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To: All Members of Council

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Date: 20 July 2011

Dear Councillor

### **COUNCIL MEETING – 13<sup>th</sup> JULY 2011**

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 13 to 39 unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

Q13 (Councillor Bruce to Councillor Ogilvie) - Would the Executive Board Member for Leisure care to comment on the recent award (Best Live television event at the TV Broadcast Awards in London) for the staging of Frankenstein's Wedding at Kirkstall Abbey.

A The Council is delighted for the team at the BBC who produced Frankenstein's Wedding have been recognised for their groundbreaking programme with such a special and prestigious award. We know that our wonderful Events team played a significant role in helping them create a new cutting edge programme which not only told a good story and showed Kirkstall Abbey off at its best it showed the Nation what brilliant dancers the people of Leeds are and how they are willing to get involved.

Q14 (Councillor Khan to Councillor R Lewis) - Will the Executive Board for Development and Economy update Council on progress with the proposed Aire Valley Enterprise Zone?

A As Members will be aware, the Board of the Local Enterprise Partnership at its meeting on 15 June 2011 agreed that a part of the Aire Valley Leeds, totalling around 140 ha, should be submitted to Government as the Leeds City Region Enterprise Zone. This was reported to June's Executive Board which welcomed the LEP's decision and agreed to further development of the proposal including the preparation of a Local Development Order to simplify the planning process.

Officers are currently working on the detail for submission to Government in due course.

The decision of the LEP is to be welcomed. The Aire Valley represents a significant opportunity to deliver economic growth that will have a major impact on the City's and the city-region economy. The designation of the Enterprise Zone will be a catalyst to further development providing jobs for the people of Leeds and the City-Region.

Q15 (Councillor Robinson to Councillor R Lewis) - What plans does the Executive Board Member for City Development have to ensure that super fast broadband is accessible for everyone in Leeds, particularly in rural areas?

A Overall Leeds is fortunate in terms of access to superfast broadband. The telecoms regulation Ofcom earlier this month published an interactive on-line map showing broadband speeds across the UK. This shows that 82% of residential and commercial premises have access to either the Virgin Media cable network or the Openreach fibre-to-the-cabinet which allows 'superfast broadband'. This is comparable with the UK's other major cities.

Exchanges in Pudsey and Headingley were amongst the first to be enabled for superfast broadband and the Council worked closely with BT Openreach to facilitate the positioning of the new street cabinets that are required to allow superfast broadband to be provided.

However, we recognise that there are rural areas which are less well served and even parts of the urban area where for technical reasons, broadband speeds are less than would be expected. The Government is making available a limited amount of money through BDUK (Broadband Delivery UK) to improve broadband speeds. Officers are currently carrying out work to pull together a proposal to BDUK (the Government's broadband delivery arm) that will in conjunction with West Yorkshire partners and City of York Council aim to deliver super fast broadband across the sub region, particularly aimed at areas where the market will not provide such as the rural hinterland. We are currently discussing with network providers what their future broadband rollout plans are in order to determine which parts of Leeds are not seen as an attractive commercial proposition and where therefore there is what is termed "market failure".

Q16 (Councillor Pryke to Councillor Wakefield) - Would the Leader of Council explain whether it is still the Labour Group's plan to introduce a 'living wage' for Leeds City Council employees?

A The Council recognises the importance of every person being paid a living wage that will provide 'adequate income' to ensure social inclusion for an individual and their family and it committed to being a Living Wage Employer status in April 2008.

In April 2008, the financial implications of providing a 'fairer living wage' for all Council employees based on an approach developed by Unison indicated that it would be an additional cost of £1.8m in the first full year. The costs of becoming a 'living wage city' were calculated to cost in the region of £90m.

Currently, the Council lowest salary of £6.47 exceeds the national minimum wage of £6.08 by a substantial margin. It also meets the fair employment conditions set out by the Living Wage Foundation.

The scale of the current financial situation being faced by the Council means that our current priority is to retain jobs for employees.

Q17 (Councillor Jarosz to Councillor Wakefield) - Would the Leader of Council agree that Government plans to impose a shadow mayor on this city were entirely undemocratic, and would he therefore also agree that abandoning those plans was the right decision for Leeds?

A A referendum will be held in May 2012 in which the citizens of Leeds will be able to vote on whether they want a Mayor for the city. If they vote for a Mayor in the referendum, the election of the city's first mayor will be held in May 2013.

However, if the people vote against having a Mayor then the Council will return to the leader and cabinet executive model. This is the preferred option as it ensures local people ultimately decide via a referendum whether their city should have an elected executive Mayor.

Q18 (Councillor Taylor to Councillor Dobson) - Would the Executive Board Member for Environmental Services & Licensing care to comment on his day recently working on the bins?

A The opportunity to see how the waste collection service works on the ground was, I believe, an invaluable and rewarding experience.

Working a full day on the bins is certainly hard work, and I was able to see at first hand the dedication of the staff as they went about their jobs. I would like to thank them for all their efforts. It was also an excellent chance whilst working on the round to meet and have a quick chat with a number of local residents to hear their thoughts on the service, and this was also very beneficial.

I certainly learned a lot, and am sure that this experience will be a great help to me as we aim to improve the service even further.

Q19 (Councillor Harrand to Councillor Wakefield) - Can the Leader of Council confirm that the Labour Group on West Yorkshire Fire Authority, with an overall majority, was unable to find a member suitable to be Chair of the Authority for 2011-12 and was therefore compelled to agree to a Liberal Democrat Chair and are there any plans to introduce this remarkable policy in Leeds?

A The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority is appointed by members of the Authority at their Annual Meeting. At the Annual Meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2011 Cllr David Ridgway was appointed Chair of the Authority and Cllr Mehboob Khan appointed Vice-Chair for 2011-12.

Q20 (Councillor Bentley to Councillor Wakefield) - How many properties owned by the Council have been empty for 20 or more years, and how much has it cost to maintain those buildings, including security costs?

A In the time available to check the records, the only property identified to date is Bramham House. However, further record checks can be made.

The Property was declared surplus in 1988. It has been marketed 5 times, originally in 1990, 1991 and 1992, on each occasion the purchaser withdrew.

Following a number of failed marketing exercises the premises have now been remarketed in 2011 and a purchaser has been selected with a sale to complete once the purchaser has obtained planning permission .

Records for the last 2 years indicate that in 2009/10, £8718 on maintenance and security and 2010/11 £10,040.

Q21 (Councillor Gabriel to Councillor Gruen) - Is the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing & Regeneration satisfied with the long-awaited outcome of the Government's value for money review of the Little London, Beeston Hill and Holbeck PFI project?

A Yes and no! I am happy that we're a step nearer to getting this much-awaited investment into the two communities. The long delay in receiving approval to proceed with the Housing PFI project in Little London, Beeston Hill and Holbeck has been extremely frustrating for tenants, residents and all those waiting for improvements. The Council has continued to fight for the project through difficult economic times and I am pleased to say that we have demonstrated that it offers good value for money to the public purse.

I am also happy that most of what we have hoped to achieve will still be happening – including the refurbishment of 1248 homes and 388 new Council homes, all to a high standard with benefits such as reduced energy bills for tenants, new internal fittings and external improvements. It will also include a range of environmental improvements to the housing estates. But, to reach this point the Council has had to respond to a requirement from Government to remove the proposed new community facilities in Little London. They just weren't prepared to fund it. We will be looking at other ways to make these improvements. Likewise, the Council will also find the higher space standards for the new homes and the higher level of energy efficiency we want to see as the Government isn't prepared to pay for those either.

I am also disappointed, that the project has been delayed so much and still faces some further delay – all of which costs the Council money – before we can finally sign the deal and get on with it.

We are committed to the regeneration of Little London, Beeston Hill and Holbeck and look forward to work starting on site in 2012.

Q22 (Councillor Walshaw to Councillor Blake) - Would the Executive Member for Children's Services care to share her thoughts with Council on Michael Gove branding the exam system as "discredited"?

A Last year in Leeds we saw record GCSE results with 76.5% of our young people achieving five or more GCSEs grade A\* - C. More than three quarters of all young people achieved five or more qualifications and less than ever left school with no qualifications at all.

We are extremely proud of the exam results achieved by young people in Leeds and it is a reflection of the hard work and commitment shown not just by the students themselves but also by the teachers and staff at the schools.

It was extremely disappointing that Michael Gove chose to make his comments at the height of the exam season as they can only serve to undermine the hard work and sap the confidence of students currently taking exams.

Q23 (Councillor Lamb to Councillor Blake) - Will the Executive Board Member for Children's Services provide an update on the progress being made on the new ESCR computer system?

A The procurement of the new system is fully underway:-

- Discussions have been held with several leading system suppliers to assess their reaction and approach to potential legislation changes as a result of the Munro review. The conclusion of these discussions was that most systems were configurable enough to cater for such changes.
- Having gained this assurance a European Tender Notice was published on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2011 for a replacement Children's Social Care Case Management System
- Suppliers are requested to respond to a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) with the closing date of 20<sup>th</sup> July 2011
- From these responses, 5 to 7 suppliers will be shortlisted
- Work is underway to complete a Statement of Requirements which will be issued to the shortlisted suppliers by the end of August 2011
- Suppliers will then have 35 days to complete their submission
- For each supplier the team will then carry out demonstrations and site visits to other authorities to evaluate the systems and the suppliers capabilities.
- The aim will then be to select the preferred supplier by the end of the year
- In parallel with the procurement, work is underway to clean and prepare the data in the existing system ready for migration to the new system
- There is also ongoing development work taking place around staff engagement, 'quick wins' in relation to the current system and ICT more generally and on integration options to enable a single view.

Q24 (Councillor Hamilton to Councillor Yeadon) - Would the Executive Board Member for Adult Social Care advise the Council on whether her department's budget is on track to break even and, if not, what is the anticipated deficit?

A I can say that activity levels are broadly in line with what we anticipated and even, in some areas there are some encouraging emerging trends, for example in residential and nursing placements.

Although it is still early in the financial year, the budget is being monitored carefully and, in line with arrangements agreed by the Council, the Executive Board will be receiving monthly reports of the organisation's financial performance.

The Executive Board meeting of the 27 July will receive the first of these scheduled reports.

Q25 (Councillor Armitage to Councillor R Lewis) - Will the Executive Board Member for Development and Economy update Council on the effects of Eric Pickles recent decision in the Grimes Dyke appeal?

A The Secretary of State agreed with the Inspector reporting on the Grimes Dyke case and with previous inspectors on the arguments of this Council in seeking to protect Greenfield sites from development. The Council's case on: housing land supply; the use of a windfall allowance; and the implications for regeneration initiatives were all rejected. The Council can no longer advance these same arguments on future applications with the consequence that all the Phase 2 and 3 housing allocations must now be regarded as available for development in principle. Furthermore in judging housing land supply the starting point will now be the housing target in RSS, until such time as this is replaced by any new target emerging via the Core Strategy.

Essentially, and notwithstanding what was implied in earlier statements and guidance, the Secretary of State has attached little or no weight to his intention to abolish RSS in the Grimes Dyke decision. More detail on these issues is available in the report considered by Executive Board on 22 June.

Q26 (Councillor Charwood to Councillor Blake) - Would the Executive Member for Children's Services care to comment on the recent Ofsted inspection of Wigton Moor Primary School?

A Key headlines for Wigton Moor are very positive from the inspection:-

- The school's overall effectiveness is outstanding
- The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

The school makes an outstanding and considerable difference to the lives of the young people in its care. The vast majority who responded to the inspection survey were highly supportive. Performance has remained high despite staffing changes.

There is one issue for development - developing the monitoring role of subject leaders.

Q27 (Councillor Lamb to Councillor Ogilvie) - Will the Executive Board Member for Leisure provide an update on the proposals for Garforth Squash and Leisure Centre?

A Discussions remain ongoing with the Schools Partnership Trust (SPT) with the aim of achieving a community Asset Transfer (CAT) as soon as practicably possible.

Momentum has been lost as a direct consequence of the original decision being 'called in'. The leisure centre will continue to operate at the enhanced 58.6 hours per

week, paid for by the City Development Directorate, while the CAT process is progressed.

Q28 (Councillor Campbell to Councillor Ogilvie) - Does the Executive Board Member for Leisure believe that charges at Leeds City Councils Crematoria should be higher at some times of the day than others?

A Chapels and cremations are currently provided at 3 sites, namely Lawnswood, Rawdon and Cottingley. Service times are available Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays, commencing at 9:00am in forty minute interval with the last slot at 3:00pm.

Due to the decline in death rates, the service has been able to accommodate chapel services within normal staff working hours by removing availability of the last service at 3:40pm. This has resulted in an operational efficiency, however funeral directors have made representations to have the 3:40pm service reinstated as it is the most popular time for use. Informal discussions have indicated that they would be receptive to an increase per cremation in order for the Council to recover these costs. Other local authorities charge a fee for the late cremation times to cover costs; in Bradford the fee is £60, Craven charge £60 and in Kirklees it is £120. Therefore an additional fee of £60 was introduced from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011 to cover overtime costs for the 3:40pm service.

An equality impact assessment (EIA) undertaken by the bereavement service considered the approach to covering the cost of reinstating the 3:40pm service. The EIA looked at the option of spreading the cost across all service users and concluding that this would be unfair on users who do not require a 3:40pm service. A supplementary charge was therefore viewed as the fairest option as it provides choice whilst not penalising every user.

Q29 (Councillor Mitchell to Councillor Ogilvie) - Would the Executive Board Member for Leisure care to comment on the good news regarding the City of Leeds Divers?

A Leeds City Council's Diving Training Scheme squad proudly have six out of the squad of eleven divers currently representing Great Britain at the FINA World Championships in Shanghai. The divers, Jack Laugher, Sarah Barrow, Alicia Blagg (14 years old and youngest member of the squad), Jenny Cowen, Rebecca Gallantree and Hannah Starling were selected after claiming 16 medals at the National Diving Championships recently held at the Aquatics Centre at the John Charles Centre for Sport. Leeds also claimed the women's team overall trophy for the ninth major national event in a row, while the men's team also scooped the overall team prize for the first time since 2004.

Furthermore two coaches from the Leeds Diving Training Scheme have also been selected to go to the World Championships with the squad. Adrian Hinchliffe (Senior Coach) and former world champion Edwin Jongejans (Age-Group Coach) are highly regarded in the coaching world and to produce over 50% of the divers representing Great Britain at the World Championships is a fantastic achievement for them and the City.

In total there are over 300 people of all abilities taking part in the Scheme on a daily and weekly basis, making it one of the biggest and certainly the most successful diving programmes in Britain.

Q30 (Councillor Lobley to Councillor Wakefield) - Will the Leader of Council provide details of the savings made by the decision to cut funding for Christmas lights in areas outside of the City Centre?

A The Christmas Lights provision including trees, lights and switch-ons provided outside the city centre costs was £120,000, and this is a 2011/12 saving. This provision was not equal or fair across the city with some communities in the past being provided with this service free from the Council while other communities paying for their lights.

Q31 (Councillor Pryke to Councillor Dobson) - Could the Executive Board Member for Environmental Services advise Council what the current timetable on selecting a preferred bidder for the Waste PFI Project is?

A It is currently anticipated that the recommendation for the selection of the Preferred Bidder will be reported to the Executive Board in November 2011. This is subject to the conclusion of the final tender evaluation by the Project Team, and the receipt of the necessary approvals from DEFRA to enable the Council to proceed through the relevant stages of the procurement process.

Q32 (Councillor Marjoram to Councillor Wakefield) - Will the Leader of Council provide an update on the Bike to Work scheme?

A A framework contract for the provision of a Bike to work salary sacrifice scheme is in the process of being procured. Tenders are about to be invited to apply.

Q33 (Councillor Townsley to Councillor Ogilvie) - Could the Executive Board Member for Leisure advise Council on how many days the fountains in City Square and on the corner of the Mandela Gardens have been operational this year?

A The short answer is 'not enough'. I can't give you a precise answer in the time available to collate an answer, but it is clear that there are issues with both fountains and I have asked for a report on both of them so we can decide how best to improve the situation.

Q34 (Councillor Marjoram to Councillor Wakefield) - Does the Leader of Council welcome the increases in Government Spending by the Coalition during it's first year in Government?

A Figures published by DCLG and the Charters Institute for Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) showed the first drop in Council spending on services since the introduction of Council tax in the early 1990s.

CIPFA said the figures, based on what Council have budgeted to spend in 2011-12, show a fall in 'total service expenditure' of 5.7% from £105.6bn to £99.5bn. DCLG chose to highlight the smaller relative change in 'net current expenditure' which fell by 2.6% to £118.1bn.

Q35 (Councillor Pryke to Councillor R Lewis) - Could the Executive Board Member for Development and the Economy advise Council on what changes there have been to unemployment figures in Leeds over the last six months?



A The unemployment figures for May 2011 show that just over 22,000 people in the Leeds district were unemployed and claiming benefit – a rate of 4.1%. Over the last 6 months there has been a marginal decline. However, between May 2010 and May 2011 Leeds was one of only 4 places in the UK with over 10,000 claimants to show a fall in the % of people unemployed and claiming benefit. There are now over 2,000 less people claiming benefit than a year ago, and the rate has declined from 4.5% to 4.1%. Over the same period the GB rate has remained static at 3.7%. This is in line with a number of reports which suggest Leeds is well positioned to recover from the recession and see future growth.

Q36 (Councillor Marjoram to Councillor Wakefield) - For the Royal Wedding where three or more households in a street agreed to hold a street party, the London Borough of Barnet organised and paid for liability insurance to ensure the event could go ahead. Will the Leader of Council give the same commitment to the people of Leeds for the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II next year?

A If the decision was taken to provide such insurance, a scheme could be arranged with our insurers. At present they have not decided how much to charge given the date is not until next year. The previous charge was £63.60 per party, so it is likely to be in that area next year, unless insurance rates go up substantially.

I am prepared to look at this nearer the time.

Q37 (Councillor Marjoram to Councillor Ogilvie) - Will the Executive Member for Leisure please confirm to Council what the cost was of the unsatisfactory installation of a level access roundabout at Kirkstall Abbey Park.

A The roundabout, which is specifically designed to allow access for disabled children, was funded by ward based initiative money. The cost for purchase and installation of the roundabout was £13,100.

Following installation of the roundabout it became clear that the issue of ground water and surface water combined to affect the safety surface and rotating mechanism of the roundabout and subsequently the water froze.

Additional work was undertaken to intercept and divert the water to allow correct operation of the roundabout, this has proved successful.

Both parts of the installation process were undertaken by Parks and Countryside staff who are based at Kirkstall Abbey, there was a nominal additional cost, accommodated within the original quotation for the short stretch of drain, but no additional charge for labour

Q38 (Councillor Marjoram to Councillor Wakefield) - Will the Leader of Council ensure that in order to protect staff who withdraw their labour in legal strike actions, undertake that all employees, including teachers, have absences due to such action recorded in their annual staff appraisal?

A The Council is aware of and supports the protection that staff have under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 when they take part in official strike action. These absences are currently recorded on the personnel and payroll system (SAP).

The purpose of the annual staff appraisal is to have a joint conversation about general performance and achievements over the past year and agree objectives and development needs for the forthcoming year. Recording or referring to absences due to strike action in an appraisal would not support the overall purpose of the appraisal so such an action could be interpreted in a negative light by both staff and the Council trade unions.

Q39 (Councillor Lobley to Councillor Dobson) - Will the Executive Board Member for Environmental Services provide details of the background information presented to the Executive Board in February 2011 in the Revenue Budget 2011/2012 and Capital Programme report used to inform delegated decision D38152: Review of Parking Prices, and inform us whether he feels this is sufficient for a decision of such importance?

A There is an annual price review. On no previous occasion has there been member involvement or Executive Board approval in setting the prices of individual car parks.

In accordance with the budget strategy for the Authority, the 2011/12 revenue budget reflected 3% additional income associated with car parking fees. Based on current activity levels this equated to an additional £130k in income in 2011/12.

At the time that the Revenue Budget 2011/12 report was received by Executive Board and Council, no detailed proposals on how to implement this requirement had been determined and as this report states "the Directorate will undertake a review of car parking prices and tariff bandings for both on street and off street parking across the city. This will result in the implementation of a new pricing structure in 2011/12 (£130k)."

Given the general reduction in patronage (a nationwide issue) of both on street and off street parking, the review takes account of activity levels to the extent that prices will be held or reduced where appropriate. The recent parking price rise decision reflects a site by site assessment of usage and also competitor pricing to ensure that the Council's pricing remains both competitive and at the same time tries to encourage more utilisation of spaces in some areas. As a result a number of charges have either remained at the same level or have been reduced for example in and around Park Square on Saturdays.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Tomkinson  
Senior Governance Officer