal interest here. Page 86, item 75, Director of East North East Homes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for that. There being no further can I ask for a show of hands that members have read the list? (*Show of hands*) Thank you. I should have also said that we are slightly varying the order of business. We are going on to items 5 and 6 before we do 4 because these are matters of procedure that have to be achieved.

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I go on now to Item 3. Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would just like to apologise to Members for the delay in proceedings today and also apologise to those members of the public who wanted to come in who were not disrupting proceedings. Clearly we need to learn lessons from this. We were not as well prepared as we should have been on the door – the police as well, I suspect – but once we did need to deal with the event I would just like to thank the members of staff and also the police who dealt with the protest in a very appropriate, proportionate and peaceful way and, as I say, we will learn lessons together going forward. Thank you.
(*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Tom. I am sure Members have appreciated those comments.

ITEM 5 REPORT

(a)

THE LORD MAYOR: Could we now go on to the new Order of Business? Could I go to Item 5, please, and ask Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I move, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I second, Lord Mayor.

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

(b)

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5(b), Councillor Wakefield?

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Grayshon to comment.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise, really, to congratulate both nominees for being entered and given the Leeds Award. Obviously it is an important thing for them both and I am going to speak really about Glynis Homes. It is rather ironic that today of all days we recognise the contribution of two members of the public who have campaigned in their own way and brought about change in their own communities when today we have seen an unfortunate occurrence in this Council Chamber who believe they are campaigning to bring about

change but really are causing disruption to society as a whole, on some occasions, and for the Council today.

I have known Glynis Homes for many years. She has always worked tirelessly for the community in Morley. She has cared for her elderly parents, she has done a lot. It mentions in here the bike ride that she did for the victims of the tsunami in Sri Lanka which we in Morley were very heavily involved with, and eventually we raised over £300,000 for that appeal and it is down to people like Glynis and her fortitude that that money was raised, so I would just like to congratulate both recipients and pay tribute to them both for the work that they do in their communities. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Grayshon. Councillor Wakefield to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I actually thought somebody might speak on behalf of Hillary because I have worked with her – I will just wait.

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. I appreciate this opportunity. I actually nominated Hillary Wilmer and you can see by the record of what she has done, to start up the Moortown Furniture Store and then to set up the Night Stop and apparently there are 30 of them round the country now, and then to go on and be involved in CROP which is very controversial and it does impact on many young people who actually get caught up in this and are groomed for prostitution, and for somebody to stand up for their rights, I welcome this nomination. Thank you, Lord Mayor, once more. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Lancaster. Councillor Wakefield, would you now like to sum up?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, thank you. They are special awards and new awards and by both accounts they are very special people. I happen to know Hillary from about 20 years ago when we worked on Community Programme together when I was Chair and I know her to be a fairly robust champion of community rights and so on, so I am delighted for both of these nominees and I look forward to, if there is a ceremony, their ceremony. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. Could I call for a vote on that, please? (*A vote was taken*) That is clearly CARRIED.

ITEM 6 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we go on to Item 6, Recommendations of the General Purposes Committee. Councillor Wakefield again, please?

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

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Leadley to comment.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on Item 6, which is about changes to the scheme of appeal with planning applications recommended by the General Purposes Committee and which begins on page 37. This is further fall-out from the Technoprint case which seems to be almost universal – a bit like

DDT which was detected in the flesh of penguins in Antarctica within ten years of its invention.

In 2008 when the Technoprint case began, there were rules which governed the way in which members could refer planning applications to Plans Panels rather than having them decided by officers. For some years these rules had worked perfectly well because everyone had ignored them.

One of the pivots on which the Technoprint case turned was the fact that Planning Services failed to provide answers to a member of the public which led to a request for the Panel Determination of a disputed application being made more or less at the last minute.

In the early stages of Technoprint part of the City Council's case was that my request should have been refused anyway because it had not been made within 21 days of the application being verified and because I was a Morley North Councillor whereas the application was in Morley South. Furthermore, the matter could not have been of any public interest because Outer South Area Committee had not objected to it.

Eventually the City Council had to retreat and acknowledge that the 21 day limit was an advisory minimum, not an absolute deadline strictly applied. Out of ward requests for Panel Determinations had not been denied before. I was able to point out that Councillor Bernard Atha had successfully requested Panel Determination and a site visit with regard to a dog sanctuary in East Ardsley, despite representing Kirkstall. An officer recommendation for refusal had been set aside by the Panel and the dogs had won a democratic victory. Councillor Atha's intervention was far-reaching in other ways. If just twelve of those dogs had voted BNP in 2008, Councillor Renshaw would not be here today! (*laughter*)

It also had to be conceded that Outer South Area Committee had never made a single representation on any planning application in its entire existence, so nothing could be inferred from its silence on the dispute matter.

What the adjustments set out here are meant to do is to bring the published rules into line with established practice. Especially with major applications it is not always possible to tell within 21 days whether they should go to Panel or not. Councillors should take a broad view of planning in Leeds and not be confined within one of 33 little boxes. Area Committees meet so infrequently that they are not well-suited to be a preferred method of raising planning representations.

Leeds has one of the highest rates of officer delegation of planning decisions in England. Members should use discretion when referring applications to Panel but not be unduly shy about it. Rules should not be devised or interpreted so as to maximise officer delegation by obstructing Panel referrals. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Leadley. Councillor Wakefield to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I would like to sum up formally. I think the case has been well made.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. Can I call for the vote? (*A vote was taken*) That is clearly CARRIED.

ITEM 4 – BUDGET

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we return to Item 4, please, and firstly can I call on Councillor Gruen?

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

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Can we agree that? *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

Would you turn now to page 9, please? Can I call upon Councillor Wakefield, please?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I start by saying how much I regret and I am sure other colleagues regret...

THE LORD MAYOR: Sorry, Councillor Wakefield, there is a little bit first in that you have to seek leave of Council that amendments can be taken.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: OK. Can I seek leave of Council so that the amendments can be taken in the suggested way?

THE LORD MAYOR: Is there a seconder for that?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we agree to that? I think it has all been agreed by the Whips. *(A vote was taken)* Thank you, that is CARRIED.

Please continue, Councillor Wakefield. We will start timing your Budget Speech from now. I know there is a little sweepstake riding on this.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: As you know – and for colleagues who do not know – there is a bet on how long I take. I have taken two hours out of my speech in light of today's extraordinary circumstances *(laughter)* so you will be relieved to know it is a lot shorter than it was originally.

I did want to make a point about how regrettable it was that people who have legitimate concerns about day centres and other aspects of the budget were not able to come in and listen to probably one of the most important budget debates in the history of this Council. The ironic thing about what happened, had we been prevented by debating this and therefore not been able to pass it on the Council, we would have had to close far more services than the budget actually proposes, because we needed that budget decision in order to spend money for next year.

That is regrettable but, as the Chief Executive said, I think it was extremely well-handled with calmness in the end and certainty. I just want to say thanks to Councillor Tom Murray and Mark Harris who decided to direct the security operations at the start. They did try and, sadly, it did not happen, but at least I think members kept calm and just allowed people to take over and take the appropriate action.

Lord Mayor, I want to start by my usual and our usual appreciation to the officers of all the departments in this Council for helping to prepare probably one of the hardest budgets they have ever experienced. Again, I would like to express our special appreciation to Alan Gay, Doug Meeson, Helen Mylan and Maureen Taylor

for their support and invaluable advice. As I have said on many occasions their work, which began in June, has been absolutely indispensable in preparing the budget proposals for this year.

Finally, given we have had a great year of uncertainty for our staff, which can affect morale, and given we have had another hard winter, especially before Christmas, can I thank all our employees for their commitment in providing public services to all our citizens, particularly to the vulnerable, young and old. (*applause*)

Lord Mayor, to preface our budget proposals I want to refer to the financial situation we faced as a new incoming administration last year and, frankly, we inherited a budget that was totally out of control and straining under the pressure of £16m overspend - £8m in Adult Social Services and £8m in Children's Services. Let us remember that, sadly, Children's Services were failing and needed even more money in-year to safeguard vulnerable children.

We remember quite clearly Councillor Carter and Councillor Brett lecturing us on how difficult it was to manage the budget with such small increases in grants from the Labour Government – absolutely right, but they could not manage that budget when the times were good and, of course, last year we also inherited reserves that were precariously low at £12m for a Council that spends nearly £2b gross. That was clearly underlined by the school balances which were far bigger than the Council's and further serious problems lay with the budget action plans that were simply not delivered on income and expenditure. In short, we inherited a financial mess.

To make matters worse, within weeks of us coming to power the Conservative-led Liberal Coalition Government plunged Local Government, Leeds City Council and the voluntary sector into a crisis by announcing in-year cuts of £50m revenue and £10 capital. Most of those cuts were aimed at services supporting vulnerable, elderly and young people who then lost vital opportunities in advice, training and jobs. The Council and the voluntary sector were dealt a devastating blow because in-year cuts meant ripping up plans and sacking people without a chance to alleviate the damage to those services for the young and elderly, as well as those employed in this city, and now we have a voluntary sector which has been dealt a further blow as part of the national cuts estimated to be £5.1b, which is 40% of the voluntary sector's funds from the State. No wonder senior figures like Dame Elisabeth Hoodless from that sector are now regarding the Big Society as a total political con to disguise the massive cuts to the public and voluntary sector which are worse than in Thatcher's period, and no wonder Cameron is beginning to panic because most people see right through that political deception that he has imposed.

In presenting our budget proposals last year, we warned that a Conservative-led Government would seriously damage our chance of economic recovery and that there would be serious consequences for public services and unemployment. Our pessimistic forecast was confirmed by Eric Pickles in October, who announced a 28% cut to local Government over the next four years as part of the £81b cuts by this Government. With the pressures of demand, we have been faced with finding £90m – ten per cent of our revenue budget – from this year's budget alone. These are staggering and unprecedented amounts which we have to find. Local Government and Leeds City Council have been cut more than three times as hard as the rest of Government spending.

On that note, we welcome the statement made in the Times from the 95 Lib Dem Leaders and Councillors nationally and locally from Councils like Newcastle, Liverpool, Wigan and so on but, of course, we should be aware of the major omission of Councillor Golton's name and, frankly, we have to assume that no Lib-Dem in

Leeds has the courage to stand up and speak out against the social injustice of these cuts for Leeds. (*applause*)

I look forward to the response this afternoon from that party because they know, and so do many Tories, that the scale of cuts to Leeds are totally unjustified totally unacceptable.

Let us remind ourselves, Local Government is taking the biggest burden of the debt this country faces and is taking a bigger share of the burden than the bankers who not strut round arrogantly denying any responsibility for this country's financial situation. Here they are, trying to threaten and blackmail this country because they are asked to pay a pathetic small amount for the financial crisis they created. No wonder Lord Oakeshott, a Liberal peer, resigned in disgust.

In relation to Leeds, despite a compensation package for freezing the Council tax, (which is worth about £6.7m), despite a new home bonus (which is worth about £2.7m), we have been faced with a cut of £12.3% to our grant – by far the biggest cut in our history. Even if you use the smoke and mirrors formula of spending power, it is quite clear there is a massive injustice to Leeds which the YEP has clearly spelt out quite recently, so our Council is now receiving over 5% cut in spending power while places like Dorset get a 0.3% increase; Surrey, -0.3%; Hampshire, a 1% cut. In other words, all the more wealthier, south-east Authorities will hardly be affected. If you look at where the biggest cuts are, they are all in northern big cities who have massive swathes of poverty and need and all of them have a major role to play in rebuilding the economy of the north. Leeds, like other big northern cities, has taken a bigger share of the cuts and so much for fairness and we are all in this together, if you remember those slogans which have now been forgotten.

Again, I repeat the figures I mentioned at the last Council. Leeds gets £796 per head in expenditure; Liverpool – sorry, Ted – gets 60% more, £1,302 per head; and Manchester 40% more with £1,146. We are the lowest spenders per head of all core cities and of all major Authorities in this country.

Last year Councillor Carter reminded us that our MPs must be able to carry clout or what were they there for? Rightly so, yet early this month I am told that great intellectual giant and MP Alec Shelbrooke said not only does he advocate a cut of 33 Councillors here, but he agreed with the scale of the cuts. Let me just say, not once has he asked for a briefing on the financial situation of this Council, on the financial grant that faces us and the cuts. Not once has he put a query in to be asked. He has simply betrayed this city, his constituency and the people of Leeds for his own Parliamentary ambitions and he should be ashamed. (*applause*)

The same goes for that other wonder MP, Greg Mulholland. Not once has he put a question in to say, "Can I be briefed?" It is a disgrace, it really is. To his credit Stuart Andrew has and so have the other MPs.

It is worth pointing out that it is not only Leeds City Council's revenue budget that has been savagely cut back but West Yorkshire Fire Authority have been hit for 9.2% cuts while Cheshire and Hampshire have got increases of 0.3% and 0.2%. We have witnessed the obscene practice of robbing the poorer northern cities to give to the wealthier south and others and this is why we are now faced with the toughest year Local Government has faced financially since the 1930s – even worse than the 1980s.

Given this context I stand by our decision to call for a different approach to budget setting. I genuinely believe that this was important in order to demonstrate to the people of Leeds that in times of crisis local Councillors and local parties can work

together in the interests of the people of this city. I have to say – and I will speak on this later – only the Green Party and the Morley Independents really took that offer seriously.

The setting up of the Leaders' Group was a genuine effort to find some common ground on the big issues, particular in Adult Social Services and Children's Services, where tough decisions have been long overdue. I would like to thank those Leaders who took this challenge up and genuinely offered their views and comments and gave their time. If you want my own personal view, I would have preferred an all-party budget, but I realise there are Leaders and Members who would not respond to this approach. I regard that as extremely regrettable because I know in places like Bradford the Liberal Party, the Lib-Dems and the Tories have backed the Labour budget proposal; in Kirklees they have done exactly the same, the Conservatives have backed a Labour budget. All of this has been decided in the interests of those people in those Authorities and is actually a preferred route rather than indulging in amendments that either trivialise it or actually distort a very serious situation. I am afraid some of that has happened here in this city.

Despite all the efforts, openness and transparencies, we now see members of the Opposition deliberating misleading people on the difference between revenue and capital, and deliberately denying any responsibilities for the decisions they made when they were in power, but the worst is deliberately trying to deny the serious financial crisis we have as a Council to face over the next few years.

As one example – and there are many and do not think I am just picking on him but he comes to my mind immediately – Councillor Alan Lamb's press release three weeks ago which totally distorted and trivialised a very serious issue. He criticised our spending of £1.7m on taxis, food and drink without context.

The truth is that money was spent on transporting vulnerable children and adults and paid for meals on wheels and school dinners. These are absolutely vital services to those vulnerable people and they rely on them. Was he seriously suggesting we should cut meals and ask people to walk to our centres? Were you? You ought to be ashamed because many of those are disabled.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Isn't that what you proposed last year?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: As far as we are concerned they will remain a priority group and that will remain a priority service as long as we are in charge.
(*applause*)

Lord Mayor, I now want to move to our proposals for the budget this year which my other colleagues will also contribute to.

Let me start our proposals by saying that they have been influenced by the widest consultation ever undertaken by this Council. Not only have we received over 3,000 responses from our citizens, we have had the views of the All-Parties Leaders' Group - certainly in the early days they were extremely useful - but we have had the views also of young people, focus groups, the voluntary and business sector and, of course, we received over 2,500 responses from employees of this Council suggesting how we could make savings. Our trade union colleagues also helped with some very constructive and helpful suggestions to save money and to work more efficiently. We should not forget the role of Scrutiny Board, particularly Central & Corporate, for more members there who made some very useful comments and suggestions.

All of these responses have been far more helpful than some of the rhetoric from Eric Pickles and Grant Shapps. Relentlessly they have targeted Chief Executive pay and other officers' income. We know our Chief Executive has taken a decision to cut his own pay and we respect that this was his personal choice. We also know that senior Councillors and back-bench Councillors have taken pay cuts, but all these gestures, however positive they are, do not scratch the surface of the £90m that we need to find.

It is worth reminding everyone, we are working together with other Local Authorities and public bodies in trying to make back office savings and that continues, but are these two people, these two Ministers, serious when they suggest that we should share a Chief Executive of one of the biggest Authorities in the country with over 800,000 people, with Bradford or Kirklees or Wakefield? It is simply ridiculous and, of course, any suggestion we should share Children's or Adult Social Services is also a dangerous fantasy. It would take four London Authorities to be equal to Leeds.

I am not surprised Richard Kemp, the Liberal Leader in the LGA, has termed Pickles and Shapps and the Laurel and Hardy show. All of us are getting ridiculous efficiency demands from a Government that announces a bonfire of quangos that a Tory Select Committee has already called a damp squib. We get it from a Government that is imposing elected Mayors which will cost this city over £1m; we get it from a Government that is prepared to spend £100m needlessly creating Police Commissioners while we lose 500 police officers across West Yorkshire; and we get it from a Government that has already created chaos, worry and stress about the future of our great National Health Service. In reality, officers of this Authority, working with Members and Scrutiny Boards, have been working hard on finding real efficiencies which matter compared to this Government's simplistic rhetoric which is often patronising and certainly insulting.

By listening and taking all the view into consideration, we have cut press and communications by £600,000; we have cut back office operations by £13.6m; and we have cut marketing by 40%. We have cut senior management posts by 25%; we have reduced the cost of office accommodation by £6m; and we have made savings in Procurement of £25m. Of course, I am sure we are all aware that our employees are on a pay freeze. There are many other efficiency savings in energy, maintenance and so on. However, it would be wrong to say these savings alone would get us to the £90m without affecting services, without real tough decisions and without real pain to our people and employees. As Margaret Eaton, the Tory Leader, has said, whoever thinks we can achieve savings through efficiency alone is delusional. Inevitably we have had to make some very difficult decisions.

As you know, we will have lost 1,500 employees by March 2012 and although we are pleased that so far it has been on a voluntary basis, we still have to acknowledge the impact of this. There are 1,500 employees who do not have jobs. There are 1,500 job opportunities lost to a younger generation. You cannot lose employees on this scale without some impact on the service that we offer to the people of Leeds and we should not forget we still have to find further savings of £47m next year which, in many ways, will be much, much harder and will impact even harder on our services. Every efficiency saving has been explored to do everything possible to protect front line services to vulnerable people, which is the key priority of this administration.

In relation to Adult Services, everyone in this Chamber knows that demographic changes and growing expectations about Social Care are already causing massive pressures on our Adult Social Care budget which we have not been able to cope with over the last ten years. We also know that the shift to personalised

budget is undermining the viability of our traditional institutions and practices in Adult Social Services.

I know we all welcome people living longer and the fact is, the fastest growing age group in the UK is the over 85s. It is this group that needs more intensive and complex care, which is the most costly. The truth is again, in order to focus on those in greatest need, we are having to restructure and reconfigure our services to the elderly. I must emphasise, our partners in the Neighbourhood Networks are key to this agenda. To make it absolutely clear, we are going to face extremely difficult choices over the coming months about the future of our service provision. For example, there have been changes in our service to people with learning disabilities. Some of our Party Leaders recognise that personalised budgets, backed up by a totally different approach to consultation, can offer better choices if alternatives are there for people to see.

I welcome the news that some user groups have already advocated this approach and to reflect our commitment to the most vulnerable and those in the greatest need, we have committed an extra £17m into the Social Services budget this year. *(applause)*

In Children's Services we again have had to reconfigure services like Youth Work but we have used the savings to prioritise money to our vulnerable children and, along with the £12.3m extra into Children's Services, we have allocated an extra £1.8m into Safeguarding Children. Investment is clearly helping to turn round the services, as demonstrated by the fact we have had several of our services inspected and received positive news. In our unannounced inspection result, which was published on 16th February, this Council got the highest grade possible. I congratulate all those involved but particularly Nigel Richardson, Councillor Blake and other Members, including the Opposition, for their commitment to make sure we did everything to protect and improve the opportunities of young people in this city. *(applause)*

During our consultation with the people of Leeds there was significant concern expressed about the environment, which was not only about Street Scene but also about issues affecting climate change and our carbon footprint. I am pleased to say that, in partnership with the Greens, we have been working to provide an initial 1,000 homes with rooftop solar panels which will reduce electricity bills for our residents and, of course, make a significant contribution to the reduction of carbon. Our ambition over the next few years will be to achieve 10,000. This scheme with the Green Party reinforces our support for the insulation scheme, which will not only further reduce carbon emission but offers training opportunities for our disabled staff, particularly those who worked at Roseville who we promised to help. It tackles the growing concern of fuel poverty at a time when fuel bills, especially for the low and fixed income families, are putting an unbearable strain on their ability to pay.

As I said earlier, the budget is not without some tough and difficult decisions. As we know, the previous administration, even under a far more generous budget, were starting to make difficult decisions, such as the closure of the South Leeds Sports Centre and, as we were constantly reminded, there was no budget for it to continue.

Despite our efforts for a community transfer, once the Government cuts were announced it made it impossible for us to keep it under Council ownership. In exactly the same circumstances, the Leisure budget we inherited had cuts to the Library Services planned. Frankly, I think it is disingenuous for the previous Executive Board Member to say they were officer plans, not Members, when they were in the budget

of his administration of 2010/11. Again, I will emphasise, once the Government cuts were announced it was inevitable that these decisions would have to be made by any party. However, this is an example where we have done everything possible to protect services, even if the buildings have had to close. In places like John O'Gaunt's, Councillor Golton tells me the mobile library has meant an improved access to people on an estate that never used the library services before. In Belle Isle they have signed up over 100 new young people to the Library Service who again never accessed the buildings. Of course there will be upset but, by increasing hours in our bigger libraries, by sharing buildings with other services, like the One-Stop Shops, by introducing mobile libraries we can minimise the impact of these Government cuts.

Our administration's commitment to work with the community, the voluntary sectors and other partners is a far more genuine attempt at the Big Society than this Government's efforts so far. The Garforth Sports Centre is a real example of our determination to make sure that services continue even though the ownership will change. I will emphasise, we will be looking at all options and ideas to work with the Leeds version of localism with the voluntary sector, but if the scale of the Government cuts continue, then I have to be completely honest and say there will be more pain and more difficult decisions to come. As I said earlier, this budget does have risks, as all budgets do. Our action plans have to be delivered in order to avoid further pressures next year on an already challenging £47m cut that we face. In terms of pressures we do not know whether the unemployment situation will put extra strain on our Children's Services, we do not know whether another epidemic or hard winter would put Adult Social Services under further pressure, but I do know as an administration we will do everything possible to protect front line services not only this year but over the next two to three years ahead of us.

Despite these cuts it is not time for us to throw our hands up in despair and give up. Indeed, this is a time where we have to show our determination, our vision and our leadership and say to the people of Leeds we will promise to do our best to provide and protect public services. We will not be a Barnet EasyJet Council which ended up costing more than the savings made. We will not close all the Citizens Advice Bureaux and cut front line services to vulnerable people, or make 7,000 people redundant like the Conservative Liberal Council in Birmingham. We will not stop delivering meals on wheels and tell old people to go to Asda for a ready made meal, as they did in the Conservative-led Cheshire Authority. Indeed, despite these unfair, unjust cuts, despite the worsening economic situation, we will work with our partners in the voluntary and private sectors and stand by our employees to do everything we can to maintain services.

We will maintain our commitment to value our staff. We will protect the Credit Union, especially given the increase in loan sharks in the city who are charging up to 1,000% on loans and, of course, despite cutting the 500 police in West Yorkshire, we will keep our funding for the PCSOs, not only because they do an excellent job but the people of Leeds have told us they were a priority for them in their communities.

Can I say that, although I might have been critical of the Opposition, there are one or two people, like Councillor Les Carter, who helped to put up the fight on behalf of Leeds and West Yorkshire to maintain our money from PCSOs and that I what I thought this whole debate would be about in terms of the efforts we are all putting in to protect services. Sadly not.

Although extremely late, we welcome the reinstatement of the Community Safety Initiative worth £900,000. We are committed to putting back £400,000 to the Burglary Initiative, which was cut. We will also put £400,000 aside to discuss with the Community Safety Partnership about the gaps in services that have been cut.

We will also set aside £100,000 and the one amendment that I think has merit about increasing that so that the voluntary sector, if they are facing hardship, can come to the Council for help and support.

All these initiatives are all our priorities and to empower our communities and Area Committees we are going to devolve more powers and funding, up to £10m, to Area Committees showing our commitment to localism because we genuinely want to involve and empower elected Members in Area Committees along with the people they represent.

Finally, we know that many of our young people in this city have had a vicious triple whammy with the ending of the Future Jobs Fund, the ending of the Education Maintenance Allowance which affected 9,000 young people, and the disgraceful hike in tuition fees up to £9,000 despite pledges and promises not to do so.

It is now a moral and political duty to work with employers in the private sector, to work with the voluntary sector, the Chamber of Commerce and everybody can help to do everything possible to find employment, training and apprenticeships for unemployed people, particularly the young. To show our commitment to that this administration is recommending £500,000 into the budget to work with all those partners to make sure we prevent a generation of people being forgotten and lost to the world of work.

Our proposals reflect our determination to offer compassion to the vulnerable, young and old, ambition for future generations, and reassurance for people who want to live in safe and secure communities.

This administration will continue to fight injustices that this Coalition Government is inflicting on the public and voluntary sector of Leeds and it will stand up for the people of Leeds by demanding an end to the scale of cuts and ask for a fairer deal for the people of Leeds.

I urge those people who share those values, who share those commitments, to support our budget proposals. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. Can I call upon Councillor Lewis, please, to second.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor, I second, reserving the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, I wonder if I may address you? The Leader has referred to Leeds Credit Union, of which I am a depositor. Forgive me, I have not declared it. Do I need to declare it and what kind of declaration?

THE LORD MAYOR: The answer seems to be no. Thank you, Councillor Cleasby. Thanks anyway. Can I call on Councillor Carter to move his amendments, please?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. You see, I got the same interruption as I was about to start as you did, Keith, so it puts us off on an even keel for the moment.

My Lord Mayor, in introducing the budget amendment tabled in my name, can I also tell the rest of Council, which will be a great relief to them, that I include the

amendment to the Capital Programme as well so do not be too frightened by the number of times you will have to vote, although it is considerable and deliberate.

My Lord Mayor, I would like to begin by, as is historic, thanking the Director of Finance and all his staff, the Chief Executive and, indeed, the Directors and various other officers of all departments of the Council for the amount of work that they have put in to putting together the administration's budget and, indeed, for the amount of time and effort they have taken in answering the queries posed by my budget team on the Conservative benches. It is greatly appreciated. I note that what Councillor Wakefield said last year got a similar health warning – in fact, almost word for word as the amendment has been tabled by myself and Councillor Golton, but I have to say, my Lord Mayor, the Director of Resources has been a most difficult man to deal with throughout this budget process and I only wish for the six years that we were in control of Council he had been as difficult with Councillor Wakefield! *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: They were!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Nevertheless, my Lord Mayor, I do appreciate that we live in interesting, as you said quite rightly, times. I would just like to comment, after thanking the officers, on what has happened earlier today.

I think all of us who are elected to office take a very dim view of being excluded from our Council Chamber and starting our meetings on time. I also think it is a great pity when people who came along here legitimately to listen to the debate have probably long since gone home. I did thank, I think particularly, our own staff here at the Civic Hall for the efforts that they put in to try and keep matters under control but I have to say, in all of the years I have been here – and we had sizeable demonstrations over the Iraq War, over the closing of pits, over the Poll Tax – never on one of those occasions was the meeting of this Council disrupted in such a way and we need to be better prepared next time.

I was going to thank the Leader of Council – and I will because I will not be churlish at this stage – for facilitating the cross-party budget meetings. I have known Keith a long time and, in fairness, we get on pretty well, I think. I did record something he said at the first cross-party budget meeting, just in case, and I will read it to you.

When we sat down at the start he said, "I realise we will not agree on everything in the budget but I would like to think we can get some cross-party agreement on some of it." I am massively disappointed, therefore, with his comments during the beginning of his budget speech because at no time did he offer me an all-party budget resolution for this Council. Indeed, he prefaced the first meeting of that cross-party budget meeting on the presumption that it would not be an all-party budget meeting and your comments, therefore, are completely misleading, to say the least, to people who are not Members of this Council.

My Lord Mayor, to show just how far we have gone down the line of agreeing a budget, I think our amendments come to in total something like £2½, £2¾ million out of a total net budget of what, £1.4b?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Half a per cent.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Half a per cent. On a lot of the majority of things, particularly the difficult issues facing Children's Services where we have made barely a comment – although indeed we could and, indeed, for next year, if certain steps are not taken during the course of this year we shall be doing – but we realise that difficult decisions need to be made.

I address this to a couple of Party Leaders opposite. I do not share the naivety expressed by some people that everything has been revealed in this budget, or anywhere near everything and I await with interest to watch the scales fall from their eyes. I shall try to resist saying "I told you so" but I suspect I will not be able to.

There is no doubt at all, in fairness, that this is the toughest budget this Council has ever had to face. Local Government is in a massively difficult financial environment. I wish Councillor Wakefield, through the years when he was in Opposition, had been as trenchant and as critical about Labour Ministers who denied...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I was.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: No you were not. No, you were not. You have not heard what I am going to say next. As trenchant and as critical as Labour Ministers who consistently denied this Council funding for various different schemes and funding in general and went on letting the gap between Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds get wider and wider and wider. I wish he had been as trenchant and critical as I propose to be about the Coalition Government's Secretary of State because I have to say – and I say it for the record now because it is being written down – that I think the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government rolled over in the budget round. I think he rolled over in the initial stage of in-year cuts and I said previously, in-year cuts are always the most difficult for any organisation, whether it is a Council or a business. I do not think there should not have been any, and I will come to that in a moment as you would expect me to do, and I do not think that Councils should not have been prepared for there to be considerable levels of savings required in-year. I think that Mr Pickles rolled over. Maybe he wanted to appear the good boy who would come up with the savings first but, as somebody who has led a Council, he ought to know how difficult that was going to be and I think he should have fought our corner for us far more robustly.

I think as well that the in-year cuts fell on Local Government too heavily, and I am prepared to say so to anybody who wants to listen. That has been compounded by the fact that savings were required to make this year a front loading and that is the big issue. If the savings we had been required to make – which in my view are probably, given the state of the national economy, justified and certainly we know the money has got to come from somewhere and, as you would expect, I am coming back to that. To front load them makes it doubly difficult, particularly for a service-led organisation.

I make no bones about it. I am extremely critical of the way in which that has been handled and I am more critical about something and I will come to that now. In Local Government we are no strangers to finding savings and this is the other myth which really does need to be exploded and causes me in particular – and I suspect most of my colleagues as well – as much if not more irritation than it does the party opposite, because in the past six years that we were in the administration we found Gershon savings alone of over £100m. On top of that we made other significant savings in terms of staffing numbers, in terms of provision of back offices and we did take difficult decisions which meant some very painful decisions being reached.

The Secretary of State needs to understand that most of Local Government, with one or two notable exceptions, have been finding and delivering savings without damaging front line services for many years and I do wish he would publicly recognise this and recognise the valuable work that the public servants working in Local Government do to contribute not just the delivery of service but the cost-effective delivery of service. One line comments which may grab a cheap headline I

do not think are good enough for a Secretary of State and I do not think are fair to Local Government. I wish, Keith Wakefield, you had at any stage in the last six years, been as critical of a Labour Minister and I have just been of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. *(applause)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: If it had been 12.3 I would have been.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It does make me smile, though, when I hear the squealings of the likes of Richard Leese and the Leader of Nottingham who, under the previous Government, as Councillor Wakefield has indicated, saw their share of funding per head of population get more and more and more while Leeds fell further and further behind. I certainly have sympathy for their citizens but I do not have sympathy for them.

You know, my Lord Mayor, I have to say, I am afraid, your party – their party – are in a very difficult position because they seem determined not to recognise where this country actually is and where it was when the new Coalition Government was elected. The country is paying £120m every day on debt in interest alone - the highest level of debt since the end of the Second World War. Debt interest payments are at almost £43b a year. Thank God that in January, for the first month in two years, the Government did not have to borrow to fund its services – the first time in two years. In those two years have any of you ever in this Chamber said, “Where is this country going? What is your Government” – our Government in your case – “what are they doing?” Never on one occasion.

To put it in simple terms so nobody can misunderstand, the £42.7b in debt interest payments this year alone is the equivalent to four Olympic Games, 17 aircraft carriers, 616 Typhoon jets, 43,000 MRI scanners, 1.3 million nurses, a million teachers, a million prison places or 350,000 doctors every year. That is the debt interest payments that your Government has saddled this country with and it is time you faced up to it. *(applause)*

To put it more locally, 140 New Generation Transport Schemes, 200 Flood Alleviation Schemes every year. The bankers have a lot to be blamed for, Keith, you are quite right, but do not try and put all the blame on the bankers for the massive financial incompetence of your Government. We cannot allow you to escape the consequences of what you left behind. Gordon Brown’s legacy – politically, his last will and testament before he scuttled off to his Scottish bolt-hole. This is a taste of his legacy.

To his successors he left no money – only waste, debt and the deepest cuts in modern times. To the young people of Britain he left one in five without work so when you start to say that number has gone up, you take responsibility for the number that you left out of work. To pensioners he bequeathed lower pensions and reduced value of pension funds. He left people working longer for less. In 13 years he wasted the inheritance left to him. Of the gold bullion his predecessors bequeathed him, he sold over 350 tonnes at the worst possible price and cost the Exchequer £5b.

He has spent, spent and spent again and every man, woman and child will have to pay £22,500 to pay for his profligacy. He has taken our hard-earned money and wasted it. He lost £3b in benefit over-payments and paid the dead £10m in tax credits. He left Britain a bigger deficit than France, Germany and Japan, greater than Greece, Italy and Portugal. He left two-and-a-half million people without a job. He wanted more time so he could have done more. He left no apology, no regret, no comfort and not an ounce of contrition and there is none from you either. You should hang your heads in shame. *(applause)*

He sent troops into battle without the right equipment. He ordered two aircraft carriers without any money in the budget. This is Gordon Brown and Labour's legacy to this country and to all of us and it is time you took some responsibility.

The final thing of all, of course, is he has left his two closest economic advisers through all that disaster, Milliband and Balls. Milliband and Balls – it sounds like a firm of undertakers – undertakers to the Labour Party. They could not even get that right – they had two Millibands to vote for and they picked the wrong one! If they had had their chance, they would have been your tax increases and, do not forget, Alistair Darling – the one honest man amongst them – told us all before the General Election the size of the cuts he was planning. Three out of every four pounds of cuts Labour were planning anyway, so do not pretend that if you had got back in you would not have had to do something, because you would.

COUNCILLOR: When we get back in.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Before I move on to the details of our amendment I just want to pass a couple of comments about the general direction of the Council.

COUNCILLOR: Can we have a lates budget then?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Let me comment first about the way in which you have meekly accepted the loss of £1m this year in car parking fees and, according to the budget, you are predicting £1.6m is your lost revenue. I find it incredible that any organisation with any business acumen at all can allow that to develop and as the response put up parking charges again. Anybody who has been in business will tell you – and there are some people on your benches that have been in business – that you reach a point with your product where you have got customer resistance, and that is either because your product is not good enough or you charge too much anyway. You do not put the prices up again – you put right what is wrong.

I am not blaming you particular for that but I am blaming the officers and I know you are conducting a review, but it underlines one of the big problems in this place, that we are not able to move our policies fast enough to cope with changing economic positions and we have got to be able to do that and modern Local Government will have to do that. Just meekly to accept that the money has gone out of the window is not acceptable.

You have done, it would appear, nothing at all – although you may tell us different when you stand up – about cross-Council working. You have attacked Eric Pickles's view of Chief Executives and I have to say I agree with you – absolutely agree with you. It is quite ridiculous to suggest that a city the size of Leeds should not have a Chief Executive. However, I had hoped at this stage of the budget presentation to have heard from you at least the beginning of outline plans for cross-Council sharing of services.

I will make a suggestion to you. It is no good letting officers in the departments concerned across the different Councils sort it out, because they have a vested interest in it not working. You are going to have to think of a much better way and if you want an offer of help, I am sure many Councillors here would be happy to join those discussions because we have to have that sort of cross-Council working.

The other thing I would say in general terms is that throughout our budget investigations we have identified very, as far as we are concerned, satisfactorily that a number of other savings could be made for next year if work started now. I think it

is essential because the Director of Resources has made it very clear that there is risk – there is risk in your budget, there is risk in our amendment. I do not think once a quarter reporting of the budget situation to the Executive Board coming a month after the end of the first quarter is any good at all. I think there has to be a much more rigorous assessment of where the budget is going, not necessarily across the Council but certainly in key departments and I would highlight, as you would expect, Children's Services and Adult Social Care because that is where the greatest pressure is going to be but, quite frankly, if we are going to sit back for a quarter and then wait until the end of June/beginning of July to find out where we are placed, the room for manoeuvre if anything is going wrong is very, very limited indeed. That is something that I learned from my time in administration.

If I can turn directly to the amendment, and I will be as brief as possible. We have been very specific quite deliberately because we have identified small amounts of money in certain areas of the Council that we think could be better spent and there is nothing wrong with that at all. Indeed, I never recall a time when the party opposite did not either, in control or Opposition – in control it would have to have but in Opposition – have its alternatives and, as I have said, our alternatives are small in number but linked directly to the savings that we would like to achieve.

It certainly is not a question of shying away from difficult decisions because I will be referring in a moment to the briefing from Children's Services, a very thorough briefing – an excellent briefing, if I may say so – containing a list of things that would be very difficult to do but we will have to, all of us, sign up to.

It is not a question of shying away from difficult decisions. It is about whether there is a relatively small amount of money available that could be better spent and focused on front line services. If you can identify those areas of money and you mean what you say, that you have got to spend them on front line services because they come first, then you have a duty to identify those sums of money.

I do have to say I think there is an element of politicking in what Councillor Wakefield has said because he cannot possibly accept there are no other areas that savings could be made and those savings switched to the front line. I just hope he is not playing the Richard Leese card and saying we are closing something we do not need to close because of the Government's cuts.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We have seen the books.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: That is why we have been absolutely specific about where we would save the money and some of the decisions even there are very difficult, but each Member of this Council can see exactly where we propose to take the money from and where we propose to put the investment, so nobody can say we have not spelled it out absolutely directly.

We have taken additional saving measures only after close discussion with the Director of Finance and I have to say – and I have said before – I have never known a time when we have been given such a hard time in making sure there were no smoke and mirrors within our amendment. Mr Gay has made it very clear that the risks are there for us all to see.

I have to say, I do not believe that we should be raiding in any large degree the reserves of the Council. We left actually, Keith, a record level of reserves in General Fund and in other funds, specific funds, when we left office. £61m was the figure I was given by the Department of Finance. I do not believe we should be unduly raiding those reserves, particularly when we have to pay them back at some future date, but we do believe there are savings to be made.

First of all, in IT and telecommunications, which is a massive, massive multi-million pound budget with the Council. We propose that we would take from that budget a sum of money sufficient to enable us to re-evaluate the proposals on libraries in particular. In the true spirit of localism, if we are going to give community groups the opportunity to take under their control Council services that we can no longer afford to run, you have to give them time to do it. It is no good putting it through, as you are doing, almost as a *fait accompli* whilst the consultation is still in process.

Secondly, by closing down the Leeds Initiative and what remains of the International Relations Department – which you actually proposed last year – and by expecting the trade unions to take their share of reductions – you know, I do find it strange, and I am sorry the trade union organiser I know best has left the balcony, but with 1,500 less staff, less accommodation, the only area of expenditure from the Council that is not being cut is what we give either in kind or in cash towards the unions, which runs at something well over half a million pounds excluding accommodation costs, and by a further cutting of the training budget - that is not incidentally the training budget for young people we are seeking to get into jobs, it is the training budget here in the Civic Hall – we can put in place sufficient money to allow us to respond properly to the current negotiations, the current consultation that is taking place on elderly people's residential accommodation, in which I include Richmond House because it has been totally impossible to discover whether Adult Social Care intend as part of the consultation process to propose closing or not to propose closing. It is like ploughing your way through fog.

I also want to propose that we increase – and you have mentioned this, Keith, already – the Charity Transition Fund. I think that the Charity Transition Fund is a very good idea. There is no doubt, if you look in the black book I have here from Children's Services, if you look at what Adult Social Care is doing, if you look across the piece there are going to be some charities who will need transitional funding which will enable them to continue to exist. I would strongly suggest that even if this amendment is not accepted, you look very carefully at increasing that because £100,000 will be nowhere near enough.

We also want to add a further £250,000 to the Young People's Apprenticeship Scheme. We would focus wholly that the half million you have put in and the £250,000 on apprenticeships – we cannot have some form of smoke and mirrors new deal that does not deliver what it is supposed to deliver. We need to have a thorough going investigation of how we properly help young people in that respect.

We would place – and this is a very interesting one because Keith Wakefield had it in his budget amendment last year – we would have a moratorium on furniture spend excluding education. Do you know how much money we spend across the categories of furniture in this Authority? £6.4m. A lot of that is education, a lot of it is IT, a lot of it is servicing of computers and the like – sorry, not IT, servicing of computers and the like - but that still leaves an interesting sum of around £700,000. I will be blunt about this, we believe there should be a moratorium on that. If we have lost 1,500 staff over the piece, there must be spare furniture – talking of which I see we have managed to find enough money to buy three new lecterns.

We would also reinstate the brown bin collections in November and January. We cannot see any sense whatever in not having brown bin collections at more than just one miss a year. When services are stretched in December we understand that one month miss is probably OK. It did not happen this December anyway – come to that it did not happen in January either – it did not happen in November either. That was the way they run the service. To me it gives an appalling bad message to the

people of Leeds who have embraced the principle of recycling that for a quarter of the year the brown bins will not be emptied. I think the knock-on effect or that will be that the level of recycling will go dramatically down and we cannot afford that to happen.

We would cut the brochures budget, making a total of £510,000 in that group of things alone. We would use that to keep the East Leeds Leisure Centre open for a further year to ensure again that we can look properly at alternative service providers.

We would discontinue the use of any outside buildings for Leeds City Council meeting venues except in the most necessary of circumstances. Again, that was in Councillor Wakefield's amendment last year. There is no excuse. I have to say, if any part of the Council, if the management cannot so co-ordinate diaries that they cannot find space in buildings that we own so the money is recycled and have to use outside venues, well God help us in getting this budget to work at all. It is a fairly basic requirement in any budgetary exercise that you look at not doing things externally that you can do internally.

It is a £250,000 saving and we would use it to replace the cut that the administration are proposing in the Area Committee Wellbeing Fund. Bear in mind we have not suggested at all that we alter the formula, so it is on your formula, the one you brought in earlier this year.

If local organisations and local services are going to be stretched, a cut in the Wellbeing budget for Area Committees makes no sense whatever because you have said it yourself, Keith, local Councillors on Area Committees working with the local communities are the best people to deliver the service.

We have also said we would cease the translation of publications with a saving of £70,000 and re-invest that money into preserving the crèches at the leisure centres. We would further cut the publication of the advertising budget by £130,000 and we would introduce a new car parking facility on the International Pool site and stop charging for car parking at Temple Newsam. Members may not be aware but it costs us more to charge for car parking at Temple Newsam than the revenue we get in. It is nonsense – it is an absolute nonsense.

Not only can this fund the free city bus, which has had millions of passengers since its introduction and which every other district in the county is keeping, but parking at Temple Newsam would be free as well.

We will then use the £400,000 put into the Contingency Fund - the Home Office grant that you have received of almost £1m, part of that you put into the Contingency Fund – we would distribute that between the ten Area Committees using your formula so it can be invested on a local basis on community safety issues that most trouble those local communities.

Penultimately, we will cut the stationery budget again. By doing that, we will be able to keep Garforth Leisure Centre open as well and reinstate the hours at Bramley Baths, which has caused such an uproar. Miniscule savings in front line services that you do not need to make.

Finally, we will use £471,000 of reserves, the only part of the reserves that we are using, and if all these amendments were passed the call on reserves would actually be a lot less than that, to keep open the Leeds Crisis Centre.

I will tell you why – and this is not a political attack because I think you have been, I hope, as misled as we have been and we need to have further time to consider it. Let me tell you, if you look through the Children's Services' budget you will find reference in here to an organisation – and I am not going to name it because I do not know how far your consultations have gone but there is an organisation in here and it states (and I will not tell you the organisation), it says:

“Recent decommissioning of the Leeds Crisis Centre. This is relevant because [this organisation] are noted as one of the services that would mitigate the impact of ending the service as they provide a counselling service.”

That was never, ever brought to the Executive Board as part of our discussions and we had a very sensible discussion. On the Crisis Centre, this is where I absolutely stand on this and this is a matter of great concern and I think we have not dealt with this properly. In six years in control it was never brought to us as an issue. We were never asked to look at saving money, we were never asked to close it in six years. Check with Councillor Harrand – he never had the discussion as Exec Board Member either. We were then told it was a duplication of service. Very persuasive – I found that very persuasive until we discover that actually that is an overstatement by their own admission. Then we were told it was a very geographic service, serving only a very small area of Leeds. We then discover it services clients from 31 different Leeds postal districts and two in Wakefield – not the bulk of the people who go there, I am not saying that, but I am saying the argument that it only deals with a very tight community is absolutely wrong. Then we are told that the National Health Service, because of its new investment from the Government for mental health, will be able to take up some of these services, but it is made very clear to us by Mr Lawlor that that is not on line yet.

I just think we have taken a decision in absolute unnecessary haste and we are going to pay the price. I am not making this into a political point at all. What I am saying to you is there is sufficient here that should make everybody in this Council have a question-mark and you should not, therefore – I could ask you to vote specifically, and it is one of the reasons we have put these amendments down as we have, specifically for that amendment.

The two other things that we suggested. One is that we cut car parking charges in the central area of the city by 20%. If you do that and you increase the number of meters by a very small number – I think it is 34 meters across the whole of the three city centre zones – you will bring in more money, nearly £100,000 more than the cut in price, you will put us more in line with other cities in the country and, I think, give yourselves time to properly review the situation with car parking in the city, help to generate more business for our shops. One of my colleagues tells me I have grossly under-estimated the income from doing what I have suggested.

Finally, the amendment on capital in my name is a very simple transfer. Do you want to have a new intranet or do you want to mend the roads? You have cut £4 from the roads budget. £1.8m for the intranet. It is an ego trip for officers, I have to tell you – I am sorry, gentlemen – it is an ego trip for officers. They want to have state of the art, we are the best in the eight core cities, whatever they are. I wonder where we will be in terms of road repairs, and that is what the people of Leeds want. The people of Leeds want to be top of the tree for getting the roads repaired. They do not want to have the best intranet system of any Council. It is a straightforward choice. Put the intranet into the reserve programme and re-instate some of the funding you have taken out for road repairs.

On that subject, the Government has just announced £100m, the same as the last Government gave, for extra potholes. I shall be writing to the Secretary of State to make sure he asks all Local Authorities to account for that spending in additional repairs to the roads and not to be used for other services as we flushed out you had done only a few months ago with what your Government gave you.

In conclusion, can I just say this? Times are undoubtedly tough and very hard. Painful decisions will have to be made and where we are properly consulted and where we agree with what you are doing and where there is no alternative, we will agree with you. We will agree with you – we will not shy away from those decisions, but at the heart of everything that is happening is the reforming of Local Government and the Coalition Government are intent on this. Community empowerment through community groups, through the voluntary sector through Parish and Town Councils. I think that unless we respond to that and are seen to be part of it, Leeds will ultimately lose out.

How we respond to these challenges, how we adapt to a completely changing way of doing things will mark this city out. It will mark this city out as a success or not. We cannot afford it to be the latter. I move, my Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Carter. Can I call upon Councillor Procter, please, to second.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Procter. Can I now call on Councillor Golton, please, to move his amendments.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. First of all, I would also like to offer the customary thanks to Alan Gay and the Finance Team for their help in putting together this amendment. This is the first time that I have had to overlook an amendment for the Liberal Democrat Group as Leader and his advice and help and amenability was always very much appreciated by me. I would also like to join Andrew Carter in thanking Councillor Wakefield for setting up the All-Leader briefings. I can appreciate that Councillor Wakefield might have not got what he wanted out of them but I think it was a civilised way for politicians with responsibility to come together...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: If he had asked it might have helped.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: ...and discuss issues in a businesslike manner and, of course, it did help Mr Gay to not spend too much time rallying around all the different Group offices at a time when the City needs to have real concentration from him and his team.

I would also like to apologise, Lord Mayor, that for once I will be reading my amendment speech. It is primarily because there are things in it that I do not want to miss out and I will pause at one moment, though, to respond to Councillor Wakefield's comment earlier.

Lord Mayor, much has been said of the exceptional circumstances within which this year's budget has been framed. We can honestly say that all parties have been shocked at the scale of the reductions in the settlement received by the Council from Whitehall. Moreover, these have come at a time when the demands on the local public purse from Adult and Children's Social Care are increasing and cannot

be denied if we are to hold our heads up high as guardians of the vulnerable in this city.

There are many dangers for us as decision-makers at such times. Faced with making £90m of savings, there could be a danger of being overawed by the scale of the challenge in front of you. Then there is the tendency to retreat into fruitless name-calling and blaming others. Finally, Lord Mayor, there might be the temptation to make the cuts hurt less on your patch than on others.

It is at this point that I will come to Councillor Wakefield's comments. This is the Leeds City Council Chamber and, as Councillor Ron Grahame pointed out earlier, we are here to discuss the Leeds budget. I think an attempt to turn this into a cut-price House of Commons is not something which is needed, especially on a day when we have had to curtail our time for debate due to the interruption of anti-democratic elements.

What I will say though is, I will respond to your issue about number one the letter of Liberal Democrat Leaders complaining about the settlement and also about, specifically, Eric Pickles.

I do not think it is very edifying to have name-calling in politics and I have been on the end of it, I know that Lucinda Yeadon has been on the end of it. It is not something which is particularly productive. I will not actually join my colleague Councillor Richard Kemp in calling Grant Shapps and Eric Pickles Laurel and Hardy. I do not think it is really very productive talk. What I will do, though, is join my colleague Councillor Carter in his observations of how Mr Pickles has approached his role as Minister for Local Government. I think he has rolled over – it is easier for him than for others – and we are unfortunately having to manage the consequences but, Lord Mayor, we are elected to manage those consequences. It is a little bit like marriage – it is in richer and in poorer and instead of not taking responsibility for the decisions that we are taking and blaming them on others, we should actually point out to people that we are in charge and ultimately we are accountable.

Lord Mayor, I will come back to my written speech. Lord Mayor, the people of Leeds are watching and we will be letting them down if the impression we leave on them after today's debate is one of name-calling. We are an anxious city concerned about services used by our families and neighbours and where our city is going.

We have a major responsibility to fulfil the expectation of our citizens to truly lead our city. We need to demonstrate that, although there is less to spend, it will be spent justly on the correct priorities and distributed fairly throughout the city but even with reduce circumstances, our city can advance and grow stronger.

Lord Mayor, the Liberal Democrat Council Group propose a progressive amendment to the budget that intends to offer an alternative to the Civic Retreat which is planned by the administration. Instead we will invest in harnessing the full potential of communities in Leeds to build a more sustainable future. We will invest in core infrastructure to make neighbourhoods more attractive to both residents and business investment. We will commit to concrete actions to reduce waste and tackle climate change and we will shift the balance of power away from the Civic Hall and towards our neighbourhoods. Actions we take now in a downturn can make all the difference in building the resilience needed to allow our city to prosper when the economy improves.

Lord Mayor, the cornerstone of our amendment is our commitment to strengthen the communities through investment in local decision making. Services decided on a local scale are more accountable to those they serve and more cost-

effective as they are made to measure for that community. Decisions taken locally are often more innovative and responsive to being provided by local voluntary organisations.

Lord Mayor, the Labour administration does not have a good track record in Area Committees during its year in charge. Councillor Gruen began the year by attempting to gerrymander boundaries in North West Leeds for his party's benefit and has ended the year cutting £250,000 from the Community Wellbeing Fund just months after announcing the creation of three well paid Area Leader Officer jobs. Our Area Committees need less interference and more influence. Our proposals aim to achieve that and the first step will be to replace the confiscated £250,000.

£847,000 will be provided to Area Committees with the specific aim of providing a Community Safety Fund to bring together local people, police and Councillors to priorities addressing local crime issues rather than priorities set from the centre.

Small and medium sized businesses, Lord Mayor, employ more people in Leeds than the Council yet are often uninvolved in the community where they operate. The example set by Jimi Heselden shows what can be achieved when business embraces the aspirations of the community. A £240,000 Business Engagement Fund will allow Area Committees to reach out to small local businesses to get them more involved in the community, from building links with local high schools to offer work experience, to improving local shopping areas, to supporting local groups with professional advice and at the same time, of course, local businesses will benefit from support to access to help they need to keep them afloat through difficult times.

A further £50,000 will be provided to replace the withdrawal of support by the administration for Christmas lights events in our outlying communities. Such events have a value bringing communities together but also support the vitality of our high streets. It is recognised that not all parts of the city benefit from this so the sum has been re-introduced as a general Community Events Fund to be decided by each area.

Our Green Infrastructure Fund is £500,000 made available to our Area Committees to make their own contribution to a more sustainable Leeds. We are a patchwork city of communities connected by green corridors. Our neighbourhoods and our wellbeing are enhanced by a quality environment. Through this fund, communities can shape their sustainable future by investing in local priorities around tree planting, allotment provision and walking and cycling routes.

Safeguarding a decent living environment for our residents is central to the next part of our manifesto. Highways maintenance is a key priority for the people of Leeds, as decent roads benefit all and the distribution of spending is spread evenly across the city. The sustained commitment to resurfacing the city's roads by the previous administration has paid dividends to taxpayers. Claims against the Council have diminished, saving many thousands in compensation. Moreover, those roads yet to benefit from this investment suffered far worse in the recent harsh weather. The withdrawal of £1.5m from the Highways Maintenance budget by the Labour administration is short-sighted and unfair and our amendment will reverse this decision.

In addition, in response to the demand from residents blighted by irresponsible and dangerous drivers, we will introduce a further £1m to fund further 20 mile per hour zones and residents' parking schemes

Lord Mayor, you will note an underlying theme with the proposals already mentioned that Liberal Democrats have the confidence in communities within the city to shape their own destinies. Our proposals aim to provide the support for our citizens to build sustainable communities in challenging times. Our next two proposals are specifically aimed at supporting communities under pressure.

The example of the HEART project in Headingley is testament to how local people can be brought together to share creativity and talent to save a valued local building for the benefit of the local community. We propose to transfer money that would have been spent in the Council's web replacement project to create a £1m fund to assist other communities to do similar with other Council buildings scheduled for closure. Similarly, neighbourhoods can be blighted by run-down vacant properties whilst families cry out for affordable homes. Our Empty Properties Initiative will take £2.3m from the Housing Revenue Account to buy up vacant properties, refurbish them and bring them back into use, with any surplus reinvested back into the scheme.

Lord Mayor, this Group recognises that the current economic situation has had a particular impact on youth unemployment, which has been rising sharply since 2008 and that we should respond to this in Leeds within this year's budget. We are therefore proposing to safeguard £500,000 from the Jobs and Skills budget, which is currently unallocated, to create a Young People Opportunity Fund. This is to be ring-fenced to be spent within the third sector as they are the most effective at engaging those hardest to reach and can attract further funding not open to the Council.

Lord Mayor, the final three proposals are necessary so that we can encourage the Labour administration to think again in three areas that are potential lost opportunities. The scrapping of the popular and effective free city bus is a proposal we would reverse and we are giving everyone here an opportunity to vote purely on this one issue. Alan Gay has made it clear that spending £190,000 from the General Reserve will have no material effect and Amendment 13 will have no effect on any other proposals in front of you. The free city bus has proven a major success and a further year of operation will allow for the technology to be procured that would remove the need for subsidy in future years. I would urge everyone who wants to see a thriving and successful city centre to vote for this amendment, even if they oppose all our other ideas.

The Food Waste Trial in Rothwell – I have to declare an interest, Lord Mayor – has taken recycling rates to over 50%. Although marginally more expensive in the short term, the more communities that are involved by the time that the Landfill Tax increases affect the city, the better for Leeds taxpayers. We will fund a further food waste round at a cost of £170,000.

Lord Mayor, on the Crisis Centre Councillor Carter has already highlighted many of the issues as to why we believe this was a decision made in haste and where reassurances need to be made. It should also be noted that the closure was made at a time when £400m was announced to be spent on mental health nationally and the NHS has not specified how that will be spent locally. This is one of the reasons why we will safeguard the funding until that clarity is provided.

Lord Mayor, I am also aware that the funding for the majority of this amendment has been funded from a variety of reserves within the Council budget and from the Council's Invest to Save Programme, and that my party will be criticised by the administration for accessing this money. I also note that Councillor Carter had a great big health warning on it as well. However, there are others that believe that reserves are there for a rainy day and we are hitting pretty stormy weather.

It could be argued, Lord Mayor, that the proposal to build up reserves in the administration budget is actually a sign of weakness, not of strength. It implies that there is little confidence that the Labour Leadership can deliver. Given the number of expensive U-turns and mismanagement over the past year - South Leeds Sports Centre, Leeds Gymnastics, bin route proposals – I am not surprised.

As for investing to save, there is no better investment than in making our communities more self-sufficient and resilient. There is no better way to save than to ensure that spending is locally accountable and subject to the scrutiny of local people and Councillors. It will be hard work but I know that my Councillors are up to it. I know that a lot of your Councillors are too, if you would only let them.

I also note that Mr Gay has highlighted that money spent next year will need to be found in the subsequent year. Depressingly, this is where the current administration's lack of vision and ambition is apparent. They are unwilling to seriously look at measures that could make a real impact over the short term to weather the storm. Progress is painfully slow in saving the potential £12m in Homecare and Reablement through providing more through the private sector. Our proposal to look at an increment freeze for Council staff was dismissed as unachievable, while other Councils have managed it to make real savings in their budgets this year. Why should our lower paid staff put up with a zero increase in wages while senior officers might get up to £3,000 in increments just for being in a job another year? It is not fair. If we had carried out the consultation this year, Lord Mayor, with our staff, we could have saved £4.4m next year.

Lord Mayor, it was suggested in the summer that staff earning less than £21,000 in the public sector should receive a £250 payment as it was recognised that the public sector pay freeze would have a disproportionate effect on the lowest paid. An increment freeze would allow us to pay this to our staff and still have money to safeguard jobs elsewhere. Why do we pay some staff mileage at 60p a mile when no other organisation does in the city and it could save over half a million pounds? I do not know, Lord Mayor, but these are some of the questions that we will need to pose ourselves over the next twelve months to make sure that next year's budget is even more secure and value for money for the people.

We have held multi-party budget meetings this year to share information on the pressures in our budget. Let us take the opportunity to keep these meetings going and seriously look at suggestions from all parties made in this budget debate to make savings.

Lord Mayor, challenging times require bold measures. Our proposals offer a commitment to unlock the potential of communities to build a better Leeds together. I move, Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Golton. Can I call on Councillor Hamilton to second, please.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Hamilton. Can I now call on Councillor Finnigan, please.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think I have sat through 14 budgets one way and another over the years and seen what Secretaries of State under Conservative Governments have offered and seen what Secretaries of State under Labour Governments have offered. It often reminds me of the end of

Animal Farm where the animals are looking through the window and look from the pigs to the humans and the humans to the pigs and cannot tell the difference, and that is certainly how we feel in Morley. Whether it is a Labour or whether it is a Tory Secretary of State...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Not the Liberals?

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: The Liberals as well, it is their fault as well, well picked up, Les – we are in a situation where Leeds and Morley has never been given a fair deal and I want to come back to that perhaps later on.

There is no doubt at all that certainly in my political memory this is the worst budget settlement that we have ever had and I think that is straight and I think that is being honest. Some of the headlines are shocking, let's be honest about it.

The Council's 2011/12 Formula Grant represents a reduction of £43.926m or 12.2%. After taking account of the new Core Grant there is a net reduction of £7.5m. In a nutshell, we are in a situation where we have 12.2% less and somewhere in the region of £50m to save, and that is unprecedented. We have never been here before. Even during the worst periods of Thatcherism we have never been here before in terms of the reductions and the problems and the challenges we face.

If you talk to ordinary people, and we go out to talk to our residents in Morley to try and see what their views are of what is happening, and we have less problems than the rest of you in this particular Chamber because we are not hostages to what our leaders down at Westminster actually do. We can have an honest and open discussion with them and they can tell us what they think, and at this particular point, if you talk to Morley residents, they are very clear in saying that we are in very difficult financial circumstances. They accept that there needs to be some cuts. We do not call them savings in Morley and we do not call them reductions in Morley, we call them cuts, and that is what the people of Morley actually say. They are being straight and they are being honest about it.

Having said that cuts need to be made they have significant concerns about how significant and severe these cuts are at this particular time and whether the cuts have been made too quickly and too vigorously. If you ask them where do we stand at this particular point, they believe that the previous Labour Government has to accept some responsibility for the situation that we find ourselves in at this particular point. A lot of money was spent. A lot of money was spent without it being effectively spent and we are in a situation where they are quite clear that we do not want to end up as an economic basket case like Greece or Ireland or potentially Portugal and all of the significant challenges that that would actually face.

They blame you all equally for the situation that we find ourselves in and what they actually say is, they want to get away from the party political bickering. They accept mistakes have been made in the past, they accept changes need to be made at this particular point and what they are looking at is for us all collectively to figure out a way ahead that is going to be painful where somebody is going to suffer from these particular cuts but that we protect communities as much as we possibly can. That is what they are looking at.

It is regrettable – and it is difficult for me to avoid saying this – at a point where Kirklees Council and Bradford Council are all accepting that unified approach is what their residents are looking at, that we have not actually achieved that here today. That is entirely regrettable. For the first time certainly in my experience of being on the Council and being Leader of this particular Group, we have sat down

across all parties and discussed openly and honestly where we are at this particular point.

I do not think fundamentally if Moortown had not gone to Labour and if Wortley had not gone to Labour that there would be a fundamentally different budget being presented here at this particular point.

We have been consistent on several issues. We have consistently said Adult Services needs to change. We supported the previous administration in the direction that they were going, Peter Harrand was absolutely right, and we are consistently supporting the present administration who really do not have a whole lot of choice. We do not have any choice and, to be honest, it is the right direction to actually go in.

The same with Children's Services. Children's Services needs to change, we all accept that and we have been consistent in accepting that those changes need to occur. We never accepted and we still do not accept that Adult Services and Children's Services were poor, regardless of what assessment we were actually given. It is a credit to the officers and the previous and the present administration that we are going to a situation where there is recognition nationally about the good work that is being done both in Adult Services and Children's Services.

I think that this has been an open and honest and transparent process and it is regrettable again that some of the ideas that have been proposed by Andrew and Stewart have not been provided with the opportunity of being discussed at an earlier point. At that particular stage we could perhaps have adopted some of those. Whipping them out at the last minute within minutes of the deadline coming down is regrettable. There are some good ideas there. It is inevitable that next year when we get yet another difficult budget to go through that some of these things will need to be considered but bringing it out at the last minute, like a magician whipping it out of a hat, really is not a sensible way of approaching it. Certainly the community in Morley would not appreciate that sort of what they would regard as political posturing. It is entirely and utterly regrettable.

Fundamentally what we have here, and we have argued this consistently year in, year out, is that Leeds and Morley do not get a fair share of resources. You have seen in previous years, people will remember the Tory Secretary of State who used to pump money into Wandsworth and Westminster to basically secure favour in areas where they were strong. We have seen the Labour Government do the same where Manchester and Nottingham, Newcastle, Sheffield – everybody except us gets a fairer and better deal. Some of the figures are quite frankly surprising. If you look at Liverpool, for example, it actually gets more Government cash than we do; its population is two-thirds the size of ours. That cannot be right. You cannot argue legitimately that somebody in Manchester is worth twice as much as somebody in Leeds, which is more or less where the figure is actually leading.

I accept that there are areas of deprivation in all of these places but in our particular communities, there are significant areas of deprivation as well. They have not been recognised by a Tory Secretary of State, Liberal Democrat Secretary of State, Labour Secretary of State. For some reason they have a view that Leeds can manage and maintain itself and we will make sure that the money goes to our own supporters in different areas. That has to stop. It is a type of political gerrymandering that is entirely and utterly unacceptable.

In whatever way that the Government grant is fiddled, it seems to us that the Secretaries of State of particular parties will try and make sure that they push money in to the areas where they are at their strongest and that has to stop.

We are calling for a Royal Commission to look at how Local Authorities are financed and try and get some integrity into the actual process where it cannot be corrupted so that one Secretary of State can make sure that it favours particular communities. There has to be a better and a more scientific way of approaching how grant is handed out from Central Government and it ought to be so deeply ingrained that it is impossible to mess and fiddle around with it as it has been done by different Secretaries of State from different parties. A Royal Commission would look at what is a fair way of actually assessing the funding that Local Authorities get and at that point Leeds might – might – actually get the fair deal that it has not had under any of your Governments.

It does not matter – some people say the previous MPs lobbied hard and the new MPs lobby hard. It does not make a blind bit of difference. The financial problems that this particular city faces and all our communities face is on the basis that we do not get a fair deal and the fact that we have a smaller piece of cake and we argue and debate at length about how we divvy up that cake is not fundamentally the issue. The issue is, Leeds deserves a fairer deal, Morley deserves a fairer deal and we need to do something about that.

Ultimately we do think we have been involved in this process all the way through. We do think some of the amendments are interesting and need to be discussed and debated but we will not shirk away from taking those decisions that are tough to actually take and need to be taken. We need to show to the communities out there that there are some assurances that we can move things forward and take those difficult decisions that we need to take without sacking people like Manchester has actually done, without cutting front line services any more than they need to be cut but by taking honest and open and sensible decisions.

That is where we will be standing. We will be supporting this particular budget. We would urge our colleagues from the Conservative and the Liberal Democrat Parties – and I might as well urge – actually to follow the line that has been taken by their colleagues in Kirklees and taken by their colleagues in Bradford because the communities out there, certainly the communities we represent, are looking for a unified response. They are looking for us all to come together to make these difficult decisions that need to be taken and to make sure that we have a budget that we can all live with. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Finnigan. Can I now call on Councillor Ann Blackburn, please.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think there are some interesting comments made in Councillor Finnigan's speech there.

It has been said before and, of course, I have to agree, that things are hard. Nobody wants to cut services. If you ask people out there, nobody wants any cuts but of course when there are cuts from above, if we do not make them in this Council, then it is going to put us all in a difficult position if the budget does not balance. It is as simple as that. I have had people say why do you just not accept that we just do not cut anything but that would not be responsible for anybody. Having said, that it is £50m-worth of cuts in Government funding is a lot of money for anybody to find and then, of course, we know the cost pressures of £40m of social services for Children and Adults and we know, of course, with those cost pressures with Children but I would say perhaps more so with Adults – some may disagree with me – that there is always going to be cost pressures there because people are living longer and so obviously they will need some help from Social Services at some time, even though I totally agree with dealing with preventative care where we can is always a sensible thing to do, but if you have got somebody 90 and 100, then if they

are perfectly fit at 90 and 100 they are doing well. Of course there will be some people who are but because people are living longer, then yes, there is always going to be a pressure there on Adult Social Services.

Again, it has been said Leeds has not had a fair deal and nobody is going to dispute that. No, it has not – totally unfair. Down south the Government has decided to obviously give them a much better deal. Nobody thinks that right, nobody in this Council thinks it is right. Yes, we can complain about it, yes, we should be complaining about it. At the end of the day, we are where we are. It is something that we have to live with. We have had to find the £90m-worth of cuts...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blackburn, can I just stop you for a minute. There is an awful lot of noise from both sides of the Chamber. Would you please be quiet and listen to what the Leader of the Green Party is saying. It is very discourteous. Thank you. (*hear, hear*)

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you. Because, as you may remember, usually, we do put some amendments in this time we have not because, as I said, it has been unprecedented, really, the fact that we have had the cuts from Government and so we decided that we would not do this year. There is just so much to look at, so many cuts there. Yes, there has to be. Always there is going to be some public out there that are not going to be happy with what the Council do but, as I have said, what do you do if you do not have the money? Something has got to go. It is regrettable, none of us are happy about it. I certainly am not here. I did not want to be in a position to come to say that things should be cut but, as I said, we are where we are.

It has been mentioned about reserves but it has also been mentioned about risk and I think we have all had – everything has been mentioned to all of us about risk there and the risk is not going to go away because, as we know, the cuts are not going to be just this year, the cuts are for four years. There are going to be more cuts next year. I understand that they are not going to be as bad the following two years but we wait and see.

It is a terrible time to me to have to come here and advocate cuts. It is not what I became a Councillor for and I am sure I speak for most people in this Chamber when I say that but, as I said, where you have risk you have to have reserves. I, like some Councillors over there, you have got loads and loads of reserves, we should be doing something, instead of making all these cuts we should be spending some of the reserves, but when you know you are going to have cuts for four years and you know there is a risk, it is made clear to all of us that there is a risk there, then you have got to have reserves there and not to have some decent amount of reserves there to me would be stupidity.

I am not an accountant – I have worked for accountants, I must admit, and I have got a fair, reasonable understanding of figures and that but to me even anybody that had not could understand that. We have got to have the reserves there if a problem comes up, otherwise you are going to have serious difficulties, to put it mildly.

It has been touched on about these budget meetings. Yes, the all-party budget meetings have been very useful and some comments have been made, I think. In those there has been opportunity to ask questions and, as most people know, I am one of them that always asks questions. Sometimes it may be officers think, "Oh God, it's here again asking questions". I can tell by the look in their faces sometimes, but yes, I do believe if you do not understand something or there is

something that you want to know further about, that is what you are supposed to do and you are not much of a Councillor if you do not.

As I said the budget meetings, I find, have been very useful. I think it is the sensible thing to do when we are in the position that we are in and to get officers in a room to explain to us the situation, to explain to all of us there, to be fair and transparent was a sensible thing to do. I know when Councillor Wakefield mentioned it I think we all agreed that it was the way forward. I do not think there was any Leader who did not think it was.

Yes, I see the amendments here and I can see where there are a lot of wants there but, as I said, we are in a position that there has to be cuts. Nobody is going to say that they do not want 20 mile zones, that they do not want more highway maintenance – of course all these things people want but, as I have said, we are in a difficult position at the moment so whilst those wants are sensible wants to have, it is a matter if the money is not there or yes, you have looked at looking at reserves in some cases to fund them but I have to say that this budget, the Labour budget is not perfect and I do not think that anybody would say that it was. Having said that, some of the stuff down here like, for instance, the free bus, city centre bus, I cannot see why that should remain as a free bus. (*interruption*) I seem to remember some people might actually disagree with me.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blackburn, just a minute. You have unlimited time so do not worry, you are not losing any time. There have been many comments from the Leaders that we have disagreed on but the Leader has been allowed and Ann, as the Leaders of the Greens, has been allowed to make her comments, so again, would you please show her some courtesy and allow her to make her comments. Her opinions are as welcome as Councillor Carter's, Councillor Wakefield's and Councillor Golton's, so let us have a bit of consistency. (*applause*)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: And me.

THE LORD MAYOR: And Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN. Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. As I was going to say, I do seem to remember – and I am sure people will correct me if I am wrong – that when this free bus came in it was supposed to be a trial for a year and the idea was it was hoped that business would pay towards it because obviously, as has been said, yes, it does benefit businesses, but that never happened and I was on Plans at the time – obviously I did not say on Plans – but for some reason, yes, it continued but now as we have said---

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: What about cuts in other bus services?

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: With have cuts there, I do have to say that we do have other buses that go round town and, of course, people can walk but, having said that, why should people have to pay for any buses if you are going to say that? I go home on the 42 – does that mean that I should not have to pay my bus fare? Is that what we are saying, or anybody else, anybody in my ward? Do we say the unemployed people, do they not have to pay bus fares just the same? (*applause*) It would be nice if we did not have to do but we all know, I hope, we all live in reality and realise that yes, people do have to pay bus fares unless they take some other mode of transport or walk or whatever. As I say, that is one of the things that I cannot go along with you.

I think that some of the other things it might be worthwhile bringing up – I do not know of the Leader of Council will continue debates or not, I do not know that,

that is up to him. If they did, it might be some suggestions in there that maybe, could be worked on. I do not know, I am not Leader of Council so it is not my place to say that.

As I have said, it is at a tough time so all I can say is thanks for listening to me those that have (*applause*) and those that have (inaudible) disappointed that I am not going to agree with you but I do think if we all have talks afterwards and maybe some of these things may be able to come about. We will have to see. Thank you.
(*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blackburn. Can I now call on Councillor Hamilton is coming in at this stage, I believe.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Before I move on to the remarks I want to make, just to respond to what Councillor Blackburn has just said. You do have to ask yourself what kind of a Green Party they are that want to vote against a free bus in the city centre. I find that absolutely remarkable.
(*interruption*)

If you follow the logic of Ann Blackburn's argument, which is fine, and we have taken a slightly different view from the Conservative Group, from the Labour Group in terms of the reserves, but if you follow what Ann has said which is we need to have money in the bank, we need to have reserves, fine. Quite honestly, we are talking about to save one item in Labour's budget we are talking about an absolute drop in the ocean whether we use reserves or whether you find savings somewhere else. It surely is possible in a budget of £1b to find savings to save one thing and surely, Ann, it is your responsibility as part of the administration to fight for those things.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Don't tell me what my responsibility is.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: I am amazed that you say in a throw-away remark, "There are several things we can talk about." I hope you will be putting your money where your mouth is and actually voting for some of these amendments.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: If we had the spare money I would like to go to all transport, not just this.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: I have just said, Ann, £100,000, £200,000 out of £1b can be found and I just find the whole argument that you have put forward astonishing.

I would like to mention a couple of things in our budget amendment, then, that we are particularly keen on. The first one was the Community Buildings Fund and this was really – the reason I want to speak about this was through my experience working with the community on the HEART project in Headingley. One of the lessons that I have certainly learned from that over a five year period is what a tortuous process it actually is for the community to take over buildings. The main reason that it is tortuous is that there is an incentive, there is an imperative for the Council to dispose of buildings and to realise a capital sum. The community wants the buildings and obviously does not want to pay for the building. What happened in the end with HEART was that through some accounting and through some jiggery-pokery, eventually the building was handed over and that same sort of thing has happened with other assets throughout the city. It takes an awful long time because there is no transparency and there is no system in place to deal with it.

We think by having a capital fund that actually says this is a community buildings fund, the money can be drawn on to purchase buildings, or effectively to offset the money the Council is losing by not being able to dispose of buildings on the open market, you then completely clear the way for communities to bid transparently for the different buildings. Actually in effect we are just simply doing what we are already doing but doing it in a much more transparent way by saying there is an earmarked fund for that purpose.

That is why we think that is a very good scheme to promote and clearly there are lots of buildings – West Park Centre, Royal Park School – eventually decisions will have to be made and the decision may well be that the Council allows those buildings to go into community hands. Wouldn't it be better if we actually had a sum of money that we can say is allocated for that particular purpose?

The second scheme that I would like to mention is the scheme to bring empty properties back into use. It seems to me that, given the difficulties we seem to have in providing new Council houses, one of the best things we can do is to bring some of these empty properties, these empty homes, back into use. Certainly in my own ward there are lots of properties that are formerly landlord owned and we have been looking at ways of using Section 106 to bring those into use. In the city centre there are flats I am sure that could be brought back into use that are not currently occupied and, indeed, throughout the city there are properties in that particular situation.

Working with the housing associations to actually get more money into the pot rather than just the initial investment we would bring to bear, I think there is definitely a worthwhile scheme here and it would be a way of increasing the amount of housing available, particularly affordable housing and that would be very much what we would be looking to focus on.

Lord Mayor, a couple of more general points before I finish, then. First of all, Eric Pickles has been mentioned. From my point of view let me just echo what Councillor Carter and Councillor Golton have said about the way that Eric Pickles has handled this whole process. I do think that the front loading was a big mistake. Why his own department, the bit of his budget outside of Councils has not been front loaded, that is spread out throughout the period whereas Councils have to take the hit immediately I think is rather disappointing. I think he was rather attracted to the idea of being first at the top table to decide on other budgets.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: That is exactly what it was.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: So he conceded a big cut for his department so he could be at the top table. I think that is a degree of vanity, actually, which has let Councils down.

Personally, I would say that when there is a reshuffle I hope he is first in the queue for a new person to come in because it would be hard to imagine anyone who would be less sympathetic to Local Government than Eric Pickles and I say that with some sadness because you would have thought with his background in Local Government we would have actually got a better deal but at the moment the rhetoric is very much the opposite.

That is my view on Eric Pickles.

THE LORD MAYOR: Would you finish now, Martin, please?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: I am sorry, Lord Mayor. In summary, Lord Mayor – I will finish! *(applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Martin. Councillor Gruen, please.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I had hoped to spend some time this afternoon to talk about the positive things we have done this year with the Housing Revenue Account. However, I think my first obligation is to comment on the amendments which have been tabled by the Opposition.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: He's doing your job for you, Keith.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I think Councillor Finnigan made a valid point which some colleagues may not appreciate. It is in fact true to say that yesterday at 1.30 we received notification of 19 amendments to the budget from the Conservative Group and from the Lib Dem Group. That is perfectly constitutional. In a Council that obsesses about Council Procedure Rules this is perfectly legitimate at present. Twenty-four hours in a serious debate on serious issues, 24 hours' notice of 19 amendments.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Try and get some straight answers.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Let me turn to the amendments within my portfolio on which I would like to comment. The first is amendment 5 by the Conservatives. They want to reinstate the Wellbeing funding. Everyone in this Chamber has acknowledged that the budget faces huge challenges. We have to look everywhere for savings. All members, I accept, value the Wellbeing funding but it is only right that a budget takes its fair share of the pain, particularly when, in accordance with the wishes of all the Leaders, all the community, we have prioritised out PCSO funding and protected that funding. If you make priorities somewhere, you have to find some cuts.

This reduction should be seen, though, in the light of very significant new delegations to Area Committees around environmental services and – and I agree with Councillor Carter – the issue of cross Council working is extremely important. Earlier on today when you approved the delegation scheme, you will have noticed that some delegations, like locality working and area management, have passed centrally to get a strategic push into localities and work across the Council.

Lord Mayor, I accept that the vast majority of Wellbeing funding is wisely spent. However, significant budgets will remain. It is interesting that those Area Committees who most plead poverty when it comes to Wellbeing funding should look at their capital budgets which remain in excess of £1m unspent and so some Committees have huge balances outstanding. With this in mind, we feel our budget is reasonable and proportionate.

Amendment 8, passing the £397k Community Safety Fund to Area Committees, which would give them something like £40k each. We will not be tempted to do that because we have had a red flag legacy in terms of burglary. We are going to spend the money wisely on reducing burglary and, as the Leader has outlined, we are going to be careful about working with partners, about proper incentive schemes around community safety. We will consult and it may well be that at the end of that some of the delivery will come from Area Committees.

The Liberal Democrats, at amendment 15, want to spend all of the £1.887m on Wellbeing. We have discussed it. Amazingly, they want to take all of the money, all of the extra money from the Home Office on community safety. They clearly do not understand where the hotspots are for burglary around Hyde Park, around

Headingley and they want to take that money away and give it to Area Committees. It is a nonsense.

With regard to redirecting Jobs and Skills funds towards a fund to support jobs and skills projects in the voluntary sector, we have already significantly increased jobs and skills funding in our budget and have also made clear our commitment to the voluntary sector. Jobs and Skills is one of the most important priorities of this administration so we can help our young people gain skills and employment, but we do not see any reason to set up a separate fund for this.

Amendment 18, the interesting comments about FRS17, now accepted as a legitimate way of spending money but they want to invest that money differently. We will spend that money wisely with the ALMOs. I cannot believe that we can become the new estate agent of the Council and buy property and do it up and hope we can flog it for a profit. Thereby lies ruin, I think.

These cuts this year have been very significant. This administration is pledged to do the very best it can for the poor people in the city, for the disadvantaged in this two speed economy and we will support those people in our budget. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Gruen. Councillor Lewis, please.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just some comments made by Martin Hamilton about the free bus which I feel that I have to come back on.

The free bus is nice to have, nobody would disagree with that. However, let us look at the facts around its usage. 97% of the people who use that free bus would still make their journey if it did not exist – not mostly by other vehicles, a fair percentage using other buses. 75% would walk. 75% would walk so are we providing a good service with that bus? As Ann says, she gets on the 42 to and from here. Yes, we would all love that to be a free bus – I would, I would like all our buses to be free, but if we are looking at it, what is the sense in this one service in the city being free in the context of the cuts that we are seeing made in this city at the moment? It is crazy. 63% of the people who use that vehicle have a Metro card, so they actually would have free transport on another vehicle, on another bus, so what on earth are we doing paying for this particular vehicle to do a job that is done by so many other public service vehicles in the city? It just does not make any sense. It is nice to have but it is not in any way an essential service; it is not even particularly useful; certainly not a healthy service for the city.

If I can come on to, I have to say across the piece between the Lib Dems and the Tories, while Mr Gay may have given his seal of approval to your amendments, I have to say in practical terms I am not sure that it is really all there. Let us look at the parking.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Are you better qualified than him?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I was just saying in practical terms. He looks at it as an accountant, Les; I look at it in practical terms.

Actually, Andrew has got up on previous occasions and said, "We have been too often to the well of parking charges." Actually, you have. 28%, car parking charges in this city have gone up 28% in the six years that you were in control. Our increase this year is actually three per cent – under inflation. Actually, if you look at how you are planning to address that, it actually does not make any sense. You are charging on the International Pool site. You have got planning regulations and all

sorts that actually come in and you should be well aware of that because it was your fiasco, your decision about the parking sites that caused the problem that we had to deal with a few months ago over parking around the Holbeck area. That was because you did not keep an eye on the whole parking issue. There are real problems in making £40,000 on the International Pool site, let alone the fact that you will probably have to do works to make it fit, that you will probably have to do access issues – I do not think you would make any money on the International Pool site.

You then kind of contradict yourself because you say right, we need to cut parking charges but then you are generating income by putting in 34, I think you said, parking meters. They would all have to generate sixty quid a day. I think you are being very optimistic there if you think that they are going to make sixty quid a day. You would not even be able to do it tomorrow. You would not be able to do it for the beginning of the financial year because you have to go all through the Traffic Regulation Orders and all the rest that go with it.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: No.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: You have to actually install the things.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Where there is a will there is a way.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: If you were very, very lucky you might have six months' income from that but I doubt it.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You are grasping at straws.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: No, Andrew, you are the one who has grasped at straws with this. You are totally contradictory on the whole issue of parking. You are all over the place. On one side you are saying that you want to cut parking costs. Let me put it in simple terms for you lot. If you are going to generate extra income from car parking, people have to pay it, so those are the punters out there, aren't they? I give up, it's not worth even trying, is it, really.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: They are not paying your charges at the moment.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: He has never run a business.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: One last point if I could because time is running out. We have got the HRA proposal from the Lib Dems, £2.3m – as if that would have any impact on the housing problems of the city. What is worse, that is Housing Revenue Account money while we have properties in this city that are not decent. I could take you to plenty that are not decent, where people have major damp problems and you would divert that money away into this scheme. I have to say, you are daft. There are people in our homes who we should be looking after before we come up with a scheme like that because the reality is we have not got a good history of buying up properties and doing them up. We are very bureaucratic in the way we do it. It would cost us a fortune and it is just plain daft. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*applause*).

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Downes, please.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking particularly about the free city bus and declaring an interest as an occasional user and in my role on Metro. I actually chaired the Working Group that put it in. When we looked at the proposal to put this free city bus in, it was there to welcome people into Leeds, take people round Leeds in a quick and efficient means. It is very difficult

to do so when you see the number of people getting on at the station and then put a charge you. You can have 20 to 30 people waiting to get on and that can take time to board and pay.

We are looking, or were going to be looking at introducing Smart Cards, such as the Oyster Card as in London, later on this year to that service. That was certainly something we were hoping to do, so this could well have been the last full year of funding. One of the other problems that I have with this – and this has only been brought to our paper, we have actually mentioned this for the last few weeks since we saw the budget papers come out because in the budget papers it said that you would be saving about £450,000 a year by not continuing to fund the service. That is not true. There were two payments made in the last year because there were not any made in the first year, so because of that it gave an inflated figure for the last year. Next year's figure is approximately £189,000 – that is what we put into our budget amendment, not the £450,000 that was there. I think when you look at that, when you look at the value for money that it offers, you say 97% of people, Councillor Lewis, coming to Leeds would still come to Leeds. Is it 97% you said?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I said that 97% said according to the survey that they would still make the journey, the bus journey.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, so three per cent would not make the journey into Leeds which, over the last five years, nearly eight million people have used the service, so that is about a quarter of a million people that would not be coming into Leeds. *(interruption)* I will carry on, because 75% of those people would walk, OK, I accept that figure, that is about right. 25% of people therefore would not walk, so they would either be using cars or taxis or whatever. That is approximately two million people since the service has been around that would then have to come into Leeds in a motor vehicle, absolutely, and that would lead to congestion, pollution and I am surprised that the Green Party support a budget proposal that will see more carbon into this city and are not supporting this carbon reduction scheme. It is absolutely ludicrous. When is a Green not a Green? When they do not support bus travel in this way. *(interruption)*

You cannot charge for the reasons I have said. The thing is that it encourages advertising from partners and those partners have actually put into their travel documents for access to their buildings but when you come to Leeds, come by train and then catch the free city bus. In the past they used to say drive to Leeds, park in this car park. They do not do that now; it encourages rail transport into Leeds.

Another thing is when you want to go and visit relatives and friends at the LGI it is very easy, you come in by train, you catch the bus, you get there and for elderly people, people who are not as firm on their feet, they can get there easily. This will be denying that easy access and encouraging people to seek lifts and cars into Leeds. *(interruption)*

That is what you are trying to do. That is what you are trying to do. You will not support it for one more year – one more year is what you have to support it for. Interesting – Labour in the rest of West Yorkshire are supporting the Liberal Democrats and Conservative Party in funding this in Bradford, in Kirklees, in Wakefield. You cannot do it here – why? It is a small amount to pay. If it was the £450,000 I understand that is a lot of money – we are talking less than half of that. The budget paper was wrong.

Bus patronage in Leeds in the last year has fallen by about five per cent. If we cut the free city bus that will have catastrophic effects on our patronage figures.

What sort of message are you sending to the Government when we are trying to bid for things like NGT and investment in public transport and you are not prepared to spend £189,000 to retain a free city bus which is providing investment in this city? As you go round it you see the shops. I for one when I have been round it have seen a shop I did not know existed in Leeds and I have been back to that shop and shopped there. It is bringing trade into this city and you are cutting it, you are failing to invest for a very small sum. Shame on you is all I can say. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Downes. Can I call upon Councillor Matthews, please.

COUNCILLOR MATTHEWS: Thank you, Lord Mayor, and thank you to Councillor Downes for putting that so eloquently. Actually it is quite amazing and Councillor Bentley just whispered to me, "So hang on a minute, they are cutting the free bus and they are also increasing parking charges. That is really going to make things better, isn't it, for the people of Leeds?"

I actually just wanted to respond very quickly to some of the points. I really am starting to wonder. When I was younger, when I was a silly student and I thought, hang on, I could join the Green Party, maybe that is where my politics lie because I am an environmentalist. Maybe I will join the Green Party, but you have just killed any thought I ever had of joining the Green Party...

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Not that we want you.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: ...because you opposed (*interruption*) the Liberal Democrat proposal, you opposed and killed the Home Insulation Scheme that Councillor Monaghan proposed, you are now opposing bus travel. What is the point of a Green Party if that is what you are going to do? There is no point in the Green Party – thank you very much, Les. Thank you, I knew you would support me there. We will not talk about your Mercedes though, Les!

The Morleys, Councillor Finnigan made some very good points then, actually. He drew together a lot of the points that we have made, so I think what he was saying is hopefully he is going to be voting amendment by amendment. He is going to be using his head, thinking like they should for the people of Morley and supporting what they feel is right, so we will all look at see what happens when it comes to the vote.

I will come on to substantive issue and this is a serious issue and, I must say, I must support the words Councillor Carter put forward on the Crisis Centre. The Crisis Centre is in my ward and I must say it has caused a lot of distress across the city, this one. I just want to really start by saying that the consultation has been abysmal. On such a serious issue, on such an issue that actually I think we can all agree, mental health, we will agree across this Chamber, is not invested in like other parts of the NHS. It is woefully inadequately invested in...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR MATTHEWS: ...and I think the little bit that the Council can do to help that service should be retained. As Councillor Hamilton, this is a drop in the ocean, actually, in the grand scale of budget and the help – if you listen to campaigners to save this service, they have saved hundreds of lives. That is what we are talking about, we are talking about saving lives. Councillor Yeadon, I know you are frowning at me there but actually I want to pay tribute to you, in a sense. You have had a lot of stick over this one. You sorted out a ward briefing for us members when we found out from the press that that service in our ward was

closing. We found out from the press but you helpfully waded in, said, "Get them a briefing" and thank you for that. I do feel that the sad thing is you have been misled by officers. There were a lot of things in this, they have run rings round you on this issue.

For instance, the geography of the people who use the service. We were told at the start it is just a small group of people in the city – it is right across the city. I cannot remember how many postcodes you said it was, Councillor Carter, but it is a lot.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: 31.

COUNCILLOR MATTHEWS: 31, right, so this is a well-used service from across the city. Then we were told it duplicates services that the NHS provide. That is simply not the case – it is simply not the case. I was speaking to one of the campaigners this morning actually and she was saying that the cognitive therapy that the provide at the service, officers of the Council have said, "Yes, go to your GP and you will find that service within a week. " In actual fact it is twelve weeks – you have to wait twelve weeks for that service. You have been completely misled.

The interesting thing, I think, when you are poring through the signatures of the over 1,000 people that have signed this petition is that NHS staff have signed it, so if you are saying the NHS say close it, why are the staff signing the petition? It just does not make any sense. It is an economic saving, this, not a social saving. You are not thinking about the social costs, you are thinking about the economic cost. It is all very well that you want to spend over £1m on a new website and you are killing such an important issue.

Actually, we had a bit of a brainstorm in the office today. Spring Road in Headingley is Labour's street of shame because on the one hand they are closing that service; on the other hand lower down Spring Road, the closed off bit of the road, the Council is resurfacing it. They are resurfacing it and it has planning permission to be brought into a park, so it is about to be brought into neighbouring Sparrow Park and you are resurfacing the road at cost to the Council. We have been on the phone to Highways officers – do not waste public money on such a resurfacing and on the same street you are closing a mental health facility. Absolutely appalling.

Consult and you will find these things out. All these things I have just outlined, go and talk to the people that run it, go and talk to the people that use it. We will fight you all the way from these side of the benches and we will not let this one drop. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Matthews. Councillor Procter, please.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The message that hopefully some Members are hearing on the benches opposite is, there is another way and, whilst the Liberal Democrats' and our amendments might not agree in every way by any shade of imagination, what they both show is that there is another way of dealing with some of these challenging circumstances.

What the ordinary backbench members of the Labour Group should be thinking about – and I hope they are thinking about this and certainly the Morley Boroughs and the Greens are thinking about as well – are the choices. That is all it is about – it is just about choices because there is great big a pot of money and it is

how it is all divided up. The Executive has come forward with a series of proposals and it is about do you agree with those proposals or not.

There is another way. I might say, not all of our proposals are contained in this budget amendment. There are a series of other proposals as well that officers were cautious about and, because we are naturally cautious people as well, were not put forward in the amendment and one of those items was the free events in Leeds that were proposed by the Executive to be cut. Our proposals was to save those free events and tender out the service. Initial talks with people in the private sector has shown that for the £1.2m that that service actually costs if that could be delivered, the savings of £350,000 that are assumed in the budget could be made there as well. The only reason it is not in there is because of the speed at which that could be progressed.

I want to address some of the specific issues to some people in particular. I can understand why Robert says what he does and why the Morley Borough Independents may wish to adopt a certain position. Nothing has been closed in Morley. If your Leisure Centre was being closed I do not think you would necessarily be going along with these proposals.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: The library is probably going to go.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: It has not been sold because, of course, I provided you with a £15m state of the art brand new leisure centre. *(applause)*

In terms of libraries I want to ask Ann a pretty simple question, and I am sure David will be able to respond. *(laughter)* Lord Mayor, I only say that because...

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: There is no need for that. I did not insult you, John.

COUNCILLOR: No, you cannot speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter, I have given more time when it is necessary but if you insist of having a go at people and they have a go back, it is your own fault.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I hope I am given more time for you interjecting as well. I was about to qualify the statement by saying simply because Councillor Ann Blackburn has already spoken and will not be able to speak again. That is what I was going on to say.

The choice is very simple and what this amendment from our Group proposes is to keep open 20 libraries across the city and instead sacrifice a tiny, tiny proportion of the IT budget. The choice is yours – libraries or IT. That is what it comes down to. Some say “Oh, IT.” Right, OK, we are taking a note. Councillor Illingworth was shouting, “Yes, IT.” Similarly with Garforth, Councillor Dobson - I am sure I have got his undivided attention – come on, Mark, you are a man of principle, what do you really want – Garforth staying open as it is, which is what you have told all the residents you are fighting for, or the stationery budget to remain intact? A £2m stationery budget exists across this Council. We are saying reduce that stationery budget by a minor, minor amount and keep Garforth open. It is commonsense to us.

The same with East Leeds, Councillor Lyons, I am sure he would want to do the same.

Colleagues opposite think there is no waste in this Council. You are wrong. Councillor Wakefield says, "You can look at the books." We have been doing better than looking at the books. We have been trawling the invoices. Do you think it is a useful sum of money to spend, East North East Homes, £3,5000 on a Christmas staff function including DJs? That is what Council taxpayers' money is paying for in this Authority. Is it appropriate for Education Leeds to spend something like £157,000 at Weetwood Hall on conferences, dinners and the like? I have got an invoice here, £3,700 in a cancellation fee; £470 in a cancellation fee; £266 in a cancellation fee and a string of people, four reggae artists put up in the Hilton Hotel. (*interruption*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I have allowed you an extra 30 seconds. Can you finish now, please?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Lord Mayor, I thank you for the extra time. No-one is fooled by what Labour are saying in this Chamber. They are Labour cuts –we know it, the protestors know it and we are going to make sure the people out there know it. (*applause*)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You need an Oscar, mate.

THE LORD MAYOR: After all that, Councillor Chastney, please.

COUNCILLOR CHASTNEY: Lord Mayor, now for the nicer side of the Coalition! (*laughter*) I will just start with a brief note about the scope of the discussions, I think. We are actually going to be agreeing both here with Councillor Grahame, when he did say earlier this is a Leeds budget. I think that is absolutely right and I think we have had a bit of a mixed bag today and I have to say there has been good and bad and that includes our own sides from people who perhaps have been a little bit distracted who fixated on a bit of a wider context which are not absolutely within our influence. Context is important, I accept that, and I accept we do need to sometimes set the pace of how we got here and what has happened. However, I think we have sometimes been subjected to a bit of history lessons which are not necessarily helpful. We have all got our own opinions on that.

Thanks to the people who did because I think I almost want to pick out Government Gruen as an exemplar of how to discuss in these particular debates where I do not agree with all he said, Peter, but everything was focused on the debate and the amendment. All I would hope is that for the discussions throughout the coming year, that is how the things will go and we always talk about what is going on here in Leeds, everyone has their own opinions on the national picture, of course, but that is not really what we are meant for here today.

With that in mind, looking locally, picking out a couple of features of our amendment, notably, obviously the proposal to pick out a significant increase of money towards local Area Committees. Of course I am going to pick that out as an Area Committee Chair. Instead of the £200,000 drop we are looking at over £1m increase. Some might call that a revolution – I told you I would get that in, Stewart – in localised agenda. Perhaps not on the jasmine scale, jasmine variety, but it is seriously a revolution towards the localised agenda.

As a Chair I am pretty aware that the desire of all members, and certainly in my Committee, they want to be able to take a lot of these decisions locally, particularly over Wellbeing funding and also the demands from the community for some money to be supportive with Wellbeing.

From the point of view of my own Committee in the Inner North West, this year the request for projects was nearly double that of the money that we actually

had available and obviously that situation has deteriorated since if we get a proposed further cut in Wellbeing.

Members, discussing these priorities as we have been doing recently, we are now faced with the difficult prospect of saying no to projects that we actually support, and that is from across the benches, and even think might be pretty good value for money. I accept the circumstances are tough choices and the need to prioritise – of course we have that, that is the whole point – but the ability to prioritise fairly and effectively is actually so much better at the local level. There are many schemes and projects that I know members on both sides would actually want to support instead of other Council projects, and that is obviously the priorities we have been discussing today. That is so much better and so much easier done at that local level so really we are not being disingenuous, we are not trying to pluck money up from elsewhere. We are simply redirecting it and we are saying that for this particular amount of money we thought that would be better discussed and better prioritised and those decisions would better be made at that local level.

That is why I very much welcome and I would urge, regardless of perhaps what you think about the other amendments, on this specific issue of local money and the Wellbeing budget, I hear what Peter said but I would suggest that this is not money being taken away from elsewhere, it is just being moved into this area and it is this area of decision making.

All I would say is that the Wellbeing budget and the Community Safety Budgets would allow Councillors and members of the public to better tailor the investment of the limited money that we do have available. Please support that amendment. Thank you. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Chastney. Councillor Monaghan, please.

COUNCILLOR MONAGHAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am in danger here, I think, of the Headingley ward members setting up a Robert Finnigan fan club because actually what I was going to say was that I think Robert's contribution to the debate was actually the most sensible and I think the man on the omnibus that I think him and his group mention would have found that actually the most illuminating of contributions. I think it is really interesting that actually the power in this Council Chamber at this meeting lies with those eight Councillors from the Morley Borough Independents and the Green Group. I find it quite astonishing that Councillor Ann Blackburn in her speech said, "Oh, it is up to the Leader of Council to sort out", "Oh, we will sort it out afterwards." No, Ann, this is the budget meeting, this where we sort it out. This is where you, if you vote correctly, can save the free city bus, you can save the Leeds Crisis Centre, you can save Sports Centres. You can actually save those budget items.

What I want to do is focus on the green environmental items that have been discussed today and I think to be honest, the Green's input into the Labour budget is about as loud and clear as one of Ann Blackburn's speeches because there were only two things mentioned. One was the insulation scheme that we fully support but there is no new money for that – absolutely no new money and that is not a fully funded scheme. I would like, when Councillor Keith Wakefield stands up to sum up, him to give a cast iron guarantee that he will fully fund the insulation scheme across the city because that is not currently identified in the budget.

To go on about the solar panels, brilliant, again, completely supportive, but not a single penny of Council money is going into that. That is through the new Feed In tariff that, quite rightly, your Government set up and we fully support but there is

not a single penny going into those green schemes from the Council. What you are actually doing is cutting brown bin collections and not expanding the extremely successful food waste collection.

The Liberal Democrat budget amendment addresses the climate change adaptation, it supports more green infrastructure through such things as community orchards, tree planting or other local green projects as prioritised through local Area Committees and actually we are progressing the green budget this time. If the Green Party really are green and really want to show their commitment to it, they should be supporting these items and actually, Ann, you have exactly the opportunity to do that by voting on each of these individual amendments and I hope you will show your independence and support the green motions we are putting forward and actually show yourself to be a green party. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Monaghan. Can I call on Councillor Campbell, please.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Popular acclamation, Lord Mayor, it is always nice. Lord Mayor, I think in my experience anyway this is perhaps a unique Council budget meeting because it is the only budget meeting I have been to, and I have been to quite a few, where we have not actually discussed the Council Tax. In the past those members will recall that we used to spend hours discussing Council Tax and how much we were going to put it up or not, as the case may be, and we did also discuss Government grant, etc, but this year, of course, the Council Tax has effectively been set for us by Central Government and so the funding of this Council was decided not actually in this room but by Central Government some considerable time ago. What we are actually discussing this afternoon, Lord Mayor, is, given that we are all going to get the same pot of money, what our priorities are for spending that money.

It is a quite clear decision that Members have to make today because we have also adopted a new strategy which involves separate votes on the amendments, on various parts of the amendments, so that allows Members of the Council to say to themselves, "This is my priority for the Council. It will not affect the budget, it will not affect the Council Tax but it will affect the lives of the people in Leeds."

I would just like to raise a couple of issues that we have highlighted in our budget. One of them was something Andrew touched on which was about road repairs. About six years ago, when the Coalition took over the Council, there was a 20 year backlog in road repairs in this city – 40, sorry. I am getting old and I don't remember all these things! It was a considerable period of time and Leeds, quite frankly, was the laughing stock of West Yorkshire about the quality of roads. I think it is fair to say – and it has already been pointed out – the cost implications to the Council of not repairing the roads far exceeded the cost of actually doing the repairs. Our amendment highlights that problem and says we need to spend more money on them.

It also highlights the issue of 20 mile an hour zones. Any motorist – and I point at Les Carter over there – is fully supportive of the 20 mile an hour zone scheme because it does two things.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: I cannot get down to 20 miles an hour, that is the problem!

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: It does two things. It reduces congestion and it reduces fuel consumption and that, by definition to a good motorist, must be a good

thing. It also does something else and that is it dramatically reduces road safety injuries. If you are hit by a car travelling at 20 miles an hour you have a very, very good chance of surviving. If you are hit by one travelling at 40 miles an hour, you have a very, very good chance of dying. It is our responsibility to protect the citizens of Leeds and we can do that really easily because the Government has changed the legislation and that will allow us to introduce 20 mile an hour speed limits in any residential street in this city if we want to. We have identified a pot of money that can do that.

Councillor Finnigan is talking but I will actually address this to the Morley Independents because in many ways we are all in the Robert Finnigan fan club at the moment. I have got my name down for a medium tee-shirt, by the way! The point is that you have touched on a point that has been raised on many occasions in these Council budget meetings and that is the element of tit-for-tat knock-about, etc, but this is the first budget meeting that you or I or anyone else in this room has actually had the ability to look at it in detail and make decisions on specific issues. That has never happened before; it may never happen again, for all I know, but it has never happened before.

I would simply say to you, if you believe what you were saying earlier on, then look at the amendments. I do not expect you to agree with all of them but I do think you ought to say to yourself, would these benefit Morley? I know they would benefit my area, I know they would benefit all the areas that everybody represents, but the only way to get them through is for us to all agree on them. It is your opportunity. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Campbell. Councillor Lamb, please.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was not expecting to speak today but following the Leader of Council's comments I thought perhaps I should respond.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Apologise, you mean.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I am hoping to get an apology from you, actually, Keith. I would like to start by thanking the officers as well because we have asked an awful lot of questions of them trying to get information and putting our budget amendment together, myself and colleagues, and I am extremely grateful for the dignified and helpful and constructive way they have come back to us and worked with us to try and put our proposals together. I am sure their hearts sink every time they see an email with my name at the front of it now, but I make no apology whatsoever for asking the questions and direct it to you, Keith, I make no apology whatsoever for letting the people of Leeds know what their money is spent on.

The specific issues you raised is around taxis. I made a point in the press saying how much we spent in December on taxis. I hope you are paying attention to this, Keith. Keith? Hello? Having attacked me in person you could at least do the courtesy of listening in response. No, not paying attention. Hopefully everyone else will listen carefully.

Last year in his budget amendment Councillor Wakefield proposed to cut the budget for taxis for special educational needs provision by £100,000. This year he did not go twice as far or three times as far or four times as far – he has gone seven times further. He is proposing to cut this year in his budget that you are going to vote for, the budget for special educational needs provision – and I will read out the line:

“In respect of special educational needs transport, savings of £700,000 have been built into the budget which will be achieved through independent travel initiatives and taxi procurement efficiencies.”

The fact that you are attacking me for suggesting that we might be able to find savings in that taxi budget, I think you owe me and the people of Leeds an apology and I hope you will deliver it in your speech. (*applause*)

There is something else I want to pick on. Since Keith decided to pick on me specifically, I am going to devote most of my speech to picking on him! I want to read something out to you, Keith.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I am afraid now.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I am sure you are. You referred to a lost generation of young people. I want to read something out to you:

“More than five million people on out of work benefits. Just short of a million 16-24 year olds not in education, employment or training. £1 in every £3 the Government spends on Social Security and debt interest. An enormous deficit, record levels of national debt, more paid on debt interest than educating our children.”

I wrote that down for a speech in 2007, a year before the economic crisis and the banking crisis and the recession. That is the legacy, the entire fault of your Government - your Government – and I hope for that lost generation of young people – I will read one more thing out:

“The OECD’s programme for the International Student Assessment shows a marked decline in science, reading and maths between 2000 and 2009. Compared to our international neighbours we fell from fourth to 16th in science, seventh to 25th in reading and eighth to 28th in maths.”

If that is not a lost generation of young people brought up under a Labour Government – a Labour Government – I do not know what is. (*applause*)

I want to address the rest of my comments directly to the people who are going to decide this budget effectively, as has been pointed out, the Morley Borough Independents and the Greens.

You talked about why was this only put out with 24 hours’ notice. Fair point. The reason is, we were working on it up to the very last possible minute. (*interruption*) Officers will tell you, you can ask to see the emails, the responses to the questions that have been coming in even in the last two days as we have tried to put the finishing touches to something that you can vote on.

You have a choice today. You have a choice. We have outlined realistic, credible savings that could be made in other areas of the budget. It is up to you whether or not you close the Crisis Centre. It is up to you whether or not we close libraries. It is up to you whether we cut the crèche service and the free bus services. You have a choice. You can save those things today, specifically, one by one, things that are going to benefit your communities.

Councillor Lyons, you can save the 2,500 people who petitioned in one week alone on your leisure centre to keep it open. Councillor Dobson, Councillor Murray, Councillor McKenna, you can save your leisure centre in Garforth. (*interruption*)

I will finish with somebody else's words, actually. I will finish for somebody else's words, actually.

COUNCILLOR: Cash for votes.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I will finish for somebody else's words that can put it much better than I can. One of the protestors today, one of the peaceful demonstrators who did not enter the Chamber but wanted to come and express their views – I will not say his name – he said:

“These cuts are a disgrace and it is shameful the Labour administration is proposing them.”

He knows the truth, he knows where the blame lies. You should apologise to the people of Leeds, Councillor Wakefield. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Lamb. Councillor Les Carter, please.

COUNCILLOR: Heavyweights are on now.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: That was a better reception than you gave Colin Campbell anyway. My Lord Mayor, may I just make a couple of comments? I am not going to make a long one.

Robert, just coming back to Robert for one second, I listened very carefully to your speech, Robert. You know as well as I do why there is what appears to be inequality in what Manchester receives, Liverpool receives, other places receive. They are different cities. They do not have a wealthy outside and that is the problem. We have said this for years with what happens in Leeds. That is why it is based on needs and our needs actually go down because of those outside. It is all right but that is there.

What you will not do it – and that is what I am saying, you will not do – that is not just now, it has been going on for donkey's years so whatever you say about that it is not going to change in the next twelve months, much as I would like it to, but it is not going to.

There was a man up there from the Standard earlier and I was talking to him and said, “Why have you come here today?” He said, “It is the Morley people.” I said, “Why?” He said, “I think they call themselves independent, don't they? How can they call themselves independent when they just slavishly follow one party's budget?” (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Remember what happened last year, Les. We were being accused of the same sort of thing. That was very different.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: What you have here today is a very clever amendment written by a very clever man. Andrew Carter is very, very good at budgets. He has seen them for a long time, he has done more budgets than anybody else in this Council. I think you talk about a united front on all sorts of areas. I am not disagreeing with that. The best words that Councillor Wakefield said

today were congratulating me and I thank you very much for that, Keith, and it was meant with good intention and it was taken with good intention.

What Keith could not do today, and I am not being funny, he could accept some of them. Keith could accept some when he gets on his feet and say OK, because he knows he can accept some of these without upsetting the Director of Finance because every one of these amendments have had to be individually considered. We did not consider them in total – they had to consider them if any one was passed that that went through. That could happen from Keith. If he thinks well, that is a good idea, let us take it on board.

What surprises me, the Greens, I think that is lovely. Ann when you said about the bus I thought, my God, it is a woman after my own heart!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I don't think so!

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Let's get more cars, more cars! *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: It is the new Green policy.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Just one point of yours, Ann, you did say – and it is an important point, listen, she made a very important point about reserves, and it is very important. The effect of these amendments reduce our reserves from £19.4m to £19.1m. £279,000 is what the reduction is – it is hardly, hardly something that is going to cripple us.

For that, and we come back to the Morley Independents, for that there are a number of things in here which you can choose to support. OK, you do not accept the free bus, that is right and proper if that is your particular view. It is right and proper if you do not support it you do not vote for it, but there are other things in here which I think you do support.

I do not think you would like to see the Crisis Centre closed. There are all sorts of things in here. I do not think you want to see libraries closed. I do not think you want to see the different sports centres closed. I do not think you want to see that. The point is, what we have got here is a pick and mix amendment. You can pick what you want out of it and leave what you do not want.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: It is like being back at Woollies.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: It is a Woolworths' amendment.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: You can do that. I just come back to you both. Just a quickie to Peter. Peter, you do not really understand your budget here. I know you have been trying very hard in the last twelve months...

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: He is only learning.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Remember what we are talking about. It is not taking away your £400,000, which is going to go towards burglary, which I totally support, no argument with that. The other money, if you remember, our Government - and they were involved in it as well; we are involved with the giving, they are involved with the cutting – *(laughter)* – what we did, they actually gave £1m, if you remember, gave £1m and it is that which is not putting the balance in reserves, it is putting it into the community.

Just coming back, all I am saying to you all is, look, I think we can choose some of these amendments and I think we should choose some, not merely because I am winding you up about whether you are independent or not. I know how independent you are and I know you fight for Morley, I know you fight very hard for Morley. I know the Greens have got principles as far as what they think is right and wrong, but I do not think we should just simply say, if you really believe a budget should be set in this Council Chamber by all of us then I think you can accept some of these amendments and I am hoping with Keith gets up that Keith says, "Yes, I can look at that, I can accept that" because we do not want to close these things and if we can help closing them, if we can stop it, we should all be welcoming and clapping Andrew Carter on the back. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: On his way out.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Let us work together, Keith.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Carter, for that impassioned plea. Can we have Councillor Harris now, please.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Councillor Wakefield started fairly early on in his motion this afternoon about what Liberal Democrats on this side think about the Government and what is being done and anybody ought to now that I always was unable to completely follow the Party line nothing has ever changed in that respect.

Others have already said it but nobody will say it of me that I am not prepared to get up and sometimes say contradictory things in terms of Party creed, though I have said before in this Chamber that I do not hold Gordon Brown or the previous Government responsible for the actual economic crisis. That came about for other reasons and I think it is disingenuous and it makes politicians look disingenuous when all you do is point the finger at others when clearly there are more complex issues. I say it again and I have said previously, I think that as Prime Minister Gordon Brown actually stepped up to the mark when the you-know-what hit the fan and if he had not, I think the world financial system may well have collapsed if not for his actions, and he deserves applause for that. What he does not deserve applause for, and this is what we are grappling with now, is the way in which he and 13 years of the Labour Government raised people's expectations unreasonably. They led the country – and I am guilty of this as well – as individuals, as collectively, to believe that we could have anything, that everything could be paid for and it was never true, it was an illusion, it was a mirage and now we are having to deal with that problem and the way in which we cut the cloth, which is severely curtailed.

In previous meetings Councillor Blake in particular has pointed the finger at this side and talked about us as being in denial about the way in which we ran the Council and indeed Keith today has made the point several times that you inherited a financial mess. I want to if I may, because I have consulted Finance Officers on this earlier today, to put this in context, because again this is the nub of the problem. The cuts that we are having to deal with, because it is always easy for Central Government to push a lot of the pain on to Local Government, they have always done that in good times and bad but the cuts we are having to deal with are as a direct consequence of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement rising by 400-500%. That is what the current Government inherited.

Let us just put that in the context of what the Labour administration inherited from the outgoing Liberal-Conservative, Conservative-Liberal administration in this Council. The expected increase in borrowing that you had inherited is 10-12%, so it is disingenuous in the extreme to point at problems that you inherited as if they are in

any way of the magnitude of the problems that the Government has inherited in trying to deal with public finances. That is the nub of it.

We are all being dishonest in not making the public understand that it is not an easy, clear picture and it is no good us all just pointing the fingers at each other.

I started by dealing with this issue of being honest and being prepared to criticise and I just wondered, as I finish, whether Councillor Taggart is going to be honest and stand up and criticise his Leader and his Party's budget, because it does say, and he is quoted in tonight's Evening Post, that he will be one of those pressing for a compromise in the Council Chamber today with regard to the cut to Bramley Primary School. I just wonder, because I would be prepared to stand up and be honest if he is prepared to. (*applause*)

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Come on, Neil, there is one you can vote for in here.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Harris. Councillor Grayshon, please.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This afternoon we from Morley appear to be everybody's friends. Indeed, I have been told by my Leader that I must not, I think the word he used was "annoy" but that could be lost in translation because it started with a "p".

There were a number of things which I find interesting about today's meeting. I always find it interesting when Keith Wakefield mentions the banking crisis and how that came about and at this point I need to declare an interest as an employee of the Royal Bank of Scotland. One of the fundamental problems why the banking crisis came about was the failure of the Government to regulate the banks correctly. The Basel Committee which deals with standards on banking was also somewhat remiss in what it should be doing and I have not seen Keith trotting down to the local Nat West Branch where the City Council's account is held to have a chit chat with the people there about the issues and concerns.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I can't trot anywhere these days, Terry.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: You could catch the free bus if you vote that way, Keith! (*laughter*) That is one of the issues, the Government neglected to regulate the banks properly. Let us bear in mind that there are a number of members of staff of those organisation in this city who are facing redundancy. It is not all people shooting on country estates at the weekend and all that kind of thing. Some people are in very dire straits with it all. As I say, the banks were not regulated correctly in the opinion of a number of people.

I am very pleased that John Procter managed to give us a sports centre in Morley.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I was pleased to.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: I feel it is my obligation to point out to you that the reason why you could do it was because we voted for you to do it John, the Morley Independents voted for you to do it.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I was so grateful as well.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Good.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: And we remember.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: We are, in Morley North, facing the consultation about whether the library is closing at Drighlington, so do not think that just because you come from Morley everything is rosy in the garden because it is not. We do have some problems as well.

One of the things I have also written down is about the Conservative amendments and, much as I like Andrew Carter and I think there may be...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: The feeling may not be going to be mutual in a moment.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Not after what I have said it may not be mutual! I think if we had seen these amendments before they were presented to us and had the opportunity to discuss them, then it would have been far more meritorious than doing it in the strange way that they have been presented, but hindsight is a wonderful thing, I am told, and going forward perhaps that is something to bear in mind.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: With your intellect you can soon grasp the point.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: My intellect is such that I could grasp the point but you have seen the other people in the Group! *(laughter)* Having said that, there are some interesting things. We live in very difficult times. Blame storming for me is never a way forward and I think that we need to ensure that we get the best deal for the City of Leeds. I think the MPs who represent Leeds could do a lot more than they are doing to ensure that we receive adequate funding from the Government. I know Les has mentioned the leafy areas around Leeds which causes the problems. John Procter again is to blame for that coming from Wetherby – I shall blame him for that because he has picked on me this afternoon – but we need to deal with the matter in hand. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(applause)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You remember next time they are after your blood, Robert Finnigan.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Grayshon. Councillor Blake, please.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was not going to speak either today until Councillor Lamb got to his feet, so he put a challenge out asking why you were not going to support the amendments and why certain members here should not and I have to say quite clearly the reason is because we all know that what you are talking about is based on fantasy and we must never forget that the proposals are coming from two parties who vowed to abolish tuition fees, who vowed to defend EMAs and vowed to protect the NHS and stop any top-down reorganisation. *(applause)*

Also, can we just go to what Councillor Lamb specifically raised. The reason Councillor Wakefield raised this, Councillor Lamb, is because of the way you put your press release out. You were intending to cause outrage and scandal by the figures that you had actually found but can I just put it absolutely straight to Council that the money he was talking about, 99.7% of the total spend on taxis related to education and social care activity meaning that we spent it on taking children with special education needs to and from school.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: You did not say that.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Spent it on taking children to care and visits from their family and spent it on transporting children with learning difficulties and vulnerable elderly people. 92% of the total spend on food and drink was to provide school meals, food at our social care facilities, including Early Years Centres, Luncheon Clubs and meals on wheels. There are many more other issues that we can go on.

I have to tell you that we have undertaken a review of the transport services, recognising your complete failure to do that when you had the opportunity, and I can actually say to you that what we want to do with the review is to encourage greater independence through personalised transport, for example supervised transport on buses, people going with them which, again, not only will it have a financial benefit but it will greatly improve the independence of the young people that we are talking about.

We have got no plans to cut the provision of transport to SEN children but absolutely it is about making the service more efficient and independent.

The key issues that we are facing in Children's Services is that grants to the Children's Services department have been cut by £17.1m. The greater question is, I would have thought, that you could have spent some real time talking about all of the priorities that you and Councillor Bentley have well signed up to, and I really do appreciate that work that you do with the Children's Trust Board, but these are the challenges that are facing the Council, these are the results that the Government cuts have brought about and I am extremely disappointed that you have not chosen today to raise in your budget discussions just how you actually fully recognise the real difficulties. We have made enormous progress in Children's Services over the last months to address the needs of the most vulnerable children in our city and we will continue to put more money in to deal with the things that we have got to do.

Councillor Chapman is quite right on supporting the Children's Trust Board real priorities in tackling the issue of poverty to children in the city. If we do not address the overarching issues of poverty, then all the situations that we know are just going to get worse and worse.

Can I just end by saying to Council, I have actually been cheered up by hearing the budget debate today because it is absolutely obvious to me that neither the Liberals nor the Tories have got any expectation of being back in a position of running this Council. It shows by the approach that they have taken, by the fact that they did not put forward any of these ideas in a meaningful way that could have actually informed the budget that Councillor Wakefield has put forward today and I am really proud on behalf of the Group on this side to support the budget amendment (*sic*) in the name of Councillor Wakefield today. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lamb, I understand you want to make a point of personal explanation.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Yes, a point of personal explanation. I think Councillor Blake has misquoted, or I will give her due and say perhaps misunderstood what I said. I know Councillor Wakefield was not listening at the time. What I pointed out was that in their budget they are proposing to cut by £700,000 the budget for special educational needs transport. Judith is, I think, suggesting that I was attacking in my press release the spend on that money, which certainly was not the case.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You know what you were doing.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I resent the assertion that somehow there is no commitment (*interruption*) – Lord Mayor, I can make the point quickly if everyone is quiet. I resent the assertion from Councillor Blake that somehow I do not have a full commitment to supporting vulnerable children in this city.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: That is not personal explanation. This is Standing Orders...

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Bernard, sit down, I have nearly finished.

THE LORD MAYOR: I think if we all sit down and if you finish now, thank you. You sit down too, Councillor Atha. Will you now sit down?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: As long as you answer the question but he is not sitting down either.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Lord Mayor, one sentence will clarify.

THE LORD MAYOR: One sentence and we finish.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: One sentence will clarify my absolute commitment to supporting vulnerable children in this city, along with Councillor Bentley, along with Councillor Gettings, along with Councillor Blackburn and I resent the assertion that I do not share that. (*applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: thank you, Councillor Lamb. Councillor Wakefield, please, to sum up.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, I am still recovering from the savaging Councillor Alan Lamb gave me. You can tell he has been influenced by Alec Shelbrooke in the way he speaks and holds himself.

Let me get on to some serious business. Despite the months and the hours we spent on having an All Leaders' Party Group, you have got to ask the question, and Councillor Finnigan did, why did they not once bring any of those amendments to the All Party Leaders' Group and engage in a debate? I will tell you why, because basically today all those amendments are about denying responsibility, trying to deflect responsibility for their Government's approach for the biggest cuts in the history of Leeds City Council.

You know, there are some amendments I would consider and I will come on to it but actually some range from the ridiculous to the very dangerous and I want to come on to that in a minute.

I think that the amendment about Bramley Baths and Garforth Baths are well worth considering and already...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Well vote for them.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ...those Members Councillor Dobson and Councillor Handley have already gone extra money in from the source which I am happy to talk about so they can be extended hours, so you do not have to consider that because Members have done it. I will come on to something else.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Where from? Is it secret?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: The more important thing is actually – no, it is from the Area Wellbeing money. That is what they persuaded people to do, perfectly acceptable, we checked with officers and there will be extended hours.

Let us get on to some of these. I will not go through the 15 because we have not got time but I will take you through – let me deal with the Crisis Centre which is actually subject to a call-in and yet people have made statements here which I think is rather strange.

Let me just say this. If it is true what Councillor Carter has said that we were misled, then I promise I will bring it back but my understanding and my hearing said we had the PCT Chief Executive, we had the Director of Social Services who gave a very clear, coherent case that, unlike Councillor Jamie Matthews, there was extra money in the mental health service and that extra money would go towards the Crisis Centre, to replace that service with a better one which offers clinical pathways out of their state if they are on the borders of suicide.

Councillor Matthews, you are deliberately misleading people by saying there is not the money there. That is not new and I will come on to you a bit later.

If you can be quiet, because I want to take us through these amendments. If you look at amendment 3 – I will only choose two or three, I promise you – what Councillor Carter is saying, a decrease in the Central & Corporate to replace the cessation of Leeds Initiative and International Relations. Are you really saying that this Council should do without working with the police...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: No.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ...without working with the health...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: No.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ...under a partnership, without working with the Chamber...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: No.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ...without working with all those partners that actually have made this city a success over the last years? Let me just tell you, I agree in the past I have cut international relations in my proposals, but there is three-and-a-half staff and let me tell you this, praise the economics, for every £1 we spend on international relations we get £4 back including the £900,000 we had from European money because they bid for it. That is crazy. It is just nonsense. We need more money and if they can generate £4 for every £1, what are we doing putting it in.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Let me just say...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: That is not right.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ...there is 150 reduction in the budget for cost of trade union facilities agreement. That is bigotry because if there is any time we need trade union involvement and relationship it is now when you are facing the

biggest cuts in our history. That is when we need to work so that we can get through the next few years. There is no need to attack them and tie their arms behind their back because actually I think you will have a worse situation.

Let me go on to amendment 6 because this is extremely worrying and I am not sure it has been thought through. A decrease, and he has admitted it, achieved by the ceasing of translation of brochures and leaflets. What we are saying as an international city with many nationalities, many languages, that we do not advertise the services that this Council offers in any languages.

Let me tell you this, that the Council Tax goes out in translations and surely you will not advocate that we should not try to send those brochures out in the appropriate language so that people can pay.

I could go on because one of the things that we were reminded by that side is we should do an Equality Impact Assessment. Has this really been through Equality Impact Assessment? I doubt it and, frankly, I think it leaves this Council legally liable for challenge. There is no doubt.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Rubbish. Absolute rubbish.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You are desperate. You are desperate.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I have seen enough cases to do it. Let me just go on to finally this one. I want to nail this other amendment which I regard as really, really – it is about the Council's web. This administration took us 36 out of 36 in all Authorities. It is not about vanity. It is actually costing our people who pay Council Tax more money because they cannot use a crap system that needs updating. That is what it is about. They cannot get to our services and what we are saying is, we should leave them to struggle, to use the phone, to use things like that.

I have got to say to Councillor Procter very quickly, I think Councillor Pauleen Grahame said, he is the best actor for a loss of memory I have seen in this Chamber. He is the Arsene Wenger.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: That is too many words for Pauleen to string together, don't be silly. She would never say that about me.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He is the Arsene Wenger here. He did not quite remember that actually it was the Labour Government that gave us the £15m for the Morley Sports Centre, he did not remember, and he did not quite remember...

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: No it was not.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ... he did not quite remember that when he closed South Leeds Sports Centre he did not offer the Members there a choice like he has done with Dobson.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: I did not close it.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Oh yes you did.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Your Exec Member closed it.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You closed it.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: It was open on my watch. You closed it.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Let me carry on because Councillor Golton's is a ridiculous amendment. What he is doing is borrowing from school reserves and he has no strategy of how he will pay them back. Which cuts is he going to make in order to pay them back? He is robbing schools who have already been knocked back from this Government. He is robbing them for his own vanity schemes which, frankly, do not matter.

Let me just say this, you know the Lib Dems have views from Genghis Khan to Leon Trotsky. *(laughter)* You have got Councillor Jamie Matthews who wants to abolish the Lord Mayor – I am sure, Brenda, you will be pleased to know that – because he is a radical. Then you have Councillor Monaghan who wants to have four yearly elections. I wonder if that is because he hopes that the people of Leeds forget that the promises they made have been broken; the promise not to do the National Health Service; the promise not to affect the economy for the deep cuts; and the promise not to put tuition fees for students increasing. *(applause)*

Councillor Finnigan I actually thought made a very good contribution because what he did...

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Oh, here is the sucking up. *(interruption)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He said that these two parties have missed an opportunity. They bluffed, they trivialised, they diverted and they have missed an opportunity to stand up for the people of Leeds and Leeds City Council. *(interruption)* They can do it in Kirklees, even John Weighell of North Yorkshire, an old friend of Andrew Carter, if they can do it in Kirklees, if they can do it in Bradford, why can't they do it now, today?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Why didn't you offer it then?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I will tell you one thing...

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Why didn't you offer it?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ... this proposal that we have got today will show people that we are out to protect front line services...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Closing things down.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ...and we are out to make sure that this city gets a fairer deal from this Government. I move the amendment *(sic)* Lord Mayor. *(applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. Before I call for the vote and pass it over to the Chief Executive, can I ask, will there be a requirement for a recorded vote and can we make it for the whole 19? Would somebody like to move that?

COUNCILLOR PROCTER: Moved, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is seconded. All those in favour of that? *(A vote was taken)* Yes, OK.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 1)

THE LORD MAYOR: I am trying to move on as quickly as I can, there are a lot of these. There are 96 present, the "Yes" vote is 42, abstentions 0 and the "No" vote is 54, which means the amendment is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 2)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again, 96 present, 41 in favour, no abstentions and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 3)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again, there are 96 present, 22 in favour of the amendment, 18 abstentions and 55 against, so that is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 4)

THE LORD MAYOR: There are 95 present, "Yes" 41, no abstentions and there are 54 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 5)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again we have 96 present, 41 "Yes", no abstentions and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 6)

THE LORD MAYOR: 96 members present, "Yes" 22, abstentions 18 and 56 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 7)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again 96 present, "Yes" 41, abstentions 0, against 55. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 8)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again 96 present, 41 in favour, no abstentions and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 9)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again there are 96 present, "Yes" 41, no abstentions and the "No" vote is 55. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 10)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again we have 96 present, there are 41 "Yes" votes, no abstentions and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 11)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again we have 96 members present, there are 22 in favour, 19 abstentions and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 12)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again there are 96 members present, the “Yes” vote is 41, abstentions 0 and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 13)

THE LORD MAYOR: There are 96 present, the “Yes” vote is 42, abstentions 0 and the “No” vote is 54, which means the amendment is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 14)

THE LORD MAYOR: We have 96 members present, the “Yes” vote is 41, no abstentions and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 15)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again, there are 96 members present, the “Yes” vote is 41, no abstentions and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 16)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again we have 96 present, “Yes” is 19, abstentions 22 and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 17)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again we have 96 present, the “Yes” vote is 19, abstentions 22, the “No” vote is 55. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 18)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again we have 96 members present, the “Yes” vote is 19, abstentions 22 and 55 against. That is LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on Amendment 19)

THE LORD MAYOR: Again 96 members present, 41 in favour and 55 against. That is LOST.

Didn't he do well? (*applause*)

Can we now go on to vote on the motion in the name of Councillor Wakefield?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Recorded vote.

(A recorded vote was held on the substantive motion)

THE LORD MAYOR: There are 82 members present. In favour of Councillor Wakefield's amendment is 54, abstentions 21 and one “No”. That is CARRIED.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Right, a “No”. That is very definite.

THE LORD MAYOR: We have a budget.

ITEM 7 - MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we go on to Item 7 and the Minutes. Can I ask Councillor Wakefield to move that the Minutes be received.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, it is a wind up.

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes, it is a wind up.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Wind up on the Minutes.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I move the Minutes formally, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, although I will not reserve my right to speak.

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

That completes today's very exciting and different Council meeting. Thank you very much and a safe journey home to you all. For those of you who are hungry there are refreshments in the Banqueting Suite, you are very welcome to come in and the people in the gallery may do so. If you want a cup of tea and something to eat please come, you are welcome.

(The meeting closed at 7.02pm)