

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday, 25th February 2015

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, 25th FEBRUARY 2015

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon everyone and welcome to today's Council meeting.

Can I ask that members switch their mobile telephones off or put them on silent while the meeting is in progress. Also, to remind Members that the meeting will be webcast and that due to changes in the legislation last year, all votes in respect of the Budget motion and any amendments will be via a recorded vote.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: I have also got to tell you that we have some students from Leeds Trinity University who are filming the meeting today. I think they are undertaking Journalism and Media Studies. (*Applause*) I do not know whether that applause was for me or for yourselves! I suspect the latter.

Also another announcement, that Councillor Stuart McKenna has very bravely offered to walk over burning hot coals by participating in my charity fire walk on Friday 6 March, which will be on Millennium Square. I hope you will all take the opportunity to sponsor him as it is all for a very good cause, the Leeds Children's Hospital. I understand there are sponsor forms going round so that will be nice because I am told it is difficult getting blood out of a stone, but he assures me he can do that so we look forward to that one. I hope to see Stuart at the fire walk fulfilling his promise.

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 15th JANUARY 2014

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to the business of the meeting, the Minutes of the meeting held on the 14th January. Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR NASH: My Lord Mayor, I move that the Minutes be approved.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 2, Declarations of Interest. Have any Members any interests they wish to declare? (*No response*) Clearly not.

ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Communications. Chief Executive?

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: None.

THE LORD MAYOR: There are no communications.

MOTION TO SUSPEND COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES
IN RESPECT OF THE ORDER OF BUSINESS

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to the motion to suspend Council Procedure Rules in respect of the order of business. Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR NASH: My Lord Mayor, I move the suspension of the Council Procedure Rules in terms of the notice.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Selby.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to the motion to suspend Council Procedure Rules in respect of Items 6 and 7. Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR NASH: My Lord Mayor, I move the suspension of the Council Procedure Rules in respect of Items 6 and 7 in the terms of the Notice.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I Second that, Lord Mayor.

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

ITEM 6 – BUDGET MOTION AND AMENDMENTS THERETO

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to Item 6, which is the Budget motion. We turn to page 8 in the Order Paper.

I would just like to remind Members again at the conclusion of the discussion on the Budget, recorded votes will be taken on all the amendments and then the Budget motion.

Councillor Wakefield to seek leave of Council under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 14.9.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just to move some of the Standing Orders in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can Council Members approve that? (*A vote was taken*) We are all AGREED on that.

Councillor Wakefield to move the Budget.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As you know that was a false start because people's watches start now and there is very heavy gambling in our Group of how long I will take. This is the start.

Lord Mayor, before moving our Budget proposals I would like to express our usual appreciation to all the staff of Leeds City Council. Despite each year getting financially harder, our staff have continued to show dedication, professionalism and resilience in delivering public services to the people of Leeds.

On many occasions in the last twelve months, whether winning national awards likes our Parks and Countryside Department or whether dealing with tragedies like the sad loss of Ann Maguire, the fire at the iconic Majestic building or even organising the magnificent success of the Grand Départ they have been truly inspirational, so many thanks to them.

Balancing, managing and preparing budgets has got harder and harder so I would like to thank all our directors, as well as the Finance Officers, for helping to drive change and innovation to protect public services. Given the sacrifices staff have made, some with their health, I would also like to congratulate our employees on the record low level of sickness absence of nine days per year. Finally, I would also like to thank our excellent Finance team of Helen Mylan, Doug Meeson, Maureen Taylor and, of course, Alan Gay who has shown calm and determined leadership in these very challenging financial times. Both Maureen Taylor and Helen Mylan retire this year so on behalf of all the Members of Council I would like to thank them for their loyalty and support and wish them both a very long, happy, healthy retirement.
(*hear, hear*) (*Applause*)

Of course, we should not forget our intrepid Chief Executive, Tom Riordan, who has made extraordinary efforts to visit our staff all over the city in order to listen, support and encourage them in these very insecure days for Local Government. However, I have to say if Boro go up and Leeds go down I think that puts our Chief Executive in a very difficult position, some say a very insecure one (*laughter*) but the good thing, as you know, we did the double over them on Saturday and I do not care if we do not win another game as long as we do not lose to the Boro.

Lord Mayor, on a serious note so that no-one has any doubt how serious our financial challenge is, I would like to give some background and context to our budget proposals this year.

Firstly, as we all know since 2010 Local Authorities like Leeds have had to respond to up to 43% cuts to their core grant, which has led to many Councils facing intolerable financial pressures. The Local Government Association speaking on behalf of all local Councils has warned that many Councils, including Birmingham, will no longer be able to meet the challenge of delivering statutory services to the vulnerable, young and elderly over the next few years.

In reinforcing how serious the financial crisis of Local Authorities is, well respected bodies like the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office have now issued a serious warning, and I quote:

“The ongoing austerity measures risk changing the nature of public services and the financial sustainability of Local Authorities with the Government not being fully aware of the impact such reductions are having.”

This is a very serious and damning statement from the National Audit Office. Even Conservative Leaders of Surrey, Buckinghamshire, West Sussex and Staffordshire are now publicly criticising their Government and describing their Authorities as being at “tipping point”.

Evidence that this Coalition Government is refusing to listen to these warnings of financial disasters lies in the Chancellor’s autumn statement in which he said they were planning more and deeper cuts to public expenditure in the next Parliament if they win. It is now estimated this Conservative/Lib-Dem Coalition is only 35% of the way through its planned expenditure cuts.

Another highly regarded organisation, the Office of Budget Responsibility, has forecast that, to quote:

“The current trajectory of expenditure cuts would reduce State expenditure to 1930s proportion. Frankly, the prospect of the fifth richest country reducing the level of public expenditure to the 1930s must be one of the most depressing and reckless scenarios facing the people of this country since pre-war times, especially those in desperate need and hope.”

The Institute of Fiscal Studies has already spoken of colossal cuts to come forcing Danny Alexander, who has shown more bottle than some of his colleagues in this Chamber, to accuse the Chancellor of being “bent on wilful destruction of important parts of our public services.” Despite the election rhetoric from this Government, this ideological obsession of shrinking the State has not achieved the positive economic or financial impact he claimed it would have.

If you remember back in 2010 the Chancellor declared that he would have the deficit eliminated by 2015. This was the mission of the Coalition. As it turns, out he is less than half way to getting there. Indeed, the deficit has gone in reversal with £92bn. David Cameron’s claim that they have halved the deficit looks mathematically illiterate. Using his original statements and criteria it should have been £40bn and, as I have just said, it is £92bn and going up. No wonder he changed his criteria to suit this claim. Amazingly, the Coalition Government have borrowed £198bn more than they planned in 2010 and, bizarrely, George Osborne has actually borrowed more than Alistair Darling planned to do. If we remember, George Osborne criticised him at this time for endangering the economy.

As one leading economist, John Turnbull, has highlighted, this Coalition Government has run up more public debt than all the Labour Governments since 1900. To make matters worse, George Osborne has revised borrowing up in his autumn statement by £12.5bn in the next three years.

As a result of this financial chaos we are now hearing an increasing number of experts and economists like the former economist of the British Chamber of Commerce arguing that George Osborne is chasing the wrong deficit. In his view he should be chasing the balance of payments deficit which recent figures have shown are increasing and becoming spectacularly bad. Our export performance in the EU now means we are 22nd out of 28 in our balance of payments deficit. Three-quarters of EU countries have done better.

Professor Robert Skidelsky, hardly a member of the Left Wing Government, has argued very eloquently that, to quote:

“Cuts in public expenditure are deflationary and the last thing this country needs just now is another dose of deflation. Given our growth forecast has now been cut back, given there are increasing worries about the balance of payments, evidence suggests Britain is already losing vital momentum in its economic recovery.”

As Skidelsky has further argued:

“There is no reputable theory that says cutting public expenditure in a slump will induce recovery. A slump comes because for one reason or another...”

(he argues)

“...the private sector is spending less than it was. If the Government reduces its spending at the same time this will make the slump worse not better.”

Incidentally, Skidelsky is now a member of the Conservative Party.

A further deficit conveniently ignored by this Coalition Government has been highlighted by a “Treasury insider” who simply stated that the problem with public finance is not spending but receipts. Tax receipts have missed their target by £7bn this year and the real reason the Chancellor has failed to meet his target in tax receipts is down to relentless cuts in real pay and the rampant growth in part-time and zero hour contracts. Not only are working people £1,600 a year worse off than they were in 2010, but the continued erosion in working people’s pay and the continued increase in private sector rents has forced the Housing Benefit bill of up to £3.7bn. Furthermore, this rather conveniently forgotten drop in the standard of living needs to be understood in the context of recent events and reports.

Firstly, George Osborne’s adviser receiving an 18% pay rise despite Local Government and public sector pay freeze. The FTSE top 100 directors receiving 12% increase on average without including bonuses. The continued bonuses and pay-offs to top bankers, insurance and directors of failing companies. We will hear more about this in the next few weeks with people expecting that bonuses to bankers’ insurance will reach over £100bn.

Three weeks ago even John Cridland, the Director General of the CBI, pressed alarm bells by claiming inequality and low wages are damaging companies and this country.

How ridiculous and ironic it was to hear David Cameron address the CBI two weeks ago and preach to them about the importance of pay rises when for the last five years he has been responsible for pay cuts and pay freezes in the public sector. Of course, in terms of tax receipts they cannot have been helped by the recent report of the £78bn being in HSBC Swiss bank accounts in order to avoid and evade tax responsibilities.

As the YEP recently reported, Leeds is not immune to the growing inequalities we are experiencing in Europe and this country. The Centre for Cities report highlighted that Leeds is the third most unequal city in the UK behind Birmingham and Belfast. We are all aware that we have over 30,000 children living in poverty, 55,000 households classed as living in fuel poverty, 150,000 people who live in the worst 10% of poverty in this country and, of course, the staggering life expectancy gap of twelve years of people living within four miles of each other.

What makes our challenge of tackling inequality in Leeds and Yorkshire so much harder are the relentless cuts to our core grants which has reduced our spending across the City Region by £470m and by £246m in this city since 2010. What makes matters worse and what makes people get angrier and angrier is the constant Government rhetoric that not only are the cuts for the next financial year the lowest cuts in Government grants since 2010, but that the cuts in grants have been fairly allocated across the country.

I want to be absolutely clear again so no-one in this Chamber and in this city is in any doubt whatsoever, the evidence so far suggests that this Government and its civil servants have been involved in a massive act of deception to the people of this country whilst spectacularly distorting the truth, and I will explain how.

Firstly, as we all know, the Government introduced the criteria of spending power in order to make the reductions in Local Government grants look more modest. Simply put, it involves using net revenue expenditure rather than grant income. In order to distort the Local Authority's income and expenditure profile this year the Government included housing benefit whereas we all know Councils are just merely the agents of Whitehall. As mentioned earlier, the housing benefit bill has gone up £3.7bn since 2009/10 yet, despite it being ring fenced and not Council money, it has been included in our spending figures.

Secondly, this criteria excludes school funding because the move of schools into Academy status would show a reduction in Council spending.

Thirdly, as we all know, it includes using Public Health money as an extra £2.5bn to Local Government which, combined with the increase in benefit, is presented as an extra £6.2bn increase since 2009/10, giving the intended picture that spending cuts look a lot less than they actually are.

The final piece in this distorted financial picture is related to the Better Care Fund of £3.8bn. Last year and this year the Government put that spending into the NHS expenditure as well as into Local Council spending. It is just smoke and mirrors and double counting. If you take the false inclusions and exclusions out, still using

their criteria of spending power, you get an average of 6.5% cuts and not the 1.8% cut which Ministers are now using in their propaganda.

To be fair to Councillor Lamb, I believe he was genuinely misled before he made a ridiculous claim about the scale of cuts at the last Council and I am sure when he speaks later on, because he is a decent fellow, he will admit his mistake.
(laughter)

Let me go on. The other false presentation of this settlement relates to claims by the former Leader of Bradford Council, Chris Hopkins, who has consistently stressed that the settlement was fair to the whole country. I am afraid this is yet another attempt to mislead the people of this country and this city and it is very simple to disprove this claim by reference to the House of Commons' Library statistics which show that between 2010 and 2015 Local Government cuts to the poorest areas were 16 times as much per household as the richest area. Indeed, the average cut per household of this Coalition Government in the ten most deprived areas is £782 compared to the average cut in the richest area of the country which is £48 per household. Given the social economic profile of this country, given the north-south divide, we all know this huge discrepancy has disadvantaged many local Councils in the north.

In terms of settlement to Leeds yet again we see Wokingham, the third richest Authority in this country, having a spending power of £1,932 per household compared to the Leeds figure of £1,841. That is £91 difference between our two Authorities. For Leeds to be described as an "anomaly" by Hopkins is a total abdication and insult to the people of Leeds. Yet again we see Surrey and Wokingham recording an increase of 3.1% in spending power and metropolitan cities like Leeds losing over 6% in spending power using their criteria. Yet again we see the pattern of strong Tory Authorities in the south gaining while Labour Metropolitan Authorities are being dramatically cut by over 6%, again using the Government's own spending criteria.

A further example of a flawed and biased funding criteria which disadvantaged Leeds relates to a safety net for business rates retention. As we all know, all Councils have been top sliced to fund a safety net for local Councils whose business rate drops 7.5% and below. In the financial year 2013/14 five Local Authorities got £130m in safety net payments. The richest Council in this country, Westminster, got a payment of £56m, and I defy anyone in this Chamber to claim that is fair. It is flawed, it is bent, it is biased and it is totally unjust.

Lord Mayor, the statement Tony Travers has made that, to quote, "If the Government treated the NHS the same way as Local Government, the skies would fall in" only illustrates how determined and resilient Local Government has been since 2010. It also illustrates the utter hypocrisy of this Government at a time when Local Government costs have gone down by 12% and Whitehall costs have gone up by 6%. Whitehall has not changed one iota, not one department. It is the same as it was in 2010 with its many, many silos.

In relation to our resilience, despite our £200m reduction between 2000 to 2014 this Council has been at the forefront of rationalisation, integration and civic enterprise in order to protect frontline services. During 2010 and 2014 we have closed day centres, libraries, sports centres and hostels and sadly we lost over 2,000 staff who were part of delivering services to the people of Leeds for many years.

Fortunately with the help of the Unions and staff we have maintained a non-compulsory redundancy policy as a commitment to treat our employees with the respect they deserve (*applause*) so the last four years have not been easy, but however resilient and determined our civic enterprise has been, the 15.6 cut in our grant, the further £46m to find for next year, a further loss of up to 500 staff forecast by March 2016, has put this Council in a position where it can no longer guarantee to protect frontline services to the people of Leeds.

Already we have witnessed a 10% cut in grants to organisations like the Citizen's Advice Bureau for the first time. Already we are dealing with cuts to advice and support services to our young people. We know further cuts will be made to our art and cultural organisations, our youth work and our street lighting services. In short we are being forced to make some very difficult and brutal decisions, but let me assure the people of Leeds, this Labour administration has not lost its ambition to be the best Council in the country nor have we lost our ambition to protect the most vulnerable in our city. It is worth reminding Council if it was not for our resilience we could have been talking about much harder decisions and far worse cuts in frontline services. Let me give you some examples.

In Adult Social Care (which has gained national recognition as one of the most creative and enterprising services in the country) the Enablement Services are saving £2.5m over three years and has also helped over 50% of their clients, that is 1,115 people, to become fully independent again. In doing so it is helping to keep our elderly healthier and happier in the community and, above all, helping to keep them out of hospital and institutional care.

As you will hear later from Councillor Gruen, we are committed to building 800 extra care homes in the city to help the transition from institutional to community care. The Better Lives Programme has given new opportunities for older people and people with physical and learning disabilities to take part in more positive and enjoyable activities at Holt Park, which is one of our great jewels in the crown. By creating a new social enterprise we will not only save £2.1m, we will also be able to expand our services so we can respond to the growing demand of people with learning disabilities. This has to be far better than closing or reducing services and I am delighted to say that not only will it provide employment for 700 staff and more, but it will also pay a Living Wage to new employees. That is in sharp contrast to pay and conditions in the so-called independent sector notorious for zero hour contracts.

In developing social capital and enterprise we should not forget our 37 neighbourhood networks now regarded nationally as the best in the country looking after over 21,000 elderly people in our city. I would like to thank all those volunteers in those organisations for their excellent work. (*Applause*) We have also maintained our emergency fund of £150,000 for voluntary sector organisations in case of extreme financial pressures.

Our Children's Services against a background of 5,000 extra children in the city since 2009, and a series of cuts to their core grants, have also made remarkable progress. In doing so they have reduced the number of looked after children by about 200 in the last two years, saving £14m, but it is more than numbers. To put the statistics in human terms, as well as ensuring those 200 looked after children are now with families, as well as ensuring we have 88 more in-house foster carers, as well as ensuring nine out of ten looked after children attend dental appointments, we now

have eight out of ten looked after children with education plans and, needless to say, this has led to record levels of educational achievement in GCSE and A-levels for looked after children and there is more to do.

Under this Labour administration no care leaver has to go into bed and breakfast when they leave our care. Given we are all corporate parents, we should all be proud of that progress. *(Applause)* The pioneering early intervention, the restorative practice, working with families rather than commanding them has made a difference to vulnerable children. I am also very proud to announce by introducing some changes and reduced costs we will be able to retain all 57 Children's Centres in this city. *(Applause)* We all know they play such an important role in our children's early development, health and wellbeing.

I am sure we all welcome the announcement by the Labour Front Bench that they intend to increase Sure Start Centres, which strongly supports our record of protecting this service. On top of all this we will commit an extra £500,000 to help vulnerable children and young people.

My final comment on the Children's portfolio relates to the outstanding joint work with the Health and Wellbeing Board which has reduced infant mortality by a third in this city; an amazing achievement.

Lord Mayor, time and time again when consulting with the people of Leeds they have told us they want to protect vulnerable children, young, old and disabled, and I can tell Council we now spend over 60% of our budget on those priorities. Inevitably, other frontline services have been under incredible pressure to be resilient and creative to protect and grow their services.

In Leisure and Public Health breakthrough projects like the 'Let's Get Active' Scheme continue to encourage people from deprived communities to participate in sport and so far 50,000 people from those areas have registered to the 'Be Active' Scheme, helping to make Leeds the second most active Core City in this country.

I know David Cameron was very impressed with our street runners when visiting Leeds in November. *(laughter)*

In Environmental Services by expanding the alternative week collection they will not only save £2.5m but at the current rate of 45-50% recycling rate they are on target to achieve the 55% by 2016. This makes our Environmental Services one of the leading waste management services in this country.

Under the same portfolio in relation to our Stronger Safer Communities, I am also pleased to announce there will be no reductions in PCSOs to the people of Leeds. We will commit ourselves to the current allocation. *(Applause)* That is a real tribute to the strong partnership we have with the police at all levels in the city and West Yorkshire. We are very aware of the roles the PCSOs play in reassuring our community about their safety.

However, given the warning of further cuts to the police budget next year we have a serious challenge to maintain our numbers in the future. I am pleased to say that Councillor Les Carter actually understood that and voted for the 1.9% increase in the precept, so well done, Les.

As we know in tackling vital issues like unemployment, skills, investment and growth, the Council's capital programme of £1bn over the next three years, complemented by its civic enterprise role, is providing the infrastructure and partnership which has achieved national and international recognition. The Centre for Cities report identified Leeds as the most successful city in the country in creating private sector jobs in the city centre, even out-performing London.

Office occupancy rates are amongst the highest in Europe with one of the lowest vacancy rates in Europe. Jones Lang LaSalle's forecast that retail sales will grow at 2.5% per annum puts Leeds ahead of Paris, Madrid, Amsterdam, Berlin, Rome and Geneva and Leeds is amongst the fastest growing cities in Europe, even ahead of Germany's strong regional hubs such as Hamburg and Cologne.

In addition, forecasts by the Council of Oxford Economists shows Leeds's economy booming to £24bn GDP a year by 2020, generating a further 22,000 jobs by that date. Developments like the Arena, Trinity, Kirkstall Forge, Aire Valley, Thorpe Park and South Bank will have helped to create an employment base of half a million people by that date. Last year we attracted a record 55 million visitors to our city which highlights the growing success of our great city, (*applause*) but we have not forgotten the importance of our shopping districts, our towns and villages which have provided vital local investment and jobs and we are committed to continue our regeneration programme with £700,000 next year in our Capital budget to help places like Armley, Beeston and Garforth, to name a few.

As a result of our economic success we have been able to support 1,000 young people through our apprenticeship hub and we have been able to support 4,000 local residents into local jobs. Those achievements are making a difference in our communities, particularly to young people. The reduction in 18-24 JSA claimants city wide is 31% and thanks to local Members' efforts in places like Middleton, reductions of 41%; Hyde Park 41%; Temple Newsam 35%; and Armley 39%. I am proud to announce our NEET figures for 16-18 has continued to reduce and we now have just reached a 74% success rate with our devolved 16-18 work contract. Compare that to the 30% national success rate. This is a truly outstanding example of what Local Government can achieve with the right freedoms and resources.

Having said that, we are not going to become complacent with the challenges ahead of us. We will build on the success of the Grand Départ which attracted over two billion viewers from all over the world and generated £102m for the Leeds and Yorkshire economy in two days.

We will continue to promote Leeds as a place for world class events by successfully hosting the Rugby Union World Cup this year and, of course, will aim to be successful in our bold project to be the European City of Culture in 2023.

These are vital ambitions to attract and promote inward investment for growth, jobs and apprenticeships, but while this Council has helped provide the infrastructure to our economic success if we are going to narrow the economic and social gap between north and south, if we are serious about balancing the economy of this country by providing a Northern Powerhouse to our economy, if we are serious at breaking the over-centralised Government of Yorkshire, then this Government has to

be serious about devolving powers and resources to the City Region so we can have the tools to match our ambition to transform the economy of the north.

Needless to say, having just achieved one of the biggest growth packages in the country for the LEP, having been promised a deal by Clegg and Osborne well before Christmas, we should all understand the frustration and anger from the people of Yorkshire in having to wait for so long. There is absolutely no economic or any other reason for not giving us an ambitious deal. We have the strongest economy in the north with £54bn GVA a year, bigger than Manchester, Wales and eight European countries. We have delivered on jobs at about £7,500 per year compared to the national average of £28,000 a job. We have been bold and ambitious on transport and infrastructure for HS2 and HS3, and we have delivered on 16-18 needs. Frankly, without the City Region the Northern Powerhouse would be a complete sham. Our ask is simple: we want an ambitious package of devolved resources and freedom to the Leeds City Region. We want action and not words. I am very aware having ambitious devolved packages is not the total panacea to helping a great city like Leeds to realise its full potential. Radical fiscal devolution would help to make our services more sustainable.

The Independent Commission on Local Government Finance has recently argued that the urgent need for reform is going to be one of the biggest and most important challenges facing the next government. To quote: “Without it many of the key services which have been part of our everyday life for generations may not be there.” The Commission stressed that Whitehall should hand over power and money so that areas can devolve in an efficient way and decide their own priorities.

Given fiscal freedoms local Councils can play a vital role in tackling inequality. Evidence from Northern Europe and America shows that a more equal and cohesive city is a more economically successful one. Evidence from cities like Detroit show that cities with massive inequalities will fail economically.

To summarise our Budget proposals, by allocating over 60% of our budget expenditure on children, disabled and elderly services proves that this administration has commitment to care and compassion to match its economic ambition.

In moving a Council Tax increase of 1.99% we are rejecting the Freeze Grant, like many Councils, in order to protect frontline services. We will provide extra money for our Social Welfare Fund to increase the belated, timid and cynical offer from this Government. We will increase Discretionary Housing payments. Both provide vital financial services to the disabled family with children, people with mental illness who are desperately struggling to buy food, pay for gas and electricity and avoid being made homeless.

As food banks and bankers' bonuses have continued to grow side by side, we will continue to campaign against the high cost white furniture shops, pawn brokers, high cost pay and money lenders. We will continue to actively support Credit Unions and improve advice and support services in our communities through our One Stop Centres and clubs, but there is more this Labour administration wants to do, Lord Mayor. To show civic leadership to other employees in the public and private sector in Leeds, to show recognition that thousands of working people, nearly two-thirds who claim benefits are actually working in low paid jobs, this Labour administration proposes to work towards the Living Wage by removing low paid grades 7 and 8 from

our structure. It will provide a 10% increase to 1,500 employees of this Council. *(Applause)* I can assure everyone in this Chamber this is in our budget this year and we look forward to total support for our proposals to help to bring dignity and respect to our low paid workers. I move the Budget, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. We now move to page 14 of the Order Paper. Councillor Gruen to second.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I formally second and reserve my right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter to move Amendments 1-4 en bloc.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

If anybody was in any doubt that we are eight weeks from a General Election Councillor Wakefield will have completely disabused them of that because the first half-an-hour of his speech was not Wakefield it was Balls - Ed Balls that is. *(laughter)*

My Lord Mayor, before I go into the details of our amendment I do want to agree with Councillor Wakefield on two issues. First of all, I want to record my thanks and the thanks of our Group for the very hard work done by the vast majority of the people who work for this city. They do a splendid job. No-one, least of all me, would pretend or suggest that times are not tough and that means that their jobs become even tougher. I have no hesitation whatever in thanking them for the work that they have done.

I also want to thank Alan Gay and his team for their help yet again in preparing our amendment, which is fairly brief and I will come to it in a lot shorter order than Councillor Wakefield came to the details of the Council's proposed budget, but I do want to single out just two people before I move on from that. That is two people who have already been mentioned, Maureen Taylor and Helen Mylan, who are both retiring this year, both of whom I know extremely well. I worked with them as Council Leader as well as Leader of the Opposition; two more dedicated officers you could not wish to meet.

In the case of Helen Mylan I apologise to her for all the work I have given her over very many years in trying to sort out random suggestions from me about what ought to be in or out of the budget. She has always held discussions with me in a most amiable and amicable fashion. I do thank her for her help and wish her a very long and happy retirement.

Similarly, Maureen Taylor. Maureen Taylor and I have something in common that most Members of this Council, luckily for you, do not have, and that is that we both appeared in court at the Queen's Bench defending the City Council against accusations from outside persons (which I am very pleased to say we won). Maureen for many years controlled with a vice like grip the spending on the Council's capital programme to make sure that we only spent what we had committed to spend and no more, and again a more dedicated and hard working officer you would be very hard pushed to find. I have taken some time over that but I wanted particularly to make those comments.

My Lord Mayor, four-and-a-half years ago Councillor Wakefield was predicting riots in the street. We saw a demonstration outside a little earlier. We get more people on Calverley Park watching a seven-a-side football game than were out there, but now at least it appears for the first part of his speech that he is predicting a financial meltdown. One thing I will admit is that when it comes to knowing about financial meltdown, nobody is more qualified than a socialist politician.

Councillor Wakefield and his colleagues sat with mouths closed whilst their Party in national government wrecked the economy of this country. (*Interruption*) They left office with every citizen in Britain owing £22,400 as part of the national debt, which totalled £1,376bn. Almost 20% of those aged between 16-24 were unemployed - young people not in employment, education or training. NEETS in Leeds ran at 10% of the total. The cost of our membership of the EU had tripled. There were 2.5 million people out of work, not to mention the fact that 5.5 million people gross had entered the country between 1997 and 2010. No wonder public services were stretched almost to breaking point. So when it comes to financial meltdown yes, Keith, you know all about it, but I would suggest to you that it is not appropriate, it is not applicable and it is not going to happen.

The simple truth is that Labour have learnt nothing in the past five years and forgotten everything. They said unemployment would be over three million. It is now under two million, so they were wrong. They said the private sector could not take up the slack and create the number of jobs the Government were predicting. They were wrong again. They said we could not cut taxes and cut the deficit but we have and they were wrong again. They said we would not hit our target of new apprenticeships. We have and they were wrong again.

In Leeds the number of young people not in employment, education and training has been reduced from the 10% inherited to 6.7%. Still far too high but better, so Labour were wrong again. The simple truth is that the painful decisions that have had to be made could not be avoided no politician of any Party likes to make cuts because they are unpopular and politicians like to be popular, but the Government have no alternative and their programme for recovery is working. That is what this lot cannot stomach.

The OECD said only yesterday this is a text book - a text book - way to recovery. There are now more than 760,000 more private sector businesses with two million apprenticeships in this Parliament alone. Unemployment is not going up it is going down. Our economy has the fastest growth rate in the whole of the European Union.

Compare that - and I will mention his name, I noticed that Keith Wakefield mentioned David Cameron's name five times in his speech. He did not mention Ed Miliband's name once. It is a bit like really Labour's Parliamentary candidate for Pudsey in whose latest leaflet David Cameron's name was mentioned ten times and Ed Miliband's name not once. Interesting isn't it, but Mr Miliband wanted us to follow what the French were doing where they have record of employment and no growth.

All the achievements I have outlined have been made in four-and-a-half years, having inherited from Gordon Brown's Labour Government the worst recession in

living memory. It is an incredible transformation and instead of shroud waving we should be cheerleading for the way in which this country is recovering.

What Labour do not seem to understand is that without a stronger and more vibrant private sector encouraged to employ people from the shop floor, from the office to the boardroom, a private sector growing in profitability, expanding its workforce and now seeing pay rises rise ahead of inflation, there simply are sufficient tax revenues to support a public sector. Without a thriving private sector there is no public sector, so if we want a public sector that provides better and more efficient public services, then we have to ensure that we have supported a private sector that can support that public sector through good times and through bad, but the truth is regrettably, my Lord Mayor, they just do not get it.

Let me touch briefly. You know, my Lord Mayor, can I make a constructive suggestion? If people over *here* want to participate in the debate I am more than happy to listen to their pearls of wisdom, as I am sure everybody else is, but preferably from a standing position and having got your permission, not in the middle of my speech. (*Applause*) I am sure we have all ---

THE LORD MAYOR: To be fair to Councillor Carter can you listen to the speech and keep down the interruptions.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Let me touch briefly on these issues of the north-south divide. I quite accept that the north should and must close the gap because if Britain is to prosper as I want to see it prosper, the only way is to have a much more level playing field, but I have to say that Councillor Wakefield is extremely selective with his statistics.

Furthermore, I do not see the point in inflaming divisions where there should not be divisions but agreement. Some of the quotes he has made about public expenditure per head of population are downright misleading.

Public spending, including Local Government in Yorkshire and the Humber is £1,000 a head more than people living in what is regarded as the south-east region and more than in the West Midlands where they have some massive cities like we do - Coventry, Birmingham, Wolverhampton.

What I would suggest to you is if you want to look at inequality in public spending you should look at Scotland, where the spending per head of population is £1,500 more than in Yorkshire and the Humber and that cannot be right. That is where inequalities really lie. We know why they were created and we all know nobody is prepared to face up to it, but it is a fact that you cannot dispute.

Similarly, if you look at some of the spending per head in the Core Cities. I remember back in 2009/10 us all bemoaning the fact that in Birmingham, Bristol, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield the spending per head was more than in Leeds. Now granted there have been cuts to all those budgets, but the fact is that now in Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester and Nottingham and Sheffield the spending per head is less than it is in Leeds, so at least one of those differentials has been closed.

Now just to touch on Surrey very briefly, in point of fact Wokingham is Keith Wakefield's favourite but let us look at a couple of others. Reigate, Surrey Heath,

both have spending of £1,000 a head less than do Leeds and indeed most of the Councils in Surrey have £1,000 per head spending less than Leeds and in my view that is right they probably should, but they pick one out that happens to be a very small difference when there are plenty of others which highlight something completely different.

Turning to our amendment, I have said many times before that we are not denying the fact that times are tough and that significant savings will have to be found. As a city we are asset rich and revenue poor and that means some serious strategic thinking needs to be done. Quite frankly, much as a lot of hard work is going into the budgetary situation we do not think that has been done, not at least as we would like to see it done.

I will give you an example. The Early Leavers Initiative, something which we have supported, is by its very nature a blunt instrument with which to manage staff numbers and I believe it has now reached a stage where there is evidence that in some departments there is a law of unintended consequences which actually starts to undermine strategic objectives of the city, particularly the Development Department where they are tasked with disposing of surplus Council assets, and in the Highways Department where they are in receipt of significant Government grants. Without the required number of highly trained professional people in certain parts of the department they cannot deliver those strategic objectives, so we believe that a budget review should begin now, not for the next financial year but for the financial years after that. There should be a staffing review undertaken in every department of the Council separately. Where the Early Leavers Initiative is still appropriate by all means it should be kept in place, but you cannot rule out other options any longer and everything has to be looked at.

Additionally, year after year we have been promised a fully fledged baseline budget review. It still has not happened and it needs to start.

Finally, assets that are surplus to requirements are still not being disposed of quickly enough. In our budget amendment we have identified just one which has been standing empty for over 15 years. In this year's budget proposals by the Council we are proposing to waste a further half-a-million pounds because we have not disposed of empty properties quickly enough. There are a whole range of other properties running through Years 2, 3 and 4 in the programme of disposals and quite simply we should be identifying the resources needed to dispose of these properties far more quickly, bring forward asset sales to enable us to invest. Without the sort of strategic approach I have just outlined it would be very foolish indeed to table a whole string of amendments today for implementation in April. That would undoubtedly incur a significant further risk to the Local Authority and that is why we have limited our proposals to the areas we have set out in the amendment.

(a) To take the Council Tax Freeze Grant and to freeze Council Tax in this coming year and, by the way, I entirely agree with my colleague's actions at the Police Authority because the increase in the precept will cost Council Tax payers in Leeds possibly about two pence a week. Putting Council Tax up, however, by almost 2% is a completely different animal.

The introduction of the Living Wage. I was going to say that in every budget that Councillor Wakefield has introduced so far, the following year he has adopted at least one of the things we suggested in our alternative budget, and if he has not adopted one

of ours he has adopted one of the Liberal Democrats'. However, this year what he has done is to stand up and do something which is not in his budget and say he was going to do it anyway. I am delighted, thank you, because it appears to me you are going to introduce the Living Wage and yet nowhere, nowhere in the papers that came to the Executive Board does it say that. Ladies and gentlemen, I wonder why?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: A little surprise.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: "A little surprise". I was hoping for that. We also want to invest in more apprenticeships and, of course, we are using £250,000 from the extra £1.1m that you got from the Government specifically for that rather than just say it is going into a pot with no specific purpose put at the side of it.

Where we want to see more apprenticeships is in certain Council departments. You have mentioned one, Parks and Countryside. A wonderful department. Ideal for young people to get training. That is where we should be looking.

We do not believe, however, it is appropriate to reduce Council reserves further. It is always very tempting for politicians in Opposition and we have all done it, yes Keith you included. I could go back over your speeches in Opposition and you took reserves every single year but it ain't appropriate at this stage when we know and we accept that more savings will have to be found.

Just let me touch on the Living Wage and I am, I have to say, delighted that you have amended your budget and I look forward to seeing the papers come forward to Exec Board where it tells us how you will do it. A strange way of budgeting but one that we absolutely welcome. It is a bit like a beater with grouse, isn't it, you beat around and it comes out of the ground. (*Interruption*) We believe that the Living Wage will not actually cost this Authority much, if anything, because where it has been introduced - and unfortunately we are following on behind Calderdale, Barnsley, Kirklees, always behind the curve - they have found that it reduces sickness levels where they are highest and that is amongst, regrettably, people who are often on the lowest wage. The statistics of this Authority actually show that, and I have got them, that the highest sickness levels are in the areas where we ought to be doing most to help and by introducing the Living Wage that is precisely what it will do.

Just touching briefly on the highways situation. I read with interest all these things we are doing to promote cycling and everything else. Cyclists are by and large on the same roads or footpaths as everybody else and it seems to me that cyclists must want to have the roads and footpaths repaired equally as much as everybody else.

I think it is a mission of abject failure, Councillor Lewis, that you should reduce the Highways revenue budget by approaching half-a-million pounds when you must know and you must see from your own postbag exactly what people think. There are opportunities within the Council's Highways revenue budget to adjust all spending to address that half-a-million pounds but we would like to see a real commitment, as we put in place when we were in power, to inject capital money, extra capital money into the repair of highways and footpaths. Above almost all other things that is what our residents tell us needs to be attended to.

I want to just touch upon the issues of devolution. I am glad that Keith mentioned it. I am a bit sick and tired - and let me tell you, Keith, I know as much about the discussions with the Government as you do and I am sick and tired of

hearing the blame for the fact that Leeds is again behind the curve and that Manchester and Sheffield have received devolution deals and we have not.

I think - well I know - there is considerable frustration in London that actually hold you entirely responsible. (*interruption*) I hold you partly responsible because Leeds should be leading on this. Leeds is the centre of the City Region. Leeds is the place where the wealth will be created that will affect and help all our neighbouring Authorities and we should be leading in ensuring that devolution comes forward sooner rather than later. I am sorry but Councillor Box chopping and changing his position all the time in his capacity as Chair of the Combined Authority is not at all helpful.

We all hope in the Chancellor's Budget that stage 1 of our devolution deal will be announced but, Lord Mayor, on Friday the Chancellor will be announcing the transfer of the £6bn NHS budget to Manchester. The Manchester City Region will be taking control of 25% of all Government expenditure in their City Region area.

Just let us dwell on the NHS situation because one of the areas where we have the greatest pressures is in Adult Social Care. The demographics speak for themselves; the pressures speak for themselves. In Manchester they are going to be in a position in twelve months' time where elected politicians, NHS organisations and care organisations will have control of a £6bn budget. We have long believed in Leeds that actually in our discussions with the NHS we do not necessarily get a fair crack of the whip.

If you want to relieve pressures in the area where there is the greatest pressure of all in Local Government, Adult Social Care, then the steps this Government are taking working with a Labour Council in Manchester have got to be right. Keith, why are we so far behind the curve? I am sorry, blaming arguments between George Osborne and Nick Clegg will not do, it just will not do. I am sure they will be arguing over Manchester and now arguing over Sheffield as well but they have both got deals and we simply haven't.

I believe that the devolution bandwagon is now rolling forward and is unstoppable, quite rightly so. Are we going to be in the third class carriage at the back that rolls up after everybody else has their deal? What are you doing about it because Leeds should lead. The simple fact is that Manchester have not only now got Phase 1 of devolution, they are getting Phase 2 and they have now got a Phase 3 and we are not even off the base.

My Lord Mayor, if we want powers devolving to Local Government we have to be a great deal more persuasive, a great deal more convincing than the Labour Leaders in the West Yorkshire Combined Authority have so far been. It simply is not good enough and it is time we saw more action.

My Lord Mayor, I want to conclude by thanking a number of other people who are always left out, they are never thanked, ever - the Council Tax payers of Leeds who pay increasingly on time, thanks to our Finance Department. The growing number of small businesses who pay their business rates are now employing more and more people in our city. Councillor Wakefield finally got round to saying that the jobs were going to be created by the private sector. I want to thank all those entrepreneurs in Leeds who set up new businesses in difficult times, and I want to thank all those people who are helping to generate profits and pay taxes which the

vast majority of people do. I want to thank employers who have taken on increasing numbers of young people. I want to thank all those people in this great city who have not spent the last four-and-a-half years shrouding waving, they have spent the four-and-a-half years rebuilding the economy in this city for which we should be truly thankful. I move the amendment. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter to second.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton to move Amendments 5 to 7 en bloc.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor.

First of all I would like to say the customary thank you to Alan Gay and his team. They have been more than helpful and have provided all the information required. Unfortunately, the sums they gave us back did not always add up to what we wanted to achieve so our amendments this year are a little bit less than they have been before.

Anyway, you will be glad to know that I will not introduce my budget amendment speech with a diatribe against the other side because I appreciate that actually you all hate Liberals (*laughter*) and it is a process for which I would not be rewarded.

Lord Mayor, it is harder and harder each year to approach the Council's budget debate on purely Party lines. As the purse strings close ever tighter from Whitehall we all feel the pain of the choices that we make.

At the Council's Executive Board there are more decisions that we agree on than we fall out over, and here at the budget debate I would suggest our over-riding sentiment is one of common purpose, to get the most out of a Whitehall settlement full of contradictions.

On the one hand we have had the greatest devolution decision making to our area for a generation. It has already been mentioned. Our Local Economic Partnership has the biggest regional growth deal in the country. Here in the Council we have retention of our Housing Revenue Account which means we are actually able to be more creative and build more houses than we ever have for a generation.

The Public Health budget is back incorporated within the accountability that this Chamber offers and is paying dividends and, of course, we have the City Deal, the first round of the City Deal which was agreed and is being implemented and is producing those benefits that Councillor Wakefield pointed out earlier about our NEET figures, just one of them.

Now all of that has been predicated on the demonstrated ability of local decision makers in Chambers such as this to deliver public spending more efficiently than any other public bodies, yet still the centre cannot quite let go. We still have Mr Pickles with his Council Tax cap and interventions on how often we put our bins out and how we can fine for parking.

We have also got the delayed second round for Leeds City Deal. I listened to Councillor Carter playing the blame game but actually the feedback I am getting - I do not know what he is getting from his Party but the feedback I am getting from my Party certainly does back up the narrative about George Osborne and his games trying to force people who have already rejected the option to go for an elected Mayor in this area and it is deplorable. (*Applause*) On top of that, of course, we have the increased frustration that front Bench politicians of whatever hue actually find it very hard to contemplate the fiscal freedoms that provincial entities could do with and could actually deliver more with.

However, to govern is to choose and however restrictive these choices may seem to an administration there are always alternatives and it is the duty of the Opposition Parties to highlight where better choices can be made.

As always the Liberal Democrat Group have approached their amendments in the spirit of co-operation to make suggestions that are complementary and that more effectively implement goals that the administration has failed to prioritise or have chosen the wrong model to achieve them.

The Liberal Democrat Group are proposing three amendments this year, a sharp reduction on the year before, as I have alluded to earlier. I am sure that some would like to portray this as running out of ideas. On the contrary, it reflects the success of our suggestions of previous years ultimately being adopted by an administration that previously rejected them out of hand.

Councillor Carter has already referred to the capability of the administration to reject something and then all of a sudden adopt it as its own. I offer two examples. At two consecutive Budget meetings we proposed ways whereby Council foster carers' allowances could be increased to aid recruitment and retention and avoid the spiralling spend on the inflated fees of private fostering agencies. However, this was only finally implemented in 2014 after £12m had been wasted and, of course, during that period other parts of Children's Services had had to be cut to pay for it, so there is a lost opportunity. If you had only listened to us on the year that we put the amendment in, you would have actually been better off, so please do listen very carefully to what we are putting forward this year.

Last year we also advocated removing outdated and expensive employee benefits, such as the 65 pence a mile mileage rate that so offended many a taxpayer. At the time we were told that we were "shamefully attacking Council workers" by the Labour Group and also, backing that up of course, we had the advice from officers that it was highly unlikely that it could be achieved, that this could be amended. Well do you know what, six months later, somehow or other, it actually got done. People were listening, they just were not admitting to it at the time.

As I said just a couple of examples there where the Liberal Democrat Group have challenged the Council and made the running on ideas that have ultimately become Council policy.

However, Lord Mayor, amendments can only be proposed where there is the manoeuvrability to achieve them. For as long as the Government has offered it, year on year we have advocated taking the Council Tax Freeze subsidy available to avoid a rise in the Council Tax to the Leeds ratepayer. This year, Lord Mayor, we have accepted the need for a rise proposed by the administration.

The Conservative Group have chosen to strive to maintain a freeze but their amendment shows that cobbling together the sums to achieve it can only be done by cutting such things as the Welfare Fund and we are not prepared to endorse that.

Although we are fully committed to achieving it eventually, this year we could not submit an amendment to achieve a Living Wage for our Council employees. The £2.4m needed to make this happen cannot be achieved in the manner that we proposed last year. I hear what Councillor Wakefield has said at the end of his speech; unfortunately I cannot see the sums in front of me and I cannot check it. What I did note is he said that he was “working towards a Living Wage” so I assume he is endorsing the conclusion I have come to that it cannot be affordable this year but if we can try it, year on year improving it, we will eventually get to it.

This is where I have a problem with the Conservative’s amendment because their proposal talks about the Living Wage but actually they are only proposing to manage it for four months of this year and there is no proposal as to how to sustain the commitment in the following years so, although we have restrained from making a proposal ourselves because we are committed to demonstrate ongoing financing of our initiatives, we will support the Conservative amendment on this occasion to demonstrate our support for the principle and that common endeavour to achieve it in the long term.

That brings us to the three amendments that we are proposing to be adopted today. Our first amendment brings back for consideration a proposal made last year to fund the provision of vitamin supplements to all children in the city of four years and younger. Last year the Leader of the Council rejected this proposal as “whacky”. I am not sure how he would describe the investment that has occurred across the city through Pupil Premium and the introduction of free school meals, nor the extension of free childcare to pre-school children. All of these initiatives were introduced by the Liberal Democrats in government to practically implement steps towards what we are all supposed to adhere to, namely that no child should be left behind due to the circumstance of birth. This initiative will ensure that no infant is disadvantaged by inferior nutrition that will stunt their development. The spectre of rickets in particular has appeared in greater strength in our city, as in others. Over recent years more children spend more time indoors and covered up and they are therefore deprived of sunlight and Vitamin D.

I know that Councillor Wakefield’s reputation has secured him a position on the team being sent to Birmingham to sort out their Council’s difficulties. Birmingham have their problems but by adopting the policy we are advocating they have received praise from the Chief Medical Officer for effectively halving the number of cases of rickets in the city. Humility is associated with true greatness (*laughter*) and I am sure that Councillor Wakefield is open to learning from others at the same time as offering his wisdom on his visits to the Midlands.

Lord Mayor, our second amendment is also a second opportunity for this administration to abandon its dark streets’ strategy. Turning off street lights to reduce energy costs is the budgetary equivalent of cutting your nose off to spite your face, as any saving made on electricity is potentially lost elsewhere with the greater incidence or fear of crime. It is regressive, dangerous and out of step with choices many other Councils are taking to save energy costs.

Do not just take my word for it. Here is your Party's Shadow spokesman on Local Government and the MP for where we are all sitting, Hilary Benn. He says:

“Forward thinking Labour Councils are already dealing with the problem by investing in low carbon LED lighting. Low carbon energy efficient lighting helps motorists and pedestrians, as well as the environment. It is the smart way to save money and to cut the deficit. Eric Pickles may love turning off street lights but what about people having to walk down dark streets and the road safety?”

He is not alone, Lord Mayor, because he has been joined. Here is Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper, quoted in 'U', the magazine for all Unison Members and their families. In this she notes that:

“Women's safety is such a wide range of things because it could be some of the most severe crimes but also something as simple as not having street lighting. A lot of the Councils, under huge pressure, have been switching off the street lights. I talked to some women and one said her shift started at six in the morning so of course she would be going to get the bus at about 5.30 and walking through a completely dark estate was really worrying, but nobody thinks about what is the impact on women and women's lives of something as simple and as practical as that.”

Councillor Lewis could have done this research, as we did, to see how others were saving energy costs with LED lighting. Manchester, Bournemouth, Plymouth, Wakefield are all saving more on their energy keeping their lights on than we are by switching ours off. Because he did not ask these Councils how much they spent to install LED lighting in lamp posts he did not realise that Leeds officers were quoting twice as much and only after we challenged them why did they admit yesterday that they had their sums wrong. The costs we were originally told for each lamp column was 875 quid. Last night we were given a revised figure of £357 - only 40% of the original price.

Councillor Lewis could have made a business case for a portion of the £6.5m windfall that this city received from under-performance from its street lighting contractor this year. He could have used that to invest in LED lighting for our residential streets if he had done this research, but he did not and all of that £6.5m got absorbed into general expenditure. This is why we are taking a modest sum from reserves to finance a £10m invest-to-save programme of investment in LED lighting.

Thanks to the revised costings from Councillor Lewis's officers our amendment is now twice as attractive as we will be able to update twice as many lamps saving twice the energy cost, doubling the amount to be saved and reinvested. Yes, Lord Mayor, the Lib Dems are offering a BOGOF to the Labour Group opposite. *(laughter)* The overall saving over ten years dwarfs that planned for through the great switch off. Councillor Lewis, look at the evidence, take the advice and think again.

Lord Mayor, our third amendment also revisits a familiar theme which appeared in last year's Liberal Democrat proposals, only this year we are more ambitious to make up for the momentum lost by the administration not accepting our amendment last year.

Much has been said of last year's Tour de France and Councillor Wakefield can feel proud of what he has achieved to put the City of Leeds on the map and much has been made of the speculated economic benefits.

However, what can we point to as a sustainable legacy for our own current and future domestic cyclists? The cycle super-highway connecting the north half of the city with Bradford is good news but it is a Government funded project. Our amendment seeks to commit the Council to year on year a significant commitment to transforming our city piece by piece into a genuinely Cycle Friendly City for every cyclist from whatever corner of the city.

The Leeds Cycling Campaign has already provided the Council with five schemes across the city that they would ask us to prioritise. This is particularly pressing as new figures released show that, just as cycling needs to be encouraged more to combat congestion, it is increasingly a more dangerous place to be a cyclist on our roads with fatalities and injuries on the rise.

Once again a significant fund of £10m is proposed to be raised in prudential borrowing financed by diverting spending from duplicated investment in obsolete infrastructure. I speak, of course, of this Council's £361,000 annual subsidy to Union convenors.

I refer colleagues back to 'U', the magazine for Unison Members and their families. Lord Mayor, this is an organisation that knows how to rake in the money. Not content to pocket the membership fee it takes from its members, it takes a cut on also flogging their members timeshares, new cars, home insurance and car insurance. This issue features Andy Burnham deploring the privatisation of the NHS but not only does it also flog BUPA to its members, wait for it, Keith, it is also flogging them vitamins. *(laughter)*

These are not poor organisations, Lord Mayor, and they are not politically independent organisations either. We know where 70% of Labour Party's funding comes from and they leave no doubt in here where they want their members to vote in this magazine. They do not need this city's taxpayers to subsidise their activities above the level of shop steward and for this administration to still be offering it gladly when finances are at rock bottom, stinks. Cut the cord and sink the money saved into something more progressive. I move the Liberal Democrat amendments. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Downes to second.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I second and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Firstly, can I join the previous speakers in thanking Alan Gay and the Finance people for the help they have given us.

I have to say Doug Meeson and Helen Mylan were not a lot of help with one amendment we were going to do. I had the same trouble with Stuart. My figures and

their figures did not add up but as it is something I am still working on - Keith, are you listening - I might be banging on your door. *(laughter)* I think I have found a way of raising some money but, as I say, I have got to sort that finance out so I left that one out, but aside from that I have to say thanks very much for that. To Helen who is retiring, I hope she has a very good retirement. I do not know what I will do next year when I go and say "How do you do this?" but I suppose Doug will still be there.

Moving on to my speech, I am not going to go into a lot of detail about the budget. As far as I can see what we have got here, whoever is in charge of this Council we have got a problem and the problem is not in this building, it is down in Westminster. *(Applause)* I mean what we have, it is papering, putting sticking plaster over cuts after cuts after cuts. It is a relentless assault. Starving of needy resources, causing massive job losses all because we have got high levels of borrowing, or that is the excuse, not caused by us in Local Government but caused initially by greedy people in the City who were not regulated enough and then being rescued by the taxpayer. *(interruption)* Yes, we should do our share but the ritual bleeding of Local Government goes too far. Can somebody tell me why, in the period that levels of employment in Local Government have reduced massively, down in Whitehall the mandarins are still there? There are more people employed in Whitehall than in the entirety of Local Government.

Why after the General Election, and Labour are as guilty of this, we have Labour and Conservatives (I have not included the Liberal Democrats there because they are going on part-time nuclear deterrent) but the front Benches of both Parties want to spend £4.2bn on Main Gate fees to renew Trident. If we can afford that we can afford to pay Local Government a decent settlement. How can we afford to waste money on what is the most wasteful piece of military hardware?

In preparation for today I did a bit of research. Did you know that between somewhere round about 1916 and the early 1970s that the borrowing was in excess of what it is now as part of the Gross Domestic Product? In 1946 it stood at 250% of GDP, but what did the Government do then? They brought in the National Health Service. In the 1950s when the Conservatives were in power and Macmillan was Prime Minister, at the time we were told we never had it so good. Most of our Council estates were being built. What was the borrowing then? It was over 100% of Gross Domestic Product. The difference then is we had some people in all Parties who have vision. What we have got now is no vision at all. What we want is people like Macmillan and Attlee there to lead our nation, not modern day Stanley Baldwins. *(Interruption)*

If I can move on to my amendments and I am going to get broodier. *(interruption)* The first amendment of the Green Group, we would seek to restore a £150,000 cut in the Wellbeing Fund. We feel it is important that we support our Community Committees and keep that money there and also put an additional £1m into the Local Welfare Scheme. The Leader mentioned in his speech that it had been virtually cut away. The administration put some money in and we got some additional money. This will take it up to roughly about £700,000 short of what it was last year.

To pay for that we are proposing a cut in allowances and Special Responsibility Allowances. It is up 28%. Can I tell you something here? To be a

Member of the Green Group if you have a Special Responsibility Allowance you can only claim 72% of any Special Responsibility Allowance, so all I am saying, you do what we would do. Anybody who joins this Group in May (and we expect to double our numbers) (*laughter*) will be covered by the same thing and the two or three people who have had discussions with me who may well want to become part of Green surge and come over there, they will have to sign up to that too.

COUNCILLOR: So how much is that saving?

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: £194k.

Moving on. I do not know necessarily if my friends in Morley will support this but I have to say other Authorities are looking at saving money on allowances as well but in different ways. They are looking at reducing regularity of the elections. They are looking at reducing the number of Councillors. I do not agree with that at all, but what we have to do, we have to get that down. We cannot be constantly knocking things off our staff and making them redundant. What we should not be doing, like the two Parties either side of me, is reducing their Trade Union rights.

COUNCILLOR: It is not reducing them.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: You are reducing their Trade Union rights and knocking their premium claimants off their overtime. (*interruption*) The amendment also proposes to raise £440k on an additional 2% on those statutory fees and charges.

Finally, I am proposing two of what I will call “efficiencies”. Having talked to former colleagues who still work in the private sector, then walking around the offices at the Council, particularly in the Civic Hall, I asked the question, “Do we need, for instance, all the strip lighting we have got?” Go in Committee Room 5 on an evening, I chaired a meeting there the other evening, turn the lights on. It is like turning Blackpool illuminations on. What we have got is, we have got lighting fitted to suit how our staff were put previously. When we have moved people we have not really looked at the lighting. There are probably too many lights there and they are in the wrong place. I can tell you from a thing I did when I was working in engineering that when I was set on we saved a third of the cost in lighting by actually putting the lights in the right place and taking the ones out that were not needed.

Also what we propose is a look at the use of computers. Going back again to when I worked in industry I did not have a computer of my own, I shared it with about three or four other people because I did not need it all the time. I mean the question I ask, does the Chief Executive need one when he has got support staff? The issue is, can we reduce that number? I think we can significantly do that and raise some money. (*interruption*)

Moving on to my second amendment, which is not as controversial I do not think, we are taking £50k out of reserves to set up a contingency fund for the purpose of creating at least two community shops, similar to that which is currently in Barnsley and the ones planned in Kirklees as a result of last week’s budget there. These will sell food that otherwise would be thrown away at an affordable low cost to those in need in areas of the city that are in deprivation. It would replace charity with dignity. Officers have told me, dependent on locations, premises could be obtained for as little as £8,500. By setting up the contingency fund it will enable officers to

identify premises and communities where viable schemes can be created with anything that is left going back into reserves.

If they can do this in Barnsley and in Kirklees then we can do this in Leeds. Passing this amendment effectively will not commit us at this stage to any expenditure; all it would do, it would allow officers to look at the feasibility of various sites and the idea is that the only cost the Local Authority would supply is the premises.

I have got to say as well as that there could be other ways we could fund this but this, of course, is the way the officers have advised me to put this amendment, so I would ask the administration to support this amendment and allow work to take place on the initial set-up of this scheme.

My third amendment would create a single Council energy line. Previously - people who are on the Affordable Warmth Panel would know this - previously this service was carried out by Wakefield on behalf of all participating Authorities but recently Wakefield pulled out of this and withdrew the service. That does not leave us any energy line that covers the whole of Leeds, you know, one single one. My proposal is to take some money out of reserves, about £33,000, and put a line into the Call Centre to take those calls. I ask you, anybody, there are a few of us who are on the Affordable Warmth Partnership, we need this. There are people out there who need our help and we need that line. I would ask you to support that.

My final amendment, my fourth amendment, is taking £330k out of reserves to be given to Community Committees at a rate of £10,000 per Ward for environmental priorities within that area. When I mean “environment” I mean that in very broad terms. Unfortunately somebody I was going to mention is not here. For instance, if my good friend Councillor Wood, who I understand is in New York, wants to spend some money in Calverley and Farsley through our Community Committee on his favourite subject, dog poo, he can do. If my other friend Councillor Coulson and I would like to spend some projects on some environmental matters on Post Hill, that is between our two Wards, then we would have that ability to do so as long as we got that through the Community Committee. I think it is important in times where we have not got much money going about that we make sure that those priorities for the environment in our Community Committee areas are dealt with and £330,000 is not a lot of money.

COUNCILLOR: It might not be to you.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Whilst most of our amendments come from reserves to a great extent, the amount we are talking about is not large. In fact, one of the things I said to officers while we were doing it, I was concerned - as Councillor Carter was saying about reserves - I was concerned that we might be getting too low but I have confidence in what they say that there is room to take this out and actually deliver what we want, particularly on the community shop thing which I think is a really good idea and, as you say, in Armley it would be really good.

That covers my amendments. On the amendments in the names of Councillor Golton and Councillor Carter it will come as no surprise to you that the ones that refer to saving money on the other side for staff and removing Trade Union facilities we will not support, but certainly the vitamins for children, as we did last year, we would

support that amendment and possibly another one. I move my amendment.
(*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ann Blackburn to second.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Yes, I would like to second the Green motion and I would also like to comment.

The cut of £150,000 to the Wellbeing Fund proposed by the administration would be a big cut out of the amount given to Community Committees. If that in some way can be reinstated I would think that all our Wards would be the better for it.

I would also think that our amendment on giving £10,000 per Ward for Councillors to put forward an environmental project to go through the Community Committee would also be welcomed by all of you here as I am sure we all have something that we could do with this money which would improve our Wards.

We are in favour of community shops as these create a win-win situation as they save food being thrown away and help people who are struggling to feed themselves and their families on a low budget. These work in Barnsley and for a small amount of money spent we could afford to do this. It would help people to be able to have a choice of food and buy it at a much reduced price. This is a way of helping needy families without taking away their pride, so I do hope that the administration will look at our amendment on this as surely, in these cash strapped times, it is our duty to do so. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Finnigan to comment.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am sure this Council Chamber will be delighted to know that I have an indefinite time to speak on things and the pleasure is all theirs. I will try and be brief and make some suggestions, some comments, some proposals that hopefully will create a bit of political debate.

We do not put any amendments because we think that it is a waste of officer time working through that when their time could be better spent on other things. We have received a briefing on the budget but we have not put any amendments down. We think that because it actually helps produce a lot of political pantomime but not necessarily much in the way of insight. We all enjoy the rhetoric, we all enjoy the knocking about and certainly some of what Keith says is true, there certainly have been significant cuts to Local Government, of that there is no argument. Some of what Andrew says is also entirely true. The Labour Party cannot abdicate all responsibility for some of the financial challenges and difficulties that we are in at this particular point, but the overall situation is that everybody is broadly supportive of this budget. 99% of the spending all of us actually agree with and there is a bit of debate, and some of that is political knock-about about the other 1%, so there is a broad consensus, everybody is broadly supportive of the budget.

There is no doubt at all that we are in difficult financial times. In our view we have squeezed just about as much efficiency as we can out of the system at this particular point and you are at a tipping point. You are at a tipping point with Local Authorities and you are getting to a point where you will be looking at stopping doing some of the things that you do and just dealing with your statutory responsibilities. I think we

need to be clearer when we are having that discussion and debate with our electorate that that is where we are at this particular point. The wheels have not dropped off at this stage but we are close to a point where we are not going to be able to find any more significant efficiencies without stopping some of the stuff that we do. We need to have that discussion and that debate with our constituents about that.

We are pleased that we are protecting, as we do, Children's Services. Certainly my colleague Councillor Elliott keeps me fully updated on what is happening with Children's Services. We know they are having a tough time and we would like to put down on record our clear support for the excellent work that they have actually done in Children's Services along with Adult Care Services, where we have again done excellent work and we would like to record our thanks for that. My colleague, Councillor Shirley Varley keeps me fully updated with the work that they are doing.

The problem we have with adult social care is indicative of the problems that we have across the Council in as much as it is clear with the changes to the demographics that people are living longer with more complex needs, that it is getting harder and harder to provide the quality of adult social care that is required.

The problem we have is to a degree we are let down by national leadership. In adult social care you need to start pumping more money into that or to have an honest discussion with voters about how you are going to be able to finance that because they do need to get involved with that discussion, which is either about increasing taxation or people themselves paying more. Granny's house has to be sold under those circumstances.

There has been a failure nationally, your national Parties - not locally - your national Parties, to actually have that honest and open discussion with the electorate about what needs to be done. We had the Dilnot Commission several years ago. We do not seem to have made a whole lot of progress since that particular point. Nobody wants to talk about the elephant in the room. We are in a situation where it needs significant additional funds and we do need to be going back to the electorate and say, "We need to figure out how we are going to pay for that."

I really hope with any future Government, whatever happens in May, we can pretty much guarantee it is not going to be a Morley Borough Independent national Government but it could be a change of government at that particular point. Would a Labour Government backed by the SNP mean we would get a better settlement in terms of Local Government? I do not believe that it will. Certainly looking at what my mate Ed is saying at this particular point there is not going to be any extra cash for local Councils. Indeed, one of the narratives about an SNP supported Labour Government is that money will go further into Scotland and that unfairness continue and actually extend.

The problem we fundamentally have is that all of your Parties down in Westminster hate you. They hate Local Government. It does not matter whether it is the Tories, the Liberals, the Labour Party whatever, they hate Local Government. They do not trust Local Government. They do not want to pass down the funds and they do not want to pass down the power for us to make those decisions locally and to get fair finance into local Councils. It is not your fault. You are all doing a decent job locally but nobody from anywhere on that political spectrum wants to give you the

money and give you the power to be able to make those decisions that you need to make.

I have sat here, I think this is my 16th budget one way or another. The problem that you get is if you look at previous governments, whether you look at previous Conservative governments who used to stuff cash into Westminster and Wandsworth going back into the late 80s and 90s; you look at the Labour Government who came in in 1997 that stuffed cash into its Labour Authorities, your Nottinghams, your Manchesters, your Bristols, everywhere other than Leeds because we got a ropey deal, even from the Labour Government in Leeds (there is no doubt whatsoever about that) and is that likely to improve under the Coalition? Well clearly it has not because at this particular point it is our view that funds have been pushed into those areas, the Home Counties and others, where they have done less badly than we have done at this particular point.

The whole issue of Local Government financing needs to be looked at most thoroughly and taken out of the hands of politicians in Central Government who will manipulate it to try and make sure that it goes into the hands of their supporters. We have said before and we make the same comment again that we need a Royal Commission that looks at how Local Authorities can be funded fairly. That is what is needed and that is what is required without the interference of any particular Central Government who can make sure and take a big stick to all local Councils and beat them over the head with it. That finance needs to be clear, fair and transparent and not open to future manipulation.

Now, turning to the amendments, we will be supporting our Green colleagues with their amendments. I enjoyed David's speech, but if you fundamentally look at the Green's amendments they are reasonable and they are modest. The interesting thing on some of the amendments is clearly at the point where they say two community shops, one of those is in Farnley one of those in Morley, that is what we would be looking for should that go through, but other than that most of what David is saying in terms of his amendments is fair, it is reasonable and it is modest. One of the issues we would put across is this is putting more money into Area Committees.

The problem with the budget we have from the Labour administration is it cuts the money going into Area Committees. We are going to get to a point where there is no point having Area Committees. If we genuinely believe that we want decision making down at that local level, then there has to be a fair amount of revenue that goes to those particular Committees. Certainly in David's amendments more money goes to those Committees so that those decisions can be taken locally. We are of a view that those are fair, those are reasonable, those are modest and we will be supporting all of those particular amendments.

Ultimately, to conclude, Lord Mayor, which I am sure you will be delighted about, we are in a situation where we think we have got to a point where the efficiencies have already gone out of the system at this particular point. We need to have an honest discussion with Central Government about how we get fair financing at local Council level. That needs to be done in some other way than we are dealing with at this particular point because I suspect after May's election we will be sitting here with whatever Government we have at that particular point having the same discussions, the same debates and the same arguments perhaps shaded slightly

differently if it is a different flavoured Government. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake to comment.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am supporting the budget motion in the name of Councillor Wakefield.

Over the past four years we have developed a clear vision for children and families in Leeds through our Children and Young People Plan. As outlined by Councillor Wakefield I am pleased to report continuing good progress against our three main obsessions: safely and appropriately reducing the number of children coming into our care; achieving a staggering 400,000 extra days in schools through our focus on attendance; and putting young people at the heart of our regeneration strategy moving towards a NEET free city, a child friendly city enabling access to all the opportunities being delivered through the economic success of Leeds. I do not think it has occurred to Councillor Carter that he was actually running the Council when the levels of NEET were at their highest in the run-up to 2010.

Supporting families is at the heart of our strategy. Developing kinship care, children staying with members of their extended families and we are already moving towards 50% of our children in care living with extended families. Also, reducing the need for external foster carers. Foster carers, as Councillor Golton well knows, are coming back to us because of the corporate offer and the additional support we give them not down to just merely increasing the level of fees.

Investment into family group conferencing successfully securing £4.85m, one of the largest successful bids from the Innovation Fund, building our record of realising £4m savings for every £1m invested.

We have also been accepted for the second wave of Families First, achieving a staggering 100% compliance in our payment by results claim, bringing an additional £2.4m into Leeds, successfully turning around the lives of 2,190 of our most vulnerable families.

We are committing to further protecting children at risk of CSE by investing an additional £1m and investing in our LE and Best Start Programmes achieving 98% antenatal face-to-face contact with health visitors.

By putting schools at the centre of our locality based clusters we are wrapping support around the most vulnerable children, around the families based in their communities and building, as Councillor Wakefield has said, on our key policy of keeping all 57 of our Children's Centres open across the whole of the city.
(Applause)

Of course, all this has not been achieved by Children's Services alone but by developing strong and committed cross-departmental working within the Council with Community Safety, Adult Services, the Health and Wellbeing Board, Jobs, Skills and Housing all making major contributions, and also by strengthening our key partnerships across the city with our health, voluntary sector, communities and the police.

I would like to draw particular attention to the work we are doing as a city prioritising action on domestic violence working with Councillor Dobson against the shocking backdrop in Leeds of 15 domestic homicides since 2011; 14,000 incidents of domestic violence and abuse reported in a year period up to June 2014 with a devastating impact on the lives of families and children in the city.

We have heard already today about how deep and damaging and unprecedented the budget cuts to Leeds are. We have lost £20m alone in Children's Services. We will not be supporting the Tory amendment to move to £50,000 because that money is going to be used to support an intense package to enable our most vulnerable young people, care leavers and those on the edge of care to move into employment and further training.

Can I end with a plea to all Councillors in the Chamber to join forces to end the nonsense of Government attempting to run our schools from London. Can we work together to support all of the work on devolution to give us back the power to open schools, provide school places where they are needed, to end the scandalous waste of millions of pounds of our money going into the discredited Free School vanity project of the failed former Secretary of State for Education. *(Applause)* These policies are leaving us with a staggering shortfall of almost £37m capital needed for new schools in the city. I move my comments. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blake. Councillor Sue Bentley to comment.

COUNCILLOR S BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am supporting the Lib Dem budget amendment to spend £450,000 on vitamin supplements for all children under the age of four. £450,000 will be used from part of the Council's £601,000 Adult Social Care Contingency Fund leaving £151,000 to support the Transformation Programme to release future savings. In future years the vitamin costs will be met by savings achieved by the Public Health's continuing re-tendering process.

We proposed this amendment last year only to have it dismissed as a "whacky idea" by Councillor Wakefield. We have brought it forward again because you may reject it this time but you will eventually implement it and claim credit for it, as you do with most of our amendments.

Our amendment was based on the report from the United Kingdom's Chief Medical Officer, Dame Sally Davies, who in 2013 warned of a worrying rise in vitamin deficiencies, such as rickets in our young children. She highlighted that as many as 40% of children have Vitamin D below the recommended healthy level. The main causes are lifestyle, a poor diet, lack of exercise, insufficient exposure to sunlight. While it might be more desirable to improve these aspects of children's lifestyles, providing supplements is more likely to be effective in the short-term. It is certainly cheaper than treating any deficiencies after they have developed, as evidenced by the Primary Care spending on treatments for Vitamin D deficiency which rose from £28m in 2004 to £76m in 2011.

The current policy of providing free vitamins to children whose parents receive benefits is frankly ineffective, difficult to access and eligible families often do

not know about it. That is why Dame Sally called for the supplements to be provided on a universal basis, asked the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), to consider the cost effectiveness for all children to receive vitamin supplements.

While likely to be expensive in the short-term, a universal programme of vitamin supplements could potentially save the NHS billions of pounds in the long-term.

NICE recommended that Local Authorities should review accessibility, availability and uptake of the Healthy Start supplements.

In January Councillor Mulherin said she was setting up a Working Group to look at this. I note she ignored NICE's recommendation to consider offering free Healthy Start supplements to all pregnant and breastfeeding women and children under the age of five. A NICE idea, not a whacky idea.

We know Vitamin D deficiency is a growing problem in our city with NHS Leeds reporting an increase in the number of cases of rickets from three to 118 from 2000-2010, while hospital admissions for the condition in Yorkshire and Humber reached 32 in 2013 compared to 2003/04 when there were just two hospital admissions for rickets in the whole country.

What further evidence does the administration need to understand the importance of vitamin supplements for our young children? We have concentrated on young children under four to give them the best possible healthy start in life, which is affordable in our amendment and which supports the city's priority for our children to grow up healthily in Leeds. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not going to spend too much time emphasising why I support the Conservative amendments but what I wanted to do, we need to spend some time trying to put a different context on what we have heard this afternoon.

Yesterday we heard about how the FTSE 100 share index had reached an all time high. What is the benefit of that? Well, it goes part of the way to reversing Gordon Brown's stealing of the pension plans in the past which has left us in a terrible state and, what you probably will not admit, a lot of your constituents suffered badly over that move. They make it very difficult today and you have done nothing nationally to try and accept that.

Inflation is down. That is good. That helps. What are you doing? You are going to put the Council Tax up which does have an effect on putting inflation back up again and then we have the revisionist and what I would call the Pol Pot politics that we heard from Councillor Wakefield. He goes on and he talks about well, the Government have not reduced the deficit. Is he really arguing that an incoming Labour Government are going to reduce the deficit even more? Is he really saying that an incoming Labour Government would borrow less in terms of what you are doing? You just do not make any sense in what you are arguing half the time. You are trying to make a political point but you do not really understand the economics of

what you are actually saying. You cannot have it all ways. I know you would like to have it all ways but you cannot have it all ways.

Now you talk about the Centre for Cities report. Well, unless my maths is totally wrong there was a Labour Government in power for a heck of a long time and they did nothing to resolve that, and apart from 2004-2010 there has been a Labour Council in charge in Leeds who have done nothing to do anything to reverse that in the past, so why do you keep blabbing on when you need to think about what you can actually do for things? (*interruption*)

What you did not also say was that Ed Balls actually agrees with what we are trying to do. If there is to be a Labour Government after May you are going to have the same level of cuts as is on the table at the moment so do not try and pretend to the citizens out there that there is some magic bullet that these are all going to disappear in the future.

You need to actually have some wider thinking in terms of what you are doing. You have identified - and I agree with you what you are trying to do about the vulnerable in society, but what are you doing to try and help the hard working families out there? The vast majority of residents who do pay their taxes, who do pay their Council Tax, who do pay their housing rent, what are you doing to try and help them? Most of what they want are clean streets and they want to drive on safe roads with no potholes in the roads. You have done nothing to address either of those two issues whatsoever.

You have made no mention at all of the fact that because of your administration's view on garden waste there is more that could be done to try and do something on that. Why do not you try and do something about that?

You have not mentioned anything at all about how you would try and improve the Council's transport costs in both Adult and Children's Services. More could be done there. You have made no attempt to try and do anything about that.

You are also being vindictive as an administration again against motorists. People are trying to come into the city potentially setting up businesses which will then bring even more employment into the city and you are coming forward with anti-business measures in what you are doing.

The final thing I want to talk about is one thing that Councillor Blake mentioned. Yes, there is around about £30m less coming into education in the city to the Council but there is £60m more going into schools in the city, so more. If you truly believe in devolution you have to trust the people to make the decisions and by devolving that money direct to schools you are giving schools the chance to spend the money on what you want. I support the amendments on behalf of Councillor Carter. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I thought Councillor Gruen was going next, Lord Mayor.

Lord Mayor I came in here, the sun was shining today. I was happy. I see cranes across Leeds, construction going on, a new five star hotel being built right outside of this building. Then I come in here and what do I hear? I hear frankly the same thing I have been hearing for the last five years from Councillor Wakefield; a tale of doom and gloom and despair. It does make you wonder why anyone would want to invest in this city or even relocate their business here or move here, does it not, if everything is so terrible and we are in such a terrible state.

What we know is the case is the financial legacy that this Government was left and that is the very thing that Councillor Wakefield and the Labour Group just do not want to talk about and even the Green Group do not want to understand or talk about it either. They just do not want to accept it.

Who said this: "We were simply in denial about the scale of the financial hole we found ourselves in." Simply in denial. "We would simply keep on borrowing, spending and taking on debt, a burden that would take an eternity to pay off and would create a tax bill for generations to come." Who said that? Who said that? Exactly. Peter Mandelson. He got it and he was one of the three people running the country under your administration.

What we know is simple, is absolutely simple and straightforward, that Labour will make an economic mess of this country and it is left to the Conservatives to clear it up. It has always been the way. It has always been the case. (Applause) We know it and we are going to make sure the people out there know it in the run-up to the General Election as well, Lord Mayor.

I will just read you a short passage:

"To my successors I leave no money, only waste, debt and the deepest cuts in modern times. To the young people of Britain I leave one in five of you out of work. To pensioners I bequeath you lower pensions. I reduce the value of your pension funds by billions. I leave you working longer for less. In 13 years I have wasted the inheritance I was left. Of the gold bullion my predecessor bequeathed me I sold over 350 tonnes of it at the worst possible price. I have spent and spent and spent again and every man, woman and child will have to pay back £22,400 because of my profligacy. I have taken your hard earned money and wasted it. I have lost £3bn in over-payments in benefits and £10m I have paid in tax credits to the dead. I leave Britain with a bigger deficit than France, Germany, Japan and greater than Greece, Italy and Portugal. I leave 2.47 million of you without a job. With more time I could have done even more. I leave no apology, no regret, no comfort and not an ounce of contrition. I leave you years of painful decisions to be made. This is my legacy to you."

The last will and testament of Labour 1997-2010. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen to comment.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, the Leader has set out our financial challenge. I want to mention some salient points so that Members can be aware of what we are facing and how we are trying to rise to the challenge.

Let us begin with an overview. Last month a group of major universities published their summary of the Government's record on housing. Their conclusion: "The non-Coalition Government has not achieved a significant success against its own housing goals." Indeed the Government has presided over a 35% cut in funding for housebuilding including a 44% reduction in social housing investment. The number of new homes built nationally has fallen from 190,000 per year at the end of the last Government to 139,000 per year now. The introduction of the so-called New Homes Bonuses frankly a magician's trick because the Government has top sliced this to such an extent that for Leeds we have to build 3,500 homes before we get any funding.

In the face of the bedroom tax this administration has sought to find flexible and fair solutions for the many tenants who are now finding themselves struggling to pay rent. Over 50% of these tenants have never been in arrears before and now they are in debt. Despite this, our collection levels are well above 97%. Still half of the people subject to the bedroom tax are in arrears, a legacy they must thank the current Government for.

Housing is a central part of all our lives. We know that demand for older people's housing will grow significantly and that older people, just like the rest of us, want high quality accommodation. In Leeds we have 850 homes in the pipeline but more are required. Our £81m investment in new Council housing will include helping to provide high quality homes for older people. Our work with older people takes place at the same time as seeking to help young people and children. We have set strong targets regarding not using adult hostel accommodation for young people and continue our support for family mediation. We have given real meaning to "localism" because we want local people to have real control over their area. This is why £1.3m has been delegated to the Housing Advisory Panels across the city. They have spent this on more than 230 projects of great local value. We are distributing £3m into environmental improvements so that local areas can be made safer - already 25 CCTV schemes have been approved - have better play facilities and that waste is stored and removed properly.

I am pleased to confirm that this year work has started on brand new Council houses. Across different sectors we are forecasting 5,000 affordable homes to be created before 2018 and across Council housing, including our contractors who are training around 100 apprentices, a real investment in jobs for people in our city. We are delivering on our promises but this does not mean we should lose focus on our existing homes.

This year we have introduced the Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard, setting a clear path to our spending for the next 30 years. This matters because we aspire to warm, cheaper-to-heat homes, quality improvements and houses where people feel safe, but here comes the punch doesn't it - we can create new Council homes but the Government's Right to Buy takes more off us. We are left to run just to stand still. We are doing what we can to help tenants and in this context I am proud that we have limited our rent increase to 2.88%, which is the lowest in 15 years.

Let me also refer to our work with the Trade Unions, which others have commented on. The true value of our mutual respect and understanding has allowed us to agree measures which are predicted to save £7.7m in 2015/16, including avoiding future costs. This is something the Opposition would never achieve. We

have replaced the Lib Dem bin strike with no days lost by strike action. *(Applause)*
Our proposal makes savings around Trade Union convenors, as you would expect in budgetary pressure, but the Opposition's reductions are spiteful rhetoric to make it harder to find agreed solutions.

Lord Mayor, I think the details outlined in this budget demonstrate our values and our vision and I hope the Council will join me in supporting this budget.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield to sum up.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor.

Councillor Finnigan was right in terms of the overall value of all the amendments put together of 1.1%. Some might argue that we actually got it right by 98.9, so well done.

You know, every year we get an amendment from the Conservatives and the Lib Dems attacking the legal right of Trade Unions to represent their Members. It is a legal right and it is a democratic right, yet every year we get this. This year they have been a little bit nastier because they have actually tried to take the Social Welfare Fund away from the poorest people in this city just to give it that little twist.

Every year I come back with the Group's support and say, "I echo what the CBI say that Trade Unions are vital for big companies when you are making decisions." Every year I talk about for every pound invested in Trade Unions you get £3 back. Every year I talk about how Trade Unions are vital when you are saving the kind of money, £277m. Could you do that without staff and Trade Union representatives? No you could not, but actually I always think it is a bit of a diversion because what they really want to do is break Labour and Trade Union links. They do not like the fact that in a transparent democratic way Trade Unions support Labour.

You know I am getting pretty fed up. They must be desperate the Conservative Party because you have probably seen all these emails. I have emails now, absolutely desperate. I am getting them from Hague, I am getting them from Grant Shapps, I am getting them from Boris Johnson. I will read you a couple.

It says, "Keith", this is one from Grant Shapps, 20 February. What does it say: "Every week share the facts. Use this to help get our message out to three million people and with you on board we can reach even more." *(laughter)*

I get another one, I am getting these every week...

COUNCILLOR: I knew we were getting to you now.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: 27 January. It is from Grant Shapps. It says "Let's give everything we have got, Keith" *(laughter)* and he goes on. "I hope in a few months we will be giving everything we have and I need you on our team, Keith." *(Interruption)*

There is another one. Guess what? I have had invitations to play tennis, go shopping with Theresa May and I have this: "We have reserved one of these for you,

Keith”, and it is a mug, 20 quid, and here they all are. It shows you how desperate they are when they are writing an email to the Leader of the Labour Group in Leeds asking me for 20 quid donations.

I tell you what, I tell you what, it is all really trying to disguise where they get their money from. Eight out of the top 20 hedgefunders pay to the Conservative Party. The contribution from bankers has gone up three times, so I am happy defending the Trade Union rights here. Let us see somebody do something about the way those donations go into the Conservative Party. *(Applause)*

I will get another email, Andrew, in a minute. I have got 50 here.

To respond to Councillor Golton. Councillor Golton was right about Vitamin D tablets. When I look over there and I see that shiny group of people *(laughter)* I realise I made a mistake last year. You look a healthy bunch and we want to be like that, but you know throughout their contributions what they did not say is if you are low income you get them for free from Healthy Start. You never said a word.

The reason why we will not accept your amendment, the reason why we will not accept the amendment is simply this, that you intend to take money away from Adult Care packages in the community. That is absolutely disgraceful. We are not going to attack the weak so we can run your idea. If you were really keen about looking after children you would actually make up your broken promises to the schools of Leeds who have not received one penny from your Deputy Prime Minister’s promise that you could have school funds. This city did not get one school, thanks to your Party Leader so no, we are not going to accept your promises.

It is a bit like your reserves. You are addicted to reserves as you are for Vitamin D. Frankly we have 13 days’ of reserves - that is as long as the Lib Dems have in Government now. You are just desperate. When you start going into reserves and spending like that, Andrew Carter is absolutely right, we are at the lowest possible. You are being very very reckless and opportunist with your idea about reserves.

Similarly with your cycling capital. I have to say this Council is spending up to £40m a year. You could not spend the money you are trying to put in. We have got ambitious plans, we have got capital support. I am afraid, Stuart, that you have over-reached yourself yet again.

I will just say this about the capital assets and moving on from Councillor Carter, I will just say this. Mr Pickles is now introducing, considering saying that any assets you sell over half-a-million pounds has to come to full Council. Imagine what that would do to the slowness of selling assets if you have got to come here. It is a ridiculous idea. I hope you can help to get him to drop it because it is an absurdity.

On the Council Tax, I am glad that Councillor Golton was honest about the Council Tax Freeze because in reality 75% of County Councils who have responsibility for Social Services and others have rejected the Council Tax Freeze because you cannot sustain frontline services without that additional money. Our Council Tax of 1.9% at 44p a week for Band D will actually protect 65 jobs in Adult Social Care and Children. We are completely honest. We have been honest with the people of Leeds. We are not accepting the Freeze Tax for the obvious reasons that Councillor Golton made.

You know I look back between 2014 because I heard Councillor Carter say how he values and protects Council Tax payers. Guess what, in 2014 I looked up, the grant for Local Government went up 17%. The tax bill went up 23.5% including a whacking 4.7% in 2007 when they were in administration, so how can things change? They were spend, spend, spend in that period and I have got the facts and figures to prove it, so no we are going to reject the Freeze Tax because we actually will put that to frontline services.

I will say something about Living Wage because I think Councillor Golton was spot on there. It is the best comment he has made all afternoon. When you look at the Conservative things, firstly it does not give to people, low paid workers in schools, so here you are at risk with a legal challenge on equal pay. The second thing it does it takes away or freezes increments of employees here. Guess what that is doing, as Councillor Lowe reminded me the other night? It is breaking your contract of employment so you risk industrial relations. The third, I think the most damning thing Councillor Golton said, yes it is funded from December to March but guess what a full year affect does - it gives you a £1.8m bill to find. So it is a little bit of using smoke and mirrors. I am sure George Osborne has been helping Councillor Carter write this but frankly it is not sustainable. Our proposals, £800,000 by the way, Stuart, are actually long-term, sustainable, and we actually show that respect and dignity to the employees who work in low pay here.

I want to talk about devolution just briefly because it is an important point. I think Councillor Golton has mentioned one dimension, i.e. that George Osborne is playing games with Nick Clegg in Yorkshire, there is no doubt. As I said before earlier on in the Budget speech, there is no reason why we should not have the same. Nick Clegg said that. You should be as ambitious as everywhere else. What you find is that the people of Yorkshire are being punished for having a democratic view about elected Mayors and that is totally unacceptable. (*Applause*) Should we just run and say “Yes” without consulting the people? I think the people of Yorkshire deserve a vote on what type of governance they want. If they want an elected Mayor fine, but they should have their say and not be imposed.

I will come to something about the Health Service because, yes, it was a headline statement this morning. I heard it was coming, but I put this to you - and I do want health devolved by the way, I do want as many public services devolved locally, that is absolutely true, along with powers, but there is no extra money in this devolution so what you might get, unless we look at the detail, is actually the City Region and Local Councils closing hospitals, closing down doctors because they have been given devolution. What I think we want is an increased budget for the Health Service, then we can talk about integration because there is clearly not enough. In order to get that we need a government in power that is committed to saving the National Health Service, that is committed to work in Local Government, it is committed with Adult Social Care and then we will see a different relationship between Local and Central.

I move this amendment (*sic*) and I look forward to the General Election to get that change that we all need. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR NASH: My Lord Mayor, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.4 I call for the recorded votes on all the amendments and the final Budget motion.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Sorry, because David gave an impassioned speech and a very strategic one, we are going to accept amendment 9 on food stalls because I think you won us over on that one, David.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is that just Amendment 9, Councillor Wakefield?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Yes, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty?

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move to the vote. The first vote is on the amendment, Amendment 1, in the name of Councillor Andrew Carter and it will be a recorded vote. I will ask the Chief Executive to explain the rules for recorded votes.

(Recorded votes were held on Amendments 1 to 11)

Amendment 1

94 Members were present, 16 voted “Yes”, 5 abstentions, 73 voted “No”.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 2

94 Members were present, 25 voted “Yes”, 5 abstentions, 64 voted “No”.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 3

94 Members were present, 25 voted “Yes”, 5 abstentions, 64 voted “No”.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 4

94 Members were present, 25 voted “Yes”, 5 abstentions, 64 voted “No”.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 5

95 Members were present, 12 voted “Yes”, 5 abstentions, 78 voted “No”.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 6

95 Members were present, 12 voted “Yes”, 21 abstentions, 62 voted “No”.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 7

95 Members were present, 9 voted “Yes”, 20 abstentions, 66 voted “No”.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 8

95 Members were present, 8 voted “Yes”, 26 abstentions, 61 voted “No”.

The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 9

94 Members were present, 69 voted “Yes”, 10 abstentions, 15 voted “No”.
The Amendment was CARRIED.

Amendment 10

94 Members were present, 8 voted “Yes”, 9 abstentions, 77 voted “No”.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 11

95 Members were present, 8 voted “Yes”, 9 abstentions, 78 voted “No”.
The Amendment was LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on the substantive motion)

87 Members chose to vote, 61 voted “Yes”, 20 abstentions, 6 voted “No”.
The Motion was CARRIED.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you for your patience in all that recorded voting.

ITEM 4 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
– APPROVAL OF THE 2015/16 PAY POLICY STATEMENT

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move to page 3 and it is Item 4, Recommendations of the General Purposes Committee - Approval of the 2015/16 Pay Policy Statement. Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I move in the terms of the motion.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR NASH: My Lord Mayor, I second.

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

ITEM 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
– CREATION OF A NEW TOWN COUNCIL FOR GUISELEY

THE LORD MAYOR: We move to Item 5, seeking leave of Council in respect of Item 5. Councillor Gruen to move.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Again, I move in the terms of the motion.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Nash to second.

COUNCILLOR NASH: My Lord Mayor, I second.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

ITEM 7 - MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to the minutes of the Executive Board and other Committees. Councillor Wakefield.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Nash.

COUNCILLOR NASH: My Lord Mayor, I second.

THE LORD MAYOR: I now invite comments on the Minutes on the Executive Board's Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel. Councillor Golton.

(a) Executive Board

(ii) Neighbourhoods, Planning and Personnel

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking to the Minutes associated with the Site Allocations Plan and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

The Core Strategy is a long running process. *(laughter)* Lord Mayor, I can see that some Members have the same priority that I will have as soon as I finish this speech, that is why it is going to be a short one! Yes, the Core Strategy is a long running process. I appreciate that at this time the Site Allocations Plan, which is in front of us, are proposals which will eventually produce a draft which will then be formally put forward for the City to adopt.

However, we have what we have in front of us. What we do have in front of us is an assurance from Councillor Gruen that the land which has been allocated is fairly distributed across the City and 60% of it, of course, is on brownfield and inner city land and only 40% is in greenfield areas.

What I would say is for those communities like my own where the paucity of brownfield means actually 90% of the land which is associated for building in your area is greenfield or green belt, that is not much solace.

This is where it brings me to the issue around the Community Infrastructure Levy. We are lucky where I am (I know that places like Morley have chosen not to participate in it) but in Rothwell Ward we do actually have the entire Ward covered by neighbourhood fora who are bringing residents together to plan for the development in their area. I think it is useful for them because they are going to be considering the amount of land which is made available for building on through this Plan. They are going to be making some quite difficult decisions. I think they will be helped in doing so if they actually could demonstrate their ability to influence the Community Infrastructure Levy and its spending in their area. This is why I would point to the fact that in the Community Infrastructure Levy paper it only refers to Community Committees being the decision making area outside of Parished areas and actually it ignores the active participation of those neighbourhood fora in at first identifying priorities for spending in their area but also, of course, in the accountability structure around what is finally decided in that area.

I would not like to think that those in the Outer South district for planning, which covers the Rothwell area, would actually be overruled potentially by Members in the wider Outer South Area Management Committee District which, of course, is three times the size. We need to make sure that in the future detail which comes forward around how Community Infrastructure Levy is implemented that kind of detail is included to assure those people working hard on neighbourhood plans that their input will be valued. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Red light, Councillor Golton. I forgot to remind Members we are back on the three minutes speaking time. I have been asked by the Whips to ensure that we stick to the three minutes and if the red light comes, on switch the mic off. Please restrict yourselves to three minutes to allow as many speakers as possible to speak. Thank you. Councillor Townsley.

COUNCILLOR TOWNSLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Minute 144, page 657.

I think all of us must have reservations about this report, not least because it both contains and is partly based on inaccuracies. I appreciate several corrections were made at the last minute but several remain.

For example, Plans Panel report 13 January where it was noted that “Horsforth Ward Members’ preference for Site 4240 was as passed.” This was also Ward Members said, as was reported on previous page, “...that Horsforth Ward Members had objected strongly to housing development.”

Admittedly, Lord Mayor, this is only a draft report and it will be submitted as an agenda item at Plans Panel in March. I do hope that this can be corrected then. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not doing as well as Councillor Golton because they are still sitting there!

Can I reiterate the view we have had for some time which is that the site allocations policy is flawed because it is based on inaccurate population figures, there is an over-optimistic demand forecast and the build rate that we were talking about is unobtainable. I think Peter may well touch on that later because he has been in the paper over the last few days pointing out that house builders certainly are not stepping up to the plate when it comes to a development.

We are, however, more concerned with the potential threat to green spaces by the abandonment of the Interim Pass Policy. I do not share the confidence in any protection that could be offered by the Core Strategy. After all, that has not been tested and we are facing dozens of appeals based on decisions Plans Panels have made in relation to the abandoned policy. I hope it works. In fact I think the City will be in a difficult position if it does not work, but I would really seriously ask that we look again at this particular policy because I do feel we do need a policy in relation to pass sites and the pressure that is on them at the moment, and if we have not got one that we can defend then I think we are in for a lot of trouble, particularly in the outer areas

and particularly on some of the things like Kirklees Knoll and places like that. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak too on Minute 144, page 657 on the Site Allocations Plan and the site allocations proposal.

In the report the Executive Member for Neighbourhood Planning and Personnel refers to the extensive work and consultation which has been undertaken in the development of the draft plans.

However, there is a proposal in the plans to change the allocation of a significant piece of green space, protected green belt, protected sports ground land in the Weetwood Conservation Area which runs completely contrary to all the consultation that has taken place regarding this land.

The site reference 3376, if you want to look at it, is adjacent to Meanwood Park. It provides a vital green corridor along the Meanwood Valley which links the inner city to the green spaces and wooded areas in the north of the city.

Now, all the pre-meetings on the site allocation process, the site visits, the meetings involving all Councillors from various Wards and cross-Party, unanimously agreed that this site was not suitable for housing and should remain red on the site allocation plans.

Councillor Walshaw in his role as Chair of the Inner North West Planning Group wrote to the Planning Officers expressing the Group's view that this site was not suitable for housing and that was the recommendation that was going to go forward to the Development Plan Panel on 6th January 2015, yet on the 19th December, just a day or two before the Council shut down for Christmas, we received an email from Planning saying that there was now going to be an amendment to the change of designation from "not suitable for housing" to "suitable for housing". Fortunately because of opposition on the Development Plan Panel no final decision has been made and more information has been called for, but the site has lost that protected red status.

Now, the Ward Councillors know that the owners of this land have been itching to build on it for years but they have been resisted because of the type of land it is. They brought their outline plan to us over twelve months ago. We suggested they consulted with local residents and we did not hear any more from them.

The landowners see this as enabling development for a strategic development in other parts of the city. The administration obviously supports that strategy. There is another outline plan which has been with Planning for several months but not yet shared with Ward Members, so I am simply saying this to the administration, just come clean, no more behind-the-scenes meetings just involving officers and Party Leaders. Share your thoughts with Ward Members, share your thoughts with residents. Be open. What have you got to hide? Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Walshaw.

COUNCILLOR WALSHAW: Thank you, Lord Mayor. You will have to forgive me, colleagues, I have a shocking cold.

I too want to speak on Minute 144 about that very issue, Jonathan, about site 3376, Tetley Field. I think in chairing the Development Plans Panel we are in the midst of site allocations going to Executive Board and reports are being written. An awful lot of work has been done.

As sometimes happens developers or residents' groups do not work to the Council's timescale so we had a fairly late in the day change - well suggestion - from the landowner about this and another site in Tingley, that this site could be used potentially to invest in the cricket ground. That is something we have to give due consideration I think as the administration, we have to do that.

This came up at both the meeting on the 6th and the meeting on the 13th. At both meetings we have asked for more information because myself as Chair cannot ask other Members to take a decision on that site one way or the other without information. None of us are property lawyers. None of us know whether the landowners can actually really be trusted and can deliver what they say they can deliver. Also, we have to be extremely mindful of Ward Members' views and the views expressed at previous meetings about that site that it should be green space. That site's legal status is exactly the same as it was before those two meetings. It is a protected green space site and it will remain that way until an officer's report comes back to us in due course and at some point that will come back to Development Plan Panel. At that point we will examine the evidence, we will debate, we will make a recommendation to the Executive Board. I think that is right and as it should be.

It was though, I have to say, given the fact we have tried to keep politics out of the DP Panel, very disappointing to see the latest, how can I put this, sour faced people looking glumly and pointing at things leaflet in Weetwood saying that a dastardly Labour Group of Councillors have voted to remove this protected status. We have not done anything of the sort. All we have done is ask quite rightly - Jonathan give over - quite rightly we have asked for more information and I think that a lot of residents have taken umbrage at scare stories and silly leaflets. We have had to put out corrections (*laughter*) and I think really we have had to make some factual corrections which is the right thing to do. I really really think we should keep that nonsense out of this process. Thanks, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Charlwood.

COUNCILLOR CHARLWOOD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Minute 144, page 657, site allocations process, Lord Mayor, thank you. Part of the site allocations process is making sure housing delivery of whatever type happens in a managed way and respects the individual characteristics of a community, but while we talk about the important site allocations process once again at full Council, it is worth remembering that there is a strong demand for more affordable housing in Leeds. There are around 25,000 households on the Council's waiting list and figures released by the National Housing Federation show that Yorkshire and Humber needs 7,100 new affordable homes per year with the need in the Leeds City Region standing at 4,510 per year.

If this need were met they predict that Yorkshire and Humber would see a £259m boost with 5,600 jobs supported. The share of this in the Leeds City Region would be 3,559 jobs and a boost to the local economy of £164m - a much needed stimulus to the City Region economy at the same time as providing affordable housing for our residents, providing confidence that their children may one day buy or rent an affordable home. Jobs would be across the sector and trades would provide support for building companies which could help plug periods where there is little or no building work for other types of housing.

Financing new homes is complex but the Lyons Review of Housing sets out clear ways that housing finance can be changed, but something has become very clear. The systematic removal of affordable housing through Thatcher's Right to Buy, which has helpfully been extended to give a bigger discount or by gifting affordable homes to people, makes life even harder for those people who desperately need housing.

If you think this is a purely political point let me remind you there are 25,000 very real families and households on the waiting list and homelessness trebled in the 1980s after the Right to Buy was introduced.

Getting the right homes in the right places is absolutely what the site allocation process seeks to achieve. However, it is clear that the right homes must include a high proportion of affordable housing.

This Council will build 1,000 Council homes by 2018 despite the Government's austerity and despite their sustained attacks on Council housing. Right to Buy must end so we can use our existing stock for people who need it and we must be brave enough to build to provide affordable homes for all our citizens. We will be providing jobs in the local economy in the process and helping the region to recover from the recession. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. It is the same item.

The Executive Board when the matter of the site selection process came before us again I obviously voted against. I have to say I share the concerns that Councillor Campbell has already raised relating to the removal of the Interim Pass Policy because mainly I found it extremely interesting to be told that actually before the Council at Executive Board even considered the item, a planning agent had written to the Planning Inspectorate saying that this was grounds for the agreement to build on an outstanding appeal application at Kirklees Knoll. It is nothing of the sort in my view but before we even got the papers, before we got the papers the agent had written to the Planning Inspectorate.

We are at great risk here of planning in this City being totally undermined. We might have dwindling confidence in Councillor Gruen and his colleagues but I would suggest that if this sort of thing is going to go on it will not just be other politicians of other Parties, it will be very large swathes of the general public, if it is not already the case, and I suspect it may well be. It is not right. It is not right. The whole way in which this is now being handled is giving great unease to the general

public. They suspect you are up to something. I have to say the sooner you climb down off your high horse, Councillor Gruen, and start the review of the Core Strategy the better for everybody. You are digging a bigger and bigger hole. The people of Leeds will not lightly forget. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was going to start by complimenting Councillor Gruen, actually, Leader, I did say “was” on the site allocations process in that - I caveat it by saying this - in that the ability of Ward Members to have a direct input in private in working groups I think was a positive. It is something that did not happen 20 years ago and I think a lot of useful information and useful knowledge came out during the course of those workshops that assisted Members of the Development Plans Panel in arriving at an initial view, so from that point of view I welcome that part of the process and as you know we were wholly supportive of that engagement. That is clearly not to say that colleagues like the numbers, welcome the numbers, want the numbers, believe they are the right numbers etc, etc. Indeed you know full well we believe that the numbers are far too high and that they are wrong and that the Council should move immediately to review the numbers contained within the Core Strategy.

I also agree with Councillor Gruen that we are in I think, as he has put it, “the silly season” in the run-up to a General Election and there are, shall we say, external forces that may influence the views of Members in this place. I have to say though that those external forces need to be kept in check.

As colleagues will know, all Planning Panels are now recorded and a record is kept. Indeed Development Plans Panels are recorded and kept. I have a copy of the recording of the last Development Plans Panel. I have to say, if anybody chooses to go back and listen to a particular section of it, they will find it quite uncomfortable because it does bring politics, Party politics, full square into the site allocation process. As I have said already, I accept it is the silly season. I just hope that when the silly season is over we can revert to some form of normality and Party politics will play absolutely no part in site allocations, which it should not. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Lord Mayor, the situation I find myself in is not one of protesting about the 70,000 houses but protesting about how those houses are being shared out.

The way that things seem to have worked out is that in the allocation of sites and the number of houses to be built, this is divested across Leeds in different areas and there is a spread across the whole of the city. When it comes to green belt we say no, we cannot look at green belt in particular areas, we are looking at green belt in the whole city. The green belt generally speaking is not reduced in amount, so I believe Councillor Gruen said, whereas in my Ward with everything going to be built on green belt, green belt has taken a complete hammering and I think it would have been a lot fairer if we had looked at green belt in relation to where it was rather than the city as a whole.

Secondly, I would just like to draw attention to something which again I find an anomaly. An awful lot of people in my Ward are writing into the Council complaining, objecting. I have an email here from an officer which says:

“We have been receiving substantial numbers of representations from residents within the Aireborough and Guiseley area regarding the emerging proposals.”

This he finds difficult to respond to because of the numbers and the fact that he is working on the emerging plan. Therefore, he is only able to provide a general response at this stage and has therefore been encouraging residents to comment at the next formal stage for consultation.

“It would be helpful, therefore, if you could support this approach to ensure that representations are made at the appropriate time.”

In other words, will we please ask people to stop complaining at the moment and wait until everything is very nearly set in stone before they make a comment.

To my mind, if this is an emerging plan, then the comments from residents must be most important in helping to form that plan. If you are going to bind their hands at this stage and ask me to co-operate, well then quite frankly the plan will not be worth the paper it is written on when we get it. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I agree with everything that my colleagues have said. What I want to add is that I am disappointed that there has been no great debate with Ward Members in terms of the infrastructure needs in respect of the sites that look almost certainly that are going to come forward. I do think that we should be spending some time with the Ward Members to look at what is needed in each area so that if or when the development goes ahead we are making sure that we are addressing the infrastructure needs.

The other issue I wanted to raise was the issue of consultation. The issues and options in my particular Ward if it was not for the Councillors there would have been no consultation done by the Council. The Council did not want to consult in my area for some reason or another - maybe that is because that was the place they wanted to put the development, who knows, but can I have an assurance from the Executive Board Member that this time there will not be a restriction on the number of meetings that officers can attend, that he will allow if local communities wish to invite officers to come along, these will be sanctioned by the Council to do so?

I am also concerned that there has been - following up on a point that Councillor Latty has just made - that there has been no direct discussion with the Neighbourhood Forums who have been recognised by the Council and they need to help inform moving this forward.

There is a lot of fear and concern in the local communities and the way this has been left is leaving a lot of uncertainty because no timescale has yet been set as to

when information will be brought back so there is a lot of rumouring and scaremongering going on...

COUNCILLOR: Who by?

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Who by? By a lot of people in your particular Party who are making out that certain things are happening when in fact they are not happening. It is not that easy. It is happening in other Parties as well, I am not absolving any Party on this one, but I do think we need to get clarity on what is happening.

We do need housing, can I just make it clear, because some people on *that* side are trying to argue that we are all NIMBYS on *this* side because we dare to argue against it. We do need housing but what we do need is the type of housing we need and the design of housing we need, not just carte blanche which some officers would like to give to the developers.

Finally, I would argue that there is a role for the Community Committees in taking this forward. If we really truly believe in the role of the Community Committees, then they should have been more involved in the interim after we have had the private Ward meetings. I do think there is a role for Community Committees. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move to page 7 and I call on Councillor Gruen to exercise the right of final reply.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, thank you very much. Thank you to the Leader of Council for giving me the pleasure to respond to all these comments. I am very grateful. (*laughter*)

COUNCILLOR: A very wise man!

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: I am also grateful actually how people have been disciplined so there have been a lot of speakers, far more than I anticipated if everybody had taken their full three minutes.

I think at the start of this somebody said it has been a lengthy process. It has and it is going to continue to be a very lengthy process.

Just to remind ourselves, the Executive Board has now said to officers "Will you please go away and present to us the final draft proposals based on what we have remitted to you through Executive Board?" That is where we have got to. As I said at Executive Board, there are lots of discussions still to have. There are lots of parts still to be included that we have not yet discussed. Near and dear to all hearts will be phasing, for example, we have not talked about phasing in any detail, but anybody who pretends that you have not had an involvement as Ward Members either is being disingenuous or does not live on this planet. There has been more discussion about this and before on the Core Strategy than ever before, so the process in my view has been very open and very transparent.

The issue of brownfield is that we, all of us - I do not make this as a political point locally - all of us want to see the maximum use of brownfield areas for building

first. Indeed, whether it is Councillor Procter's Scrutiny Board or discussions elsewhere we are all of the same mind that we want to maximise the use of brownfield sites.

Where I think it becomes more difficult is when people argue on the one hand it is not the numbers it is the distribution, as Councillor Latty did. Well, I would say the distribution in Guiseley and Rawdon, in that particular housing management area, is 3% of the total of 100%. You go to the city centre, it is 15.5%. You go to East Leeds and it is 17%. Green belt is not equally distributed across the city. Would you believe there is no green belt in the city centre? You cannot allocate green belt in the city centre so it is pretty damn obvious we are going to have to look at it in a different way.

I am also finding it quite staggering the kind of double-think by colleagues opposite. On the one hand they want the protection of the Planning office and of this administration to make certain that we are robust with developers, particularly those who want to anticipate the plan and put in premature applications, and we are, and at that stage we get their support, and yet when we have to allocate certain numbers of houses they then pretend, "Well actually this five year land supply thing does not happen in Leeds, it is something somebody else has talked about. It is something nebulous. We do not have to worry about the five year land supply." I think if you interpret what you have been saying and the numbers (and we had this discussion actually, very sensible discussion, at the Scrutiny Board yesterday) and Councillor Procter and I have to be honest and say we totally agree we think we are in a false cycle of the next three months. I said that openly at the last Council meeting. There are other forces gathering and I think, if I may say, that Councillor Jonathan Bentley's contribution smacked of that today. Councillor Bentley and I serve together on a number of Boards and Panels and I understand he actually is a very reflective, well read, well prepared Member. He speaks reflectively so he knows exactly what he is saying today and he knows that what he has said is only the partial element of what actually is going on.

The fact that we have had a meeting at the request of the Opposition briefing senior politicians here is a testament to being open. That is not a testament to being secretive. We would not have told anybody if we had not done that, and the fact that people have been briefed is something you should say thank you for in a way, because we want to share the information.

I think Councillor Walshaw's answer to you was entirely transparent. The status of that site at the moment is that no decision has been made. It may well have come into it on the 6th December, on the 13th January, but the status now is that it has no status. We are considering all the representations that have been made before we bring that particular issue back.

The Interim Pass Policy, well, again there has been lengthy debate following the legal advice we have taken and that we have shared.

I will share something else with Council now. Who do you think said on the 23rd September 2014, I quote: "It is clear that the Interim Pass Policy needs to be revoked with immediate effect"? Councillor John Procter in the *Wetherby News*.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Do not believe everything you read in there!

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Normally, John, you believe it because you write it. I think you probably part own it, but seriously, some decisions are difficult decisions to make. The advice we got very clearly and very strongly was that that is the position we should take.

I will say this to Councillor Carter, again in a reflective way. He says this sort of thing goes on and they suspect that I am up to something. Well, you know, I am always up to something. Leaving that aside, I am not up to anything. The fact that one of the Planning consultants who advises some of the more militant, if I can put it like that, house builders and has his finger on the button, and sees the papers when they are published and then writes in, is one thing. If you are alleging - and I hope you are not alleging - if you are alleging that he has information before it becomes public, well, I will say to you to the best of my knowledge that is not the case. To the best of my knowledge, and I would be extremely irritated if what you are alleging potentially were to be the case, I do not think we run that kind of independent Planning Authority. We know that we have to be quasi-traditional at times. We know we have to be fair and we know we have to be thorough. We also know that we need to discuss applications and matters with Ward Members and the protocols now are better than they have ever been in this Council. They are more open now than they have ever been and if you want a debate on that, be my guest. I can go past your administration for six years and compare how open you were compared with how open we are.

COUNCILLOR: Total rubbish.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: I think in summary to what colleagues have said, I need to come to Councillor Anderson. If you do not think we have had a debate on infrastructure at every single Development Plans Panel meeting as we have considered the potential site allocations, where have you been, my friend? Where have you been? We have been sitting in there when Children's Services came and presented ... *(Interruption)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Can you let the Councillor speak. I will have to allow extra time for the interruptions.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: ...evidence on school places. Thank you. Highways presented evidence on major highway proposals. We have talked about ELAW on all sorts of things in great depth. I refute the suggestion that we are not paying attention to infrastructure proposals.

Everybody, Councillor Latty, will have an opportunity when the report comes back and the answer Councillor Carter got at the Executive Board was we think it will be round about May to June time. That is when the reports will come back and that is when there will be absolutely full consultation. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for the vote on the motion to receive the Minutes. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

On closing the meeting can I thank you all for attending. I hope you have enjoyed this robust Budget debate. Thank you.

(The meeting closed at 4.45pm)