

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday, 11th September, 2013

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL,
LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(COUNCILLOR T MURRAY)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 11th SEPTEMBER 2013

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, everybody, I think we will move on to the Ordinary Meeting – the meeting where we listen, ask questions, comment and debate. I suppose in that sense we are heading for the usual business meeting except, of course, can I just remind you that today the meeting is to be Webcast. There is a camera in front of me, there is a camera behind me and I also noticed – and I will use Councillor Wakefield as an example – when Councillor Wakefield was up on his feet proposing Alec, the Members behind him were also in view...

COUNCILLOR: And very beautiful Members they are, too!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You were chosen for your looks!

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis and Councillor Kamila Maqsood were also – I can tell that because I am looking at the screen, so there is a little hint there.

Today is a special meeting, of course, because we have had our two Honorary Aldermen, the Webcast is happening as we speak but I would also like to add some sad news. It is with great sadness that I report the recent death of Honorary Alderman John Mead, known to his colleagues as Jack. Apparently he answered to both names. Honorary Alderman Mead served as a Councillor in Horsforth from 1989 to 1995 and became an Honorary Alderman in 1995. Council's thoughts will be with his family.

Can I also add, actually, that today is the twelfth anniversary of the 9/11 disaster in New York. Would you mind if we stand and have a minute's silence.

(Silent tribute)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much.

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 1st JULY 2013

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 1 is the Minutes of the meeting held on 1st July. Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that the Minutes be received.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I move to the vote? *(A vote was taken)*
CARRIED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Second item, Declarations of Interest. Are there any Members at this stage wishing to declare any pecuniary interests? No.

ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: We will move on to Item 3, Communications by the Chief Executive, Tom Riordan. I think Tom does have something to report back.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Two communications.

Firstly, to inform Council that a response has been received via Stuart Andrew MP's office from Mark Hoban MP, Minister for Employment, in response to the resolution of Council at its May meeting regarding skills. The response has been circulated to all Members of Council.

Secondly, today I have received a letter from Paul Rowsell of the Department for Communities and Local Government, confirming that the Parliamentary Order has now been made to move the date of the Local Government elections in 2014 to coincide with the European elections on Thursday, 22nd May 2014.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Tom. I understand Councillor Gruen, with the agreement of the Whips, has a communication for us.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Council will recall that at the last Council there was a Community Concern which was raised by Councillor Walker around Temporary Event Notices. We have now received a reply and I am advised that it is practice for us to share those replies with Council, seeing it followed a Council resolution.

This reply comes from the Home Office. It thanks us for setting out our local concerns over the processes in place for objecting to TENs and the notification period set out in the legislation. It goes on to say the Government is committed to reducing regulation and bureaucracy to free up business and as part of this commitment the Government amended the system of TENs (Temporary Event Notices) to tighten up existing loopholes and to prevent it being exploited by unscrupulous operators whilst ensuring the process is not overly bureaucratic for small voluntary and community groups.

It says in our letter we requested consideration is provided for a change in the legislation so that elective Members could comment and/or object to TENs. It goes on to say that as TENs are meant to be a light-touch process for temporary events held, such as outside of normal licensing processes and Environmental Health, we are now able to object on the grounds of nuisance and public safety. However, the Government does not consider it appropriate to allow either residents a direct role in the overall decision making process for TENs or, indeed, does not consider it appropriate for elected Members to act on their behalf.

The Government believes that to allow this to happen would place further burdens and increase bureaucracy. The Government believes that these measures, alongside safeguards, are appropriate. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

ITEM 4 - DEPUTATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 4 is Deputations. Chief Exec.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. We have got three deputations: first, Swillington, Oulton, Woodlesford HS2 Action Together (there will be two separate speakers still taking up the five minutes, the Lord Mayor has agreed

in relation to that deputation); secondly, residents regarding public transport in the Leeds 11 area; and third, residents of Angel Row, Rothwell, opposing a planned housing site on green belt in Robin Hood.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that all the deputations be received.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

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

DEPUTATION ONE – SWILLINGTON, OULTON, WOODLESFORD HS2 ACTION TOGETHER

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MR J LYNCH: My Lord Mayor and Fellow Councillors, my name is James Lynch and I am the Chair of SOWHAT, which is an HS2 action group representing over 300 households in Swillington, Woodlesford and Oulton. On my left we have got Ed Cartwright, who is a business owner in Swillington. His business is currently threatened by closure due to HS2. We have Martin Law, a resident of Cluntcliffe, Peter Holly, a resident of Woodlesford, and Gordon Daker, another local resident of Woodlesford.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I understand you have got two speakers?

MR J LYNCH: Ed would like to speak for a minute, yes. Thank you.

We are here today to ask the Council to support our efforts to re-route HS2 utilising tunnels and existing transport corridors so that less residents are catastrophically blighted. We also want the full support of the Council in our efforts to secure full and fair compensation for all residents suffering personal financial losses as a result of the proposals.

At the end of January this year the lives of hundreds of people in Leeds were catastrophically changed by the announcement of the preferred route of the High Speed railway line. We were given absolutely no warning, received no communication from the government or HS2 Ltd, discovering our fate by watching the news or hearing from neighbours.

There are approximately 400 residential properties located within 300m of the proposed route in our areas. A June 2010 pilot study into property blight on Phase 1 of the route suggested that blight corridors would extend between one and two miles from the centre of the proposed route. It also estimated that blight impact would be between 15-30% of the market value of the properties affected.

The average house price across our areas is £160,808. If we presume the average loss in value due to blight is only 22.5%, then we calculate the estimated loss to the property market to be just under £14.5 million, which needs to be recouped before HS2 brings any financial benefit to our city.

When France built the TGV, properties within 1.5 miles of the route qualified for compensation. Our Government proposes that only properties which fall within 60m of HS2 will qualify for compensation. We believe this means that there will be only six qualifying properties in our area. Everyone else will receive nothing, leaving residents stuck in limbo, unable to sell, unable to move, unable to plan for their futures. People are also experiencing difficulties securing lending at reasonable rates of interest.

We were delighted to receive a letter from Councillor Golton last week in which he informed local residents that he now opposes HS2. His perspective has changed following lengthy attempts to speak with HS2 Ltd on our behalf. In his letter Councillor Golton stated that HS2 is and I quote “ruling out fair compensation or alleviation to those affected on the route.” He goes on to confirm that he “will not stand by and see the interests of my neighbours and constituents sacrificed to protect HS2’s bottom line”.

I now pass on to Ed who is going to speak about his business and the environment.

MR E CARTWRIGHT: Thanks, James. Our two successful and growing family run businesses, Swillington Organic Farm and Swillington Park Fishing, are based in the Aire valley in East Leeds. Not only do we provide employment and a valuable resource for the local community through our initiatives with local school children, groundwork, post-16 learners and elderly residents, my parents and grandparents have invested decades of work in turning what was a wasteland left by the Coal Board into a thriving environmental oasis. Our land includes a site of scientific interest and we farm the green belt organically to protect local wildlife. The Aire Valley was meant to be a green corridor into Leeds for the enjoyment of Leeds residents. If the proposed route for HS2 goes ahead it will be a concrete corridor, with trees felled, landscape and wildlife destroyed and our businesses closed to build the 60 foot high viaduct, that will come through Swillington and blight the whole area.

HS2 is meant to be bringing investment and jobs to the city, but as a business owner it means I cannot invest, grow or create jobs and our employees will lose their jobs if the route is not changed.

The alternative route is a better route for Leeds. It follows the existing railway and will spare the impact on our businesses, the environment and the devastating personal impact it will have to see a lifetime's work bulldozed away.

MR J LYNCH: Concluding our deputation today, we make the following requests of Leeds City Council:

- We want you to fully support the alternative route for HS2, proposed by Alec Shelbrooke MP, which would broadly follow the existing motorway corridor to Stourton where it would rejoin the current proposed route, and express this support in the Council's written response to the current proposed route consultation.
- We request that the Council properly examine the possible benefits and disbenefits associated with bringing high speed rail to Leeds. This examination must include the negative impact the project has already had on the value of housing stock in our areas.
- We want you to establish a working party which will liaise with all stakeholders, including our group, opening channels of communication and working actively to minimise the impact of implementing high speed rail on the residents of Leeds.
- We seek a commitment from the Council to oppose HS2 if the Government fails to implement an appropriate and fair compensation scheme, or
- If you are not willing to oppose HS2, to commit to implementing a local compensation scheme, as by supporting the project you are supporting the unfair treatment of affected residents in Leeds. If the anticipated economic benefits to Leeds are realised a proportion of this financial gain should be used to offset the personal financial loss of affected residents.

Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, James; thank you, Ed. Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that this matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we vote on that, Council? *(A vote was taken)*
Thank you very much, that is CARRIED.

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

DEPUTATION TWO – PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN LEEDS 11

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MS A HOPPER: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I am Anne Hopper; the Treasurer of Holbeck Area Residents Group and I am accompanied by Dennis Kitchen from the Voice of Holbeck Group, Irene Smith from Cross Ingram Area Residents Group and Ken Green, who is a local Holbeck resident

Holbeck has buses - five in all, covering a stretch of Domestic Street, approximately 450 yards long. These buses run up and down Domestic Street and nowhere else in the entire Holbeck area has a bus service. We are surrounded by motorways, the Armley Gyratory, the inner and outer ring roads etc and there are buses whizzing round us all the time but none where we live. In the past buses have been routed to the densely populated areas to the east and west of Domestic Street, but these extensions to existing routes have been withdrawn leaving residents to walk a distance equalling three to four bus stops to even reach a bus. No doubt these extensions were withdrawn because they were non-profitable.

We are not asking for a 15 or 30 minute services nearer to us. One bus per hour between certain hours per day would be extremely welcome.

Holbeck is shortly to see the start of a flagship PFI project. This, along with the proposed Unity Housing project roughly in the same area (well, in the same area, actually) will see an increase of 300 to 400 new homes. With these improvements there should come a realistic public transport system. Five buses running up and down the same route on one road in the area and nothing else is ridiculous. It is inadequate now, never mind in the not to distant future, yet all efforts to consider our problem has been disregarded by everybody, particularly the bus companies.

I hope there is someone, or a section of the Council, whereby we can receive support and leverage for our request. We really need to bring more pressure to bear on the bus companies, or perhaps the Council could consider some funding towards, care I say, if cost is the most important issue.

Anything you can do to help or to push this project through for us. It is essential that we have a better bus service or a better bus routing in Holbeck. We cannot have a new, regenerated area with a traffic system like this is. It is totally unacceptable. If you can help, all of us in Holbeck would be extremely grateful. Thank you for the opportunity to state our case.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Anne, for your speech. I now call on Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, rather than referring it to the Executive Board, I would like to move that the matter be referred to the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Let me call for the vote. *(A vote was taken)*
CARRIED.

Thanks again for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the considerations which your comments will receive. Thank you very much and good afternoon. *(Applause)*

DEPUTATION THREE – RESIDENTS OF ANGEL ROW, ROTHWELL

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

DR D FREEMAN: Good afternoon, my Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors. My name is Dr Diane Freeman and I am here to represent Angel Row, Rothwell. With me are Wayne Jackson and Stephen Plumpton.

I would like to strongly object to the planned housing site on green belt in land in Robin Hood.

My first concern is the effect of the new buildings on the properties of Angel Row. This is a street of old terraced cottages built approximately in the 1890s whose gardens face directly on to the proposed site. Not only will the new buildings cause a significant depreciation in the value of the properties due to the loss of view and privacy, but it may also cause serious damage through flooding. These fields absorb thousands of gallons of rainwater each year and, if concreted over, where will the water go? There are many examples of housing developments where, when the area has experienced above average rainfall, it has caused great damage to the local area.

Angel Row properties all have cellars and if these were to flood, then it would have a serious impact. There is also the issue of drainage – there is no draining at the back of these properties. All water is carried away from the house by a drain-away pipe which drains into the field. Please consider the effect on the properties if this land was covered by houses.

I also have other concerns regarding the properties. For example, there is an access right at the back of the properties and my property extends past the fence at the bottom of my garden and I hope that the Planners are aware of this fact.

Secondly, I firmly believe that the development is not appropriate for the area. The proposal is for 373 houses. This is an excessive quantity which is not supportable. This is a semi-rural location and the amenities and infrastructure are set up for this. The local schools are at capacity and many people have already experienced severe difficulties in obtaining a place for their children. The roads cannot accept a significant rise in traffic. There are already traffic jams each morning

and evening. The average house has 1.5 cars – this equates to an extra 560 cars on the roads. The Council has a duty to ensure that the local infrastructure can support any new housing, yet I have not see any evidence that this has been properly investigated. This area has already been severely affected by a huge development at the top of nearby Sharp Lane and we cannot accept any more.

Also, the land is designated green belt land, and for a good reason. Since I have lived in the area it has always been fully productive arable land. It supports a wide variety of wildlife, including bats and other protected species. Charities such as the RSPB and the RSPCA suggest a minimum of a two year (and preferably five year) survey to fully assess the extent of wildlife and impact of the housing development on it. The land is also of historical importance, even being mentioned in the Domesday Book. We believe that there is also a covenant on the land which ensures that it is used for arable farming. We are currently researching this, but due to a lack of advertising about the development, we have not had sufficient time to fully investigate.

The land also plays a crucial role in giving the area its own identity. It serves to separate the areas of Robin Hood and Middleton, which would be virtually merged into one if the development went ahead. It is also the boundary between Leeds and Wakefield, with the LS26 postcode on one side and WF3 on the other.

In opposing this planned housing, we have been able to come up with many reasons why this site should not be used, yet I have not been provided with one reason why it should. Even if we accept new developments in the area, there are other, more appropriate, brown field sites available. Why build on green belt? There are also other areas where housing is being knocked down. As there are already houses present, the amenities and local infrastructure is already in place to support a development.

There is very strong opposition to the development in this area. We have an online petition which, despite being in its infancy, has already nearly 100 signatures. We feel that this development would ruin the area, is completely unsupportable and unsustainable and that there is other, more appropriate land available. We fully intend to pursue this objection and will continue to investigate both impact on wildlife and the covenant on the land.

Thank you for listening. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that this matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Let us call for the vote. (*A vote was taken*) CARRIED

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

ITEM 5 – REPORT ON APPOINTMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5, Report on Appointments. Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that the Report of the City Solicitor on Appointments be approved.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR NASH: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Let us call for the vote. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED, thank you.

ITEM 6 – REPORT ON LEEDS AWARD

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 6, Report on the Leeds Award. Councillor Wakefield.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Let us move to a vote, then. *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, thank you.

ITEM 7 – REPORT ON COUNCIL MEETING DATES 2013/2014

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 7, Report on Council Meeting Dates. Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move that the Report of the City Solicitor on the date of Council meetings 2013/14 be approved.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR NASH: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Let us move to the vote. *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED.

ITEM 8 – REPORT – AREA COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 8 is the Report on the Area Committee Annual Report and it is Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, thank you very much. Three years ago this Group inherited an organisation which had become a backwater in the Council. It was punching well below its weight and it had almost become an irrelevance to Council proceedings. It was then called Area Management.

Over the last three years we have revitalised this into localities, communities and ensured that, through regular intervention such as the Environmental SLA 1 and 2 – and, Lord Mayor, I recall you were very instrumental in the first of that followed by

your good colleague Councillor Dobson – we have brought new life and spirit and endeavour and enthusiasm to locality working.

We are now talking about making Area Committees central and pertinent to communities and citizens and outward focused and outward facing, and the report before you today illustrates many examples in all different areas within this city that we can be proud of and that you, as elected Members serving on Area Committees, can be proud of.

I want to use the opportunity to thank all the Area Chairs over the past two to three years, especially the ones now, and all the officers who are servicing those Area Committees. I think in twelve months' time I will be able to thank all of the senior officers of the Council because they will have learned to write reports which are relevant to localities. They will not give you reports which are simply regurgitation of Executive Board matter. They will absolutely focus on localities and that is, of course, why the Leader has been instrumental in setting up a new Director of Communities and Citizens. If we do not take Communities and Citizens to the heart of our strategy, then why would we have locality working?

We are going to continue giving more powers, more functions and more interest to Area Committees, which is you. You will have more direct say over many of these services which have been dished out hitherto centrally. That gives you an opportunity actually to influence what happens in each of your own areas for each of these different main transactions and transformations of business - be it in Children's Services, be it in Community Safety, be it in Jobs and Skills, you will have much more of an input.

I recently chaired an Inner West Labour Improvement Board where I was really pleased about the insistence of those Members there to hold officers to account about the NEETs, about the worklessness, about the key issues in the West, and that is the kind of transformational business that I think we are transacting.

The report also makes clear, finally, Lord Mayor, that there is added value. For every £1 you spend you have got £2.5 back, so one makes 3.5. Fantastic additionality. It is exactly what this is supposed to be about and I look forward to the Area Chairs being able to tell you more about the work in their own areas.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I formally second the Area Committees Annual Report 2012/13, moved by Councillor Peter Gruen.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Andrea McKenna.

COUNCILLOR A McKENNA: Lord Mayor, I am speaking about the Annual Report. As Chair of the Outer East Area Committee, which I only took over in 2012 following the retirement of Councillor Parker – very, very hard shoes to fill, I have to say, but we are moving along and hopefully we are doing a reasonable job.

The Area Committee of Outer East is significant in attracting new businesses and encouraging sustainability of communities. The Outer East Area Committee includes Garforth and Swillington, Kippax and Methley, Temple Newsam, Crossgates and Whinmoor, so therefore covers the edge of the city right to the rural edges of the City Council area.

As the Chair of the Area Committee you see many instances of the Council working together with businesses in order to foster growth and create jobs. This growth and the jobs that follow need to be sustainable and suitable for the area and work with the local communities. The Area Committee has a key role in ensuring that the Council's priorities are keeping what the local people want in their area. By helping businesses where there are young people investing in growth we can continue in this progress in all areas and not just in the centre.

The towns and areas within the Outer East Area have their own characteristics, which many people will know, with the Area Committee considers essential to retain. Co-operation between the towns allows there to be successful growth which is sympathetic to the needs of the particular area. Whilst there is much discussion about the growth in the City of Leeds, there is also positive signs of growth and development in the Outer East Area. Traders and towns groups have improved the vitality and viability of local shopping areas and work in partnership with the other trading areas within the city. Groups have been established in Kippax, Garforth and Holton and are developing in Allerton Bywater and Crossgates. These groups develop the ambiance and the appearance of shops and vacant land. Potentially these groups could be establishing new businesses bringing local people into the heart of the town and establishing a shopping area.

The window of opportunity has allowed vacant retail spaces to be utilised and artistic achievement showing support to culture in Crossgates and Whinmoor and Kippax, highlighting how spaces can be used.

Just on to a couple of areas which the Area Committee has supported. The Outer East Area Committee has donated £5,000 to cricket coaching course sessions, in particular a week long coaching session which was held at Kippax Welfare Club and then the second week at Whitkirk Cricket Club, taking local boys and girls aged between seven and 16 and providing them with professional Yorkshire County Cricket Club coaching. Thanks to the funding from the Area Committee children can take part for only £10 a week. This shows a wide variety of items the Area Committee can help support and retain opportunities and towns are given this throughout the Area Committee area.

In addition, the Area Committee is contributing £3,900 towards five events in Older People's Week. Older People will be able to access information relevant to their needs; entertainment including...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor McKenna...

COUNCILLOR A McKENNA: Yes, I am just on my last one - entertainment and a buffet which is provided by us and it benefits probably in excess of 700 people. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gabriel, please.

COUNCILLOR GABRIEL: Thank you, my Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors. First of all, I have a confession. I have actually written a really nice speech which, unfortunately, is still on my dining room table (*laughter*) so it will not be as professional as it would have been.

I welcome the opportunity to be able to speak today. I have been an Area Chair for about ten years, I think I am one of the longest standing, and this is only the second opportunity I have ever had to speak in the Council Chamber about that role on Area Committee so I welcome the changes that are being brought along.

Each Area Committee is run in different ways and obviously is done under the style of the Chair of that Group. Our Area Committee covers Beeston, Holbeck, City and Hunslet and Middleton and Belle Isle, so we are quite a diverse area even though we are all classed as inner city.

We have spent most of our money in the last few years on children and young people and we have been providing lots of activities for them to do in their spare time, so we try to make sure that they do not have much spare time. We have been giving money to Hunslet Boys and Girls Club where we have been doing apprentices for young people, getting them ready to go on to other courses of education. I always feel that the Area Committee is what I call the outer facing or the coal face of the Council. Members of the community can come to our Area Committees and ask questions of us as Councillors and of officers and we can actually have a debate with the community and actually feel part of it rather than this meeting today, which is very sterile, it is us talking to each other. We like to think as an Area Committee we are actually talking to our communities.

I also feel that the Area Chairs do not seem to have the same kudos in the Council as you do if you are the Chair of a Panel – Planning Panel or Licensing. The Area Chairs have always been thought of in a less positive role, and with officers as well, and I think that needs to change. The Area Chairs are going to be the way forward for the future and I think if the Council does not get a grip of it, either us in the room here or officers out there, it will not happen.

I would like to thank Peter Gruen, because since it came under his portfolio it has actually grown from strength to strength because for the first several years of Area Chairs we did not get any positive lead from officers and now we have a function and we meet regularly and we see the way forward, so I would like to thank personally Peter for all his hard work. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Jarosz.

COUNCILLOR JAROSZ: *(Banging a gavel)* Order in this court! *(laughter)* What has that got to do with the Area Committee? First of all, what it has to do, I do not like the term “Area Committee” and everybody knows. Community Involvement Team, as it was, because especially in these days of shrinking budgets it is involving the community that is the only way that we are going to get ahead, the only way we are going to make progress.

Why am I shouting “Order in the court”? Because it is about us as Councillors getting involved in the community, getting involved with businesses, getting involved with the schools and that is precisely what Councillor Coulson did, over there. In Pudsey Council Chamber he had a mock trial. It involved a local firm – he was the judge. How many times he had the black hood on I am not sure, I was not there to see it. It is about involving every different part of the community. He wants *this* [gavel] back because on Saturday he will be doing an auction for the Wellbeing Centre. Again, it is about us not only giving money – yes, we do give funds when we can, when we have got the money – but it is about being involved and knowing what is going on out there and that is what Councillor Coulson and I will be doing on Saturday at a World War II event in Pudsey, which will be really interesting.

It is about the Business Engagement Project. This involves schools, it involves businesses, getting businesses to go into schools, given their spiel about all the different types of jobs that are out there and then allowing the pupils to go round and talk to each of the businesses. This has developed a sustainable local partnership between businesses and the schools and, again, Councillor Coulson was in the thick of it, as you might imagine.

There are other things. There is the In Bloom. We give some money to the In Bloom project but we get involved as well and we get there. There are just so many more events. I can already see the orange light on. Pudsey Carnival, which has been going for years; we get involved, we give money. Cottingley Springs, the Gypsy Engagement Day; we gave some money, got involved there.

What we wish to provide is a service which enhances the lives of local people and show that we as a Council are prepared to invest in activities that truly benefit and involve the local community. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bruce.

COUNCILLOR BRUCE: I have got to follow Josie now – brilliant. Can I borrow your hammer? *(laughter)*

As Chair of Outer South Area Committee I would like to share with you one of our great successes from this year. We held our own Community Heroes Award event for our area and it was a bit like our very own version of the Oscars, with the recipients every bit as worthy as those who won an Oscar in Hollywood.

The evening was a chance to award and honour those who work in day in, day out in our community, giving up their time and energy for the benefit of our community. They are the real community heroes. Our communities would not be so great without their hard work and their dedication, and without them local Councillors would not be able to do out job. They improve the quality of life around them and they deserve our thanks and appreciation.

Our event was a real feel good one, which was a great success and everybody had a great time and enjoyed it. It was a very worthwhile thing to do. Many have made invaluable contacts and heard of the great things that others in the community are doing. I did an introduction and did the presentations and we had Martin Kelner from Radio Leeds on hand to share the great stories of the community heroes. We also had South Leeds Community Radio helping with a quiz and introductions. There was also some lovely food for people to enjoy, which always helps. Third sector providers also came and they were on hand to give information to our community groups to equip them in supporting people.

Our Community Heroes event was a splendid opportunity to showcase the sterling work going on in our community and to recognise the unsung heroes who give up their time and efforts for others voluntarily. It was a chance to say a big thank you as a Council for the work that they do. It was also a great way that community activists can get inspiration from each other, make connections and work together in future on projects.

Our communities truly are the backbone of our groups and we in Outer South would highly recommend that you have your own Community Heroes event to recognise your community heroes too. We are already looking forward to our next one.

I was in Hollywood at Easter but who knows, next time I might not need to go as far if we could create our very own Walk of Fame here in Leeds for our community heroes. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not an exalted Area Chair, I only am a humble Chair of the Environment Sub Group, but what I wanted to talk about is the good work we have done. We have been doing this for a number of years in Outer North West.

Can I first of all thank Jason Singh and his team for the work that they have done, integrated and worked with us in terms of moving the Service Level Agreement forward, and we have also spent a lot of time challenging officers and, bearing in mind probably somebody like Councillor Cleasby is probably seen as the least challenging on the Environment Sub Group, it tells you how good fun we can have at times.

We have, for example, been challenging just recently the grass cutting. Last June and July when there were problems we got Continental in front of us and we got some improvements as a result of that, so that is positive from that side of things. We have looked at the effectiveness of the Outer Area service in terms of dog fouling. We have not been as successful as we would like to be there, we think there is more to be done as far as that is concerned.

We have also looked into grass verge enforcement. Again, we feel that more could be done from the Council on that, we are interested, and if Councillor Gruen is going to give us some more power, does that extend to developing our own local policy on these sorts of things? If so then fine, it is something to be welcomed.

We have worked very well and very hard with West North West Homes in terms of environmental work and what I would say there is that we need to make sure that from 1st October we make sure that there is no reduction in any service in any of the Council estates in the area as a result of the integration, and that probably applies equally throughout the city as well.

We do have an allocated officer from Parks and Countryside who volunteers to come along and also is now volunteering to come to stay for the Area Committee meetings as well so obviously he enjoys himself and he is very open and honest and discusses things fully with us.

We have improved leaf clearing, which is one of the major problems that there was in the north of the city which had not been recognised fully by the Council before that. We have also had Highways before us looking at collapsed gulleys and the capital requirements. We have managed to work to introduce flood messaging in our area because we have got particular problems with flooding. We were one of the first Area Committees to look into the possibility of part-night lighting to try and take it forward. We are trying to work on something on winter maintenance as well – more important things, they are important for our residents because of where we are.

We do need to look more at enforcement. We do have a problem in trying to get enforcement done. 3gs appear to have been a roaring success in the city centre but in our area where they were part of the pilot they have not been as great a success as maybe we would like them to be.

The final point I would make is a plea again – I made it at the first meeting of Area Leads the other day. We do need a representative from Refuse Collection to attend our Area Committee meetings. At the moment they do not and I think that is sadly lacking. Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wadsworth.

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do not need to promote myself as an Area Chair, I do not need to be elected by my own Members because, as you know, in our Group we do not do things like that.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Have you spent your budget yet?

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: I will tell you about spending money, yes. Can I just thank all the Members on the Area Committee because we work as a good team and we all work together and, as you can see, a lot of us are passionate about what we do, in the case of what Councillor Anderson has just said.

This is a report on what the Area Committee has done so far and I am really pleased that Councillor Akhtar has returned to the Chamber because I thought he was going to miss this but he has just come back in time, with regard to the Wellbeing spend. So far in 2013/14 we have committed £112,000, Councillor Akhtar, of Wellbeing spend to various activities, such as Holt Park Over 60s, Yeadon Town Wildlife Ponds, highway improvement schemes, speed indication devices and Guiseley in Bloom, and at the next Area Committee we have another £24,000, Councillor Akhtar, to allocate for spending in September.

With the Draft Community Consultation, Outer North West runs a number of forums throughout the year – the Yeadon Forum, the Guiseley and Rawdon Forum and the Holt Park Forum. These forums are able to utilise community participation and allow debate to involve participating and information encouraging responses from the 2013 Site Allocation undertaken by the Planning Department and that has been fed back into that process.

With regards to Neighbourhood Planning Outer North West – which does sound like a weather forecast, I appreciate that that is repetition but hopefully that may be going to change shortly – Horsforth and Otley Town Councils have their own Neighbourhood Plans designated. Adel and Aireborough's Non-Parish Forums, which have received support in respect of the public consultation events that have been held and signposted for information for their Neighbourhood Plans to be consolidated.

With regard to sub-groups, the Outer North West has six sub-groups and I just wanted to report briefly on those. The first one is Environmental Services, which is chaired by Councillor Anderson and you have heard quite a lot about what he does. In addition to what he has been speaking about, that forum helped provide additional resources at Wharfemeadows Park, Carnfields Park and site based gardens for Yeadon and Guiseley cemetery. It also helps improve Street Scene, which Councillor Anderson has alluded to in his speech.

The Children and Young People's sub group, that is chaired by Councillor Pat Latty, who does a wonderful job of that and has particularly taken on the Youth Service Delegation and that has been a big job for Councillor Latty. She has taken it on with a lot of passion and that is moving on greatly. That has helped to fund Aireborough Summer Activities, National Citizens Award and Sports Coaching Qualification Schemes and the Breeze activities over the summer period, and we hope to expand on that. I know Councillor Pat Latty is doing a lot of work on that.

We have the Transport sub-group which is chaired by Councillor Brian Cleasby and he is very passionate about that, those meetings go on a long time and we do have Inner and Outer ones. Where is Councillor Walshaw? You are there, Councillor Walshaw. He has been participating in these as part of the Inner, have you not, Councillor Walshaw, and you did find that seventh floor window quite

attractive at one point to jump out of, did you not, when we were having a really lengthy meeting and Councillor Walshaw was getting a little bit excited.

I see that the red light is on and I have still got two pages. I will briefly (I have never been on the red light before, Lord Mayor) just to say that we did, over the summer, hold a special Area Committee to discuss the Older Person's Care Homes and that was fed into the process. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. We want order in Council. Please sit down. Thank you. *(laughter and applause)*

Not on your Order Paper but Councillor Akhtar would like to add to the discussion.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just while I was listening to some of the comments, I thought that I need to add on to some of the work which we have carried out in North West (Inner).

My Lord Mayor, it is important, and I think this is the first opportunity that I have had that I need to express the feeling because I feel that the North West (Inner) is the unique Area Committee in the city where we have a great interest from the local community. Each time we get 50-plus members of our community attending our meetings and this makes the real democracy in our local community. It gives us the great feedback what we are doing as elected Members in the area.

I feel, my Lord Mayor, it is important that we need to understand the role of the Area Committee and some of the things that we have achieved over the years.

Just bear with me, my Lord Mayor, because I was not down to speak so I quickly made some points. Over the last few years that we have discussed numbers of issues, and especially without forgetting the members of the Area Committee are really excited, the work to improve and the build of new Council housing in Little London is going ahead. All of this has been subject to many delays where we are now happy that the work is now starting. The support that this Council has shown to the area through the long history of this application has been very encouraging, including stepping in to find alternative funding for the new Little London Community Hub.

The Area Committee has also discussed the work of North West Environmental Locality Team. The Committee complimented the team on the improvement of tidiness in the area and were able to make comments and suggestions as part of improving the new Service Level Agreement. In particular, the Area Committee was able to point out the local priorities dealing with the graffiti and importance of information about the days being given to the new tenants.

We cannot really forget Woodhouse Moor, which is the jewel of Hyde Park, and the work that the Area Committee and the Council has done over patrols on Woodhouse Moor have been successful in preventing some of the previous problems encountered. Even the Scrutiny Board intention was Woodhouse Moor should be enjoyable for the whole of the community, not just a single part of it.

The team itself, the patrol team and the security, obviously has been helping to keep Woodhouse Moor as a community facility and we have got to focus the community and this is where the Area Committee comes into light and we have been focusing local community and listening to the concern and delivering on those bases.

With Freshers now upon us, enforcement patrols are working with the students over an intensive four week period. There will be late night and weekend patrols aimed at ensuring students have information on personal safety and environmental issues.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Let me just finish, my Lord Mayor. *(laughter)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I thought you didn't have a speech!

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: My Lord Mayor, thank you very much but I think it is important to talk about the students. I will do it later in the day. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dobson to comment.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Again, I did not intend to speak on this item at all but it has strayed quite heavily, and actually quite rightly, into areas for which I have departmental responsibility, so I just wanted to touch around some of the comments that have been made today, certainly around Barry with your comments around the Environmental Sub-Group. You have focused on the good, the bad and the indifferent but I think you will accept as well as other, and Councillor Akhtar has also highlighted that, that since we have gone to delegations we have seen definite improvements across the piece.

It is so interesting listening to all the Chairs, because we all represent the same city but every story is different, every story is unique to those particular communities. That actually cascades down to the work that we do as Exec Board Members in terms of the services that we are delivering on the ground. I am really delighted that officers have been named but I could name a raft more who are doing absolutely first class work on the ground.

For me I would just like to touch very briefly on what comes next. Peter and I have had an extremely positive meeting and the next stage for us is breathing the next stage of life, if you like, into the process which is about some real strong Area Lead engagement. We had an extremely good and well attended first meeting where Peter and I, from his role with Community Safety and me for Environmental Services, have committed to give the Area Leads on those two topics our time and a commitment to work with us. I think the phrase that Peter and I used was, Peter said "challenge us", as he would, and I said "inform the debate and bring stuff to us that you need to know about." That is a genuine offer going forward.

We want to work with Area Committees. I think the broad consensus of opinion has been that the Area Committees is actually where the action is going to be going forward and from a departmental perspective – and I know I echo what Peter thinks on this too – we are totally committed to supporting the Area Committees in that work and the Area Leads is a fantastic next stage of that, so thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen to sum up.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Yes, I would like to reply to the comments that have been made.

May I start off by paying tribute to one of the Chairs who has not spoken, Gerald, who has been one of the most long-standing Chairs of Area Committees in a

very, very difficult and challenging Outer North East Environment, very wilful Councillors there, but well done. I know you are going to speak later on.

Paul, of course, takes it with great gusto whenever the Area Chairs say to him, "Paul, how much money have you got left to spend?" and he keeps saying, "Well, Les won't let me spend any money", but well done and thank you for that.

I think we are looking at the title of Community Councils potential, rather than Area Committees. We accept that "Area Committees" is a bit techy, a bit inward facing but the competition starts here. If anybody has a better name then we are willing to listen but we do think Community Councils is perhaps a bit more focused.

In terms of appreciation I think all the Area Chairs and officers know I am extremely grateful for all the hard work that you do. Indeed, I have to say to Council, in the Labour Group in certain parts of the city, becoming an Area Chair is as challenging as getting on to Strictly. The auditions are extremely challenging to actually get on. I think in terms of status and responsibility and prominence, that is clearly understood. I do accept that, I think, from the SLT and Directors onwards, we want to ensure that Chief Officers come to Areas and present meaningful reports. I said that earlier on, I mean it. We want reports that are forward looking and address the points that are made in particular areas.

I just want to give you one example about some of the money being spent. This is from South East Leeds. £1.9m in the last three years on 288 projects, of which 167 were Council led. 59 projects have been led by the local community, including the Beeston Festival which attracted £5,000 visitors. Revenue spending has allowed small amounts to be spent to ensure large projects go forward, like the Marlborough Green Roof Project. £6,000 of Wellbeing Fund money meant the £100,000 scheme could go ahead.

£16,000 of Wellbeing Funding released £50,000 funding from Highways to complete traffic signals for Osmanthorpe Lane. 70% of the projects would not have gone ahead without Area Committee funding. That, I think, tells it all and illustrates what a part Area Committees and you play and what a difference to people's lives you can make. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Chairs, thank you Peter, Councillor Gruen. Can I now call for the vote? (*A vote was taken*) I think that is CARRIED, thank you.

ITEM 9 - QUESTIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item number 9 is Questions. Question 1 is by Andrew Carter who is obviously not here. In his absence the question will be withdrawn, so can we move on and he will get the written reply, which is normal.

Can we then move on to Question number 2, Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. How many staff employed in providing services for the Council are employed on zero hours contracts?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As you know, we do not employ people on zero contract hours, out of 15,000. However, quite recently we have had three people TUPE-ed into the Council on zero hour contracts from the

voluntary sector and I hope it is reassuring to you to know that two of them have been offered contracts on part-time jobs, which they have accepted, and we are expecting to do with the third one when they return back from leave, so we are still keeping our commitment and our principles by not falling into this very, very bad form of practice in terms of employing people.

The answer will be zero. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was not aware of that particular point, so I am grateful that you have mentioned that and cleared that particular one up. Would you agree, Councillor Wakefield, that you also need to guard against sub-contracting out zero hours contracts to third parties through agencies and through the contracts that we issue, so would you do all you can when we are framing these contracts to minimise the chances that people who are employed on those contracts are on zero hours contracts? There are ways of doing that through ensuring that training is provided in the Council on continuity of service, etc, so could you give that commitment, please?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I am very happy to offer those reassurances. Some of the issues are in Procurement. I think we have seen a growth in zero hour contracts in this country and not only will we do our best to limit that, because it is ruthless exploitation of people, I hope that the Government actually introduces something as well to stop this odious practice that is creeping into our employment practice across the country and actually exploiting a lot of young people who are desperate for jobs, whereas we all know they are getting virtually very little and working very long hours, and we know which industries they are in.

Like you, I look forward to a statement from the Government on this soon.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hardy.

COUNCILLOR HARDY: Would the Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing comment on the impact that the proposed Government changes to NHS Allocations funding will have on narrowing the health gap in the city.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Mulherin.

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor and thank you, Councillor Hardy. It is a very serious issue. NHS England, the body which funds primary care services, including GP services and specialised healthcare services like children's heart surgery units has recently begun a national review of the allocation of funding for these services across the country. Figures have been published for each GP led Clinical Commissioning Group based on a Draft Funding Formula that was produced in December last year. These figures show a huge £84m cut in funding for the Clinical Commissioning Groups in Leeds who, in turn, commission hospital and community services in the city.

The cuts for Leeds are echoed across Yorkshire and, indeed, the North of England, which would see a £722m cut, whilst the South of England, the Midlands and the East of England would be set to gain. Across the board, if the NHS England funding allocations are redistributed in the way proposed, NHS services across our city and across our region will suffer.

Critically, however, it is a drive away from needs-based funding to address health inequalities to areas that already have better health outcomes where people are already living longer. It will undermine our efforts as a city across health and social care to improve the health of the poorest the fastest. We are committed in Leeds to addressing the health gap in this city which is symbolised at its starkest by the gap in life expectancy for men in the poorest parts of the city who are dying on average twelve years earlier than those in the best off parts of the city.

NHS England decided not to implement this formula in 2013/14 because it would have redirected resources to areas that already have better health outcomes, and I hope Members across this Chamber from all parties will join me in saying loud and clear that Leeds citizens cannot afford to lose £84m from our health system here, that there needs to be a system, a formula, that properly reflects health inequalities, that does not drive resources to those areas that already have better health outcomes, that enables us as cities in the North of England to actually narrow that gap and ensure that people do live longer regardless of where they live.

I hope that you will join me in telling NHS England to think again about this funding formula and I hope all of you will be urging our Leeds MPs to do likewise. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary, Councillor Hardy?

COUNCILLOR HARDY: No, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. We will move on to Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Does the Executive Member agree that when Council tenants move out of properties that have had adaptations, that those adaptations should not be removed by that tenant when they leave the property?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Yes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary, Councillor Blackburn?

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Yes, I do have a supplementary. Can the Executive Member assure me that where the tenants or relatives or friends removed adaptations, that the ALMO or later the Council will take action against those responsible?

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: I am grateful to Councillor Blackburn. She did, in fairness, give me some notice of this so I could make some enquiries. It raises a serious issue.

Expensive adaptations are put into our homes for the benefit of people who need adaptations. In the old days, adaptations were then taken out when those people moved somewhere else. We are doing it differently now. We are trying to leave those adaptations in the homes and match people with needs to those homes.

In the instance that she describes, I know where the property is, I know the circumstances and it raises two issues which I have discussed with a Director since the question came in, I have to confess.

The first is, there are still too many housing officers who, when they are refused access, think that that is the end of it. I want to disabuse them of that thought. These are our properties, they are our homes. If we want access, we will take access, within reason, but we cannot simply keep being refused to inspect or verify issues with our own properties and I know that will change.

The second thing is if, as in this case, what is Council property is removed illegally, then the Council should take action and, again, I have made that point very clear. Each case is assessed on its own merits but the principle is, you cannot just wander off with City Council property, otherwise we will have no bathrooms left, no kitchens and whatever else.

Thank you for the question and I hope the answer is crystal clear. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harland.

COUNCILLOR HARLAND: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Member for Children's Services please update Council on this year's GCSE and A-level results?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Councillor Harland. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of Council of sending sincere congratulations to all of our young people across the city who did so well in their exams this year. Just to give Council an update, we have actually seen this year an improvement in our results across all key stages. The real highlights this year have been at GCSE level where we have seen an increase of 2.4% for A* to C including English and maths, which is a great success for Leeds as the national picture is indicating that the actual results in that category will have fallen by over one per cent, so I think we have to give real congratulations to our schools. A-levels as well, the percentage achieving three or more A* to E has gone up by 3.5%.

However, there is a health warning on this, and I do have to alert Council to the fact that there is still a great deal of turbulence in the system and some of you will be aware that schools in your area might have seen results going up by up to 15% in some cases, but equally some of our schools' results have gone down by about 10%. We have never seen such varying fluctuations in the grading of our GCSEs. This is clearly a knock-on event from what happened last year with the GCSE grading fiasco, so we are all urging Governors to be extremely vigilant, to look at the results that they have achieved in their schools and to work with us from the centre to make sure that we create the best opportunities for our young people going forward.

I am very willing to take comments from all Members who have any concerns from schools in their area, but I know Council would want to join with me today in sending great congratulations to all of the achievements of our young people in the city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Supplementary, Councillor Harland?

COUNCILLOR HARLAND: No thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I move on to Councillor Anderson with his question.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Lord Mayor, will the Executive Member for Development and Economy please advise on the current backlog of road

maintenance both in terms of monetary value and in terms of the anticipated number of years he feels it will take to eradicate this backlog?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The current backlog of maintenance figure is an estimate based on the sum total of the maintenance requirements of all the roads in Leeds at any one time. The current total estimated backlog of road maintenance in the Leeds district is £102m. It is unlikely that the highway maintenance backlog will ever be entirely removed. In asset management terms we would never aim to do so. It is our aim to maintain the roads in a fit for purpose condition and that inevitably means that there will always be maintenance requirements on an ongoing basis. The most cost effective maintenance regime is to undertake the right maintenance at the right time and that is what we continually strive to do.

Road maintenance is obviously a high priority for the Council and that is why we have continued to invest in road maintenance with a capital budget of £7m this year topped up by a further investment of £1m recently. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson, supplementary?

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Does the Executive Member agree that the state of the roads is actually a good local indicator that people, residents, use, and also visitors to the city, whether they are visiting for leisure purposes or whether they are businessmen or businesswomen arriving in the city, that if they see roads in a bad state it does not give people a great deal of confidence about a number of other Council services?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thanks, Lord Mayor. Yes, I would agree with you, Barry, and from my observations of other Local Authorities across Yorkshire we are all suffering from the same problem and that has been exacerbated by a very difficult year. I think we all notice that around March time all our roads looked absolutely awful and you think we are never going to sort this out, but the world does move on and as the year goes on things have got better.

I think we are in a position where financially we are getting squeezed in terms of LTP funding, in terms of all Council funding and that makes continuing investment very difficult. The last twelve months have been, I think, the most difficult probably in living memory for anybody involved in highways maintenance work and that is because we did not just have a bad winter – and I think our gritting wagons were out 100 times as opposed to the normal 65 – but for the months preceding it we had heavy downfalls, extreme weather that was incredibly damaging to the road network.

I think it is incumbent on us all to think how on earth do we address this as an issue, how do we spend our money as effectively as we can? We have continually to look at new methods of doing that work to ensure that the roads are kept in the best condition that we possibly can.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bentley, Sue Bentley.

COUNCILLOR S BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Will the Executive Member for Education join me in welcoming the number of university applications from students from deprived areas which, in 2013, reached its highest ever level?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Yes, I would like to welcome the increased number of applications from pupils from areas of deprivation. I think we are all aware of the investment, the massive investment that has gone in over the last ten years to encourage students to come forward to go to university. However, we do not yet know how that has translated through into actual entrants – we are talking about applicants here, not entrants.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bentley, supplementary?

COUNCILLOR S BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Given this good news then, does the Executive Board Member therefore regret the hyperbolic predictions made by her and others within her party of the effect of Government tuition fee reforms and will she accept that this irresponsible scaremongering had the effect of unnecessarily scaring many already disenfranchised youngsters away from higher education, according to the respected broadcaster and journalist Martin Lewis of the Money Saving Expert website? *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I expect that was an attempt to try and redeem themselves from completely letting down so many students in this country by reneging on their commitment. *(Applause)*

In answer to her question no, I do not regret highlighting the real concerns we have got about the impact of tuition fees. We know, and it has been actually mentioned by the Chief Executive of OFFA that these students this year are the ones who have had the most investment in them in terms of raising their aspiration. Their numbers, I have to tell you, show that affluent applicants (or applicants from affluent backgrounds) still outnumber those from areas of deprivation by three to one. I hope you are not satisfied with that as a statistic. Figures from university entry have slightly gone up but they are still woefully down from the drop as a result of the Government's introduction of such high figures.

I have to say, underneath those figures we cannot be complacent. The number of white boys applying for university is extremely low and concerning. The area that you do not mention is the number of mature and part-time students. Those numbers have fallen through the floor. We cannot be satisfied by that.

One of the really worrying statistics that has come out of the research is that young people from areas of deprivation are far less likely to apply to the top Russell Group of universities and the admission into the universities of Oxford and Cambridge is, frankly, woeful. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hanley, Question 8.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Will the Executive Board Member for Adult Social Care please comment on the Care Bill, including its proposal to cap care costs for individuals at £72,000? Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Hanley, for your question. Members will be aware that the Care Bill was published in May and is currently making its way through Parliament with the expectation that it will come into law by April 2015.

While all the headlines have rightly been around the cap on care costs, we must not forget that when the Bill becomes law it will radically reform the way the Council will discharge its Adult Social Care responsibilities. This will have far and wide-reaching impact on the Council as well as Adult Social Care.

The Act will introduce a raft of new Statutory duties which the Department of Health says will prioritise carers, promote independence, prevention, wellbeing as well as introducing national eligibility criteria.

The £72,000 cap on the maximum amount an individual will have to contribute towards their care will come into effect from April 2016, alongside the raising of the means test threshold from £23,250 to £123,000.

Whilst these changes are welcome, they will benefit far fewer people than the original £35,000 cap proposed by the Dilnot Commission. The think tank Demos says the cap will only benefit 16% of over 65s compared to what was proposed under Dilnot. As the average length of stay in residential care is four years, it would take longer than that to spend the £72,000, so most people will not actually benefit.

In terms of those who will benefit, the House of Lords Committee of Public Service says that the major gainers will be the relatively better off, who will be protected from depleting their housing assets.

What is missing from the Care Bill? The Care Bill does nothing to address the current lack of public funding for Adult Social Care budgets at a time of changing demography and increasing demand. The LGA has recently said:

“The overall context in which the Bill is being considered, the Government’s austerity programme and the need for further savings, does not fit well with the aspirations of the Bill. Without addressing the current funding gap within the Social Care system, these reforms simply will not be realised.”

We are going to do our utmost with our partners to make the changes a success for the people of Leeds and all our local communities. However, we will have to deliver it all in a very challenging financial environment. The LGA says the changes will have significant implications for the workforce in terms of capacity and skills and estimates the cost to Councils of system change to be £300m nationally. Added to this is the cost to Councils of picking up care costs of individuals over the £72,000 limit which the LGA estimates to be a further £200m a year nationally.

Whilst there are some good elements to the Care Bill, there is no doubt it is already difficult to balance the growing demands on services that Adult Social Care faces. Unless the Government allocates adequate funding to implement the changes resulting from the Care Bill, the situation is only going to get worse.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hanley, have you a supplementary question?

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Yes, Lord Mayor. Just a very quick one though. I am sure the Exec Board Member would agree with me that we owe a great deal to the officers involved in the recent consultation. It is all related to the Care Bill, of course. I know some of them are here today. The Exec Board Member and I have visited all the homes that we run as a Council. We are delighted with them and I am sure he would agree with that.

The question is, would he agree and in particular would he agree with the result that we have had in Horsforth, where I happen to live, that we, this Party here, has kept Manorfield open? That is the question. *(interruption)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie, can you get the question?

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Lord Mayor, I can agree that the work of officers within Adult Social Care whilst carrying out the consultation – it was, I appreciate, not easy for officers who, along with Members, went out and met with relatives of residents so it was a difficult process but I think we have demonstrated that we have listened as part of the consultation and we did make changes to what we originally planned, so yes, I would agree with Councillor Hanley.

THE LORD MAYOR: Question 9, Councillor Mohammed Iqbal.

COUNCILLOR IQBAL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can the Executive Member for Development and the Economy provide an update on progress with the Superconnected Cities project?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The Superconnected Cities Programme was originally due to deliver huge improvements to our digital connectivity in Leeds and Bradford city centres and the connecting areas in between, and the Aire Valley Leeds Enterprise Zone. Whilst we have been able to deliver on some of the original projects, such as free wi-fi in Millennium Square and on Briggate, as well as the number 72 bus, the bulk of the scheme to deliver ultrafast connectivity to residential and business properties has been altered considerably because of problems in the way that the project was developed and in its non-compliance with State Aid rules.

To address these problems the scheme will now involve Local Authorities making available vouchers to small and medium sized enterprises of less than 250 employees, which will provide them with the 100% funding to purchase from telecoms companies ultrafast broadband connections. Whilst the revised scheme would offer some benefits, these are far, far less than those promised originally, which was to put the improved broadband infrastructure in up front. Not all businesses will be eligible for the vouchers and we will be responsible for making businesses aware of the scheme and encouraging them to take it up.

Some residential properties may also benefit as a result of upgrades to telephone cabinets by BT but many residential properties will not.

We will therefore have a situation where some of our most deprived communities and some of our most economically important locations, such as the Enterprise Zone, the City Centre, the Leeds Bradford Corridor, will have the worst broadband speeds in West Yorkshire when originally they were promised the best.

The situation we expected, where we would have a small part of the district with poor broadband has not come true. It will be a considerable part of the city that suffers.

Councillor Wakefield has written to the Minister to express our deep concerns and we will continue to work with the Government and BDUK to resolve the issues and to find a suitable solution for Leeds residents.

I find it unacceptable that we have deprived communities who will be cut off from the benefits of broadband by what is, I would say, Civil Service incompetence on this issue. I trust that representatives of other parties will join with us in fighting

for a decent deal for residents of wards such as Armley, Burmantofts and Richmond Hill, Calverley and Farsley, Pudsey and others to get a good deal for our residents and ensure that they are connected. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: No supplementary. Can we go to Question 10, Councillor Wadsworth.

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Why has the Executive Board Member for Environmental Services introduced a waste permits policy that unfairly discriminates against residents who use larger vehicles to dispose of their domestic garden waste, and was an equality impact assessment carried out before this policy was introduced?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dobson.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will answer the second part of the question first in that the equality impact work was done and completed and seen to be done. I will answer this question in, I hope, a full and frank way but I have to say I reject the original principle within the question round discrimination against the people that you have mentioned. Actually, I will concede, I think there was an element of discrimination around how we were doing things previously, and elaborate.

From a public perspective, a person who goes in and uses one of our domestic waste sites, was it fair? I think it is no secret that people were using our domestic sites for free tipping off of commercial waste. I think that discriminated against people. I also think it discriminated against the thousands of people, be it large business or people from charitable organisations, who paid legitimately for a commercial waste service on top of the domestic service that they paid for through their Council Tax.

Yes, I do think that in the system there was an element of discrimination; I just think it is a different one.

I think the history of this teaches us a lot of lessons. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. Back in 2005 a lot of eyebrows were raised around the Wednesday and Saturday restriction on large vehicles and some of the vehicles that were actually taken out of the system, so again the long-wheeled based stuff, the flat-beds, the pick-ups, the stuff that was originally taken out, I do not think that was discriminatory either then, I certainly do not think it is now but we are actually simplifying the new mechanism to enforce a lot of that.

Why are we doing it? Let us talk pounds, shillings and pence. The real argument here is, we know – and it is no secret – that commercial waste was going to our domestic tip off points free of charge - at very conservative estimates, around 6%. In monetary terms that is about £108,000. I am expecting more in terms of a saving. I am expecting anything up to 13%, which could give us a saving on commercial waste being deposited at our sites free of charge of around quarter of a million pounds, and I am really happy to revisit that at some point in Council because I might be proved wrong; I would love to be proved right.

Some early indicators: the first six weeks we have done it, no real evidence of increased fly tipping. Let us find some wood to touch but that is an early good indicator. In the system I think it is fair to say that we have looked and we have listened, as we always try and do, so when In Bloom groups have come or some charitable groups, or even a Parish Council and they have said, "Look, we actually collect things for you and we take it away and we think we are being penalised", we

have said, "Fair enough, we will give you dispensation. We will try and make it work and we will try and bend where we can bend on this."

The original premise is a good one. We were actually being a free service in a way that was absolutely unacceptable.

Who has been rejected from the scheme then? Actually the sort of people that were included in the large vehicles back in 2005 plus non-Leeds residents who have been coming to our tips and using them regularly, they will not get a permit, along with commercial. Some people have actually come to us and said, "Can we have twelve permits, please? By the way, we are commercial" and we have said, "No, of course not, there are legitimate channels to explore that", and finally a few, a handful, of landlords.

To sum up, and I will not shy away from this point, Paul, no system is perfect. There are 760,000-odd people living in this city and somebody at the top end who have trailers – and that is one of the key reasons we have done this, because what we found in 2005 onwards is people who had vans before and used vans moved to trailers. I am always concerned when somebody has a large garden or a particularly large piece of property that is hard to maintain and there is always going to be somebody at the top end, but I really do think what we have tried to do with this has been proportionate and has been fair. We have had, I think, five official complaints, three of which were around gardens and I think there was one who actually coughed very early on to the fact he was a commercial trader who just wanted to trade for free.

I do think we have done quite a comprehensive job of work on this. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wadsworth, supplementary?

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: Would the Executive Board Member agree with me that this policy will prove unworkable because the people who he is trying to exclude, which are the traders, will just move their operation to cars, and should he not have implemented it for all vehicles entering our household waste sites, and has this policy not had to be brought in because of the failure of the administration to provide significant enforcement on the Wednesdays and Saturdays to the traders who were coming in?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dobson.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Yes, on the first point, how long is a piece of string? Where do you actually draw a line and say this is a proportionate scheme?

Let's face facts, if somebody who has got twelve permits wants to use a car to bring in trade waste, there is not going to be massive we can actually do about that but I imagine if somebody turns up to a tip with an old bath lashed, we will soon have something to say about it. Again, this is about being proportionate.

When we have actually looked at this it has really been focused on trying to find a solution to a long term problem and one of the big problems we have had, actually, I think has been really untenable for a lot of our guys because they do not want to stand arguing the toss, sometimes in quite aggressive situations with people, nor do I want to expose our people to that sort of risk anxiety.

Actually, we cannot actually win as Councillors sometimes because I am sure we have all had the email, "I have been to the tip, I have got a van but I am a

legitimate domestic user and I have met some little Napoleon who has said 'Off you go'." On the other hand, we have had people who have really forced the issue and we know for a fact it has been commercial waste and we have had to take the battle to the gates and it has become ugly and confrontational in a way that I just do not think is appropriate for our staff. That is another reason we have tried to implement this. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor. That is the end of Question Time. You have answered ten, there are another 19 questions that will get a written response in time.

Can we now turn to page 10?

ITEM 10 - MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: I am looking at Item 10, which is Minutes. Councillor Wakefield.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper?

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: I will second for him.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Gruen. Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Yes, Lord Mayor. Could I move under Councillor Procedure Motion 13.2(c) that the order of business be changed so that the reference back falling within the Adult Social Care and Environmental portfolios of the Executive Board Minutes be heard immediately after the reference back in the name of Councillor Lamb within the Children's Services portfolio.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Campbell. Councillor Townsley.

COUNCILLOR TOWNSLEY: Formally second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I intend now, then, to call for the vote. (*A vote was taken*) I think that motion falls, Councillor Campbell. LOST

(a) **Executive Board**

(i) **Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services**

I am going to move on to invite comments on the Executive Board Minutes, Neighbourhoods, Planning and Support Services. Councillor Ghulam Hussain.

COUNCILLOR HUSSAIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, fellow Councillors, I will be speaking on Minute 45, page 40, about affordable housing.

Providing affordable housing is essential for our city's development. We all know that there is a need for more Council housing in Leeds. Demand for these homes has indeed increased in the current economic climate.

The Council is set to provide the largest number of Council homes to the city for 30 years. The project will take around four years to complete and will total over

400 new homes. This is a big project and something I know the Council is working hard to deliver.

Not only will this provide much needed homes for families in need, there are all sorts of economic benefits to the Council. This project will also create new jobs for local people, the investment will lead to sustainable self-financing level of housing growth.

The programme will provide income and generate Council Tax and New Homes Bonus. This is money that we can use to further invest in Council owned properties so long as the Council is given the money to deliver on its ambitions.

Council is already bringing 2,000 empty properties back into use every year but there are still too many people on our waiting list. There are around 25,000 people on waiting lists in Leeds that need housing and our population is growing.

The gap between average house prices and average income is also expected to widen. We are in a position to support our communities so we have a responsibility and clear motivation to provide a genuine affordable alternative to private accommodation.

We know this is a national challenge. Also as a Council we know that we have a duty of care to those that need it. Central Government is making changes to the welfare system that will affect many of our residents who are already struggling financially.

I welcome the fact that we are taking action as a Council to ensure that we can provide for those most in need with a suitable place to call a home. This Council wants Leeds to be the best city to live in the UK. Investing in the housing sector is a great way to do so. You cannot be the best if you do not look after the whole of your population. We must create housing for all needs and ambition, something that is vital to delivering economic growth.

Council housing has and will continue to be a very important part of the community. We must cater for all people, particularly those that are vulnerable and need our help. There are few things more important than making sure that people have an accessible, affordable place to live. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Mick Lyons.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I am looking and I just thought I am speaking on Minute 45, page 40, and I thought I would have a look at the speech while somebody was doing something else and saying what I was going to say and then it said three minutes. I like my eggs hard boiled, so I cannot have them for three minutes but I will not do what somebody did. When I have finished he tells me to sit down.

The Housing Growth Programme is the largest Council house creation in over 30 years, as has been said, and we have got to try to do 400 new properties – that is 100 properties that will be new built, so we are going to build 100 new properties. The rest, what we are going to do is we are going to go and look at where new properties have been built or are being built and look on plan. If you are buying on plan and you are buying a few houses, it sounds sense that you can make a good deal out of them, so on top of the 100 new houses that are going to be built, we are going to look at buying new properties from builders that we can guarantee we can buy on plan and guarantee that we will get a quick return and we will get them a lot cheaper. As far as we are concerned, it should be a good deal. Having said that, I

hope our officers are told how to bargain on buying properties and what the builders will accept at the end of the day, but I can guarantee you that if you go to a builder and buy on plan, I will guarantee X amount of houses he will take it at a reduced rate of what they are advertised at.

COUNCILLOR: They should take you with them.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Well, they should take me with them but I am going to stop here and I am standing again, by the way, Paul, so I will annoy you for quite some time to come.

My time is nearly up and I haven't started! *(laughter)*. The non-traditional way to create housing is buy back from people who have already bought Council houses and cannot afford it. What happens is, they will be made homeless, we will have to find them homeless places, we will have to pay again. In actual fact, if we buy those houses back off them we keep them in housing and we save money. It is about keeping people in housing and keeping them in money.

Not only that, how many young people, how many of your kids and grandkids and possibly yourself can afford a deposit on a new house? How many? For a £100,000 house you are talking about 20 grand. When the banks start lending like they should do at 50% or whatever they might be able to get them moving; until then, they won't. Just think of it, they can build them and move into areas not such as...

COUNCILLOR LAY: Red light. The red light has gone.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I had enough of you when you were Lord Mayor because you were bloody rubbish! *(laughter)* I know when and who to tell me to sit down and it will not be you. *(laughter and applause)* Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I think I will ask you to sit down. Thank you very much. Councillor Congreve.

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I am speaking on Minute 46 page 41, the Financial Close for Little London, Beeston Hill and Holbeck PFI Scheme.

I am sure Members will know how happy I and my fellow Ward Councillors are for getting to this point. I only wish I could be standing here a few years ago making this speech.

What is important now is that we move forward on to the next stage of building work. For us now to be at this point where work is starting means that the tenants' long wait is nearly over. Again, I and my ward colleagues want to thank every affected tenant in Beeston and Holbeck for their patience.

We cannot forget out many times this project nearly did not happen, nor that it was the Council, including Ward Members and officers, who made sure it went ahead. When the credit crunch led to the end of other projects, the Council persevered to make sure it continued. When parts of the community facilities, such as the Little London Hub, was removed, the Council ensured alternative financing was found. When significant further funding was required, the Council stepped in to provide the capital necessary to keep it going. When banks were failing to agree a position, the Council kept at them in the hope to achieve this. When central Government suddenly demanded a new system of funding the project, the Council ensured that this happened as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Now it is time for us to move on. In Holbeck, in addition to new build, more than 370 homes are being refurbished to a very high standard. This is not just about the look of rooms but about ensuring tenants have a warm, comfortable and sustainable place to live. High quality renovations are also happening to convert Ingram Court into a 23 bedroomed self-contained unit.

What happens around people's homes is almost as important as what happens within their homes so I am very glad that alongside the property refurbishments there will also be improvements to the environment. With work now started on Meynell Heights, residents can look forward to seeing real improvements in their homes.

In conclusion, this Labour Council acted again and again to fulfil the promise made to comments in Beeston and Holbeck that their properties will be improved well beyond the basic decency standard. The real work begins now to make that promise a reality. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Iqbal.

COUNCILLOR IQBAL: My Lord Mayor, I would also like to speak on Minute 46 page 41 regarding the eagerly awaited housing scheme in inner city Leeds. I would like to echo Councillor Congreve's comments that this is fantastic news for the city, especially for the residents in South Leeds who have had to endure such a long and frustrating wait to arrive at this point. However, I am now delighted we are all at a place where we can all finally get excited about the scheme and start to see the work taking place in an area of Leeds that desperately needs it.

What is really pleasing about this report is that the residents in existing properties will be the first ones to benefit from the scheme. A range of internal and external refurbishments are scheduled to begin in the coming weeks before any new building takes place.

As a Ward Member in one of the affected areas I have fought hard with my colleagues to ensure that work to existing properties was made a priority. Residents living in existing properties have really suffered throughout this whole process. They have continued to live in the properties which were falling below the decency standard while being let down by one set back after another. Overall, the scheme will deliver significant improvements to 1,245 existing Council properties and external improvements to 51 other leaseholder properties, with work set to begin this week.

The construction of 388 brand new Council homes over the next four years will be a much welcomed boost to the area, providing essential affordable housing in this part of the city. However, it was important for me and my colleagues that the residents who have had to wait so long will be the first to see the benefits of it. They have had to give up so much while waiting for this moment. In addition to the internal and external improvements to over 1,200 properties, the scheme will also deliver enhanced environmental standards. This includes being built to Code for Sustainable Homes Standard. The combined effect of all these improvements will enhance these homes above the decency standard and make them homes that residents can be comfortable and proud to live in.

I am really looking forward to seeing the work begin to take shape over the coming weeks. We all know that it has taken much longer than anyone wanted to arrive at this stage but we can now all work forward and start to think about the great benefits this scheme will bring to local communities. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Iqbal. Councillor Maqsood, Kamila.

COUNCILLOR MAQSOOD: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I am speaking on Minute 47, page 42, Housing Management Review Implementation. As a member of the new Shadow Housing Board I wanted to give my opinions on how the governance of housing can lead to better management.

We all know that Housing Management is the first and most important way tenants come into contact with their landlord. It covers the welcome and response residents receive at the Housing Office, the sensitive handling of repairs and the reaction a tenant receives if they go into arrears. I am sure Members will, like myself, have experience of sympathetic and dedicated care from Housing Managers. Members will, of course, also have seen times when their care fell behind the highest standards we expect of Council staff. I want to ensure that tenants receive high quality housing and support. I want to make sure that tenants are empowered to take decisions on matters that affect them.

Bringing Housing Management in house does not automatically improve performance. In order to help tenants we have to ensure we get the behind-the-scenes work done right. The first and foremost job of the Shadow Housing Board is to oversee the bringing together of strategies, procedures and, most importantly, staff from three different organisations. These organisations often have three different sets of policies and in some cases three different terms for the same thing. The ALMOs each have significant strengths. It is my ambition for the new in-house provision to keep those strengths whilst making sure all Council tenants across the city can benefit from them.

There may also be imaginative and creative solutions that are not already being used in Leeds. We should make sure we look at these in order to work out if they would be successful in Leeds, but doing work for tenants can only bring us so far. We need to do work with tenants. One important way in which the ALMOs make achievements was in bringing tenants into the heart of decision making. I am proud that we are continuing this legacy of tenant involvement. This is not just through the Shadow Housing Board but also through the ten Area Panels. As tenants gain skills and experience, they can use these to confidently assert what they feel is in the best interests of themselves and their neighbours. I am particularly interested in how we can continue to empower tenants and make their views central to Housing Management.

The Shadow Housing Board is not intended to be permanent. We have a limited task and a limited amount of time in which to achieve this. By focusing on and retaining and finding the best approaches to Housing Management, alongside listening and promoting tenant engagement, we can create an outstanding in-house service. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hardy.

COUNCILLOR HARDY: Lord Mayor, I am speaking on Minute 48 on page 43 of the Minute Book in relation to the destitution in the asylum seeking population in Leeds.

I think we all agree that Leeds is a welcoming, compassionate city and asylum seekers and refugees make valuable contributions to all of our communities. Many asylum seekers can find life a struggle if they are unable to work or to claim State support. They can be faced with destitution, homelessness and all the

worrying vulnerabilities that come with that. I wonder if any of you were hungry, if you were cold, if you were homeless, how would you feel?

An estimate 400 asylum seeking individuals, including families and children, are considered to be destitute in Leeds. What a disgrace that is. Thankfully, there are numerous third sector organisations and charities and faith groups in Leeds who step in and do a great job to help the people in that situation – not the Government, of course.

The Local Authority plays a large role supporting the form of accommodation, subsistence or additional social care for individuals classified as destitute plus. It is provided under the Community Care and Children's legislation. However, what a surprise, this is not funded by the Central Government. Well, I am shocked. The Council has to meet the costs but finds it hard to plan for how many people need this support as decisions are made on where to place people by the Home Office with no recourse or anything said to Leeds City Council. That is a disgrace. Where is the Big Society?

In the last three years there has been a steady increase in the numbers of supported children and family cases. The vast majority are waiting for a decision on Human Rights applications for leave to remain in the UK from the UK Border Agency. They will be destitute without Local Authority support – support that can be ongoing for years because of the delays in decision making on the immigration claims. We have heard the figures in the House of Commons – how disgraceful that they have let it go on for years and years and years, but I will not talk about national stuff, that would be wrong.

Again, we see the financial burden falling on the Council, plus all the cuts we have. What little control over the decision making process that rests with the UK Border Agency. What we need to see is a renewed dialogue (has there been one?) between the Home Office and the Local authority to address an issue of disproportionate cost falling on the Council compared to Central Government while they have escaped once again their obligations.

I am glad that the Executive Board agreed that a letter will be sent to the Home Secretary about this and I hope that that letter is acted on so Leeds can continue to give a compassionate welcome to asylum seekers and they can make a vibrant difference to our city. I will finish, Lord Mayor – I know my place. They can go on living independent lives and make valuable contributions to the community and live in our city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Sobel.

COUNCILLOR SOBEL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on Executive Board Minute 49 on page 43. I think all Members will agree that the Holt Park Centre is an important facility, serving the communities right across North Leeds, and the updating of the centre and the development of new opportunities is long overdue.

With a centre, which I often visit, particularly the superstore, there are poor conditions in the centre and around the centre, and it is a shame that when Council budgets were satisfactory, under the last Labour Government, the Council's then ruling Coalition could not have brought this scheme forward much sooner and that it took a sole Labour administration to bring this scheme forward. Maybe this is evidence that coalitions running administrations, whether locally or nationally, just do not work.

As Holt Park Active nears completion it is now important to look forward to a better District Centre that helps the community become fitter, healthier and happier. The Holt Park Active scheme is one which takes a whole person approach in the community, which I am usually enthusiastic about. We as a Local Authority need not just think about people's economic wellbeing or their wellbeing around their health but also their social wellbeing. We need to think about all of our citizens holistically and I think this is a great example of a scheme that does this, one that is a shining example to the rest of the city.

The planning statement which has been brought forward now covers the District Centre of Holt Park including the site of the previous leisure centre and the previous school, the previous Ralph Thoresby School site. Much of the site is owned by Leeds City Council and proves a great opportunity to show how civic enterprise can operate in local communities. Of course, we in Leeds are national leaders in civic enterprise.

The suggested uses do include older people's housing, general housing, retail and green space – all much needed by the community in Holt Park. Older people's housing is particularly needed in the area, especially due to the failed attempt to create extra care housing in 2010. This failed, if you recall, due to withdrawal of funds from the Coalition Government as part of its Comprehensive Spending Review that year. Holt Park suffered hugely due to that Comprehensive Spending Review. It is this Council's administration that has the courage to invest now in the future of Holt Park.

I am pleased that potential developers are required to consider the Council's ten urban design principles which include community engagement, quality design, sustainable solutions and improving the existing identity of the area.

In terms of the retail offer, residents have spoken to me about a broader retail offer with the opportunity for local entrepreneurs, local people, to start their own businesses in a redeveloped centre and I hope to see this in a new planning statement after the consultation.

I also welcome the fact that green space is indicated in the plan as fundamentally important to the new centre. The Draft Planning Statement shows how green space can replace the existing 1970s concrete dominated area which currently exists at the site.

Having public space where people can talk, play and relax without commercial pressures are the strongest ways to bring communities together and enrich people's experiences of their own neighbourhood. Following approval by Executive Board of the Draft Planning Statement...

THE LORD MAYOR: Last sentence, please.

COUNCILLOR SOBEL: ...it will be taken to public consultation in September and I hope we can all work with the local community to ensure the best scheme for those in Holt Park. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was going to explain all the welcome and why I welcome what is being proposed here but I would like to point out to Councillor Sobel one or two things.

It started when the Lord Mayor was in charge of Leisure and Education in his administration and we advised him, because we had only found out that afternoon that Ralph Thoresby High School was going to be closed. He was flabbergasted because he was trying to develop the plan, so the plan has been going for that long.

Then we took over in power and John Procter led what was going on. Then you took over and you did not push it hard enough. You can blame the Government for everything but get the facts right in terms of what it was. It started when the Lord Mayor was looking after Education and Leisure and it has taken that long, and it has taken too long to get to this because for too long Holt Park has been neglected by the administration that is here. You were in charge a long, long time ago – you did absolutely nothing. John Procter tried to do something about it and was moving forward and came forward with a number of initiatives.

Yes, the older people's housing is something that must be going in there, as for the retail units as well, but again, when the school was closed down the site was poorly managed and it was derelict and it should not have been left and, as a result of that, some of the development that could have gone in there has not gone in.

One thing I would say, and I would say it both to people here and if there are any developers outside listening – this is a brown field site and it is where development should be going, should be going as a priority and it is to be welcomed for that reason that we are utilising an asset that we have got as a Council, we are not trying to destroy anything else in the area. What is proposed is not going to destroy anywhere in the area, unlike some other developments that are proposed.

The consultation does start end of September/beginning of October but we need to make sure that the spatial planning is introduced, particularly for a community space and in terms of play areas and also sports areas that are needed.

Finally, one problem that it is not going to solve is the potential of NGT. It is not going to help the regeneration of the Holt Park area if NGT is going to continue. You do not have to listen to me, listen to the Labour Party in Adel and Wharfedale. They do not want it and we do not want it either because this will not enhance the area. Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Paulene Grahame.

COUNCILLOR P GRAHAME: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I wish to speak on Minute 50, page 43, which relates to the external publication of employee interests for high risk posts.

Transparent, unbiased decision making is at the heart of what we do as a Council. We are, after all, dealing with decisions on behalf of the public using public money. It follows that those of us making decisions should be up front about our interests. For a long time it has been common practice for elected Members to register the interests which may influence, or be perceived to influence, decisions we make. However, there has remained some concern about whether there is the same transparency for senior officers. They too are making important decisions on a daily basis, often spending public money, so surely it is right to have a similar safeguard in place for officers as we do for Councillors.

Like the Executive Board, Scrutiny has spent considerable time looking at how we can address the situation. I am satisfied the proposals included in the report that went to the Executive Board strike the right balance. They enable us to ensure we have transparent, unbiased decision making whilst still respecting the private lives of officers.

I understand Councillor Procter does not think that we have gone far enough with this enquiry. I do not know exactly what he would like us to do – would he like officers to sign in blood or answer more questions? I can remember a time in 2006/07 when I chaired the Scrutiny Board for Leisure and you were Executive Member where you once came to a meeting and asked me how I dare question officers regarding questions.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: No, I said I would answer the questions.

COUNCILLOR P GRAHAME: I am sure Councillor Dowson – can you remember when we wanted information about the Millennium Square and contractors and licensing, officers were told not to answer questions. There is a lady's name springs to mind (I cannot just quite grasp it at the moment) so I think maybe if you would say exactly what you are wanting us to ask to get this information.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: She sits on my Scrutiny Board as well.

COUNCILLOR P GRAHAME: Yes, I am, and I told you this. Would you like a torture chamber in the basement, Councillor Procter, for the officers?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Ignore him, Paulene.

COUNCILLOR P GRAHAME: I always do.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: She's just quoted me for half her speech.

COUNCILLOR P GRAHAME: In conclusion, Lord Mayor, I welcome this report today as a sensible step towards greater openness and transparency on the part of officers in the spirit adopted by Members many years ago. Thank you and, Councillor Procter, if you would like to let me know what else and how we can question, I would be more than happy. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blackburn, on a number of Minutes.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. For one time I might actually reach the red light with these.

I am speaking on Minute 50 on page 43, Minute 79 on page 15 and Minute 82 on page 17 of the extra papers.

Firstly, on Minute 50, I welcome what the administration has brought to Executive Board on this. It has taken a long, long time and I can remember going to many meetings when I was on Corporate Governance and Audit where we raised this many, many times and it took a long time coming.

I have got to say, I somewhat disagree with Paulene. I think it could have gone further, but it is a start. At least we have done something and we have been talking about this for years.

Secondly, on Minute 79, we also welcome the establishment of the trading company called Civic Enterprises Leeds. I think this is a really good idea and it gives us opportunities to move forward in a number of areas and actually earn some resources for this Council.

Finally, on Minute 82, which is on the extra papers, the proposed amendment to the Core Strategy. Again, we welcome this. As a member of City Plans I know the Exec Member has been raising this about the applications we have been getting for student accommodation and, quite honestly, when we first started getting the applications for student accommodation, there was definitely a need but we are getting to the stage now where if we have not got enough students to fill them what is going to happen? Of course, housing for students and housing for members of the public are quite a different thing.

We welcome this and congratulate the Exec Member on actually bringing it forward. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: My Lord Mayor, I am referring to Minute 77, page 14. This refers to the Leeds Says No to the Bedroom Tax, a campaign by Hands Off Our Homes. What they are doing is referring to the most immoral tax you can almost imagine, the so-called bedroom tax. I find it the height of impertinence that people like the Tory toffs can say to people of the lower orders that you can have one bedroom but you cannot have a side room, a small room next to it, for storage. You are over-occupied, so you must move. The irony is if you move into the private sector and it will cost the country more because of the actual benefits they can claim.

It is a totally immoral tax and it is only possible because people over there, the Lib Dems and their representatives in Parliament, are allowing it. They cunningly describe it as an immoral tax but, quite frankly, what are you doing to stop your leaders going along with every right wing Tory policy which attacks Local Government, which is attacking the Health Service, which is attacking all those things which we civilised beings actually believe in?

I shame for the Lib Dems because quite frankly a generation or two ago the Liberals were often far more left wing than many of the Labour Party Group that was established here. They have completely gone now, the conscience has gone. You could make a difference. You as Lib Dems could stand up and make sure that your MPs said this is a wrong tax, it is immoral, it should be withdrawn.

Quite frankly, if they did that and voted with Labour then, in fact, you would defeat the Government on it, so that goes through solely because you and your colleagues in Parliament – with one honourable exception, this lady who has already said she is so disgusted she is leaving as an MP – it is only going ahead because you are allowing it and you must take the full moral blame. Do not expect the Tories in Parliament to take the moral blame because quite frankly I do not think they have the high morals to understand what that meant.

Quite frankly, the inequality of treatment, again, if you look at the figures, the amount of money we are getting for roads is a fraction of what is going on in London and the South and other areas. The same in the Health Service. In almost every area you look at there is this gross disparity – so gross it is almost impossible to believe even the right wing Tories would go along with it.

Well, quite frankly, we have tried as Socialists in this Group to ameliorate the worst aspects of this bedroom tax. We have done all kinds of things which have been repeated, I think, before and you will know them. We have set up an emergency fund and the Government cheats on this. They will take away billions from the NHS or from Local Authorities and then later on say, look, we are giving back two million when they have taken away billions. It is just sheer immorality and if

we are in politics for anything, we are in politics for morals. Quite frankly, that is why some of us feel so enraged. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dawson.

COUNCILLOR DAWSON: Thank you. My Lord Mayor, I am speaking on Minute 78 on page 15 of the supplementary papers. As the Labour Councillor in Morley let me make my position clear on housing developments in Morley.

I want Morley to retain the green belt that separates us from Leeds, Wakefield and Kirklees. I want to preserve Morley's character. I want to preserve reckless construction and reckless development in a similar manner outlined by the MARC group at the last Council meeting. I want Morley to be a distinct and separate town and not part of some metropolitan urban sprawl.

To achieve that, though, I recognise the best thing for Morley is to have protection of the green belt status as outlined in the current LDF plan. That is our best chance. To not have a plan or a delay in adopting the LDF will only mean that the green belt in Morley is vulnerable and significant chunks of it could be built on by developers. Not having a plan is not an option.

Now I need to ask the question, where is Greater Morley? Greater Morley covers Lower Wortley, Beeston Royds, Cottingley, Beeston, Middleton, parts of Belle Isle, Thorpe, Lofthouse, Robin Hood – all places that have never been part of Morley. Perhaps it may soon even be extended to North Kirklees and then Councillor Finnigan might live in Greater Morley. *(Applause)*

This means that there are 18 Leeds City Councillors who represent the Greater Morley area but Councillor Finnigan appears to be the lead spokesman on planning matters for Greater Morley, though I am not aware that the other 17 Councillors have agreed to this. I must have missed something or missed the meeting where this occurred.

In Greater Morley there is a figure bandied around of 8,000 new homes in the LDF. Let us look at that. First of all, in the plan it is 7,200 – there has been some very generous rounding. 23% of that number have already received planning permission and building could start tomorrow, so the real figure for Greater Morley is somewhere around 5,600. In my own Ward, Morley south, the current site allocations mean around 700 new homes could be built in the next 15 years – 50 per year. The combined figure for Morley North and Morley South Wards – that is Morley – is around 2,200. It is still reasonable and fair to challenge even these numbers. As part of the site allocation consultation I have asked for all developments in the green belt in Morley North and Morley South Wards to be removed from the plan. I hope other Morley Councillors will support this proposal, though my fear is that they will put their political alliance with the Green Party ahead of saving the green belt in Morley.

It is interesting to note that at the initial site allocations meetings for Outer South West there was hardly a cigarette paper between my suggestions and those of my MBI colleagues – if anything I probably took a harder line on some of the sites.

We must hammer out the best possible deal to protect Morley's green belt and Morley's green spaces. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hyde.

COUNCILLOR HYDE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on Minute 79 page 15, extra papers.

I might be adding a little bit of light to the proceedings. This is talking about a Labour administration's initiative to create a new trading company called Civic Enterprise Leeds, which Councillor Gruen and myself and other people have been involved with. It is create a company to deal on the market place and the innovative thing about this is that we can actually extend our expertise from this Council out into the private market place outside. The Council already has powers to trade and does so already and it raised about £90m and that is through the work of Julie Meakin and her team through Commercial Services. This creates opportunities for employment, creates opportunities for apprenticeships but the main thing is about innovation and this Authority has been very good at innovation over a number of years.

The interesting thing, Councillor Atha and I were speaking the other day, reminiscing about 1965. I used to work for this Council as an apprentice in 1965 and I learned my first skills as a joiner here, so that shows how long I have been around. The interesting thing, in 1965 this Council used to trade – trade substantially. Just take the Parks Department then. It used to raise £1m and it raised £1m by trading with other Authorities and the private sector and the interesting thing is we used to trade even with Plymouth, down south, and provide plants for their horticultural displays.

It is nothing new but it is interesting because we can do it again and the law now allows us to do that. The interesting thing is this trading company will allow us to trade with the private sector market. The interesting thing is as well that the research shows that we are as competitive with the private sector people in various industries. We can trade right across all our departments. The interesting thing is we could trade on lifts, we can trade on catering, which is substantial at the moment through the catering service, we can trade on one of the things which is interesting, actually, and I should have mentioned it, the lift maintenance service. There is actually a shortage of lift maintenance companies in Leeds and the private sector are crying out for people to repair their lifts. That is the strange thing, but we run, through Commercial Services at the moment, a very good lift maintenance service. Also, our fleet is actually very competitive with the private sector, which is also interesting.

I would just like to add that, as I mentioned earlier, Julie Meakin raises £90m and about £9m comes back in profit.

THE LORD MAYOR: Red light, Councillor Hyde.

COUNCILLOR HYDE: I am sorry, Lord Mayor. Can I just say that I wish this company all the best in the future. It is a proposal, it is a paper to come back to the Executive Board. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Khan.

COUNCILLOR KHAN: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on Minute 80, page 15 on the extra Minutes.

As local Ward Member I am delighted that the sustainable community investment programme has been approved. It will see much needed improvement to house conditions, energy efficient, environment condition for many homes in the Crossgreen area of Burmantofts and Richmond Hill – an area that is in need of further investment to benefit the local community. Myself and my colleagues are pleased by the Group Repair Scheme which local residents describe as a high

priority for the community. Not only does the programme meet priorities set out in the Housing and Regeneration City Priority Plan, it will also help improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and families. Up to 180 properties in Crossgreen are expected to benefit from the programme.

These improvements will include new roofs, windows and new doors and improved energy efficiency, resulting in affordable warmth. Hopefully the contractors will be appointed in early 2014 with the work starting at the beginning of the next financial year. This is really good news, considering the long wait for improvement in the area. We are also happy to say that the new contractor will be required to provide opportunities for training and apprenticeship schemes for local residents. This will help provide a real boost to unemployed opportunities in the area – something that is to be welcomed in the current economic climate.

To ensure the scheme has big impact, staff within the Group Repair Scheme will be contacting all potential residents in the target area. A Group Repair Scheme can improve the physical appearance of an area, increase confidence within the community and leave the community feeling that neighbours are safer. In addition, it has motivated home owners to invest further in their own homes, improve their overall living conditions. The result of the scheme could see Crossgreen becoming a more attractive place to live for many more people. It will also give some residents valuable skills, experience, to gain work in the future.

In summary, this is fantastic news for the Crossgreen area and will bring numerous benefits to the wider community. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on Minute 81, page 16 of the extra papers, Planning Policy for Gypsies and Travellers.

I totally agree that there should be locally set pitch targets to support policy H7 of the Core Strategy and I think this says some very good things, does H7, in it, saying that travellers should have reasonable access to facilities such as shops, healthcare, schools and local facilities. Also, that it should only be built on green belt land as a last resort.

However, whilst I agree with that, this seems to be the case for any pitches in the future going down in a year or two, not the twelve pitches that is currently proposed and I think that that is totally wrong because it is giving out two standards – one standard which we say is OK for what we are doing, it is OK to do something now which is totally different and not as good as what we intend to do in the future. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on Minute 82, page 17, which is the item on the amendment to the Core Strategy Policy H6.

Lord Mayor, when I was first elected to the Council in 2002 the buying up of residential properties, terraces and semi-detached houses in Headingley, was very tight and at the time I think at the time it was felt that we were powerless to stop some of this. One of the things that we did at the time was propose a fairly strict policy on student housing which was a policy called the Area of Student Housing Restraint, the ASHORE Policy. That was submitted to the inspector at the time and

was rejected and in replacement we got the Area of Housing Mix Policy, which is essentially what we have in Policy H6 in terms of the proposals for policy conditions for the conversion of family properties into shared housing.

I think what actually changed was not something that the Council effected, it was actually market forces because when we had the property boom, people saw the opportunity to build these purpose built student flats on the fringe of the city centre and to make a large buck in the meantime, so the answer to the problem that we faced in Headingley, which was for students to move into purpose built accommodation, was actually answered by market forces on this particular occasion.

Of course, what market forces do not do is allow you to plan and we did find there are a lot of properties, particularly in the Burley and Little Woodhouse areas, as Councillor Blackburn will remember, that just sprouted up almost overnight. There was very little planning. We were frustrated because we could not actually have an influence over how those were being developed.

I do not think anyone would have a problem and certainly would not have a problem at the time with these properties being built on the university campuses, for example - it is the obvious place to have purpose build accommodation – but I think some of the unplanned nature of what we saw was regrettable.

I do welcome any attempt to plan for these types of accommodation in the future but I think what we need to ensure is that it is not seen as downgrading our attempts to create a more balanced community in Leeds 6, so it is important that we plan but it is important that we also say loud and clear that we want Headingley and Leeds 6 and other parts of that part of Leeds to be balanced and to have a fair share of family accommodation because we have seen changes in recent years in that direction.

I think the policy as proposed is not perfect, I do think there are some tweaks and changes that are needed and I did write to Peter about this. I accept that there are possibilities to comment and I will certainly be doing that. Particularly, how do you convert a purpose built student property into normal flats or offices or something when the Section 106 Agreement we put in place is specifically for student properties. You do not need parking, for example. Those are issues that we need to address.

I think the general thrust is good but we do need to watch out with balance. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to speak on the same Minute. I am sure that in his summing up Councillor Gruen will say we need the Core Strategy in place and this is a key policy within the Core Strategy. I would not disagree that we need the Core Strategy in place, certainly we need it to protect us from unscrupulous developers.

I just, however, have some issues with this particular policy and the strength of our ability to defend this policy. I think Councillor Hamilton has covered the issue particularly what we used to call student land out Headingley way but I think because of certain aspects of the proposals we may have an issue in relation to defending our policy.

I think there is a reference to over-supply as one of the reasons for needing the policy. There does seem to be an over-supply of policy but when I have asked a

specific question which relates to does this apply to new build properties or does it apply to conversions, the Council has no information. I could well see a situation where a developer of a new block might come along to us and say "You cannot apply that policy because all the other blocks I own are fully occupied and we have got a waiting list", so I think there is an issue in detail there that we need to address.

I think it also talks about introducing basic size standards for rooms. Again, I ask the specific question of what would those be because I think within Development Plans Panel we have tried to raise the issue about the basic size of rooms within any housing development and unfortunately we have not been allowed to discuss that.

At the moment we have no guidelines for the basic size of room and, in fact, the response from officers I got was, "Well, if we pass this policy we will have to think about it." I think that is particularly hard to defend, Lord Mayor, if you come to an appeal.

It also talks about conversion back into family accommodation. The average size of a family in Leeds is 2.9 and I can see great issues with developers and us trying to persuade to produce a design which converts a cluster flat in a purpose built student accommodation into a 2.9 family accommodation.

So, Lord Mayor, I would fully support the Council in their wish to get a grip on student accommodation and fully support the principle that we have a policy, but I do think – and I would flag up this – that we may have some concerns in relation to our ability to defend that against the determined developer. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen to sum up on these Minutes.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, thank you very much. I am delighted that 17 Members of Council took part in this debate across this portfolio and it shows how important and interested people are. It also gives me the opportunity if I may, briefly, to say my thanks to people who work with me across this portfolio because if it was not for their help, advice and support, then I would not be able to do my job. Kamila who helps me on Housing, John Hardy our Homeless Champion, Mick Coulson on Community Safety, Alison Lowe on HR and Corporate matters, Ghulam on Community and Kim on ICT. Thank you all very much for your guidance and help.

We talk about empty properties. We are doing a good job, we have to continue to do better and do more because, as Ghulam said, there are lots of people out there wanting homes and it is only right and proper that we convert as many back as we possibly can.

I am grateful for the comments about the new Council House Programme. I am grateful to the Leader and Executive Board for making that kind of funding available, which is unheard of in the history of this Council. It is a once and for all opportunity and it joins up a lot of our portfolios because we need to make certain that the new housing has a proper design, the proper quality, is fit for older people, encompasses what is needed in terms of health and health considerations and also children and families, so we are at the centre point in terms of housing and planning to make certain we do not waste this opportunity that is now before us, particularly if we are going to build as many houses for Council growth as the plan says, now is the right time to insist with developers that they step up to the mark and do what we want them to do.

I fully understand the comments about PFI from my colleagues. Thank you very much for your help and advice. Also, it would be churlish not to mention the work on a national level done by Hilary Benn MP to get us over the line in the end. We are literally just days and a few weeks away from starting on site and I hope you will all get your hard hats on, your flak jackets on at that stage, because your work will increase exponentially when actually you are there to support and help your tenants.

Kamila was quite right talking about the new Shadow Housing Board. We have had our first meeting. It was very successful and we want to build and form now the new Housing Leeds Enterprise going forward, so lots of work to be done there.

John, asylum seekers. It is part of the Government's agenda to actually discriminate and hurt the people who are most defenceless, most vulnerable, who cannot stand up and fight on their own behalf; nothing new there. Equally, the issues, very impressed with Bernard's passionate attack on the bedroom tax. I will save my comments for later – Councillor Bentley, wear your hard hat. *(laughter)*

Paulene, thank you for the support from the employees' interests. We will continue that debate. I said to her at Councillor Procter's Scrutiny Board this is the beginning and not the end, we will monitor how that goes.

A final word on the whole issue of the Civic Enterprise Company. When I came to Councillor Grahame's Scrutiny Board, everybody there was excited and thought was a great project we are going to embark on, apart from one person who is not here today, but Les thought it was a terrible idea. How could the Council possibly begin to compete with the private sector? I have got news for you, we are going to do it and we are going to say for once to our employees in the public sector, the denigration from Tory Ministers will not affect how we do our work. We trust our employees, we know they are going to do a damn good job, we know that insourcing some of the work and raising more income rather than perpetually being forced to talk about cuts is the right way forward, although you do not believe it because you actually want Local Government to be out of business. As long as we are here we are going to stay in business.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: We do more business that you ever do.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: We are going to absolutely make certain that where there are income possibilities, where there is work that we can do as well as and in some cases much better than the private sector, we are bloody well going to do it. *(hear, hear) (Applause)*

Neil Dawson, I am delighted to hear that there is a new constituency called Greater Morley. I was never aware that we have had a boundary revision and Greater Morley now exists, but what you did, on a serious note, you put into perspective the number of new houses that are actually potentially going to be built. None of us benefit by scaremongering and telling people it is thousands and thousands when it is perhaps hundreds. All of us know that these are very difficult issues, and all of us know that if we do not have a plan, then Pickles's plan is you can build anywhere you want, any time you want, night or day and all of us will suffer from that.

Student housing, thank you for those comments. I was reminded earlier on that I thought Councillor Akhtar was bidding for more work in the Inner North West Area Committee. I am absolutely certain that student housing will be a fantastic topic for the Inner North West Committee and you are just the guy to steer that debate through the Area Committee. Thank you all very much. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I would like to seek leave of Council to suspend Standing Orders to allow the next item on the agenda to be heard.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, it is nearly quarter-past four, it is too late to move reference back. It should be ten-past.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty, do you have a seconder?

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I do.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I formally second.

COUNCILLOR HARDY: It is rules, they do not understand.

THE LORD MAYOR: I have been advised that we need very quickly to go to a vote on that. What I will do is, I will ask Councillor Latty to move.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I move that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Secunder?

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Colin. Now let us call for a vote. (*A vote was taken*) I think that fails. LOST

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Special Council meeting.

(b) Area Committees

(i) North West (Inner) Area Committee

THE LORD MAYOR: We can move on, Councillor Harper, to page 15. We are considering the Minutes from Area Committees and at the top of the list we have got North West (Inner) Area Committee and it is Councillor Walshaw to start us off.

COUNCILLOR WALSHAW: Thank you, Lord Mayor. After that brief interlude of democracy I hate to break it to you but there is a bit more Planning coming up, so be still your beating hearts!

I want to talk on Minute 7, page 275, which is Nominations to Area Committee Sub- Groups, and it is my pleasure again to be Chair of the Inner North West Planning Sub-Group this year. I think you will find we are a nice, lively crucible of debate and discussion of the challenges and changes that face our communities and, indeed, we had a very informed debate this morning on the issue I wish to speak on, but more of that in a second.

It is those sorts of challenges and changes that are central to the planning system and how we interact with it. It is often through the planning system that our communities first come face to face with how society is changing and how that throws up new challenges.

What is really planning in this context? To me, planning in this context, that is actually one of the main mechanisms by which our communities can shape change and address challenges. In keeping with many areas in Leeds, residents and Councillors in the North West, we try to manage challenges and change the best we can with the tools we have available.

I really turn to the meat of what I want to talk about; having the right tools is absolutely essential. If we look at it in the North West, and how does that apply in the North West, we are facing a lot of demographic challenges. Other Councillors from the area have spoken of it already today. We have seen the growth in student numbers, we are seeing a slight decline in student numbers. We have seen an explosive growth in student houses, in HMOs, as we call them; we are now seeing a growth in purpose built student accommodation.

We are in the middle of what is actually a long process of rebalancing our community and, turning to the Core Strategy, the famous policy, H6, H6A and H6B, those two policies there are a really important part of how we manage change and how we manage challenges.

I think particularly controlling the location and growth or decline of HMOs is particularly important and I think as an Area Committee we have a lot of work to do on that and a long way to go.

I would like to turn briefly to the new challenge that we face, the challenge we have all seen grow up in Leeds in the last five or six years particularly and that is the growth of purpose built student accommodation, or PBSA, as we now call it in planning – we have gained yet another acronym.

For a Headingley Councillor I think purpose built accommodation is a bit of a bitter sweet moment because theoretically purpose built accommodation is a great thing for us and it frees up family homes, but I think the important thing is we have to as a city, as elected representatives, have the ability to control the location, the quality, the scale and the nature of purpose built student accommodation. That is why I was pleased that as a Council we have acted and the modifications to policy H6B are now out for consultation. Anyone interested in how we are going to manage challenge and change in our communities, have a look and have your say.

At the moment, as it reads now, I think it gives us a really good, useful, powerful new tool in allowing our communities and our elected representatives to choose where purpose built student accommodation happens. I think it is really important that we have that planning armour in our locker.

I would just like to say that I think it is an excellent example of responsible Local Government working for our communities and for our city. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Chapman.

COUNCILLOR CHAPMAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on Minute 10 on page 277, the Report to North West (Inner) Area Committee Meeting, 27th June 2013.

This report brings forward a new model to allow Area Committees to determine local youth provision in their area. However, we have a problem in our area because, although there is no mention of the West Park Centre in the report, it could be said that the closure of the centre will have an adverse effect on youth

provision in the area. In fact, I am most interested to hear where the Youth Hub is going to be placed.

I would also like to remind Council that, at its meeting on 14th November, the Area Committee passed a resolution which stated that:

“It is the opinion of the North West (Inner) Area Committee that the West Park Centre is a valuable community asset and should continue to operate as an educational, cultural and community facility.”

Councillor Atha, I wonder how your conscience feels now, together with your Labour colleagues...

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Terrible, I can't tell you, terrible.

COUNCILLOR CHAPMAN: ...because you voted with us to keep the centre open. Can I remind you, on 23rd July when Councillor Jonathan Bentley wrote to all Members of the Inner North West Area Committee and asked them, in the light of the resolution passed on 14th November, to support the call in on 6th August. Councillor Jonathan Bentley has said that the only response he had to his email was from the Lib Dems.

I question the role of the Area Committee. We all agree a motion, as we did, to keep the West Park Centre open but what has happened? The building is due for demolition, approved by the Exec Board on July 17th. We are waiting for a demolition date whilst groups representing the youth, education and cultural activities of the city are still trying to get funding to keep the centre open.

I think to allow them to continue down this line is very unfair and I wonder if the Chair of the Inner North West Area Committee is going to put them right and tell them that there is no chance of the West Park Centre opening for youth provision or, indeed, for any activities. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Towler.

COUNCILLOR TOWLER: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on Minute 11, page 278.

This Council plans to offer community development work in a range of priority locations. In order to make that possible, our Area Committee has identified the need for a Community Development Worker to lead the process. We know this approach works as it is already working successfully in the South of Leeds. As such, it is something that the Outer West and Inner North West Area Committees are eager to implement.

The Community Development Worker will bring ownership and responsibility to residents, fostering a real sense of civic enterprise. They will encourage locals to have a say in the delivery of services in their areas and they will provide useful advice to help people to be more involved and influential in local projects.

We know that a single point of contact produces a clear and more effective system. The Community Development Worker will create a vital bridge between residents, their communities and Local Government. We hope that this will enable the Council and residents to work together to better identify local problems and find a community solution.

The residents often know what is best for their community and we want to support local people in achieving these goals. We have worked on this project in collaboration with our neighbouring Area Committee. I hope that we will see more of these local partnerships as further responsibilities are delegated to Area Committees.

We also plan to utilise the benefits of the Third Sector. They will be directly involved in the appointing and managing of the position. Partnerships with the Third Sector are becoming more important and I am delighted that they are involved. The new role will target areas that have traditionally been harder to involve, communities with low levels of local engagement and high indicators of deprivation. We want to strengthen and support the sense of community in these areas.

We are returning power to the local community and improving ties between the Council and residents. Giving people the experience of key decision making is an important step in increasing participation and eventually helping us to deliver a better range of services. We do not intend to dictate what people ought to want. The Community Development Worker is there to support people in identifying their own unique needs. At the heart of this position is the desire to promote the Council's core values.

In order for our communities to develop they must be safe, sustainable and cohesive. The Community Development Worker will work towards these ends and provide a service that the local area wants and needs. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Akhtar to sum up.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Let me take this opportunity to thank Councillor Towler, Councillor Walshaw and also Councillor Chapman for their contribution on these important local issues.

Councillor Towler has spoken on the Community Development Workers. This is the post that has been made possible by Inner North West and Outer West Area Committees joining together to work in partnership. Partnership working is an important way for areas to meet common problems. There are likely to be more opportunities for working together across Area Committees in the future.

The Community Development Workers will work to bring greater support and funding for the local groups who want to do more in their own communities. They will be a vital link between the Third Sector and Area Committee. Members will gain greater understanding of issues faced by local organisations, while the local organisation will be able to respond to Members' vision for the area.

The Worker will also ensure local people have a say in what the services will look like. I agree with Councillor Towler that this must be a good thing for the local community in our areas.

Councillor Walshaw, can I congratulate you for subbing a planning group and doing an excellent job. Councillor Walshaw has just spoken on the population of the area, including those caused by movements in the student communities. The local community has abundant capacity to respond to change. This change is often a positive force, especially when it brings people of different communities together. However, changes in population needs intelligent response to all predict and react to their impact if moderate numbers of students are moving to the city centre.

We do need to plan to do the private rented properties in Headingley, Hyde Park and Woodhouse. I therefore welcome that the Student Accommodation

Working Group is looking into these matters in full, including the Members of Area Committee. Councillor Walshaw, I feel that as the work continues the Area Committee should be fully consulted on the groups in order to ensure the voice of local representatives.

Councillor Chapman, I am sure that you will agree with me and welcome the initiative that has been taken by the Executive Board in March 2013 to ensure that all the Area Committees will get extra funding in their own communities and I am proud of this Council for providing £17,884 for our committee and next year that will be double the figures to £35,769.

I can only give you examples of the way I think that we can look forward. I will be using the local mosques and the local community centres and the local schools to make sure that our children are getting their fair share of the services that we have at the moment in Hyde Park. I am sure that you will do the same. Unfortunately I cannot make any comments on the West Park Community Centre because since we met last in the Area Committee, I slept since then so you can understand, I cannot recall (even though I do), I have slept and you have just caught me on the edge.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: The edge of what?

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: None of us came into politics, none of us, and Members across the Chamber, none of us came into politics to close any public services or cut backs but unfortunately this Council, like many other Local Authorities across the country, are going through very hard times where we have got to cut back on our services.

My Lord Mayor, I feel that I was a bit cheeky when I was speaking and now I have got extra time to talk about the other works that this Committee is doing, and I am pleased to say, my Lord Mayor, where I was stopped with regards to the pressures upon us and enforcement and patrolling, this Council is providing a vital service not only to the local community but also the new students who are coming into our area, and to make sure their safety is important and make sure that they are well educated with regards to littering and any other issues.

I would also like to thank the Lead Members which is a new role from the Champions. Members have been appointed in North West (Inner) Area Committee to fulfil those jobs and I look forward to Area Committee having even greater local involvement in Council decision making. This includes local members being able to put their views across to the Executive Members in formal setting. This allows local views to be considered fully and responded accordingly.

I would like to conclude by looking ahead to the next year's business plan, delivering a programme of health (I am looking at the amber light) improvement in Hyde Park, bringing young and old people together in community projects, providing support for the residents to work in order to give them a greater employment in learning and skills, ensure the effects of welfare changes are understood and local community is assisted wherever possible to deal with the impact of welfare changes, reduce burglary in Hyde Park and Headingley, continue to support local community events such as Hyde Park Community Day, Kirkstall Festival, Diwali and the Eid events.

My Lord Mayor, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak once again. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Akhtar – perfect timing!

Now at half-past four I would like to give Councillor Wakefield, the Leader, an opportunity to exercise his right of reply.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Yes, Lord Mayor, given that Councillor Gruen has just summed up probably the only Executive Minutes we have been able to get through, I will not be repeating much of what Peter has covered, although he did say that we had 17 speakers on his portfolio due to the importance. Personally, I think it is due to his charisma and leadership and that is why he has bought everybody a drink so they can speak on his Minutes and so on! *(laughter)*

I will go back a little bit on things that I think maybe I could just add a little bit. The first thing on Area Committees, I think Councillor Gabriel did raise some very important points. There is no doubt if we listen carefully, we could not have had the sports facilities without the role of Area Committees being extended. We could not have looked after the elderly without Area Committees being involved. We could not have provided children and, from my area, we could not have helped to regenerate the High Street in Kippax without the Area Committee.

One of the things I have always felt, and I think it is something that we should look at, is there is hardly any profile or recognition for all that work. It is a serious point because Executive Boards do get in the paper on a regular basis and that is right and proper, it is a form of public accountability, but it is very rare that Area Chairs do. One or two occasions, I think, this week Councillor McKenna might have got in over an issue, but I think it also raises something else which we experienced at Executive Board. You are right about officers of this Council have to take Area Committees more seriously. We did have a very glaring case at Executive Board raised where the Department did not respond to the Area Committee's concern that was communicated to them. I think that is a very serious issue and I think not only have officers here got to take more notice, so have we as Executive Board.

I give you two more challenges in the future. If we are to oversee the integration between Adult Care and Social Services successfully, it is not going to be done from the centre. It is going to be done through Area Committees and they have to drive that. If we are seriously to tackle NEETs, unemployment, apprenticeships, it will not be done from the centre. It will have to be done through the Area Committee. We have to up our game and put more resources, more officer support if we are to achieve that.

We know that in the next few years we have got another £80m plus to find. That only means one thing for me – the centre gets cut and it is delivered through localities. I think localities and Area Committees, whatever we call them, are very much the future of delivering public services in this city.

I think today has been a really important day for Area Committees to raise their profile and start to talk to us about the vision.

Again, I think Peter has thanked everybody in the Area Committees. I am not going to repeat that but, of course, all of us work with you over a number of areas and your work is appreciated.

I want to go back to what Councillor Lyons said, because I have read this statistic that people may have heard. Parents in the last few years have spent £2.5b helping their children to get a house. I think Councillor Lyons raised it. If you buy a £100,000 house you are required to put £20,000 or £25,000 down as a deposit. I think that is preventing young people – I am not surprised that the average age is 37 before people get a mortgage and I think that is going up. I am not surprised at all.

It is virtually impossible and the truth is the private sector has failed people on housing in this city. It is actually the Council that is actually trying to solve some of our housing problems. The 400 Council houses is welcome but we all know it is not enough and there is more to do, but if you look at the way people are being squeezed out of the private rental sector because the rents are shooting up everywhere you go, some are £800, £1,000 a month in areas that are not affluent but they are strategically important for key workers. That is the difference. That is squeezing people out of rent and it is forcing people to sacrifice other lifestyle things.

Last year this city built 130 affordable homes when we need to build 1,500, so I think Council houses are more than just the old perception well, if you cannot and you are a failure - a Council house. Council houses today are absolutely essential for people who are working in our city, whatever sector. When you look at the development of zero hour workers, low income and all the rest that are squeezing people's income, particularly young people, Council houses are an essential, affordable alternative to those young people. I am pleased that we have got 400. I think Peter dealt with the Housing Management, the need to do that.

I just want to go to Holt Park, by the way. I am sorry that Les is not here, I hope he is OK.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: On holiday.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: That is probably a wise thing. I am pretty confident that Les Carter, Barry Anderson and others will vote for Alec Sobel.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: How misguided are you? *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Because when you hear what he has delivered, we have got a new school, we have got a state of the art health centre which is absolutely brilliant, it really is the cutting edge – I wish some of us could have that because it at long last integrates, both delivered by a Labour Government or a Labour Council. Now what we are doing is promising even more gains of regeneration in that area, Barry.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: It is nothing to do with Councillor Sobel.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: NGT, you have got NGT, you should be celebrating a modern public transport system going up there, you have actually got a chance to regenerate the shops, to introduce houses and so on.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Give me the money and I will spend it.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: That is all because Alec Sobel, our candidate in North West... *(Applause)*

I am very sorry, John...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is the biggest joke of today is that.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ...I am very sorry, John, but you and Councillor Paulene Grahame have started to fall out. It is like Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. *(laughter)* The times they have been married and divorced together.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I do not think so! Where is my wife?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I am sure the relationship will... Can I mention an idea that came out of the Commission that I was fortunate to Chair on Local Government and that is the Civic Enterprise Vehicle that was talked about by Councillor Hyde and Councillor Gruen.

You know, I am pleased that we are not outsourcing because that is sometimes the only option for some people's minds. We do have an example to prove Local Government can be efficient, can be imaginative, can be ambitious.

Let me give you a good example of that because the school meals could have been outsourced, but instead we turned that service around through the offices of Julie Meakin. Now what we get is top class healthy food for young children in schools, we buy locally, which is a fantastic thing because if it was a multinational company you would not get that, and we actually employ local people. What a fantastic example of public service at its very best with an example like that.

I am proud of Civic Enterprise because it is a better alternative than outsourcing TUPE public sector employees to a company that is not committed to Leeds. We have a commitment to Leeds and public services through that. I think it is a brilliant idea and I do congratulate there.

Finally, given that we are going to talk about bedroom tax later on I would only say this thing to Councillor Bentley. Sue and others, Sarah Teather resigned because she had a conscience and it is time you did something a bit more. It is very much time you got on your feet, you have never said anything all year and it is time some of you stood up and pushed your Party like we will, and I promise you this, the next Labour Government that comes in will abolish bedroom tax because we would have worked hard to make sure that they do in the next few months. I move.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: We have reached the stage where we are going to vote. I need to step through a number of votes, so I can address the reference backs which were in the Executive Board Minutes so that we can deal with them formally and properly, as it says in my little note here, so that they are properly disposed of.

The reference backs relate to faith school transport, care homes and allotments. If I go to the top I am going to ask Councillor Lamb, please would you move your amendment.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Yes, I move in terms of the Notice. Regrettably we did not get the chance to discuss it but I am sure we will at a further meeting.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Lamb. Councillor Latty?

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that formally, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would now like to call for a vote on that reference back in the name of Councillor Lamb relating to faith school transport. (A vote was taken) I think that falls, that reference back. LOST

Councillor Downes, please would you move your amendment?

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell, are you seconding?

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I now call for the vote on the reference back in then name of Councillor Downes relating to care homes. *(A vote was taken)* That falls. LOST

Councillor Golton, please would you move your amendment, your reference back.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: I move in terms of the Notice.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is it Councillor Campbell again?

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I now call for a vote on the reference back in the name of Councillor Golton relating to allotments. *(A vote was taken)* LOST.

Finally, now let us call for a vote on the motion to receive the Minutes. *(A vote was taken)* They are obviously CARRIED.

ITEM 11 – BACK BENCH COMMUNITY CONCERNS

THE LORD MAYOR: I can now move on to Item 11 at the bottom of page 16 which is Back Bench Community Concerns, and it is Councillor Buckley to start with.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am very grateful to you. I would like to make some remarks today concerning a village green proposal which is being pursued by Alwoodley Parish Council.

There are two main objectives to this proposal. The first one is community cohesion and the second one is the protection of the local amenity green space. The community cohesion means bringing people together and I would like to come on to that in a few moments, but the solution to these concerns is to create village green status for a small area of land on Council owned land on King Lane and bordering Adel Woods. The problem in all this has been, so far, the negative response of Council officers to this proposal.

Let me explain my point about bringing people together. Alwoodley, as Members probably are well aware, contains a very varied, diverse mix of races, religions, ethnicities and so on. The Ward is home to Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, Muslims, Christians and lots of smaller groups. Whilst 47% of the Ward is Christian and about 15% is Jewish, 5% are Muslim, 4% Sikhs, which is the second highest figure in the city, and 3%, the Hindu community, is the biggest in the city. Surprisingly enough in this Chamber, Members will be interested to know that there are more City Councillors living in Alwoodley than in any other Ward, so we are obviously doing something right.

Some of these small groups are a long way from their natural habitat but what I want to say about this is, we actually want more of them, we want more of these peoples who make up the population in Alwoodley and make the place what it is today. We want them to live together and to play together, which is why the village green application is so apposite.

The excellent and elected Parish Council applied for this status and were told that they had to meet certain conditions, and there are several of them. Beauty, it

says here, relating to the attractiveness of the site and the character of the area. You only have to look at the area, drive up there and have a look and this test is easily met.

Historical significance. There are listed and scheduled monuments in the adjoining woods and the interesting point about the historical significance part is that in the first half of the 20th Century – the whole of that time, really – whole families would journey from the city and camp on the very location of what they now want to call the village green. There were all sorts of caravans and huts of all shapes and sizes and even a café existed on this very spot. They were escaping the soot and the grime of the city in order to enjoy the fresh air and the tranquillity of this particular patch, so the application is working entirely with the grain of history.

Recreational value. Far from having to demonstrate 20 years of usage, it has been used for 90 or 100 years as a place of sports and outdoor activities of all types. Tranquillity. It is an oasis of calm abutting a suburban area and an urban area and it is even bordered by its own stream. Richness of wildlife. You only have to ask Friends of Adel Woods about the birds and the creatures living hereabouts. The final test was it should be reasonably close to its community. Well, it is right in the middle of it, it could not be any more central.

Having passed on all these tests, officers were minded to say “No” and actually said, “We are comfortable that the site has adequate protection from development.”

That is not quite the whole point. On this issue of bringing people together, the Parish Council also organised last year a hugely successful Golden Jubilee Day and further plans are in hand for a community First World War Commemoration. The adjacent playground has been vastly improved and the Jubilee Oak and the garden have also been created. Native trees also now line King Lane and next year wild flowers will be planted.

All of these schemes have been widely acclaimed and appreciated by our diverse community and have brought people together.

Lord Mayor, there are no disadvantages for the city in approving this application. Can I call upon the Executive Member concerned to look again at this matter as a matter of urgency. The Council talks a lot about equality and diversity and community cohesion, quite rightly. Let us have some in this particular case and get this approved as soon as possible.

I would just add as an afterthought two things – I have to apologise to my friend Councillor Cohen for leaving him about 30 seconds probably.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: It is OK, Councillor.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: Also, the current Chairman of Alwoodley Parish Council is my wife and she has been demanding action on this for quite a long time, so if I am sent away from here with a flea in my ear I will have something to say.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor, Buckley, and thank you, Councillor Cohen. Can I ask Councillor Dobson to respond.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think one of the problems actually with Community Concerns is, I think Members know by now I am always prepared to offer forward a full and frank answer but I was perhaps fishing

around in the dark a little bit on this one with the one line that came forward. Was it, wasn't it? Was it a new proposal? Was it an old proposal? It is all right going like that, Peter, but I genuinely am trying to piece...

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: There is a pile *that* thick in your department.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: The statement was not, but that is by the by.

Looking at this I suppose the question I would want to raise with you is, genuinely, what could not be achieved on the site as it currently stands with the status us has? Correct me if I am wrong, I have been given several pieces of planning policy around N1 green space, N8 urban corridor and N32 green belt, forms part of Meanwood Valley identified as a Leeds nature reserve and it is also identified as a site of ecological and geological importance.

I suppose with those robust pieces of policy in place I go back to my original premise, I am not sure what cannot be achieved on that site or if there is a subliminal message I am not getting please tell me afterwards, but in the here and the now I have not seen anything that cannot be achieved on that site or through Parks and Countryside we would not want to work with the Parish Council to facilitate on that site that cannot be done as things stand.

We have had several mechanisms for protecting green space. We have put several pieces of property across the city through the Queen Elizabeth II project last year and there is a commitment within our service to ensure that green space is protected and maintained and improved.

I can give those assurances, I am happy to work with Ward Members and the Parish Council because the last thing I would want to do is cause disharmony within the Buckley household. From my perspective, I will sit down afterwards, I will meet with you and if a rationale can be given forward as to why this is the way forward in your opinion, fine, but I will counter it by asking you to really drill down into this for me and say what cannot be achieved with the current quiet little policy protections that are in place. I am happy to revisit it with you outside of this Chamber. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. My Community Concern relates to commercial wheelie bins – those large blue, red, yellow things on four wheels with a plastic lid on, sometimes locked sometimes not locked, sometimes leaking refuse all over the place, sometimes rolling down the road pushed by enthusiastic young men after an evening out in the pub.

As Members know, Otley centre is based on a medieval down and it has got a medieval street pattern and it is part of its charm that it has a number of small, narrow streets which attract many visitors and are popular with local residents because there are a number of small shops and businesses that work there.

What has concerned me over the years is that we have seen a proliferation of commercial wheelie bins stood not on the property of the company who fill them but actually on the highway, either on the pavement or in certain cases on the road.

I have raised this issue over a number of years with the Environment Enforcement Team and consistently I think it is fair to say they are reluctant to do anything because for some reason they tell me that they cannot do something

because these people may not have an alternative. I am not sure that is true and I am not sure that our response to an issue should be that it is difficult.

I am faced with the anomalous situation where a company downstairs in a property effectively is permitted to have a commercial wheelie bin outside and yet the person who lives in the flat above has been threatened with prosecution for leaving their domestic wheelie bin outside. It seems a bit of an anomaly to me.

As we know, Otley attracts visitors. Next year there will be a considerable number of people there to enjoy the Tour of Yorkshire – or the Tour de France as the French will insist on calling it. I think commercial wheelie bins strewn round the streets do little if anything to enhance the experience of visiting the town. I think it does little, actually, to enhance the whole of the Leeds district.

Therefore I would like to repeat my request to Councillor Dobson that could the Council actually look at this particular issue and can we be much more robust in persuading commercial operators either to provide something more appropriate or to say to them, “Actually we do not really want you storing your waste on our streets.” Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dobson.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think from our perspective as a service it is breaking this down into its component parts. Firstly in terms of enforcement, which I think is probably the broader issue that is perhaps under the microscope here, not just in Otley but right across the city where we do have clear evidence of misuse of the public highway through any number of obstructions, not just commercial wheelie bins but any number of things, if it has been detrimental to public safety we will act upon it through talking with the various people, be it a business, be it A N Other, or perhaps a private person if we think it would impact upon public safety and health.

I understand there are four specific ones, Colin, that you have been raising with officers for some time and the feedback I have had ahead of this Community Concern has really been around proportionality: are these particular issues detrimental to the public, what is the impact on the pavement and the like, or are they just an eyesore, a bit of a blight? I think officers have tried to find a way to address the issue and when particular traders have been saying to us, “Look, we are having difficulty with X, Y and Z in terms of locality, we will not be able to remove our commercial waste without these facilities”, I think we try to take a proportionate approach towards that.

However, if there remains a problem for Members, and it is something that we picked up before I went away on holiday and there has clearly been no proper resolution to a lot of these issues since, the same offer I made to colleagues on the previous matter. I am always prepared to look again, I am always prepared to look with a fresh pair of eyes.

As a service, I am sure the charge is going to be laid at our doors that we are not hot on enforcement because at the moment we are being held up nationally as an exemplar of good practice around robust enforcement, but again I have a great deal of faith in officers to take a pragmatic approach without turning a blind eye and if they are telling me that actually X, Y or Z trader is having issues and we have spoken to him and we have tried to reach an accord, perhaps if it does not impact on public safety that is the right way forward. I do not know. I am prepared to look again and look at it with a fresh pair of eyes.

I will give you that commitment here and now. We will get something in the diary, if needs be I will take a trip out to the lovely market town of Otley. It is not a place that I have visited since I was a younger man before the licensing laws changed and you could go up there on market day and enjoy the hospitality, let us say, but I am more than happy to pop up and see you and look at the problem first hand. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Dobson. It is five o'clock, I think I am going to announce with your agreement (I am sure you will agree) it is time for tea. Before you go let me mention that this is the first time that Civic Flavour provided food for Council tea so I would be interested in your comments later. May I extend that welcome to the people in the public gallery to join us in the Banqueting Hall for a cup of tea, a sarnie and a bit of cake. Thank you.

(Short break)

THE LORD MAYOR: To continue, the top of page 17, Councillor Hardy, Community Concern

COUNCILLOR HARDY: Lord Mayor, thank you. Being in the second half it is always the best act!

The problem we all have is parking outside our schools. I know that my Ward colleagues only know about parking on election day with their huge cars, so that is why I have not asked them to speak on this. *(interruption)*

Yes, there are many problems with parking at schools. The problem people have is they do not have or cannot take the time to take in a safe and considerate way. That is one side.

The other side of the problem is for people who live near a school. Let me deal with the first issue. I get many people telling me now unsafe and inconsiderate the parking is outside the school that their children go to. I am sure it is the same for all, not just in Farnley and Wortley. Last year a child got knocked down outside a school in my Ward. Thankfully the child was not too badly injured. Everyone was asking for something to be done so I got the NPT to come down and to give tickets out and to have words with people who were parking in an unsafe and inconsiderate way. They did their best and parking got better for a short time but as soon as the NPT stopped coming to the school, parking was as bad as it was before the child got hurt.

I know Children's Services have worked with schools in Leeds to have a travel plan for getting children for school for each school in Leeds. Outside schools there are yellow markings which make things better. I know at Five Lanes Primary School they have arranged for parking in a local car park just away from the school, but people still block roads up near the school; even on some of the roads not so near the school there are people parking in an unsafe and inconsiderate way.

At Farnley Academy, where students come out on to Whincover Drive, parents have asked for no parking, but is that fair on the residents on Whincover Drive?

That brings me to my second point. I get many people that live near schools complaining about the parking on their road, even across the drives, on the pavements, outside their homes. How can this be right?

Another problem is the narrow streets do get blocked. If there was a fire, how would a fire engine get down the street? The same goes for an ambulance. Again, how would that get down some of the narrow streets which have been blocked? Will people die because of the blocking of roads?

Who are the people who park badly putting children and young people at risk of getting hurt and killed?

COUNCILLOR: Parents.

COUNCILLOR HARDY: I will come to that. I ask, is there a problem when schools are on holiday? No, is the answer. Is there a problem after 9.30 in the morning? No, is the answer. Is there a problem before 2.30pm? No, is the answer. Is there a problem after 4.00pm? No, is the answer, normally.

Who are the people who park in an unsafe and inconsiderate way? Is it someone that does not care? No. Is it someone that does not have children? No. We all blame people for parking in this bad way but it is not 'people', it is loving parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents and carers. It is the same loving parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents and carers that will be so upset if their child got hurt and ask what have we done as a Council about the parking at their school.

It is time we got the loving parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents and carers that do park unsafely and in an inconsiderate way to stop doing this with a campaign that will say, just like when you go on a long journey, those words we have all heard and dread, "Are we there yet?" No, not those words, the words like, "You are not going to park there, are you?" or, "Why are you parking there? Miss says it's bad to park there." They always say "Miss", even if they are married, about the teachers.

I am sure that voice from the back seat saying that again and again will start to change how loving parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents and carers park and make them start parking more safely in a more considerate way at schools. We do not want a police state with police on every street that has a school on it and every street near a school. Given the Government cuts we do not have the police to do this or the parking wardens, nor would we want this.

Towards this end I have asked the parents of a young person at Farnley Academy to work on having a campaign with the school to get children and young people to make their loving parents, uncles, aunts, grandparents and carers park more safely in a more considerate way but, before that starts to work, I ask what can be done? (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think pretty much everybody in this Chamber will have had the complaints from schools, from Governors, from parents, from everybody, residents, about this phenomenon. This is incredibly time consuming for the schools in terms of the management time that is put into endless letters to parents, attempts at making people change their way of behaving. It is expensive in terms of often PCSO time because they should be doing different things and we have them going along to schools to try and enforce some kind of order amongst people who should know better than to do what they do.

In my experience in terms of one of the worst schools in Pudsey we have just put barriers along a street to stop people parking on the grass verges so the Council tenants end up paying for the behaviour of the parents. It makes the place look

cluttered, it makes it look unpleasant and those residents still have to put up with the car parking continuing.

Just one thing I do need to say is, in terms of accidents, the accident figures for Leeds are not bad for children outside schools, but that is no reason for us to be complacent and I do think we need to do whatever we can to reduce the number of accidents.

This is not just about parking or considerate parking; it is about people changing their behaviour. It is about parents and grandparents changing what they do. I do not want to stray into Judith's territory, I am the last person to want to tell people about education, but getting people to think about how their kids get to school, thinking about what kind of society we are creating where we put kids in a car and drive them two miles or a mile to the school and they get out of the car and they run into the school grounds and at the end of the school day there are grandparents there to pick them up and the grandparents are outside the school gates and they shove them quickly into the car and then back home and back into the house is not healthy. It is an unhealthy society we are creating, not in terms of physical health but in terms of mental health because you are turning society into a place where children are not about. They are not walking the streets, they are not cycling, they are not doing anything physical, they are not engaging with society as a whole.

I think we have a real job and I think it is about Council leadership on this one that we have got to do the persuading about how people behave. It is not simple. You understand all the pressures that make people think yes, there is time, time is horrendous for people, we must do this, but really long term we have not got a sustainable system. We are trying to tackle it round the edges by the schools actually spending a lot of time on this and we actually need to say very clearly, kids wherever possible should be walking and having a School Travel Plan is not enough. School Travel Plans are not enough, we have to work far harder to actually get a message through.

We are doing a lot of the 20 mile an hour zones and I think by March next year we are up to about 110 schools covered, and that means roads will be safer. We have to get this message out very strongly, taking kids to school in a car is not the best way of doing it but if you have to, you are quite right, it has to be about thinking what you do when you get there, that you do not have to double park outside the school gates, that there are other ways of doing things but it is a big change that we have to push. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Concern number 4, Councillor Illingworth.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I want to raise a Community Concern about the loss of local pubs and clubs in Kirkstall. I am sure that Members across the Chamber will have similar problems in their own Wards.

In recent years roughly half of our local pubs and clubs have closed in Kirkstall Ward, while several more are struggling or under threat. Once closed, several sites have been redeveloped for housing which is welcome in some ways but it means the lost facilities may never be replaced.

Lord Mayor, when a local pub closes we lose more than a drinking place. Pubs and clubs often provide a focus for their surrounding area, sports teams are often based in a local pub as are some community groups. Wedding parties, family groups and even funerals would repair to their local after concluding the formal business. Local pubs where people know one another are safe places where lonely people might go to meet fellow souls with compatible or complementary interests and

outlooks. Members of my own family suffering from Alzheimer's disease found comfort and companionship in their local pub.

It might seem odd that your Health Scrutiny Chair, who is often concerned with the bad effects of alcohol, should be celebrating local pubs and clubs but the point about locals is that there is generally slower and more moderate alcohol consumption, in marked contrast to the pre-loading and the high speed vertical binge drinking in some of our city centre locations. It might be vertical drinking initially, Lord Mayor, but it often has a horizontal outcome and often in the Accident & Emergency Departments.

People usually behave better in their local, surrounded by friends and neighbours. They can walk home afterwards instead of driving home when drunk.

Lord Mayor, why have so many local pubs had to close? Some people blame the smoking ban but I for one would far sooner drink in a pub which is free from smoke.

The real problem is price. When times are hard and family budgets are under pressure, who would not buy their alcohol in a local supermarket where it may be half the price? It is completely understandable, but an important social function is being lost.

A second problem is the role of the Pub Cos or Pub Management Companies. Brought in after the abolition of the Brewery tie, they have moved us out of the frying pan into the proverbial fire. About half of our pubs are now controlled by Pub Cos. Many Pub Cos charge extortionate rents, forcing staff on to subsistence wages and exacerbating the price differential between pubs and the cheap booze outlets. In doing this they are scarcely cutting their own throats because when a pub closes the Pub Co is generally in line for a corking capital receipt. They have no impetus to keep the pub open. Campaigners relate that over 10,000 pubs have closed in England over the last eight years, an average rate of 23 per week.

What can the Council do about this? Lord Mayor, this Council owns the freehold of a surprising number of estate pubs that were built during the post-War housing boom. We are, of course, locked into existing legal agreements but nevertheless the Council may be able to frustrate the Pub Cos' desire for an easy capital receipt.

One of our objectives should be to promote the trade from Leeds based microbreweries, some of which actually operate within the pub they serve. By brewing and selling their own beer these establishments maximise local employment and the health of their local economy. They empower local communities and their workers, they promote local individuality and they enrich the various cultures of our city.

Lord Mayor, health campaigners rightly seek a minimum price for alcohol but some mechanism must be found to retain the really important social functions of our local pubs. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis to respond.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Support your local pub.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thanks, Lord Mayor. I think that is the problem, isn't it, John, we do not support our local pubs. It is a bit like our local shops – some of us used to but I cannot afford it any more. I was just scribbling down the names of

all the pubs on the street I used to live on that have closed and four out of five of them have gone, and I think that is not untypical for the city as a whole.

It is an issue in a whole lot of ways. There is the whole impact on streetscape where very attractive buildings, often, have disappeared and some of them are saved and turned into supermarkets of one kind or another but a lot of our landmarks have disappeared. It is funny to think that when you used to do a regeneration scheme or a clearance scheme many years ago the thing you left was the pub because that was the centre of the local community, and now it is the pub that goes long before the estate goes. The world has changed.

I am a bit reluctant to do my analysis of the pub trade because I know there are people who are involved in it. We all used to curse the tied house system years back and say this is terrible, it is awful, it is a monopoly, but there were advantages to it in that the brewers actually had an interest in the pubs and that was something you do not seem to get now.

Some of the Pub Cos you can see have a very good business model and they are very successful; others you really see as screwing down on their staff and where you have people coming to do 80 hour weeks just to break even. In the industry where you see a lot of pubs with a sign outside saying "Can you run this pub?" that is not a healthy state for us to be in.

I think estate pubs have bigger problems than anywhere else because there is no passing trade. A high street pub or a pub on a main road you can sustain; a pub off on an estate it is very difficult to attract other people in.

There is a study being done on the Pub Cos and I await that, it is coming out I think in a few months' time. We do have a real concern that I think all of us would share about the positive aspects of pubs and that we would like to see some kind of pub in a community. After what I have just said I do not want to be telling people about their behaviour but there are real big issues. One of them I think we touched on, why do the big pubs come down? Because they have got this lovely large footprint of land and it is great, isn't it? One thing I have a concern, it is very difficult when a pub goes down the drain, it is very difficult to get anybody else to come into that, and we do try.

We do have microbreweries that are being successful and some of them do run pubs and I think we really have to look at that, how can we encourage something rather than perhaps go down the route of penalising or trying to tweak the market? We have a lot of success from microbreweries in the city. They are the people I think we need to work with to see how can we make things work? It is a very uphill struggle. As you say, the world has changed. What have we replaced the pubs with? Where I can say a lot of pubs have disappeared in my Ward and everybody else will say the same, we have replaced them with bars and those bars cater for a very different demographic and a different way of behaving and probably most of the people here do not fit within that demographic.

I think it is an issue we should explore for a number of reasons and I hope to have future discussions with people over the coming months. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Normally we have six Back Bench Community Concerns, so can I ask Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. May I seek leave of Council to introduce two further Community Concerns in the names of Councillor Cleasby and Councillor Robinson.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Can I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to seek leave of Council to progress to do that and invite Councillor Cleasby for item number 5.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Are you going to have a vote first, Lord Mayor?

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED. Thank you very much. Councillor Cleasby, item number 5 of the Community Concerns.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor, thank you Council. I have made my concerns about planning procedures to you several times. The latest, if I can pick one and give it as an example, is Lingwood and I would like to share it with you. Lord Mayor, Council, I am not referring to the decision or to the Panel, only to my concerns leading up to the Panel so that I do not cross any legal lines. Sorry, Councillor Townsley – our concerns.

Ward Members were notified in an email from the applicant that he had put in an application had would we like to discuss it. This arrived the day after our diared monthly planning meeting where there had been no mention of it. Research showed that talks with several different officers had been ongoing for eight months – ongoing for eight months before it became a planning application.

The explanation from Phil Crabtree was that:

“The pre-planning application enquiry when submitted last year was allocated to an officer in the team covering the north-west area. I can only assume that this occurred because of the site’s close proximity to the Ward boundary.”

Lord Mayor, Council, no Councillor was informed or consulted until the applicant informed us. In fact, there is a situation here where officers have been discussing a site in my Ward – it could have been yours, any of our Wards – and I believe from the nods we are getting it has happened to you where officers from Planning and other departments discuss things without informing you and the sad thing, Lord Mayor, is it is usually our residents who find out and then get on the blower to say “Why haven’t you warned us? Why haven’t you done something about it?” It is pretty lame really to say, “Well, I don’t know.” That is the point that I want to make.

After contacting the neighbouring Councillors in the process of making them aware, Councillor Campbell was the first to lodge his objections. However, the Panel were not made aware of these objections. They were made aware of mine, and I apologise to him because I plagiarised his words to get my objections right because as far as I am concerned he understands Planning law better than I do.

That is the sad thing, Lord Mayor, Council, that because it is an application, I and Ward Councillors are now trapped in Planning law to get involvement in something to protect our neighbourhood. This is a planning application that now results in roads being created in green belt to service just four houses, one a barn –

a 17th Century barn – that will have to be totally removed, totally destroyed, to rebuild it. That seems a hell of a price to pay to have saved a barn by totally rebuilding it and then putting roadways into green belt.

Green belt land of course, Lord Mayor (as many of you are aware I did speak about green belt previously in this Chamber) is down in the SHLAA. We seem to be opening doors to developers that are probably best left shut. Certainly it would be really helpful if elected Members were aware.

In the paper then that went to Panel it stated:

“The applicant consulted with Ward Members prior to the submission of the application.”

This is not true. We were made aware of the application by the applicant after he had put it in. Nobody else – that is how we know and the Chief Exec will bear that out and the Director will bear that out because they were involved immediately.

A verbal statement was made to Panel by an officer, as was Councillor Collins’ support for the application. However, these are not in the public domain. My comments are in the paper that went to Panel and will be there on our system for ever. Councillor Collins’ support will not be there. Councillor Campbell’s objections are not there. I think we are falling down and talking about a quasi-judicial Panel, committees and boards who are making these decisions. They are not based on the full information that is available and it is also lacking, Lord Mayor, vital local interests and knowledge which is worse, leaving elected Members vulnerable to criticism from our electorate and officer/Member relationships seriously damaged. Officer/Member relationships should be more important than those between officers and developers. The secrecy afforded to them during pre-applications must end. Thank you, Lord Mayor. Thank you, Council. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen to respond.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Thank you for that Back Bench concern.

I confess, I started with a great deal of sympathy when Councillor Cleasby made me aware of these issues some weeks ago and I said there is a protocol and I will get officers to send you the protocol.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Where is it, Peter? I have not seen it.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: I will continue, if I may, Brian. I know that other senior Councillors and I have discussed with senior Planning Officers the protocol, and I believe there is a protocol. My briefing tells me it is in its final stages of completion but I promise you, having read that, it will be completed very quickly because as far as I am concerned there is nothing to hide from Ward Councillors.

Some of us have talked about this and Plans, Chairs and Plans Panel Members know, there may well be need for initial technical discussion between Planning Officers and an applicant to see if there is anything to talk about. Sometimes they are just cursory ideas. Once it has gone beyond that, then Plans officers should discuss with Ward Members and keep them up to date.

I said I had a lot of sympathy with what you were saying. I have now got a briefing note – by the way, when he refers to Horsforth Ward Members, I am

assuming this is just the two of you not the three of you, because I am not quite certain whether Councillor Collins is meshed in with the two of you in all of this or not.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: There is no meshing, Peter.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: I am told – and this may be news to Councillor Collins as well – you have a monthly meeting with Planning Officers and bizarrely I am told that this is formally minuted by the Liberal Democrat Support Officers. I am actually quite surprised at that as well and will actually think about why and how that should happen. Councillor Collins might wonder about that as well. I do not think meetings between the Planning Officers and Ward Members should be minuted by their Group Support Officers. I may be alone in that but I do not think it should. If it is a formal meeting, a proper meeting, it should be minuted properly elsewhere.

This note goes on to say that officers are totally aware of the need to be open with Horsforth Ward Members and inform them of all applications. Indeed, I can see from a letter they have sent to you that that is exactly what the Area Planning Manager states to you:

“I am always open to you contacting me, I will discuss items at the monthly meeting of officers, I will brief in between these meetings. Please contact me whenever you wish.”

Actually, they are being quite open. They are inviting you in, they are actually making themselves available so you should...

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: We need to know what they are discussing before we can talk about it.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Hang on. You are pretending that you only came here yesterday; you have been here 20 years. You know exactly how it works.

What I will do, because the light is going to go on, what I will do, Brian, is I will take your concern seriously and I have not checked this out but my good friend Councillor McKenna will, I hope, agree as Plans Chair that he will take this away, talk to you, talk to the officers because other things I am told, which I do not want to share with you because you do not want gossip, really, do you? I am not going to share gossip with you but I think relationships are not what they ought to be between Horsforth Members (not counting Councillor Collins) and you two and officers. Please, we have got to try and do better and the diplomat in all of this, Councillor McKenna, will bring you together and make it all happen. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR: Can we send him to Syria?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Robinson, please.

COUNCILLOR M ROBINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Before coming to the substance of the Back Bench Community Concern that I have raised on an HGV ban, I would personally like to congratulate Ed Miliband, the Leader of the Labour Party, and inform Members of Council that yesterday was the last day before Party Conference that a Leadership challenge could go in to Ed Miliband and, as Councillor Wakefield raised voting at the next General Election, good luck, Councillor Sobel, you are going to need it with Ed Miliband in charge.

Also, the Back Bench Community Concern of Councillor Hardy, I must admit I always enjoy Councillor Hardy's speeches in Council because they are a little bit like

listening to Gollum from Lord of the Rings. There are strange segways in there, I do not know if he is talking to himself or a rhetorical question sometimes but it is always entertaining. He may want to ask Enforcement Officers of this Council why of the lines outside all of the schools in the city, only 35 of those lines outside schools are enforceable. That might be something you could deal with as part of your Back Bench Community Concern and I am sure Councillor Lewis will have a look into that for you.

COUNCILLOR HARDY: I am sure Councillor Lewis will take that up and deal with that.

COUNCILLOR M ROBINSON: Always helpful; always willing to give some advice! *(laughter)*

Most Members of Council will know the road that I am talking about, the A659 between Collingham and Harewood, as it Leeds to Harewood House in the village of Harewood, which is a wonderful asset to this city and it is mark of not only our heritage but a fantastic tourist attraction. However, traffic along the 659 is causing constant disruption to the lives and villages of the adjacent area to the road.

After changing the A1/M1 many heavy goods vehicles are now using this road to cut through to the city centre or other parts of Leeds and this road was never intended to carry the traffic levels or the rat running done by the drivers associated with it.

Proposals have been suggested by officers of this Council to reduce speeding and to reduce the accidents along this stretch of highway with the assistance of some traffic flow studies and problem parking studies around the junction of that area. However, the heavy goods vehicle problem persists.

A little bit like the question "How do you eat a whale? One bite at a time", we tried to tackle this one proposal at a time and I know that Councillor Lewis's officers have supported us in trying to do that and making that road far safer. However, residents have contacted me to say that the heavy goods vehicles are increasing and the speed that they are driving on this road is also increasing and that noise levels are entering a problematic level for them.

Local people support change and a ban on HGVs with the provision that farm vehicles and rural vehicles can still use this stretch to access their land on the farms in the area. We have a wonderful rural area in this city and many green areas in this city. I think, in fact, the Chief Exec of the Council told me that the amount of green space we have in this city is second only to Prague in Europe. I hope I have got that correct; I am sure you will correct me afterwards if not.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Vienna.

COUNCILLOR M ROBINSON: Vienna, sorry, apologies. Leeds should be incredibly proud of that and if we want it to stay that way we must remain vigilant and ensure that sensible measure come forward to protect those rural areas and the character of our villages.

I hope that the Executive Board Member can expedite such a solution and that he will enhance the lives of residents in the area and the quality of living in the area by advising his officers to bring forward an HGV ban. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wondered why we were getting the Ed Miliband bit in the comments. I think it was because it was a bit thin, Matthew. We want an HGV ban. There is nothing wrong with that but the key to it is always evidence and it is who is using the roads, why they are using it. Normally with the 10% threshold, if it is less than 10% HGV you would think not necessarily a huge problem but happy to look at any road where residents perceive there being a problem.

If you do have a ban where do you send that traffic, because you can have that kind of law of unintended consequences because it can go on to inappropriate roads, it can go on to other roads perhaps even in North Yorkshire (and that would not be our concern but we would have to have conversations there), it might be other residents who would be inconvenienced by it.

I think it is not a simple thing of just slap a ban on. You mention the agricultural traffic in that area, that will be a fair chunk of the bigger vehicles going through.

I think the starting point has to be let us do a proper survey, let us see where the vehicles are going, what speeds they are doing, why they are taking that route and, as far as we can, get as much information about what other routes they can use, would use. I will happily have a conversation with you once we have got that information and we have digested it but I think it is a bit more than "We want a ban, thank you very much, let us get on with it." As you realise, we do have to go through those Traffic Regulation Orders and we have to put up with all the potential objectors as well.

We do not want to strangle trade at the same time as we are doing something for local people. It is a balance, it is always a balance with it but I am happy to have that conversation. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

ITEM 12 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – FAITH SCHOOL TRANSPORT

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving on to White Paper Motions. We have three. Each one will last no longer than 30 minutes and a formal vote will be taken.

We start with Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Lord Mayor, I would seek leave of Council to suspend Council Procedure Rule 14.1(c) to allow Councillor Barry Anderson to second the White Paper in the name of Councillor Lamb and speak for three minutes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lamb.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am going to call for the vote. (*A vote was taken*) That has been AGREED. Councillor Lamb.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I thought it was a bit harsh of Councillor Lewis to accuse Councillor Robinson of being a bit thin. He certainly cannot say that about me!

Lord Mayor, I was going to talk earlier on, if the opposition had allowed the reference back, about some of the legal problems and issues that the Council has got itself into around this policy, but this paper is about trying to help the administration and in trying to demonstrate some of the ways forward I do not want to muddy the waters of this paper by referring to those issues, so we will save that for another time.

Lord Mayor, we are not the sort of opposition that just proposes things for the sake of it. We accept there is a need for savings in this administration, in this Council, that there are challenging times, but on this policy I think the administration has made the wrong choice and what I want to do in this paper is, some of my colleagues will demonstrate some of the reasons why we think it is a bad choice but we also want to give some examples of different ways that the money could have been saved.

Lord Mayor, Councillors may not be aware that this Council spends a minimum of £40m a year transporting people around the city across Directorates. That is the minimum that officers have been able to tell us, it could well be more than that. That is before we count in other partner agencies such as the Health Service and so on. We are responsible, incredibly, for something like one in four of the traffic movements at peak time every morning which is a quite staggering amount, really, when you think about it. If we did things differently we could actually ease a huge amount of the traffic flow that affects the city every day.

I am quite happy to put aside for today the shabby implementation of the policy, I am quite happy to ignore the fact that it is a policy that has so many holes that you could drive a school bus straight through it. I am quite happy to ignore that it has had to go back out to consultation because they messed it up the first time. This is designed to help and I want to try and give a few examples of ways the administration could save some money.

Independent Travel Initiatives is something many Councils will be aware of. We currently employ two Independent Travel Advisers and each one of those saves around about £100,000 a year. I have been arguing for four years that we should increase that number dramatically and have asked many times what is the limit we could go to in terms of being able to help and support people to be able to make their own travel arrangements.

In its Budget this year in January, finally, the administration decided to double the number to four. I think we could go a lot further than that and Children's Services have not been able to say what they think the limit would be.

Working more closely with some of our external partners, such as the NHS, I think there are opportunities for savings in transporting people around the city. If we work as one Council and start to think about the way we do other services, do we really, when we have got difficult choices to make and the Council is in some cases deciding to stop providing services altogether, in some cases we could just provide them a little bit differently. Do we need, for example, everyone that is accessing Adult Social Care services to move at the same time as everyone who is going to school? If you make that slight change and change the start and finish times of some of the services, you can actually use the same drivers and vehicles and there is a huge amount of money to be saved there.

Having a different relationship with taxi firms. A lot of smaller taxi firms are procured out of the market because of the type of vehicle they need to have to move people around and actually, if the Council provided the vehicles and allowed access to the taxi drivers to use them, again there are significant opportunities for savings.

There are many, many more. There is not a great deal of time, I might come to some more at the end. If we look at a one-Council approach of trying to tackle this problem, actually instead of stopping services, instead of challenging and taking away free transport for Children's Services to go to school, I think we could save the same money and keep that service in place.

I hope the administration will take some of the ideas on board and accept our motion. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: In seconding this motion what I want to do is just refer to the issue about choice. This policy does affect school choice. It does have a significant effect on the right of parents to decide where they want their children to be educated. Parents and children should be allowed to choose the school which is right for their needs regardless of the reasons for that choice and it is not up to us to play God or anything else and make these decisions for these people. We should be allowing them to make it themselves.

The reasons for choosing a particular school are vast. Some people want it on faith grounds, some choose to move to another school because in their view the nearest school may be a poor school and they want a better education for their children. There may be reasons why people want to go to certain schools because they are known for specialising or having an excellent record in educating people in a particular subject. Again, a good reason to allow choice. There is sometimes the ethos of the school fits in with the views of individual people. We believe in tolerance in this city, we believe in multiculturalism but why not in education? What is it about this particular policy that means that that does not happen? Why is it that the Equality Impact Assessment is not clear on some of those views as to how effective or otherwise the policy is?

The policy that was approved by Executive Board will mean choice is only available to those who can avoid to make it, only those who can really afford to privately shift their children from place to place. Is that equal? Is that why you all came into Council, to only allow wealthy people to have the choices that some of your residents will not be able to get as a result of this particular policy?

Councillor Gruen – I am not going to criticise you, you are all right – is in charge of the Housing side of things and one of these outcomes can be that parents want to then move to housing near schools and that can then lead to problems, so that is one of the problems that he has got to try and deal with. This could be one of the consequences of your particular policy, the law of unintended consequences.

At the moment approximately 10,000 secondary school aged pupils in the city are attending a school deemed not to be good enough, so this could end up rising. Do you want that as an epitaph on your Education policy that in excess of 10,000 secondary school pupils do not have a choice of school that makes a difference to them?

Finally, I fully support the motion in the name of Councillor Lamb. Thank you very much. (*Applause*) Councillor Blake to move an amendment.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In moving the amendment I would like to welcome Councillor Bentley agreeing to second our amendment. Before we go any further I just need to say one thing again which we have said repeatedly in this Council – all those families that are on qualifying benefits will still

get support after the implementation of this policy. It is a Statutory requirement and you cannot just keep coming back and saying that everyone will be having this taken away. I do not understand why you have not understood that, Barry.

Just to reassure Council on this policy, do you remember it came up I think about three times at the last Council meeting in July, we discussed it from a whole range of different angles. Since then it is reported back to Executive Board, or we have had a full discussion about the consultation process, and we agreed to delay the implementation of the policy for two years to make it fair so we can work with parents to prepare for the changes.

It has since been discussed at Scrutiny Board where Scrutiny Board, with our full support, has agreed to set up an enquiry looking at how things have gone so far but, importantly, to look at how the policy is going to be implemented. It has also been to call-in and everything was raised at call-in and Scrutiny Board made the decision to release the decision for implementation and we have agreed to have an Implementation Board, we have offered it as a cross-party Implementation Board so all of the things that Councillor Lamb has raised will be part of that process.

Can I reassure Councillor that throughout the process we have taken legal advice, we have had legal officers in the meetings, we have had Equal Opportunities staff working with us all the way through. Today we have just had a letter from the DFE which says, and I quote:

“We have considered the information you have provided and do not consider there are any grounds for us to conclude that the Local Authority are acting unreasonably.”

I think that is a real tribute to us trying to work through a very complex policy area.

We know the reasons we are doing this. The Budget situation makes it an imperative. Most importantly, we want to make the policy fair. Young people have told us very clearly that they do not consider our existing policy to be fair. We have taken a partnership approach and all of the things that Councillor Lamb has considered about independent travel, about buses, about different ways of working with Adult Services, all of those are on the table and will be part of the discussions going forward.

We want to make sure that we save money. We have to because, as I said last time, we inherited a budget of £16m spend from the previous administration on children's transport. That is unsustainable. If we do nothing it will go to £25m. All of this is going forward.

I am deeply saddened at the tone that Councillor Lamb keeps coming forward and the lack of responsibility that he shows with regard to the Budget decisions that we have to make and, actually, the lack of recognition of the complexity of the issues and the really innovative work we have already done thus far. I hope after this meeting we can put that behind us and all pull together. At the end of the day young people say to us that lack of access and transport needs are their number one priority. Let us all of us pool all of the resources we have to make sure that we have a fair policy that is accessible and meets the needs of children and young people going forward into the next period of time. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bentley.

COUNCILLOR S BENTLEY: I formally second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis to comment.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I recognise some of the constructive comments that Councillor Lamb made in terms of moving his White Paper but there is one thing, and I think it may be fitting when we are talking about sometimes religious education that we had a bit of a sermon from Councillor Anderson, but to be quite honest, Council, I am not particularly prepared to sit and listen to sermons about choices in education from a representative of a Government that has abolished Education Maintenance Allowance. Bear in mind that the Association of Colleges said that nearly every Higher Education College in the country felt that the abolition of Education Maintenance Allowance would prevent young people from having a choice about which college they attended. I think sometimes when we talk about choice we have to talk about choice across the wider pitch and maybe the actions of Councillor Anderson and his Government when it comes to funding people to get to school. The abolition of Education Maintenance Allowance, as people know, was taken away from everybody and was taken away straightaway. There was none of the steps that have been done on implementation as we have tried to do. It was a completely different approach and I think we should bear that in mind.

Turning to some of the issues, I would particularly like to say Councillor Lamb, who was reasonably constructive in some of the things he said about other measures we could take in terms of transport to school, I welcome the role of the Independent Travel trainers in recruiting people to use the public bus service. Certainly with Metro there is a lot of encouragement where they worked with High School children travelling to school, they have the Metro built classroom which teaches children how to use buses, teaches children how about fares and bus stops and routes and things like that so children are confident and able to do it, and also the role Metro plays in the school bus network as well. Again, in terms of imaginative savings, we have managed to save over £200,000 just by simply reorganising school buses and getting a better deal out of the private operators that run school bus networks. Also, Metro has their own network of yellow buses as well, a service that provides specialist school transport on buses, a service that is provided by a social enterprise service that does that. We are also working with Metro Access buses as well to try and encourage better use of buses just as we have been encourage to do in terms of getting people to special educational need.

I also think as well we need to bear in mind that school transport is not the only way young people get round this city. Ordinary bus services, children enjoy in this city a half fare concession, one that we pay the bus companies for, one that we have negotiated a much, much more affordable price on which shows some real imagination by getting the bus companies who make massive profits out of running buses in the city and the county to pay a lot more towards carrying young people, the passengers of the future, on it. Not only does that support young people in travelling to school, it supports young people in travelling to other activities as well.

I support Councillor Blake's amendment on this. I think it really is important to recognise the work we are doing not just in Children's Services but across all Council services in terms of supporting young people in transport, making it accessible, making it affordable. Yes, we have tough decisions to make but I also think we are doing a lot of work to mitigate those and we are doing a lot of work to encourage people on to public transport. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Pat Latty.

COUNCILLOR P LATTY: Lord Mayor, I am only too pleased to speak in support of my colleague's White Paper. In my Ward we have one of the best schools in Leeds, a faith school, St Mary's at Menston. I say one of the best and that is made forcefully plain by the number of pupils from all areas of Leeds who fight for a place there.

These pupils are not all from wealthy families - in many cases quite the contrary – and free transport to school is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

If and when free transport disappears many of them will be forced to find alternative school places or face crippling annual travel costs. If this is not religious discrimination, then I do not know what is.

Secondly, has the administration thought this through? They might be saving a pitifully small amount of money but they will do nothing for traffic congestion and in my Ward that means congestion on the A65.

An Executive Member said to me that children do not like being taken to school by parents because they will lose face, implying that the number of cars will not increase too much, but children still have to get to school and that will mean travelling by bus and the extra buses and the extra cars are going to do nothing to alleviate the deplorable state of the A65.

I will leave it at that, Lord Mayor. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dowson.

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am happy to speak in support of this amendment in the name of Councillor Blake. Time and time again young people tell us that the biggest barrier they face is lack of accessible and affordable transport. What we are trying to achieve by working closely with partners such as Metro is a better transport experience for young people across the city. Our aspiration is that accessible and affordable transport is available to all young people in Leeds and we are determined to achieve this aim, but you can only do that by thinking more long term.

I take particular offence at Councillor Lamb's accusation to the Home to School policy and that it lacks imagination and does not propose a flexible solution. It strikes me that Councillor Lamb has not actually read the new policy that is all about flexibility and providing transport solutions that are best suited to individuals.

It is interesting but not all that surprising that during this meeting and the last Councillor Lamb has chosen the easy political route by focusing on the faith aspect of the policy, which is only part of a bigger picture. He has failed to mention the improvements – well, he has actually mentioned the improvements in the policy for kids with special educational needs and their families. By increasing the investment in the Independent Travel Training, something that you have, I will agree, been hugely supportive on and I am sure will be in the future, we have given hundreds of children the independence that they want and so badly need. By helping them use public transport we are giving them a skill that helps them throughout their lives, increasing their confidence and belief in their own abilities and this helps them in their school work as well. Why should these children and young people be denied the opportunity of an increased level of independence just because you want to have the same argument over and over again?

COUNCILLOR LAMB: You have not listened.

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: You have, over the past two Council meetings, had the issue discussed in the form of a question, comments on Minutes, a Back Bench Community Concern, a White Paper, an attempted Reference Back and, of course, the Scrutiny call in. The only one we are missing here is a deputation...

COUNCILLOR LAMB: There is still time.

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: ...but there is always the November Council meeting.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Or a special Council meeting. It is called democracy.

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: I understand the politics of what you are trying to do but, Barry, you are just wrong. You are just wrong about what you said and it shows a concerning lack of understanding about what our statutory roles are.

On this side of the Chamber we have to live in the real world. This Northern Council, like many others, has had to deal with an unfair and massive cut in funding from the Tory Government. What we are going to do is work together with our residents and our partners to provide the best services we can from decimated unfair funding.

Let me give you a message to take back to your bosses in London. Labour runs Leeds City Council is not going to lie down quietly and just go away. We are going to fight for the rights and dignity of our residents and protect services for as many as we can, especially our children and young people. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cohen, who is not on your list but I think you are down to speak next.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It was interesting that Councillor Dowson chose to finish with the phrase "protecting rights and dignity" because one of the reasons we have come back to this time and again is because we see a fundamental flaw with this policy and when we see a fundamental flaw, we see, the Councillors of this city, that we have an obligation to shout loud and shout proud about that problem and highlight it again and again in the hope...

COUNCILLOR LYONS: What about the bedroom tax?

COUNCILLOR COHEN: ...that you will listen, because there is a real problem here. The problem was highlighted at the Scrutiny Board and, with respect Councillor Blake, you did somewhat gloss over it because the legal advice given at the Scrutiny Board was not supportive of this policy, I am led to believe. I am not especially surprised by that because if one looks at Section 85(2) of the Equality Act 2010, and I will read it first and translate it second, it says as follows:

"The responsible body of a school must not"

- it is not "can choose not" –

"discriminate by not affording the pupil access to a benefit, facility or service."

I will translate that. It means it is against the law to treat a pupil less favourably because of his or her religion. This is not something we have got an option on, it is the law. It is Statute, like Equal Pay legislation, like Race Discrimination legislation, legislation on gender. It has the power of Statute and we are not giving it due regard.

The Executive of this Council is not giving it due regard. Indeed, the Reference Back would have asked us to go into *camera* to look at this in some real detail. We were not afforded that opportunity so I have to say it now in open Council.

Part of this policy will be implemented on 1st October which will no longer allow new entrants to access free home to school transport on the basis of their faith. At the same time, new entrants will be able to continue to apply for home to school transport on the basis of their non-faith. Council, I am afraid in this instance we are acting clearly and unambiguously discriminatorily. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lamb to sum up.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I make no apology for raising this issue many times and I will continue to raise it, Councillor Dowson, because I think the administration has got it wrong. I said in the very first meeting that I had with Nigel Richardson on his first week in office that I thought there were significant savings to be made in this budget and I still think there is. I do not think this policy will deliver those savings. The ambition was to deliver a saving of about £2.4m for this year, that is down to about £300,000 now and I think we will continue to see the ambition to save money slip by.

Councillor Dowson also suggested I had not read the policy. On the contrary, Councillor Dowson, I have read the policy. I suspect, and I put it it is quite likely, the Executive Board Member for Children's Services probably did not read the policy. If she had read the policy she would have known and seen the legal problems that were coming down the road. She glossed over the Scrutiny enquiry. It was regrettable, Lord Mayor, that the Labour Members on a whipped vote let it go through on a seven to six vote despite legal advice that was pretty clear that the Council was being left in a very sticky position.

Councillor Blake waved a letter that she had – I have got a letter as well. I have got a letter from the Chief Executive of this Council explaining to me how the service managed to make such a mess of its policy and what it was now having to do to try and put it right.

If we had been allowed our Reference Back and had been allowed to go into *camera*, I would have quite happily circulated this to every Member but I think what is going to happen, since the Chief Whip of your Group played politics with things, we will have to reconvene a special Council meeting in order to discuss these issues properly and perhaps you will learn the lesson then.

Lord Mayor, this is an issue the administration has got wrong. I welcome the fact that Councillor Lewis pointed out how reasonable I was being at the start, just before he went into his political rant about EMA, which has got absolutely nothing to do with this issue.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: It depends which side of the House you are on whether it is a rant or not.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Lord Mayor, this is an issue of putting children first in this city. We have got things wrong. The administration has got things wrong. We welcome the opportunity to work together.

One lesson that should be learned and must be learned from this episode which I hope all Members will take on board however this vote goes...

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: We will take no lessons from you.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I think you will, actually.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: No we will not.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Lord Mayor, I hope you will allow the time at the end, thank you. Lord Mayor, Councillor Blake welcomed the input of Scrutiny into this decision. The biggest failing of all and the reason the Council has got itself into such a mess is because it welcomed Scrutiny after it had made its decision. We should make a much bigger effort to involve Scrutiny before we take decisions, to help to inform decisions, to ensure that we make better policies in this place. Councillor Blake has got herself into a real pickle with this. It should be a Scrutiny enquiry and this is all about saving her face. It is time to look again, to look at the opportunities to save real money for the Authority, put the interests of children first in the city and to have a policy that is actually workable, sustainable and fair. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Council, we are now going to move to the vote.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Recorded vote please, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment in the name of Councillor Blake)

THE LORD MAYOR: There are 88 Councillors present. The “Yes” vote is 71, 4 abstained, there were 13 “No” votes, so the amendment is CARRIED.

We are now moving on then to the substantive motion and we are going to vote on that. *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED

ITEM 13 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – NON EVICTION POLICY

THE LORD MAYOR: Now White Paper 13, the Non-Eviction policy. Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Before tea both Councillor Atha and Councillor Wakefield talked about our position on the under occupancy policy. If you read the White Paper motion it is quite unequivocal. We say we believe “the current Government policy of reducing benefit for under-occupying tenants is ineffective, unfair and penalises the most vulnerable.” That is the basis of where we are starting from.

I know Councillor Atha and Councillor Wakefield and the Labour side would rather talk about the Government policy, which they can do nothing about, than about their policy, the Council policy, that they can do something about.

We talk a lot about fairness. A typical family in my Ward, assessed by Government rules to only need a two bedroom property but living in a three bedroom property, would have their benefit payments cut y £28.85. Is that fair? Should the Government be deciding how many bedrooms somebody needs? Clearly the last Labour Government did because that example I gave you was somebody living in private accommodation and the cut in their local housing allowance as a consequence of legislation brought in by the Labour Government in 2008. The last

Labour Government clearly made the link between the number of bedrooms and the level of benefit but restricted it to the private sector.

I do not recall hearing any terms about iniquitous bedroom tax in 2008. I do not recall protests calling for the repeal of legislation that affected private sector tenants in 2008. What the Coalition Government has done is to take the principle of a needs based housing benefit established by the last Labour Government and extended it to the social housing sector.

We accept it is a bit of a blunt instrument and our White Paper recognises that. This debate is not about that policy, it is about what the Council can do. If you want to write to Ed Balls or Ed Miliband and see if they are going to repeal it if and when they are part of a Government after 2015, see about that but they have already committed to the Coalition spending plan.

COUNCILLOR: No they have not.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: I think we all accept, as I say, that the policy is a bit of a blunt instrument. The Council tenant who finds themselves with the benefit cut and has the same choices as someone in the private sector, they can adjust their spending patterns, they can look at more income or they can move house. The Council tenant who finds himself in debt and in poverty and cannot afford the increased rent has great difficulty in moving house, has great difficulty in downsizing because the affordable housing is not there and they understandably do not want to move into the private sector and lose the security that social housing gives them and perhaps they have been waiting for years to get into social housing. They find themselves through no fault of their own with higher rent, getting into debt or further into poverty with nowhere to move to. That really is not fair.

We have all seen the effect of homelessness on people. It is devastating, it is like a bereavement. Almost as bad is the fear of homelessness. Under the Council's Rent Collection Policy, eviction and homelessness is a possibility for tenants who find themselves unable to pay the higher rent and cannot be rehoused to more suitable accommodation.

Our proposal is not a blank cheque or a free ride for anyone in arrears. It would only apply to arrears that arose as a result of an under-occupancy charge and the tenant would have to have applied for rehousing and not have refused a reasonable offer of downsizing. They would have had to have applied for Discretionary Housing Benefit and not have breached any of their tenancy conditions.

We welcome everything that the Council is doing to assist tenants by way of advice and support. We are simply asking the Council to take that one extra step and just strike that bargain with tenants that if they meet those conditions they will not be evicted. How can anybody with a sense of fairness and compassion oppose that? Lord Mayor, I move the White Paper. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Townsley to second.

COUNCILLOR TOWNSLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Yes, I would just like to formally second this White Paper motion.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Finnigan to move an amendment.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Councillor, to move under the provision of Council Procedure Rules 13.2(d) and 14.1 that leave of Council be given to withdraw the amendment in my name on the Non-Eviction policy.

THE LORD MAYOR: Right. Do you have a seconder, Councillor Finnigan?

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

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to seek leave of Council for the withdrawal of the amendment in the name of Councillor Finnigan. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I also wish to move under the provision of Council Procedure Rules 13.2(d) and 14.10 that leave of Council be given to withdraw the amendment in my name on the Non-Eviction Policy.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I second that.

THE LORD MAYOR: To seek leave of Council for the withdrawal of the amendment in the name of Councillor Gruen. *(A vote was taken)* I think that is CARRIED. Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Now, Lord Mayor, I seek leave of Council to suspend Council Procedure Rule 13.1(b) to allow the introduction of an amendment in my name at short notice. The new amendment would merge both mine and Councillor Finnigan's withdrawn amendments.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, may I second that and we have got a copy of the amendment here for members to look at.

THE LORD MAYOR: Let us call for the vote. *(A vote was taken)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, we need to know what the wording is, don't we, before we can vote on it.

THE LORD MAYOR: OK.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: We have seen nothing.

THE LORD MAYOR: Right. We are going to circulate...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, why were we not given notice of this? Lord Mayor, formally, why were we not given notice of this? There was a Whips' Meeting that was held yesterday, no mention was made of this. There has been ample time during the course of today and, indeed, in the tea break and no notice again was made. Are we to conclude that the Whips channels have broken down in terms of communicating these matters?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper, would you like to explain?

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I did raise this at tea with the Solicitor. I could not distribute this at the time because it would be taking Council's vote for granted. I wanted people to see it.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, was that the legal advice from the City Solicitor?

THE CITY SOLICITOR: Yes, it was the legal advice that it would be preferable not to distribute it prior to Council making a decision. However, I do not think that I have a response to your question which was why that was not raised at Whips last night. I do not have an answer to that.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Lord Mayor, I also ask the question then why was it not raised at Whips at lunchtime when you and I were there and you obviously have no knowledge of this and I have no knowledge of this.

THE LORD MAYOR: It is true to say I had no knowledge.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: If you are mindful to take this, Lord Mayor, please can I request that we have a recess of ten minutes so that the Whips can actually sit down and discuss this item?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: We need to read it and consider it.

COUNCILLOR: I second that, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, perhaps I can help. Actually all Members will have read (1) the original amendment in the name of Councillor Finnigan and (2) the original amendment in my name and all that has happened is Councillor Finnigan's amendment is the last paragraph of my new amendment. There is nothing new introduced, you have read both of the resolutions and now you have seen them.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: There is. That is exactly what it is.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, can I move that we have spent five minutes, let people read for five minutes and then carry on.

THE LORD MAYOR: I agree in principle that we ought to have a suspended period but that suspended period gives you time to have a look at the motion and to clarify exactly what is going to be debated.

It is about quarter-to seven; can we come back into the Council Chamber at ten-to seven. Thank you.

(Short adjournment)

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Lord Mayor, given that we have had five minutes to look at this amendment which, contrary to what Councillor Gruen said, is not quite the amalgam that he made it out to be, we have not had long enough, really, to digest what is happening. We would move, Lord Mayor, that this White Paper should be removed from today's business and brought back to another Council.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I would support that, Lord Mayor. It seems from my initial reading of it, and certainly we have not had much chance, this appears to be a completely different resolution to the one that Councillor Bentley put forward which is, in theory, what we are recommending. I do think if you wish to do this, and

there is no reason why you should not, then we have procedures. For some reason those procedures have not been followed today - that is, as you know, Lord Mayor, that the item should be dealt with via Whips. Both Whips' meetings – the one last night and the one at lunchtime with you – it was not raised at either of those as far as I am aware. In fact, nobody turned up from the Labour Group to the Whips' meeting at lunchtime.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is why.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I am not sure why that is. I am sure there is quite a good reason for it but I think it is only fair to the democratic process if we have a clear, rational process by which we can deal with these resolutions. I have no problem about that but I would warn Council that if we are going to change the resolution, which is effectively what we are going to do, I want to change my list of speakers.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Absolutely.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: We have dealt with it correctly, Lord Mayor, under Council Procedure Rules.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: If they want to do that, put it to the vote.

THE LORD MAYOR: I think that is the next step, Council.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, there was no vote. If something else has been tabled we should be further allowed to reflect on it, as has been said in terms of our speakers, and then maybe also look at further amendments that we may wish to make.

This is wholly irregular, Lord Mayor. If Councillor Harper wants to conduct Whips' business in this way so be it, we will be back here later on this month or early next month if that is the way in which he wishes to proceed. The whole point of having Party Whips that go through extensive meetings yesterday evening and another opportunity today with the most senior officers of Council and you, Lord Mayor, is to order business appropriately, and this has singularly failed.

Councillor Gruen says there is nothing new, it is just a conjoining of two amendments. Those amendments have been known for ages – ages and ages. That could have taken place at any point in time and it did not, Lord Mayor. That is why we should withdraw this paper now and bring it back to a future Council meeting to properly consider it.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Lord Mayor, I have moved that we go to the vote and I think we should do that.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: In that case, Lord Mayor, I would like to propose that we suspend Council to give us time to draft an amendment to this White Paper. That seems only fair.

THE LORD MAYOR: There will be other opportunities on this topic to be able to look at it. A proposal has come from Councillor Latty that we suspend this motion and revisit it at another Council on another occasion. We have clearly heard all the arguments for and against that in the last five to ten minutes. What I would propose to do is just to vote on that.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Can we have a recorded vote on that, please?

THE LORD MAYOR: We will have a recorded vote. It was seconded, I think, by Councillor Campbell earlier on. We are going to have a recorded vote.

(A recorded vote was taken on the proposal by Councillor G Latty to withdraw Item 13 from the Agenda)

THE LORD MAYOR: The result is those present 86, the "Yes" vote was 21, two people abstained and the "No" vote was 63.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, if the City Solicitor can now confirm that under Council Procedure Rules 30 minutes has now elapsed in relation to this White Paper Motion, therefore we move directly to the vote.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Absolutely not. We will move Standing Orders.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: There is no possibility for voting on it. That is what it says.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: We are not putting up with that rubbish from you.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is what it says. They are the rules.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: We will have to move Standing Orders. They have deliberately wasted 30 minutes. No.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, that guidance can be clearly seen on page 18 at the top of it.

THE CITY SOLICITOR: I have consulted my colleague who has a timer on this and, including the time that we adjourned, we have still got five minutes of the 30 minutes left. *(laughter and applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Lord Mayor...

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, that is it, we are not wasting any more time. This is the playground of school children. *(interruption)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Wasting time, coming from you, messing around with the amendments like this? You have caused all of this, nobody else.

THE LORD MAYOR: I think we will go with Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: This is the playground of delinquency. We are now going to continue with the new amendment, Lord Mayor. They have had enough time.

THE LORD MAYOR: We will allow Councillor Gruen to proceed. Councillor Campbell, can you sit down, please.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: I am starting now. It is 30 minutes. The curtain is up in the West Yorkshire Playhouse and here we have the West Yorkshire Playhouse starting 30 minutes early. No, the Lord Mayor has told him to sit down so I am carrying on. That is how we do business in this Council Chamber.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: How we do business in this Council Chamber, bodged attempts like this at amendments? That is how we do business, is it?

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: This is how Labour do business.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: ...you will have to add some time...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Instructing senior officers to copy documents without telling Opposition Members. It is appalling.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Lord Mayor...

THE LORD MAYOR: John, can we go through the debate, please, and Colin, can you sit down, please. We will continue the debate and then you can contribute when you need to.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: He cannot, he has got four minutes left.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: This is the visible attempt – and I wish the gallery was full to see – how this Coalition of Lib Dems and Tories does everything possible not to discuss the bedroom tax. (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: It is their White Paper. You do not understand how it even works in here.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: You do everything possible.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: I will stand up and debate it with you.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: You do everything possible to stop us discussing it.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Let us suspend Standing Orders now to carry on debating it, shall we?

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: We are debating it. The bedroom tax...

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Lord Mayor, suspend Standing Orders so this debate can be debated in full with as many speakers as wish to speak to afford that democracy which you say is being denied and we will see who is looking after a playground of delinquency, Councillor Gruen. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Can I carry on, Lord Mayor?

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes, we have allowed Councillor Gruen to go on, that was the vote of Council and that is what we intend to do at this stage. Off you go, Peter.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: The bedroom tax is an evil, regressive, unnecessary, unprincipled, harmful, spiteful, deliberate Coalition policy to cause real distress to people's lives, people who are already on the edge, people who are already subject to multiple cuts. People will have to choose between paying for food or paying for utilities. People will have to choose paying for children's clothing or for rent. They are being punished by the Coalition because they are easy targets.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: We totally oppose the bedroom tax and have made that clear in everything that we have said and we will – and that is why we have accepted Councillor Finnigan’s sensible amendment – do everything possible, as our Leader said earlier on, to campaign to ensure that this bedroom tax will be abolished at the first possible opportunity.

Where we differ fundamentally from Councillor Bentley is that we can only have one policy about housing need, we can have only one policy of assessment and we cannot have a policy for one set of people that says there will be no eviction and not the same policy for other people.

We have 58,000 homes, therefore 70,000, 80,000 tenants. We have to assess them all on the same basis.

What we will do, you will have seen from papers before all the things we have done to support, to advise, to help, to signpost, to guide people who are in that distressful situation. We will do everything we can. Eviction is a very last resort and the cases I have got are where people have been repeatedly asked five, six, seven times to come forward and have not answered a single letter, no communication. If people do not come forward to talk with us, how can we help them?

We will help them if we can. We have reclassified properties, we have helped in terms of repayment scheduling, advice we have given and in terms of managing downsizing where it is sensible and possible. We are doing everything possible to help people against this Government imposed tax. That is how we will continue to work. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bentley, would you like to sum it up?

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: I find it so difficult, Lord Mayor, that what could have been a full debate with everyone who wanted to speak speaking, that we have had this absolute shambles from this manipulation of the rules by the Labour side.

The Labour amendment, like most of their amendments to White Papers, criticises Government policies, wants the Chief Executive to write to the Minister etc, wants a campaign – that is fine, the Labour Party is in Opposition nationally and will stay there, I hope. It is not the party of Government.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: You are.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: We know it is the Members’ duty to complain and criticise and they exercise that duty diligently, but the Labour Party in Leeds is not in opposition. It runs the city, it has got powers, it can affect change. It could, if it wanted to. This is not an either/or situation. It is not have a non-eviction policy or have a campaign against the under-occupation charge. You can carry on writing your letters, having your campaigns. Councillor Finnigan’s motion would have been fine with that.

What we are saying is, when we come across somebody trapped in debt, trapped in poverty, trapped in a property for reasons completely beyond their control, they cannot move, living in fear that they will be made homeless, what would you rather say to that person? “Oh, it is OK, we are having a campaign” or would you rather say, “Yes, we will have a campaign but also we have implemented a policy, our policy in this Council, that you will not be evicted from your home.” Which of those would you rather be identified with?

COUNCILLOR CHARLWOOD: Do you agree with your Government?

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Your policy, you cannot deny it.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: You would rather talk about something you cannot do anything about than something you can do something about. (*hear, hear*)

Look at what other Authorities are doing. My Lib Dem colleagues in Stockport who run Stockport Council will be happy to show you how a practical and effective non-eviction policy can work. You have a policy of “not invented here.” Things are invented elsewhere, go and look, go and learn.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: We have.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: How many Members opposite would really support a non-eviction policy but, like on many issues, all issues from the demolition of the West Park Centre, to closing old people’s homes, to living wages for Council employees, Labour Members talk the good talk outside this Chamber and in their pamphlets but when they come in here they have not got the courage to vote for what they really believe in and they fall back to what they are told to vote. (*Applause*)

Think about what is right, think about what is fair. Vote for this White Paper. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You have got your leaflet ready now.

COUNCILLOR: Watch out, Stewart.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, everybody. We are going to now move forward to the vote. The first step – I think I know what you are going to say, Colin, because I think we are going to go through that process. Add to it.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Because we are interested to know who does not support a non-eviction policy can we have a recorded vote, please?

COUNCILLOR TOWNSLEY: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Colin.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: That is not what we are voting on.

THE LORD MAYOR: The Legal Officer is just listing what needs to be done. For clarity, we have got to make sure that we vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Gruen - introducing the amendment brought forward by Councillor Gruen.

All those in favour of the amendment being introduced by Councillor Gruen. (*A vote was taken*) CARRIED.

We move to the recorded vote on the amendment.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, can we be clear? Are we having a vote on whether Councillor Gruen’s amendment is even admitted into business?

THE LORD MAYOR: That is right.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: So even though he spoke to it it was not actually admitted?

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: It was, we voted on it. We voted on it.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: They are just saying it was not.

THE LORD MAYOR: Peter, we have got to be clear about this.

THE CITY SOLICITOR: At this point we have got two amendments which have been withdrawn but we have not actually had a vote to introduce the new amendment in the name of Councillor Gruen, so the first vote will be in the name of Councillor Gruen to introduce that amendment.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: So he has spoken to it without actually...
(*interruption*)

THE LORD MAYOR: There is no need to shout because if you shout nobody can hear anything really. It is better to be done bit by bit. For clarity, what we have just done is we have voted to include Councillor Gruen's amendment. We have done that.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: No. No, we have not.

THE LORD MAYOR: John, we have done. We actually have done.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I think the Legal Officer is going to tell you we have not actually done that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: She is not quite right then.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, we have voted on that. We voted at the beginning.

THE LORD MAYOR: I know, Gerry, we voted on it. Now we have got a substantive motion and what we are now going to do is vote on that as the substantive motion that has been debated, if you like and there is a request for a recorded vote.

(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment in the name of Councillor Gruen)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: What you said is that we voted for the amendment and the amendment now is the substantive motion.

THE LORD MAYOR: That is right.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I think it needs a new Chief Whip, Keith.

THE LORD MAYOR: On that particular vote 75 people are present and 60 people have voted "Yes", four have abstained and six people have said "No", (CARRIED) so that becomes the substantive motion and now we vote on it.

All those in favour of Peter Gruen's substantive motion, the one that was circulated in the meeting, show. (*A vote was taken*) The vote is CARRIED, finally.

ITEM 14 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – SHORT TERM LENDERS

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield, White Paper Item 14.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: That is a very hard act to follow!

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: No it is not Keith, you know it is not.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I do think it is a great pity because in the end we are talking about vulnerable people who are struggling with their benefits and we have ended up in a procedural bureaucratic nightmare and I will certainly think about that.

This White Paper is similar in its theme. I think many of us have seen now the growth of pawnbrokers, bookies, payday lenders, food banks, all within our own community and I think we are very aware of the growth in demand of our One Stop Shops. I mentioned it last time, our One Stop Shops' demand for help and advice has gone up in many areas 90%, in Burmantofts and Richmond Hill 140%. If you listen to the CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau) they now tell us that the demand for food banks is up 78%. The new charity that has just arrived, StepChange, has already said they are under siege by people who are struggling with loans, from 500 last year to over 1,000 with the average debt of £13,000. Why is that? Because we have seen a 20% growth in payday lenders in this city. You all know we are now talking about an industry worth £7.5b - £2b alone with payday lenders.

What is, I think, pretty astonishing for a city that claims to be affluent and wealthy is that actually payday loans have gone up 20% and in this city alone we now have 62 money lenders in our communities. As we know, they are not just spread evenly throughout the city. There are 18 in LS1 and LS2, there are ten in Crossgates alone, there is five in Armley, four in Bramley. They are all clustered there, targeting the most vulnerable people we have in our communities who are struggling.

One of the reasons that we brought this White Paper is saying blocking the website is just the start because there is so much more we need to do. We all know that the vast majority of people are under 25 who have been going to payday loans. Within ten minutes you can go in for a loan and come out and owe money without really knowing what the interest rates are. I will come back later and talk about Emma from Leeds who got herself into a financial crisis because she borrowed £3,000 without knowing the interest rate and defaulted.

I think this is a starter, blocking. What we really need to do as well is start talking about the Government putting a cap on the interest rate alone. We all know, Wonga again, 36% increase in profits, £62m last year, they now charge up to 5,850% interest on people who borrow money. That is not alone, there are many more that are charging extortionate people. (*sic*)

I also think it is about time, like we did with sex establishments, we start having licences so we can limit the amount of payday loaners and money lenders in our community. This is now becoming a serious crisis. In Leeds alone we now have something like 22,000, 23,000 people on payday loans. That alone with it all is £90m.

This is not just hectoring about it, this is also trying to construct a campaign against them and I am really hoping as we move on this White Paper to consensus, this is just the start because if we do not, all we are doing is adding to the misery of

hundreds and thousands of people who have lent money in desperate situations and are about to be plunged into a worse life because of their current position.

I move the White Paper, Lord Mayor, and look forward to support. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I think it is Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Yes, Lord Mayor, we are pleased to be able to second this White Paper. For those of you who are either on or attend Executive Board you will know that Andrew Carter has spoken in support of the Leader of Council on this matter on a number of occasions.

It is worth noting that this is not just this Council that are concerned about payday lenders, as they have become known. The Government also has taken note and actually a Lib Dem Minister is heading the charge. A Ministerial Summit took place in July, a consumer consultation with those who have actually taken out the loans closed in August and also the whole of the industry will soon come under a new authority, the Financial Conduct Authority, which starts business in April 2014 and I certainly hope that they will look critically at the payday lenders.

The real problem that I think we face, that this Council and the people of Leeds face and, indeed, the people of this country face, is one of new different accessibility to such loans through technology. We should not kid ourselves, money lenders have been around for ages, for ever. They have been around literally for thousands of years. We all know that, we all recognise that. It is just the way in which these current operators have accessibility to people.

I do not know if any of you have by accident found yourself the target of one of these payday lenders. My wife, Councillor Rachael Procter, has. Completely not by accident, not of her doing even, because when registering people feed in their mobile phone number and once they have got a mobile phone number you are persistently – persistently - pursued to take out a loan and it is not just by one company, it can be by five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten at a time every day, every hour of the day and night. They are relentless in terms of their approach. I am sure the temptation for so many people is simply to reply “Yes” to those texts without actually knowing the situation that you can end up in.

During the course of some of the Council meeting I was using my electronic device here just to see how easy it is to get a payday loan and, hey presto, I could have got a £1,000 loan at the usual ridiculous, for a month at an annual repayment rate of something like 3,000%, and that is truly frightening that anybody, any of us could have done that simple procedure simply by submitting a mobile phone number, an email address and the like. It is a real difficulty, a real issue and I hope the Government as well as this Council can do something to tackle this industry. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was hoping to be commenting on this in a better mood, but I will try my best.

This is a very positive and constructive White Paper put forward by Councillor Wakefield, who can lead very effectively in certain areas and I think that in this particular example, when we are talking about do not just complain about things you cannot control but do something about the things that you can, which was emphasised so well in the last debate, in this one we as a Council leading a city of

institutions and professionals particularly in the financial sector, we can do something practical.

Councillor Wakefield is emphasising the issue about making sure that these organisations will not be promoted as best as possible but also it talks about the Credit Union. We can ensure that people know more about the Credit Union so that more people take up accounts, so that they can have a normal economic existence but there are those that are still going to want to take those short term loans and they will be desperate.

This is why my group particularly wanted to include the Community Development Finance Institutions in there because these are associated with credit unions but they have less restrictions upon them and they are able to offer finance at a higher interest rate than credit unions themselves but far, far fairer than those which are offered by some of these doorstep lenders. If we can physically get something going in the city in that particular direction soon and fast and effective, we will have done something and we will have redeemed ourselves and we will not just be seen as a Council that has a lot of opinions on things but we are a Council that wishes to drive certain agendas forward. I am confident that under Councillor Wakefield we should be able to do that. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Downes.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Formally second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Dawson.

COUNCILLOR DAWSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak in support of the White Paper from Councillor Wakefield, in particular the proposals that designated lenders should have planning permission before a retail unit can be converted into a loan shop.

I would like the Government to propose changes to planning laws allowing Councils to refuse permission for certain businesses, in particular payday lenders and betting shops, to be on our high streets.

Currently if a bank branch closes, a payday loan shop can move in and open up in the same place, even if there is another lender just down the street and there is nothing the Council can do about it. That cannot be right. We are in danger of creating a two tier society and also in danger of creating two tier high streets.

In Morley I can visit the White Rose Centre where I do not see any payday lenders, no betting shops, no pawnbrokers, no amusements arcades, whereas in the centre of Morley in Windsor Court and Queen Street, within a few hundred yards there is a loan shop, a pawnbroker, two amusement arcades, three betting shops and William Hill now wanting to open a fourth betting shop. Individually I am not against these business but there is a feeling that we are in danger of moving too far away from a real shopping experience in our town centres. We need to focus on retail outlets, services and entertainment facilities. We need to keep our town centres, places like Morley, vibrant and welcoming.

Local Councillors are finding they do not have the real power to stand up for local people. That is what politics is supposed to be about, standing up for those without power and giving power to them. Give us the power to help shape our town centres such as Morley.

In terms of regulation of payday companies, it is interesting to look elsewhere in the world. Germany and France apply a cap on lending rates. In the United States the payday loans are no longer a growing industry. In twelve states payday lending is either illegal or not feasible. Since 2007 a Federal law has capped lending to military personnel at a maximum of 36%, defined by the Secretary of State for Defense.

Finally, I have worked in finance most of my working life and I will even admit to being a banker in a past life as well. *(laughter)* My financial background and knowledge tells you that payday loan companies are getting away with daylight robbery. They are making excessive profits and much of this excessive profit comes from the most vulnerable members of our communities. It is our duty to do all we can to stop these modern day robber barons. I urge you to support the White Paper. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Groves.

COUNCILLOR GROVES: Lord Mayor, fellow Councillors, I will be speaking in support of Councillor Wakefield's White Paper. Credit is an important part and it is accepted in everyday life but, as Councillor Procter and Councillor Golton have already pointed out, we need to make sure that our residents are getting the right advice and we are signposting them to responsible lenders for that type of credit.

In Middleton and Belle Isle illegal loan sharks operate on our estates. Payday loan companies, as has been said, are opening up on our high streets and everywhere you look there is an advert for them.

I recently met with young people from my Ward aged 16 and 17. They said that loan sharks struck their family lives and caused them misery and that they love to get into the people, promising them loads of money and we see them knocking on our doors. I think this is a powerful statement from our young people and I think for their sakes we need to work together not only to tackle the payday loan companies but also to go back and tackle the illegal loan sharks.

We know that those using payday loans are often desperate and vulnerable. They are doing so out of necessity rather than choice meaning they are often unlikely to be able to pay the money back. This creates a hostile and potential dangerous environment for people. They are only wanting support for their families but sometimes they find themselves in very difficult and dangerous situations.

We are now in times where illegal lenders are not the only people on our high streets that are trapping vulnerable people into cycles of debt. Legal loan sharks are, in my opinion, little better than the illegal loan sharks and I think that is a strong message that we need to get back to Government. They carry out few financial checks before they lend the people the money. They probably know that those people cannot afford to pay it back and they are plunging them further and further into debt.

Our high streets have been taken over, as has been said by Councillor Procter and Councillor Golton and I would just like to reiterate what Councillor Procter was saying about the marketing technique. The process is fast and it entices people very quickly and the reason for that is Wonga spent over £50m on advertising alone last year. Obviously we cannot compete with that in advertising our credit unions but we just need to keep taking steps like banning their sites from our computer network and promoting the benefits of safe, affordable alternatives.

Just last week in Middleton we started to provide two new services, a Job Shop and a Leeds Credit Union that will be open five days a week offering loans and financial advice, but we know as Ward Members that we need to do the work with our officers to get that message out on to our toughest estates where we know our illegal lenders are preying, ready for Christmas. They are already on there selling vouchers and saying £50, they have to pay back £100, so we have to get the message out.

These places in our communities do exist and in our city, we just need to make sure people are aware of them.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Groves, can you wind up, please?

COUNCILLOR GROVES: I will do. I just hope that we can all pull together on this, that we can actually get out, deliver some actions and work to banish this from our city. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Selby.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. First of all, can I say how delighted I am that we have got all party support for this White Paper and for the action that is being taken by this Labour Council.

I would like to pick up one point that Councillor Procter made and that was on the question of the new Financial Services Regulator. Unfortunately they won't start looking at this issue until 2014 and my concern is that there is what we call a legal loansharks' window of opportunity before regulators can start getting some charges.

My further concern is that those high cost lenders, when the consultation takes place on regulation, will actively lobby, as they did with tobacco, as they did with alcohol, to weaken any regulation that is proposed and it is extremely important that when that campaign does begin, when they do start that campaign with the cleverly worded articles we will no doubt see in certain newspapers, that we are working together to challenge what will no doubt be a very well funded campaign with access to those at the highest level in this country.

Lord Mayor, that is a major concern that I do have because I am concerned that over the years we have seen many shops go on our high streets to be replaced by the pawnbrokers, the payday loans and the betting shops. In my Ward there are two high cost lenders; across the road in Crossgates Ward, just 100 yards away from my Ward boundary, there is another six. We do need to actively campaign on this issue.

I am delighted with the Council's policy to remove the adverts of the payday loans from the website. I hope all other Authorities will do the same. It is bad enough having to watch those adverts on the television – misleading, insulting, condescending, those are the things that we have got to be aware of, that type of activity.

We do need to work with the Credit Union and also with the Headrow Money Line helping people who need assistance as well.

I welcome this White Paper, I am conscious of the time and I urge everybody to support it. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Grahame.

COUNCILLOR P GRAHAME: Lord Mayor, I am speaking in support of Councillor Wakefield's White Paper. This is a hugely important issue and one that my Scrutiny Board will be looking at when we meet at the end of September.

High cost lending is growing at a rapid speed, in stark contrast to many other industries that are still struggling to cope in the current economic climate. There are over 200 of these companies already operating on line. Perhaps the best known of these companies, Wonga, has recently announced profits of £62m. In 2012 Wonga issued four million loans. This was up by 58% on the number issued in 2011. That increase followed a tripling of the number of loans the company issued between 2010 and 2011.

We also share concerns about some of the operating practices within this industry, such as rolling over loans, failing to check people can afford the loan, failing to handle complaints and concerns and, perhaps most worrying of all, disregarding the fact that some people do not have the capacity to understand the arrangement they are signed up to.

You may remember Bob Ward brought an excellent deputation to this Council at the end of last year. Bob will be joining Scrutiny Board discussions this month, along with Chris Smith, Chief Executive of Leeds Credit Union. I should also confirm at this point that we have invited a representative from Wonga to attend but as yet they have not responded. *(laughter)*

As Councillor Wakefield has highlighted in his White Paper, credit unions are a valuable mainstream alternative to high cost lenders. I am therefore particularly keen to hear what action Chris would like the Council to take and how he thinks we can support and strengthen credit unions in Leeds.

One of the statements made by Bob last year particularly stuck in my memory. He said that interest rates should be displayed on adverts like health warnings on tobacco. I hope this month's meeting will allow us to explore that idea in much more detail. There is no doubt in my mind that families in Leeds are suffering because of the activities of high cost and payday lenders.

I am delighted the Council has acted to address this and I look forward to seeing what other recommendations Scrutiny can make to ensure that those living in poverty in Leeds cannot be further exploited by unscrupulous lenders. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield to sum up.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am delighted about the response and can I just say that Yorkshire County Cricket have signed up, Leeds United have signed up – not all football clubs promote the wrong people (sorry, Lord Mayor, as a Newcastle supporter, I am sure that is an embarrassment to you) *(laughter)* and Rhinos Rugby League as well have signed up to do it, along with the churches, along with the voluntary sector, along with anybody like ourselves who feel quite passionate about these people.

I listened this morning to Emma who I referred to very briefly who went for a £3,000 loan, walked in, got the money, never knew the interest rates when she left, faced a barrage of letters, phone calls, door knockers till her health was destroyed and she is now still mentally, in health terms, broken down, financially broken down.

The other story that I will tell very quickly is the guy who borrowed £400 - £68.45p to pay back. He defaulted by £8 on one month and ended up paying £4,000. I think that tells you how ruthless, how exploitative these people are.

It is not there yet. I am glad we have got consensus here but if you listen to the company that somebody just mentioned, they really do say that:

“Councils’ belief that the loans are detrimental to those that take them is misplaced and not based on evidence.”

That is the lobby group on behalf of the money lenders. Even BIS, and I say this in a constructive way, was saying (because we know who runs BIS), we are not absolutely sure about capping. I think the evidence is overwhelming; we need it now. *(Applause)* They have done it in Japan, 20%; they have done it in France, 20%; they have done it in Germany, 20%. It can be done, it is more ethical, it is better.

Just like Councillor Groves, what is amazing about when the Ward Members and Councillor Groves had to open the Credit Union shop up, within seconds there were people queuing up. We owe our communities action, responsibility and leadership.

I hope that we can continue to lobby to have it capped and I really hope that if we really believe in localism, Local Authorities have got to be given the powers to limit these predators in our communities to give people a fairer chance and alternative.

This is just a start. I am hoping now that we can build it up throughout the city till we marginalise and see off these 62 companies in our city. I move the White Paper, Lord Mayor, thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I am now going to call for the vote. The first vote is on the amendment in the name of Councillor Golton. *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED

Councillor Golton’s, then, becomes the substantive motion so I am going to call for a vote on that. *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED

I think means that Council business for today – and I think I choose my words carefully – is over. No doubt some issues will be revisited.

Can I thank those people in the gallery who have been with us most of the afternoon, those brave souls, and let me mention, by the way, that over 100 have been watching the drama and what has been happening in this Council Chamber on the website today.

Safe journey back and enjoy your night. Thank you very much.

(The meeting closed at 7.42pm)
