

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday, 20th February 2008

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(Councillor B Cleasby)

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20th FEBRUARY 2008

THE LORD MAYOR: The first instruction, Council, our usual first instruction, is switch off your mobile phone - remember, if a mobile phone goes off in the hearing of the Lord Mayor, it is £50 to the Lord Mayor's charity and, as I keep saying, that is very good value for money. Thank you, everyone.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: That takes us on to announcements, and there are quite a few this afternoon.

Could I first welcome students from Trinity All Saints College who are here to see just how well I can control you and how well you are behaving! *(laughter)* You know me, I do try to be humorous!

Could I then point out that this year it is Randall Brown's last Council. He is lucky, he has realised that the doors marked E-X-I-T means the way out and is leaving us. As you will appreciate from the banter, you are very well respected here. Could I thank you on our behalf for all the work that you have done for the Council and therefore our citizens. *(Applause)*

Now another piece of news - better news in fact, I know the informal announcement has been made - to congratulate Councillor Frank Robinson on his appointment to be the next Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

Councillor Robinson.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: Thank you for all your good wishes. May I also thank you for all the good advice that I have been given. I am certain that with the Council we have in front of us, it will be rose petals all the way. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: What about the Christmas party, Frank?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor, unfortunately I do have some sad news. As many of you are aware, John Gunnell, former MP, former West Riding Councillor - in fact Leader of the Council - died a few weeks ago, sadly following on a fortnight after the death of his wife. Could I suggest, then, that we stand for some time in honour of him?

(Silent tribute)

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16TH JANUARY 2008

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I move us on to agenda item 1, Minutes of the meeting held on 16th January. Councillor Hamilton?

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, could I move the Minutes be received.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I second.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote, therefore, on those Minutes? All those in favour? Against? Abstentions? That is then CARRIED. Thank you, Council.

ITEM 2 - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 2, Declarations of Interest. I do not need to read out the list here, I think you have all got the Order Paper and can read that for yourselves. Are there any further declarations?

COUNCILLOR EWENS: I do not seem to have my name down as having a house but I do own part of it.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: As a resident at Chapel House in Burley in Wharfedale.

THE LORD MAYOR: It is remiss of me, I have not declared my property in Rawdon! I have only lived there 46 years

COUNCILLOR KIRKLAND: I can trump you, Lord Mayor. 45 years and I declare an appropriate interest. Also, as a member of Otley Town Council.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: My Lord Mayor, I am told I am not on the list here so I declare an interest as owner of a property at 25 Gledhow Wood Avenue, Leeds 8, 95 Gledhow Park Grove, Leeds 7, and part-owner of a property 17 Brackenhurst Drive, Leeds 17 and my membership of Sinai Synagogue by virtue of being responsible for the cemeteries there and in due course to be buried in what will be a Council cemetery.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is that all? Thank you.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: My Lord Mayor, my house as well. I do not know why they are not on the list, they were submitted.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, it is now recorded.

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to agenda Item 3, Communications. I have a really nice letter here. I am not sure if Council are aware that when anybody celebrates their century in the city I take a signed, framed certificate on behalf of the city congratulating them and also the same when it is a Diamond Wedding. Rather cheekily, I sent on to Buckingham Palace to congratulate the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh and I have received a rather nice letter back. They were quite touched so I hope that, having framed it, it will be displayed. Thank you, Council.

ITEM 4 - BUDGET MOTION

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I move us on now to Item 4, the Budget Motion and ask you to turn to appendix 1 on page 9? As members will have noticed, there are some pink pages in their papers. Advice now from officers is that that is not necessary as that information is actually open information and it is necessary for me to ask for a vote to do just that.

If Council is happy that those pink pages are now made open pages, could I ask for those in favour? Against? Abstentions? That is CARRIED so the whole of the paper is now open. Thank you, Council.

Could I then call upon Councillor Brett to move the budget?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In moving the budget this year I want to start by thanking Alan Gay and his team and, indeed, officers in all departments for preparing this budget in circumstances which I shall explain have been unprecedented in their difficulty.

It has been a particularly hard process this year because of the tightness of the budget and the pressures that we face, so I hope you will all join with me in thanking all the officers who have played their part in preparing and shaping this budget.

Let me remind you all of the background to this budget over the last two years. In 2006/7 we had a 2.5% settlement, an increase of 2.5%, when the nationwide average was 3.4% and then, for the current financial year 2007/8, we had Revenue Support Grant with a 2.9% increase when the national average was 3.7%, so you can see we have not been blessed with generous settlements from this Labour Government in recent years.

Despite these difficult settlements, this administration has kept to its key targets and has delivered a minimum of two PCSOs in every ward in Leeds and has contributed in that process towards a 30.5% drop in crime in Leeds since 2003.
(hear, hear)

On recycling, in our four years in power we have doubled the recycling rate from 14% that we inherited to 28% now. We have introduced the Corporate Call Centre, which is winning awards and has vastly improved call handling for members of the public. We have more than met the Government's Gershon Efficiency targets of 2.5% a year for the last three years and, to cap it all, we have once again been recognised as a four star Authority that is improving well.

This year's settlement was announced in early December as a 2.8% increase as part of a three year plan which sees our increases drop to 2.1% in 2009/10 and 1.8% in 2010/11. The provisional national average for 2008/9 was again higher than in Leeds, at 3.7% and the fact that the core cities have an average of 3.7% just reinforces the point that we have had, we believe, miserly settlements from this Government in recent years.

As well as telling us the amounts of our so-called increase at £7.9m, the settlement made it clear that we would have had £4m more if we had not had to contribute towards the Floors scheme which makes sure that no authority gets less than a 2% increase. This is particularly hard to fathom when you realise the authorities we are subsidising include Liverpool and Newcastle who are starting from a much higher Council tax base and Government grants than us anyway.

We always knew that the Local Authority Business Grant Incentive Scheme - LABGI - was under review. We are likely in this financial year to get £10.5m out of this scheme because of the large growth of business rates in Leeds. No-one expected that this scheme would suddenly be ended. The Government had decided to save money, however, and ceased this scheme for the next financial year that we are talking about and then restart it with much reduced funding, so the £7.9m growth when you take off £10.5m becomes, at a stroke, a £2.6m deficit which brings me to

Neighbourhood Renewal Funding which, as we had been warned, has been stopped and replaced by the new Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

We knew we might not qualify for this fund because - and this has not been said loud enough in my view - we have been very successful in spending the Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. Of the 31 Super Output Areas which in 2004 were deemed to be in the bottom 3% on the indices of multiple deprivation, nine have improved significantly so that we now only have 22 Super Output Areas in the bottom 3%. Our success with our partners, not just at the 3% level but across the majority of the Super Output Areas in Leeds, which in the main have all improved, has not been, in my view, widely enough recognised. If we had only been a whisker less successful we would have qualified for up to £50m more in Government grants over the next three years.

One of the criteria for qualifying for the Working Neighbourhoods Fund was that more than 20% of our Super Output Areas must be in the bottom 10% on the indices of multiple deprivation. In Leeds that meant we needed 96 of our 470 or so Super Output Areas to qualify. In fact, we had 95 - just one less. Instead of 20% it works out at 19.96%, so we miss out on £50m by just 0.04%.

Every big city in England - Liverpool, Newcastle, Manchester, Birmingham, Nottingham, Sheffield - all get this funding because big cities in the western world have prosperous centres, prosperous suburbs and dire poverty in the middle. We all know that but in the eyes of the Government Leeds has done what New York, Paris and Rome have not managed - its inner city has disappeared. That happened at an administrative stroke because of 0.04% - poverty, deprivation, crime, drugs, bad health and bad housing have been abolished in Leeds. Alleluia!

Not my words but the words of George Mudie MP (*Applause*) in the House of Commons on 4 February. I pay tribute to the one Leeds Labour MP at the courage to protest at what his Government has done to Leeds. (*Applause*) I wish that the other six would start to rattle a few cages. In case anyone thinks that I have promoted George Mudie to sainthood, let me explain that St George did not slay the dragon. He is still garrulous George because on 24 January he voted with Hilary Benn and Fabian Hamilton for the Local Government Bill in favour of this settlement. The only Leeds MP to vote against was, of course, Liberal Democrat Greg Mulholland. (*Applause*)

We have not qualified for the new Working Neighbourhoods Fund but our Neighbourhood Renewal Fund grant of £14.9m in 2007/8 is reduced next year to £9m and to £4m in the year after. The net result for the next year's budget is that we lose £5.9m in grants for the budget I am introducing today, and more in coming years. Our deficit of £2.6m for the 2008/9 budget has, therefore, grown to £8.5m.

None of this is within our control. These have all been central Government decisions. Councillor Wakefield is going to try and convince you that this budget is made in Leeds Civic Hall rather than in Whitehall. It is absolutely clear to us that the global sums have been in large measure determined by the Government and not our own actions in Leeds.

It has been an unprecedented budget - a budget which we had to do with £8m less in Government grants than the previous year. No wonder that for the first time in twelve years an all party delegation went to London to lobby against these unfair measures for Leeds. So it was that Councillor Geoff Driver, Andrew Carter and myself went to see in January Parmjit Dhanda, MP the Parliamentary Under Secretary to John Healey, the Minister responsible for Local Government.

We were, sadly, very much given the BT treatment as we had just 30 minutes to try and make our case. I must give credit where it is due because Geoff Driver spoke very passionately on behalf of an improved settlement for Leeds. It was clear that the civil servants were aware of, as they described it, Leeds's near miss on Neighbourhood Renewal Funding, but whenever a difficult topic was raised Parmjit Dhanda had a phrase which got him out of jail - "We will have to deal with that by correspondence." He used those words three times in this interview, which did not give us much confidence.

At one point we introduced the changes to the Public Works Loan Board which had taken place on 1 November 2007. These were changes made by the Treasury that mean that our ability to reschedule long-term loans has been severely curtailed. In 2007/8 we believe we will have saved about £10m by these Treasury management manoeuvres but both Parmjit Dhanda MP and his civil servants seemed completely unaware either of Leeds's record in this area or the fact that this change had taken place, because this is a Treasury matter and we were talking to the Department of Communities and Local Government. It was a classic left hand does not know what the right hand is doing.

We have had some brief discussions by phone and a letter following this visit, but otherwise the only change to our position has been, unbelievably, for the worse. When the final settlement was announced we were £300,000 worse off. Just like the great white shark in Jaws, it was a case of just when you thought it was safe to plan the budget they came back for another bite. Do you see what I mean when I say about Alan Gay's team and their work? It has been an unprecedented year.

Our deficit year-on-year cash reduction has gone up with this £300,000 from £8.5m to £8.8m. A late change on this scale is unheard of. Perhaps it was a case of Northern Rock strikes again.

As always in any budget round there have been a number of financial pressures on us. Leeds, like many places, has an ageing population needing more social care and we reckoned we needed to put in at least an extra £7m for that. The pay and grading deal, close to being concluded, with serious implications for many underpaid staff, is going to cost us £6.9m extra. Pay and price information generally will cost us £17m extra. Our waste strategy and trying to avoid landfill taxes will mean £2.6m extra. Children's fostering services and their field work staff, which needed improvement, £2.2m extra. These are all things we have to do and for which total resources of £32.7m must be found.

What has been our response to all of this? From here on, Keith, you are right - it is a budget made in the Civic Hall. We have had choices to make about what to do and, from the beginning, we have been completely agreed that maintaining front-line services has to be our main priority. This has not been easy to do but we think we have achieved this aim.

To do this we have had to put many charges up by around 3% and in some cases more. It would appear not to be sustainable for Leeds to be both one of the lowest Council tax payers and at the same time one of the lowest charging Authorities, but I am personally certain that if fair comparisons with similar Authorities to ourselves are made, they will show that we will remain one of the lowest Band D Council tax chargers and also be one of the lowest for charging our residents and customers for many services.

An important point to make is that there are no services which previously have been free for which we are now charging. All the major cultural events, like Opera in the Park, the Classical Fantasia, will continue to have tickets which are free.

How have we done this amazing feat? *(laughter)* By cutting back ruthlessly on back office functions like advertising, glossy publications, job interview procedures, procurement and consultancy fees. We will also make significant savings on energy use, travel costs and reducing the use of venues not owned by the Council. We will review all externally provided children's placements and there will be a cash freeze on revenue grants to major arts organisations.

We are cutting 2% per annum from our back office services for the next five years to produce a saving of 10% over that five year period. The Government is insisting that we make 3% efficiency savings for each of the next three years and we are very confident that we will be able to do this.

We are also reducing our dependence on one-off sources of funding, which next year will come down from just under £24m in the current financial year to just under £19m, a reduction of well over 20% in one year. This is still, in our view, too high and we are planning to reduce this figure still further in the coming years.

What are we going to spend our budget on? I am going to start with the capital programme although I suspect Councillor Andrew Carter may want to say a bit more.

The Council's capital programme was approved by Executive Board on 8 February and the programme sets out over £1b of capital investment over the next four years. Key to the Council's plans is the continued investments in highway infrastructure which includes a massive £51.6m for major maintenance work, a programme of upgrading and adopting private streets and a package of traffic management improvements.

Council investment in the cultural infrastructure of the city continues and includes contributions of £7.2m towards a major refurbishment of the City Varieties, £1.7m towards the second phase of the Grand Theatre refurbishment, and £7.7m towards a new headquarters and dance facility for Northern Ballet and the Phoenix Dance Company.

We are continuing to invest in our city centre and our £5m upgrade programme will begin with works in the Albion Street area. Provision has been made for around £1m to create a ward-based initiative scheme whereby elected members can promote capital projects within their wards. Finally, since our Arms Length Management Organisations were established, close to £600m has been invested in bringing Council houses up to the Decent Homes standard. Over the next four years further investment of £273m will be made to continue this programme of work.

Of course, our capital programme is not by any means the only game in town. The private sector is making huge retail investments in the Trinity Quarter Development and in the Eastgate Quarter. The highlights of the City Development Budget include the new City Museum in Millennium Square which will open in late summer 2008 - later this summer. The budget increase of £294,000 represents the final tranche of money to provide the full running costs for what I am anticipating being a wonderful new facility. An extra £195,000 for the Olympic 2012 and World Corporate Games provides dedicated staff resource to ensure that Leeds is in a position to benefit from the Olympic Games and the World Corporate Games, which will take place in Leeds in July 2008 - this summer.

The base Parks and Countryside budget has been under pressure for the last two years and the additional £1m added in this year will continue in 2008/9. In 2006/7 the Water Asset Management budget was increased by £1.1m to provide significant additional resources for flood prevention measures across the city. This

has been further increased by £100,000 to fund additional land drainage staff for reviewing and monitoring planning applications and investigations, for the purchase of a rainfall tracking system and to enable the rapid deployment of resources and the introduction of stand-by arrangements to ensure a rapid response to incidents and the clearance of major blockages from large culverts.

Finally, in City Development the PFI leisure centres at Morley and Armley will continue to be constructed during the next year as part of the £30m PFI investment programme.

For adult social care in overall terms there will be a 6% increase in funding. In extra resources this means a whopping £10.5m which we are adding in because we know and understand the need for more money in this area. In adult social care we will be providing £2m of extra investment for direct payments, supporting older or disabled people in making their own choices over how their care is delivered and, just as important, their own choices on who delivers it. This will enable more people to put their own care preferences into practice during this year.

We are putting an extra £3.2m into the pooled budget to support people with learning disabilities. This will fund extra care packages to help learning-disabled people live at home with their families and in their communities.

Highlights of the Environment and Neighbourhoods budget include a £50,000 amount towards regeneration of the Leeds-Bradford corridor and a huge extra £2.6m on various aspects of the expansion of our Waste Strategy programme. This includes more for bin replacement, more for increased education to support the waste strategy to teach residents how to recycle, and a significant expansion of the brown bin garden waste collection. The education support will be aiming to reduce contamination levels in areas where recycling is poor and we believe we are on course for a household recycling rate of over 30% by March 2009.

In Community Safety we had a number of key projects funded or part-funded by Neighbourhood Renewal Funding but, despite that being cut by 40% in the next financial year, we have made it a priority to maintain all the neighbourhood wardens, PCSOs and mobile CCTV which have been funded by Neighbourhood Renewal Funding so, as ever with this administration, it is safety first, which brings me to the Housing Revenue Account and I must return to the question of whether this budget is made in Whitehall or the Civic Hall.

For the first time for a number of years we have actually been given the chance to set in Leeds the Council house rent increase. We were told that the Government's suggested figure was a whopping 7.8% increase, but we could choose a lower figure. Then it became clear that if we chose a figure lower than 5.8%, Leeds City Council would have to pay the difference back to the Government. Yet again, Keith, this is a case of effectively the decision being made in Whitehall. It should be no surprise to anyone here that we have chosen to increase Council house rents by an average of 5.8%. *(Applause)*

The Housing Revenue Account Settlement is, however, particularly tight. The ALMO fees are likely to have a stand still, a 0% increase, and the increase in the negative property subsidy - which for those of you who do not understand this, that is the amount that we have to pay back to the Government from the rents and the increase we have to pay back is £7.4m, so once again it feels like the Government is taking with one hand and taking even more with the other.

Children's Services has a very tight budget in a number of areas but we are adding significantly more money, £5m, into Children and Young People's Social Care

to provide more for payments to foster carers and more children's social work staff. We are investing £1.4m into a programme of positive activities for young people which will mean more activities are available for young people between the ages of nine and 18 in school holidays and after school.

There is a new investment in the provision of short-break services for disabled children and young people. This will give their carers a break and give the young people valuable new experiences.

I can also confirm that we are able to continue both the Youth Capital Fund of £429,000 a year and the Youth Opportunities Fund of £496,000 per year for a further three years. These are funds where the spending is prioritised by the young people themselves and gives them a vital say over where new resources for them are to be spent.

Finally for the Children's Centre Development programme continues with an expected 49 centres being opened by the summer of 2008 and further centres being developed between 2008 and 2011 as part of the Phase 3 of this programme.

Finally I want to pick out two areas of development in my own Central and Corporate portfolio. We will continue to develop our award-winning website so that our residents can conduct more and more business through this website. The resources needed for this will be found from savings within the Resources Directorate. The Contact Centre will see further improvements this year. Savings and efficiencies within the Contact Centre budget will be generated to allow the service to continue with key developments as part of the customer services development strategy. The implementation of the golden number and the extended opening hours, as well as the migration of more services to the Westgate Contact Centre, will take place in the next financial year, in 2008/9.

The main decision we have had to make is to decide the level of Council tax and, of course, here is another area where we are effectively bound by Government dictat. The word has clearly gone out, if you are over 5% we will consider capping you. With such a tight budget you might have thought we would go for 4.9% and get as much cash as possible and there have, indeed, been some urging us to do just that, but in the final reckoning that extra 0.2% brings in less than half a million and we are always mindful that many residents in Leeds are on fixed incomes; that any increase above inflation is extremely difficult, so we have settled on 4.7% which is, once again, lower than Labour ever achieved. All of the budgets that we have set have been under 5% because we know how hard it is for many pensioners.

This is a challenging budget which makes new demands on many of our hard-working staff. The following two years will be just as hard - perhaps even harder - but I am sure our 35,000 staff will rise to the challenge and maintain the high level of service that the people of Leeds have come to expect.

In summary, Lord Mayor, we have maintained front-line services, despite the worst settlement in living memory. We have stuck with our administration's priorities of putting safety first and increasing recycling. We are providing excellent value for money for the people of Leeds with a 4.7% Council tax increase.

Lord Mayor, I commend this budget to Council. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Before Councillor Wakefield moves an amendment, could I welcome back to the chamber two former Lord Mayors, Councillor Townsley as you see, having had an operation to his shoulder, and Councillor Atkinson. We welcome both of you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR ATKINSON: Lord Mayor, please forgive me for not standing, first of all. I would just like to say to you, to Councillor Wakefield and Councillor Carter a very big thank you. The flowers that came over to what I call the first mad house - this being the second - were just simply wonderful and so were many of the elected members who came to see me over there. I would also like to pay tribute to somebody who I cannot see is here and that is Mike Evans. He did above his duty to many patients over the road and it was pleasing the response that he got but also what he gave.

Lord Mayor, can you have a word with Councillor Procter, though because your flowers were ultra yellow and I do not think they were meant to be that colour! I am sure Councillor Procter will rectify the situation. A big thank you to you all. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call upon Councillor Wakefield to move an amendment?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, in the traditional manner I would like to thank all the officers of all the departments for the support and help they have given us in preparing our budget amendment this year.

Like Richard, I want to pay special tribute to Alan Gay and his team for the very professional and indispensable advice they gave us during the last few weeks. As I said at Executive Board, Alan Gay is a Newcastle supporter, so he is used to very difficult times and remaining optimistic and he has done so all through the last few weeks and I think he is going to get more practice over the next few weeks and months with his team as well, but a special thanks from the Labour Group for Alan.

May I also take this opportunity to thank all the staff and congratulate them on getting the four star award in the recent Corporate Assessments of the Council. It reflects very well on the professionalism of the officers of this Council, so congratulations.

Lord Mayor, perhaps I should also congratulate Richard Brett on his first budget speech because I know a lot of us, Richard, have faith in you to give this a fresh start and strong leadership this Council needs. Perhaps you could start by having a word with Mark at the back and ask him not to try and sum up for you, as he did at the last Council when you were trying to speak. For now I am sure you have had a word with him about back-seat drivers needing to lie down and be quiet when you are doing the driving.

A lot of us on this side are not absolutely sure about who to blame in the Lib Dems for this budget. We could blame Richard, because he is the Leader. We could blame Mark because he has been around a long time this year. We could blame Councillor Stewart Golton, who is planning to be Leader in May and spends a lot of his time conspiring with ward colleagues about it. Today, we will blame you, Richard.

Lord Mayor, this is a tight budget and I think Richard has identified some of the key issues. The Local Authority Business Growth Incentive finishing, the phasing out of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and the limitations now placed on our ability to reschedule loan debts which have been so important in this Council under a Labour Government because it has kept the interest low for such a sustained period of time.

The rescheduling I think has been worth something like £40m for this year thanks to the very skilful Treasury management of our officers here. However, as has been said, the biggest set back has been the ending or the failure to receive any of the new Neighbourhood Working Fund money.

As George Mudie in the Commons quite recently has already argued, to lose everything, as you say, because of a 0.4%, defies logic and reason, especially when we know we still have 149,000 people who are suffering from poor health, poor education, poor life chances in this city. You might be reassured to know that today there has been another debate led by George Mudie and just to correct you, Richard, the speakers include from the Labour side Paul Truswell, John Battle, Colin Burgon, Fabian Hamilton and, of course, many others with George himself leading that, so that puts into the record that they are standing up for this city. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: How successful will they be?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Wait and see. You will get your turn.

Can I also now refer to the budget and make our comments about the 2.8% in Revenue Support Grant. Yes, we would like more and yes, we would like more recognition of our poverty and not just our wealth. We all know because we have said it every year for as long as I have been here, we never get a fair deal under any form for this city. Personally I would like to see more recognition of this city's role in driving the regional economy and giving resources to continue that.

However, a 2.8% settlement with low inflation is still far more generous than the Tory Government gave us for the last five years of their rule which actually gave us 1.8% on average for the last five years. One of them was actually -0.5% when inflation was in double figures. I do think there are people who actually should remember those days when we were really struggling to keep this Authority with the settlements we were getting from Tory Government.

Also let me give a more balanced assessment. We should note as well as the settlement we are also gain money from what is now called the Area Agreement Grant which is worth over £50m this year and this includes money for our outstanding childcare services that this Labour Government funds, not this administration, and that we should be proud of the Government's contribution to those areas of service which have really been outstanding.

Let me be clear, this is a tight budget but I would still argue public services are still safer under a Labour Government than any Tory Government that the last time they went promised £21m of cuts to public services and nobody knows what they are going to go with in the next election.

I do not mind agreeing, as I have said, this is a tough budget and there are central constraints but you are right, when I read in the YEP that Andrew thinks this is a budget made in Whitehall and not in the Civic Hall, I think you are trying to con the people of Leeds. I think this is an insult to local accountability and local democracy and, frankly, it is no good looking for alibis and excuses under this administration. This is your budget. These are your choices and you have made your own decisions. You have chosen to increase charges, change eligibility criteria and make cuts to vital services. You are responsible for this mess, not Whitehall and you should own up to it and take full accountability.

Maybe the problem is, as John Bale recently pointed out in a letter to the YEP, when he said, "The trouble with coalitions is that they lead to weak governance

and look for deals with smaller representative parties.” I am always interested in what John has got to say.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Is that why you went to Morley Town Hall three times last May, Keith.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You are right and it is absolutely spot on. I think that is personal experience and when he is right we should say so. We told you last year about your use of one-off funding. We told you this was a seriously flawed strategy and yet you are still doing it. You are raiding education reserves, street lighting PFI reserves and general reserves and this is simply not sustainable over the next three years because that is what they are - one-off sources never to be seen.

I remember in 2004 when Councillor Carter accused us of abusing reserves like being the Viv Nicholson of Leeds. You would have to be a Barry White fan to remember that far back, because it is.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I am a Barry White fan!

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Who is Barry White? *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We were all spend, spend, spend, he said, but we have seen nothing in 2004 compared now to the dependence on spending on reserves to bale out children's services, social services and leisure services who are habitually over spending.

Using 278 and using capital to revenue is something which is acceptable, but to leave this city with a predicted reserve of only £12m next year without any overspends taken into account, can only mean more crises in our budget and more cuts to come.

This is weak leadership, Richard, and you are as guilty as Andrew and your predecessor. You left Children's in a mess - badly over spent and it is still in a mess now when you have left with your new incumbent now. Last year we told you there were too many officers between Children's Services and Education Services. There is a massive duplication of directorships, press officers, marketing staff and co-ordinators. I will tell you, we will rationalise this, saving over half a million pounds and we propose to put this money straight back into front-line services, which is where it is needed.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: The only people are going to be rationalised are you lot.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We will also spend this money on Youth provision, ensuring all wards retain the £70,000 threshold for making sure that money goes to those children who need it. In your ward, Richard, our proposals will bring an extra £10,000 for youth work. This is not a cut anywhere. It is an addition and is an attempt to narrow the gap.

We will also spend this money on looked-after children, one of the most vulnerable groups in this city. This money will make sure that we no longer have to see Councillor Brett or Councillor Golton writing out letters, begging letters, for the most vulnerable groups in this city. This really is old Victorian paternalism and I say this, as a Council it is something we should be ashamed of. This should never happen in the 21st Century and it will not happen under our amendment.

Furthermore, what is worth is at a time when the YEP reported only last week there are over 23,000 children in Leeds who live in families on benefits as high in one in three in the Leeds central constituencies. You have chosen to hit them with massive nursery charges and again it is those people who could least afford it.

For some families this is an increase from £19 to £28 week. Yes, that is right, Richard, a 47% increase. It is your officers who have confirmed that, by the way. This budget is typical of these kind of tactics, targeting those who can least afford it.

As Mark said back in 2003 about charges, they are grotesque, they are unfair and they are unethical. Do you remember, Mark, when you used to care? I will tell you what, we still do and our amendment protects those low paid families from those kinds of increases.

Voting for this budget and not our amendment - and I say this to Robert, a committed Socialist (*laughter*) and our friends---

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Don't you swear at me!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: That is interesting, right. Our friends in the Green Party who are radical as well...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Friends!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Yes they are. A vote for this budget is a vote that penalises those people.

Let me turn to another example of weak governance - social services. We welcome the 6% headline rise in funding but we all know it is only 4.1% due to pay and grading issues. Nevertheless, it is welcome because there are some big challenges to modernising services especially with the move towards individualised budget which we support. However, we need to put safeguards on, as we have argued before and that is why we do not agree with further privatisation of Homecare because there are not the safeguards in place yet and we oppose it.

My colleague, Councillor Coupar, will deal with this later on but let me say this. If we are moving towards individualised budgets, individuals must be given real choices which must include the opportunity to choose our own helps. These are our employees who have given so much loyal service to the elderly and they deserve to be valued and not just discarded. We will pay for this by ordering a review of the use of consultants in this Council. Let us put on record that one of the worse examples of wasted expenditure is the use of consultants to appoint senior officers to this Council. This has cost us thousands and thousands of pounds which we will cancel as soon as we get into office this year. Our priority is less waste on consultants and more investment in carers to help and protect the vulnerable.

You know, the sum of £2.7m spend on consultants, which was quoted in the YEP last Saturday, is far too high. I was surprised to see that the YEP congratulated you, Andrew, on calling for a review. We all know it is you who is responsible for this budget increasing in the last four years. You make me wonder whether you were going to blame the mysterious Council spokesperson who always talks when there is bad news or whether, if it is really bad news, you look to Councillor Brett for advice - never Councillor Carter when it is bad news, he is completely out of it.

Now I shall return to social services because we are not finished. Let me give the elderly and the disabled in this city a warning. There is far worse to come from this administration but it is hidden in the budget under a new lexicon of words like

repackaging, reprovion, rebalancing and realigning. These words are there to disguise the most Draconian increases in charges our elderly will ever see in this city.

It is worth reminding you again, it was Councillor Harris's promise to reverse Fairer Charges which actually gave birth to this Rainbow Alliance. Let me also remind Councillor Carter that in 2004 he called charges like this wicked and unacceptable. Both of you promised to reverse the charges and both of you failed to do and in actual fact your plans are worse. Your plan to change eligibility will mean a huge number of older people no longer qualify for care and the thousands who do pay will have to pay much higher charges for day care, home care, meals on wheels and transport.

Colleagues, this is the cynical part - you promised to consult about these higher charges and announce the results after May, but already you plan to take £400,000 from the elderly for this year and £1.6m for every full year after that. So much for consultation. It is a done deal, they will not announce it until after the election because they are frightened of their necks at the next election.

You are giving people less and challenging them more and that, I think, is totally wicked and unacceptable. You tell us you do this because other authorities do it. I remember you saying because our charges are too low compared to other cities. Let me remind you what Councillor Harris said in 2004 - and for once I agree with him. He said this, "I am not interested in what other Councils do. I am actually interested in what is best for Leeds."

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Well said, Mark.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Do you remember that? We agree with that but where do you now stand as a Liberal Party with these proposed charges?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: On the back foot.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Where are your principles about protecting the most vulnerable that you gave us lectures week after week about?

Let me tell you what our amendment does. Our amendment provides free home care for the over eighties and free access to leisure centres for the over 65s. That is right, because we value and respect older people. *(Applause)* This group will be letting people know about your plans before the election and while we are at it we will also be letting people know about your real waste strategy - that is right, your plans to build an incinerator in East Leeds. Do not get us wrong, a lot of the waste extra spend we welcome, especially money to increase recycling and raise awareness, but we all know that the issue you do not raise awareness of is the most central to this strategy - your preferred option, an incinerator. That is what our auditors, the KPMG, called it recently, the preferred option.

Do you remember, Steve, when you used to use those words, before you got caught up in the spin, before the smoke and mirrors? Do you remember when you were a straightforward, honest fellow? I also note in the latest civic paper there is a nice glossy photograph of an incinerator. So much for not having a preferred option. It is there in the paper to go out, a nice, glossy incinerator polished specially by Steve Smith so he can sell it.

We all know the people of Leeds have not been properly consulted about your plans and therefore our amendment provides the funds for a referendum to take place which will let the people who will be most affected decide whether they want an incinerator in their back yard or not.

Is it not time the silent man of the Executive Board, Steve Smith, made himself accountable to the people...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: He never shuts up!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ... and stopped hiding behind officers' letters that no-one understands? David, I hope you vote for our amendment and stop the incinerator coming to Leeds.

Finally I want to come to an extremely important topic central to our city's future and our commitment to going up a league and narrowing the gap. Again, I applaud the YEP's City at a Crossroads article because they raise fundamental questions about the leadership of our Council. I can understand why Michael Heseltine came to the conclusion at the Tory conference last year that what this city needed was strong leadership, because leadership is what is needed to solve the massive challenge identified by the Chamber of Commerce to make sure that we have the skills in this city to meet the needs of our economy by 2020 and really start to close the gap between rich and poor.

In this city Les, if you are bothered - I am sure you are not - there are still over 13,000 people unemployed.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: There are 149,000 poor and we cannot get money off the Government.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Over 30,000 on incapacity benefit and 10,000 single parents on benefits. Most of these people live in our inner city wards - nearly 1,000 alone in your ward Richard - your ward alone - are categorised unemployed and over 46% of children now live in households with families on benefits. What have you done to respond to this challenge? You have overseen a halving of the number of people who work at Roseville. Even after Councillor Harris promised to walk the plank if one person was made redundant, you have squandered over £2m on Tech North, expansion for a building in Chapeltown which is now virtually empty. You have chosen to close the East, the South and the West training facilities which Labour built to give people of this city a chance to share in our wealth and prosperity.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Exactly.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is fundamentally wrong to abdicate all your responsibility in those areas of the city and this is why they are your choices and not Whitehall.

We propose not only to return the £6m taken away from East Leeds but also to commit nearly three-quarters of a million pounds which will help to provide training for those who need skills, qualifications and confidence, something your administration has ignored, Richard.

We will pay for this by prioritising training, skills and worklessness in the Local Area Agreement and asking all the services funded in the Local Agreement to make a 1% efficiency saving with the exception of crime and antisocial behaviour and all the projects and services which were formerly funded by the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund money.

Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour will remain one of our top priorities and there will be no cuts to funding in these important areas. Frankly, if it was not for the Government spending money on antisocial behaviour and on PCSOs we would

not have the existing staff we have now. It is never mentioned. Furthermore, we would also apply for Train to Gain money to help employees of this Council to gain the skills and confidence needed to get proper career with the Council.

The Council should not just ignore its staff. It should take responsibilities to recruit, train and inspire people to go from low paid jobs to higher paid jobs and to have genuine careers. Do not shake your head, Richard - millions of pounds that are available by the LSC for Train to Gain are being ignored by you. You have done nothing to address this negligence. We will apply for this money and help our employees to get the skills they need to better themselves with this Council. This is about valuing our staff and this is a clear Labour pledge which we will deliver when we return to office.

Lord Mayor, never have we seen a budget that has so many wasted opportunities and attacks on the most vulnerable in our city. We warn the people of Leeds, if this budget was passed today, do not look to this Council for help if you have children or elderly or disabled relatives or you are poor. There is no point. The commitment is not there any more.

There is a further thing our amendment does and I appeal to any independent minded people because I think it is important. We have decided to freeze the Council tax for the over eighties. You are nearly qualified for the over eighties, Les! Yes that is right, people. People over 80 who live in Leeds will not see their Council tax increase at all this year if our amendment is agreed. We have done this because we recognise that life is hard for older people on fixed incomes under this administration.

Our amendment protects the poor, values and respects the elderly and safeguards our environment but, above all, this amendment provides hope, opportunity and prosperity for all and I urge everyone to vote for it. (*Applause*)

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call upon Councillor Finnigan?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, before he does can I declare an interest which was not apparent before.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You are over 80?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: That too, yes. The first was the Northern Ballet theatre and I am a taxpayer.

THE LORD MAYOR: It is a pity Councillor Wakefield did not make us all aware of that because I am looking forward to that too! Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. An Englishman, a Welshman and a Scotsman go into a pub and all three of them have just been to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Englishman says, "I have done pretty well out of it. In terms of specific grant per person I am getting £6,361." The Welshman says, "I have done better than you, actually. I am getting £7,248." The Scotsman says, "That does not actually matter, I am trumping both of you. I am getting £7,597." The Englishman says, "Why is this? Why am I being treated so differently, worse, than you two?" and the other two turn to him and say, "It's in the numbers. It's in the figures. You need to go back and check the figures." The Englishman says, "What figures should I be checking?" He says, "Look at Labour's majority. Labour's

majority is 66 and there are 46 Labour Scottish MPs. On top of that there are 24 Welsh Labour MPs. If you add that together that is 70 and Labour's majority is 66."

The reason that I am bring the Council's attention to this is to try and explain why our seven are as ineffective as they are, because ultimately whatever they have done - they can huff and puff as I am sure they are doing today (although I do know that Colin Challon is not huffing and puffing today - perhaps he is chasing polar bears or taking a plane to China to advise them how to cut their carbon dioxide emissions). We are in a situation where when you are looking at grants, just in case Councillor Nash is unaware, looking at central Government grants to support what we are actually doing, the big question we need to ask is, why does this Labour Government hate Leeds in terms of this particular settlement? Not only does it seem to have problems with the English but it specifically hates Leeds.

Let us look at some of these settlements. The national settlement is 3.5%. The core cities average is 3.5%. The West Yorkshire average is 4.3%. Leeds - 2.7%. You have got to ask the question, why does the Labour Government hate Leeds?

If you go a little bit further, let us look at some of the core cities. Nottingham - Labour controlled - 6.1%; Birmingham, 4.6%, Bristol - Labour controlled - 4.3%; Manchester 3.6%; Leeds 2.7%. Again you have got to ask the question, why does the Labour Government hate Leeds so much?

If you look at the West Yorkshire comparison of all of this, Kirklees 5.7%; Bradford 5.2%, Wakefield 4.9%, Calderdale 4.2%, Leeds, 2.7%. You have to ask the question yet again, why does the Labour Government hate Leeds so much?

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: They just don't like you, Robert.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Maybe they believe that they are never going to see a Labour administration here so they do not need to finance it. I do not know. *(Applause)*

If we are looking at formula grants per head, Liverpool, per head, £584; Manchester per head £567; Birmingham per head £506; Newcastle, £419; Nottingham, £429; Sheffield, £363; Leeds, £266. Again, you have got to ask the question, why does this particular Labour Government hate Leeds so much that it puts us at the bottom of every single table? Maybe they believe that there is more deprivation in Bradford; more deprivation in Wakefield; more deprivation across the board, it would appear. If we look at formula grant per head, Bradford, £379; Wakefield, £297; Leeds, £266, Calderdale, £291; Kirklees, right behind us, £260. We are in a situation where ultimately we are at the bottom of everybody's list and that goes into what you do in terms of the budget.

People are suggesting that the Labour Group would have you believe that, "It is nothing to do with central Government, guv, nothing whatsoever. We do not apologise for the labour Government. We do not make any excuses for the Labour Government - in fact, it is nothing to do with them whatsoever." It is absolutely and totally everything to do with that.

If we look at the fact that apparently seven Labour MPs went and made representations, that cost us £300,000 from what I am being told, so please, please, ask them not to make any more representations on our behalf because we cannot afford it.

The real tragedy of this is in the loss of NRF funding. That is a great, great pity. Certainly the communities that get this I should imagine that they will be suggesting that NRF stands for No Real Future, because Morley has never got any of this particular money and the communities that do need this particular money need it desperately, need that help, need that support. We think it is an utter and absolute disgrace that there was a suggestion that Leeds no longer has areas of deprivation. We know that that is the case. We certainly think that we have more deprived communities than places in Kirklees and places in Bradford and that we compete with other West Yorkshire areas in terms of the sheer problems, poverty, deprivation that those particular communities face. It is a disgrace, an absolute disgrace, that money is not going to the people who actually need it.

From our point of view in Morley we are observers. We have never had a penny of this, we are never going to get a penny of this but even we recognise that this is something that is entirely inappropriate and hits the vulnerable most.

In the administration's budget we have some concerns. We always have some concerns. We would like to have seen a bit more in planning enforcement, it is a big issue as far as we are concerned. Looking at it in total, we believe that it is the best that can be done in the difficult financial circumstances that we actually find ourselves in. Taking into account the main villains in this particular piece, never mind all the smoke and mirrors of the Labour Government who have left us with such an incredibly poor settlement not only on a West Yorkshire basis but on a national basis as well.

We have had a look at Labour's budget. We have significant concerns with Labour's budget because ultimately at a point where you are using phrases that suggest that, "These cuts will require redeployment and other appropriate actions", it means redundancies. It means sacking staff.

The bottom line is, looking at your budget we reckon you are looking to lose 50 to 100 jobs. As Neil Kinnock once said, you do not play politics with people's jobs. We are not in a situation where we will be supporting a job seekers' budget that puts people out of work. We think that is entirely inappropriate. *(Applause)*

Dealing with some of the specifics, Keith talks about the increase in terms of charges for those working families that need childcare. Again it is more of this synthetic outrage that we have had last time because, as he well knows, the working tax credits scheme covers 90% of childcare costs.

If you go back and you want to talk about childcare, ask the Government why it does not cover the whole 100%, why those same low waged families have been asked to contribute to their own childcare by the Labour Government anyway. I think it is something that we need to ultimately reflect upon.

We are in a very difficult time, there is no two ways about that. If we look at Leeds, inevitably it is seen as an economic generator bringing wealth and prosperity to this particular city. It is a disgrace that the recognition that we used to get through the Business Grant Scheme has also been abolished and it does seem to me that they want to punish success to a point where you have got a thriving city centre, where you have got it generating jobs, generating income and we are in a situation where there was very little recognition in the money that we get from central Government.

Ultimately what we need to be debating is why central Governments - and I would accept that all central Governments of all political persuasions - have not been keen and enthusiastic on local authorities. We need to look at better ways of

increasing and de-politicising those particular processes so the settlement is based on fair and reasonable needs, not on the basis of what could be regarded as political gerrymandering.

We are in a situation where it is a tough budget, we accept that it is a tough budget. We are not of a view that we will be supporting a budget that puts people's jobs at risk. We accept that we ought to be lobbying more and that our MPs ought to be doing more to make sure that we get a fairer settlement from central Government in the future. All I know, we are doing the best with a very difficult job. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think probably one of the few times where if you take LABGI, NRF and grant into consideration, we started off the year with less money than we started the last year. It was one of these few times - somebody will tell me over there probably in the bad old days of Margaret Thatcher how difficult budgets were then, but let us remember the fact is we have had a Labour Government now for ten years and why have we not seen something different?

An increase of 2.7%, just over £7.6m on a basic budget is, to me, disgraceful. That is without any inclusion of the other things. It is well below core city average, it is well below West Yorkshire average, well below Metropolitan average and for that matter lower than average for the whole of England which covers Shire Counties as well. Then we have got NRF and we have got LABGI going.

The other day on television, on the Tonight programme, they were talking about the inequalities, on what our colleague there was just saying, about the inequalities between England and Scotland due to Barnett solution. What they said there they should have been saying about the absolutely barmy way that Local Authorities are funded in England. Not only that, do you realise these unelected, unrepresentative quangos get, what is it now, 40% more money than all the Local Authorities put together to spend. There is something wrong, this county is not being run in the proper and right way.

I looked at the possibilities of putting forward my own budget amendment for the Council meeting, but basically because of the tightness of the budget, even Keith's changes are not as dramatic as what you would normally have done and I think that recognises the difficulties we have got and whatever I would have done it would have been peripheral.

We have come up with some ideas, John, in that time where we got advice from officers and that, and basically what I am going to do is, I am going to go through some of the points that are in the administration's budget and some of what Keith has raised and maybe stick in a few of my own ideas while we are going along.

Firstly, if we start with reserves. I have got to actually agree with Keith on that. When I was in the administration...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It was a lot better, David.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: What, better now or better then? We set up a procedure where we had a percentage on reserves and I have got to say this does not seem to me, from my memory, to actually reach that level. I am extremely concerned about that amount of money.

In saying that we seem to have an ability over the last few years through efficiency savings that the tendency has been that we have ended up with higher

reserves at the end of the year than what we budgeted for. I need some sort of reassurance that we are not going to drop ourselves in trouble there.

We welcome £2.46m worth of efficiency savings, particularly those, that £480,000 in energy savings, which is quite remarkable at a time of higher energy prices, I would say, but our view is that the use of some capital and a definite commitment to the use of renewables should be used to make those savings bigger.

I have been looking at a project at Top Court(?), which is my old school, where Alan Gay's people are and I have got officers to do some work on that and they have come up with some quite remarkable results - maybe not as good as I would like to see but going in the right direction and certainly I believe there is scope on all public buildings for us to have a look at doing things in that direction. Whoever happens to be in control after May please take that on board, I would suggest.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: We will.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: We would also welcome the commitment made by the administration at the Executive Board to further increase efficiencies and savings, particularly the area of procurement. As long as these actions are consistent with service improvement, and I note provision has been made in the budget for £1.8m towards increases of £8 a ton in landfill tax and a further £1.71k on waste collection service, but really we need some clarity on this.

How many households are the brown bin collections going to be extended to and where are they? How many households are going to receive fortnightly sort collections and where are they? Is there provision in the budget for extending the sort collections to the many estates that have recently been built or are currently under construction in many of our wards and what about those households who have never had any service at all?

I know for us to introduce fortnightly green bin collections across the city will cost us £2.7m, and I know the saving on sort collection disposal against land fill is something like £39.40 per ton, but we need to know some more facts and figures about what is intended.

We clearly need some assurance with regard to street cleaning services that we can continue with support for intensive areas, as it says in the budget, but without this causing any detriment in core services in the rest of the city and the very small but important point is, is the provision for litter bins, new litter bins, in the budget? I note the point Councillor Carter has been interested in because we were talking about it in Area Committee.

On flood prevention I welcome what the administration are doing but there is one issue that does not seem to be within the budget and that is to do with gully cleaning. I recall four years ago we increased the number of gully cleaners back up to the historic number but I think we may be a bit behind again there. With the increased rainfalls we are having, gulleys are getting blocked up much more often and while it is not going to solve the problem of climate change, what it is going to do is it is going to assist us to clear that water away a lot quicker if we can extend the gully cleaning services.

We welcome funding to promote safety on two wheeled power vehicles, particularly myself and my wife whose son has a motor bike - any safety in that we have an interest in. The £1m injection into parks and countryside, funding to deal with Japanese dog weed and ragwort and continuing funding towards the 170 matched funding PCSOs. Of course, the continued development of Contact Leeds,

which I feel is one of the best things the administration has done but I would do seeing I had something to do with it when I was in the administration.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: It is your fault.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: I will not have it. It is very, very good.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Rip off.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: I support to increase efficiency, the purpose of improved service delivery and there is one thing that Keith has mentioned which I am concerned about when he said about the job saving in his budget amendment. It seems very much to me like redundancy in cuts and not savings. I think you need to develop what you are saying there to convince me of what you are doing.

On social services, I agree with Keith, 6% increase actually concerns me. I am not sure it is enough and I am not sure that we will not have to increase charges later in the year above the rate I would like to see. On Keith's issue about, I think they said free care for the over eighties, did you not? Actually you have been on the same sort of thing as I have been looking at but I am not sure actually legally you would be able to do that. As I say I would welcome your comments on that.

As regards free Council tax for the over eighties, that is another thing I particularly would agree with the Labour amendment about, but the point is I am not convinced that there are those extra savings there that could deliver on that. As I say, in principle some of what you are saying I am in agreement with.

Going back to the administration's amendment, I know Councillor Brett mentioned something about the introduction of a ward-based initiative again and we would be interested in finding out more when you are summing up of what you intend there. That is my comments, Lord Mayor, thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. All of us in this Chamber can be rightly proud of the transformation of this city over the past 20 years. Even in today's Guardian there are photographs cataloguing that transformation. It is simply a fact that through the 1980s and 1990s and the early 21st Century that Labour was running the Council. The Council under Labour was credited for leading the dramatic progress achieved during that period - progress that led us to become Conde Nast favour UK city in 2003 and led us to achieving the much sought-after status of Environment City - recognition for our Green strategy and commitment to the environment.

So what on earth has gone wrong? We are not even in the top 15 of Conde Nast's list this year. A glance over the headline stories over the past year shows a city losing direction, losing its position and losing confidence; stories that highlight Leeds as the most unsustainable city in the UK, that talk of crisis in the development of the city centre housing market and have culminated in the YEP leading the Leeds at a Crossroads debate. Also, stories and letters in the press reflecting the upset caused by the demise of a proper New Year's Eve celebration and a failure of Leeds adequately to celebrate its 800 year history.

Whether you agree or disagree with these views, this is what is being said about Leeds. This is the debate in the press; this is the debate amongst academics and, even more worryingly, this is the debate amongst the people of Leeds.

The reason for this fair and square is being put at the door of this administration. Lack of leadership, lack of direction, lack of vision all personified in

the part-time flip-flopping charade that you have put in place to run this great city of ours. Yes, Andrew, also at your door your reluctance to engage in constructive debate and to take a lead in moving the city forward.

Can we get any comfort from your budget proposals? No. Where is your vision and where are your projects for the future? You have been relying for all this time on the projects that we put in place as the Labour administration.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Clearing up the muck you left behind.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: What a load of nonsense.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Councillor Wakefield's amendment is all about putting the people of Leeds first, protecting their services, making Leeds a place to be proud of again.

Lord Mayor, when Labour wins back control in May this will be our priority...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: There is only you thinks that, Judith.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: ...across all departments, putting people first.

In the Development Department we will redirect the additional resource within the Parks budget to address the lack of maintenance of our informal open spaces across our city. We will work closely with developers to insist that all departments, all developers add to developments to improve our public ground.

We will listen to our critics and work with them to improve access, safety and recreation for all. We will work to recapture our status as a green city starting immediately by additional investment in alternative fuels for our own vehicle fleet to cut carbon emission, leading by example. We will also deliver energy efficient buildings by stringent application of efficiency standards through our planning department for new build. As well as cutting CO2 emissions and tackling climate change we must deal with fuel poverty in our city. We just make sure that all of the new build affordable houses are the most energy efficient in the country. This is what the people of Leeds deserve.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: They do, but you will not give them it. You did not give them it before and you will not do it again.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: We will start immediately improving transport arrangements in education and social services by cutting the enormous waste of the £16m bill that we currently pay and provide a sustainable transport service for our most vulnerable citizens, cutting emissions and improving the environment and health of our city.

Councillor Wakefield has highlighted the hike in charges. He has pointed out leisure centres and we must not penalise people by over inflation of charges. I urge you all to support the amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield. It is time to put the pride back into Leeds and time for leadership, we need to do this. Above all, it is time for you lot to go. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to start by thanking Richard Brett for his refreshing honesty in some of the things - and only some of the things - he said in his speech. I think I can speak for many in the Labour Group because when Richard is replaced in May by whoever it is in his group who is conspiring against him, I think we will miss the honesty because he actually admitted

that this Council's budget was based on putting up charges for the use of services in Leeds. He admitted that these decisions were made here in the Civic Hall.

We get a little tired with these trips round the country we often have. We have come here to talk about what happens in the Civic Hall and what happens in this Council Chamber.

What I would like to do, just as Richard reeled off his list of flash city centre projects which he is so proud of, is actually spell out exactly what this budget means for the ordinary, hard-working families that seem to be so absent from the thoughts of the political boss class in this city who rule over us.

I would like to talk about a pretty typical family. There are two adults and they have got two-year old twins, called Andrew and Richard. They have got a family income of about £13,000 a year. What impact does this Council budget have on them? If they want to go swimming, then the charges are up. They live in a Council house - their charges are up. Their Council tax - it is up. The two kids go to nursery - the charges are up and up and up by 47%. That is £17 per week. If they want to come into town to go shopping, the charges are up.

How about the grandmother? If she wants to go to a day centre the charges are up. If she wants transport to the day centre, the charges are up. It is up and up and up and what is the total cost to this average working family in Leeds because of the charges that this rip-off administration is implementing in this budget? Let me tell you, it is £23 a week, or £1,218 a year which, for a family on £13,000 a year is nearly 10% of their income swallowed up in unfair and iniquitous charges brought in by this administration. *(Applause)*

It is quite clear for young and old alike this administration's charges, as Richard admits the decisions made here, are a rip off, they are a lot of money and they are a damning indictment on an administration that has failed to get a grip on its culture of expensive consultants and excessive marketing.

This administration are just not playing fair by the people of Leeds. The whole purpose of this Council should be about giving people opportunities and all these people are doing any time anybody wants to do anything they are ripping them off. They are charging more for childcare, they are charging more for social activities for older people and they are charging more for people who what to go to leisure centres.

This Labour Group is in favour of opportunity, you are in favour of rip-off charges. I support the Labour Group budget. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to address the budget in terms of social services. Firstly, I also welcome the 4.1% increase in real terms in funding. However, we on the Labour benches do disagree with you on your allocation of the budget.

I find your budget uninspiring. It shows no innovation and completely lacks vision for the future. You have provided another make-do-and-mend budget.

Home care. It is a well-known fact that we have an ever-increasing ageing population in this city, elderly people who rely on this Council for support and help. That is why in our amendment we provide free home care for the over eighties. This commitment would put an end to the horrendous stories we hear about such as Mr Tommy Place. Do you all remember him? He is the 90-year old war veteran who had his home care cut by your policies. We could not rely on Councillor Harrand to

get it right, could we, but then again, who can? Definitely not the people of Leeds, especially if you are disabled, aged or infirm.

The morale in the home care services is at an all time low. Our directly employed home carers do a sterling job not only for the elderly but also the disabled and other needy people. Your administration has treated them disgracefully. You have drastically reduced the number of home care workers since you took control. They are the ones who saved the day when the private provider, Care UK, let down 60 people and did not turn up to help these needy people. Do you remember that one? Yet, for doing all this you repay them for their hard work by giving their jobs to the private sector.

You have allowed for further savings in home care by even more privatisation. When will it stop? When you have no-one directly employed by this Council coalition? Councillor Finnigan, privatisation means job losses. How clearly do you need it spelling out? These benches will not support that. We recognise the benefits of having an in-house service and because of that we do not support your cost cuttings.

We know the line of eligibility is vulnerable under this administration and the Executive Member has stumbled from crisis to crisis, dithering and bumbling all the way. Where is the direction? Where is the leadership, the knowledge? I can tell you. It is on these benches here. *(laughter)*

Let us look at just one issue - older people's services. We should have had proposals on day services in December. Have we got them? No. Are we surprised? No. They have been postponed. Yet more indecision and dithering from Councillor Harrand. He has dithered and dithered again and still got it all wrong. Well done - a new record, even for you.

You have identified £2m for direct payments which you estimate would allow for 420 more service users to transfer. Although we welcome the improvement in direct payments, there is a concern about this issue which is that direct payments should be available for those people who would benefit the most and should not just be allocated to particular client groups or geographical areas. We would ask that this be done sensitively and in consultation with service user groups.

The voluntary sector sees an increase of 2% again this year which, after inflation, in real terms is a 1% cut. Our amendment adds £50,000 to give the vital assistance needed. Voluntary organisations in this city have seen a massive increase in demand for their services, especially since your home care cuts of the last two years. We all, as Councillors, have seen these organisations struggling to keep their heads above water and one organisation recently told me 2% would not even cover the cost of their rent increase.

It is about time you started listening to the people out there who are picking up the pieces of your flawed policies and cost-cutting exercises. They are not getting enough and they need more money just to stay afloat.

Lord Mayor, if I can now turn to the review of charges for social care. Well, haven't we come full circle on this one? Remember the heated debates that took place in this Chamber when fairer charging was being introduced? Councillor Brett will not remember, though, the debate as he was not even a twinkle in the Returning Officer's eye at the time. Councillor Carter and Councillor Harris will remember when they spoke so passionately as to why the elderly and disabled people should not be subject to these charges.

THE LORD MAYOR: Finish your next sentence, Councillor.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Hard lines. Sit down. Your time is up.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: The citizens of Leeds deserve better than this budget - in fact they deserve better than you and in May they will be able to make their voices heard and I am sure they will return a Labour administration to this great city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I point out the two seconders of the motion and the amendment wish to speak. Just in case the operator of the microphones does not know, it has been agreed by myself and the Whips that they should have the same unlimited time so do not be alarmed if the red light goes on, Richard. You will have whatever you want to say time.

Can I now call Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I think there is really quite a lot to say so I make no apology to members over there for taking some time to do it.

When Councillor Wakefield was speaking I listened intently and I thought things, in the words of the song that brought Labour to power, can only get better. As I listened to the last three contributions from the Labour benches, how wrong can you be?

You know, my Lord Mayor, you have to feel a bit sorry for anybody on the Labour benches or, indeed, in the Labour Party who wants to talk about financial management at the moment. They find themselves well and truly between the Northern Rock and the hard place. *(laughter)*

My Lord Mayor, anyone in the balcony who has listened to the speeches we have just been hearing could be forgiven for believing that everything in this Council's budget was wrong, everything we have done was a mistake, every vote head, every line, every calculation, every area of spending was wrong.

In point of fact, Councillor Wakefield's amendment amounts to precisely 0.6 of a per cent of the budget. That is what he was proposing to amend, 0.6% of our budget. We could be forgiven, I think, for believing, therefore, that he thinks that 99.4% is absolutely right. That is a percentage I am more than happy to live with. If anybody agrees with me 99.4% of the time, I am over the moon as a politician, quite frankly, but to stand up here and make the comments that he made and listen to the comments that his colleagues made when they were talking about 0.6% of the budget is to make a nonsense of a budget debate and you have to ask exactly what is the opposition playing at? 0.6 of a per cent.

Just to stick with Councillor Wakefield for a while, because he very quickly glossed over the savings he was proposing to make. I do not wonder that he glossed over them. Actually it was Councillor Finnigan who put his finger on it. There is £800,000 in there that he proposes to save at a stroke by reducing sickness levels in the Local Authority.

Let me tell you something about sickness levels. We inherited a figure of I think it was 13 days on average sickness for our staff. It has taken us three-and-a-half years to reduce it to twelve days. He is proposing to reduce it by a further day, not in the 24 years it took them in which they failed to do anything, but overnight,

actually, because he is spending the money, so he is saving the £800,000 on 1 April of this year.

You were right, Robert, there is only one way to save £800,000 that quick in staffing and that is to make staff redundant, Keith, and that is what is in your amendment, the redundancy of staff.

Let us stick with this for a moment...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Redeployment. Robert would not understand.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: ... because actually when you look it underlines the fact of what Keith is up to. When you look at the number of employees who actually contribute to these high levels of sickness, you find that the vast majority of our employees - and I pay tribute to them as we did through the Audit Commission Review of our services - do not have excessive sick leave and I do hope that the press will not over-egg the pudding and make out that we employ 30,000-odd who all have twelve days a year off sick, because it is absolutely not the case. The vast majority of our staff work damned hard for the Authority and do a good job.

What you come down to is a very small number with very high levels of sickness. A lot of these I have to say are chronically ill and in a work force of our size you would expect that. What does he want to do? Get rid of them? Is that what he is saying, because to realise this £800,000 that is what he is going to have to do. It is no good him shaking his head because like a good Socialist politician he has already spent the £800,000 he is saving from the sickness levels so he is going to have to do something to get that money back in the pot. Everything he said was another example of Keith in fantasy land.

My Lord Mayor, it brings me nicely on to the issue of leadership. It is interesting, I have listened to two Labour Leaders over the last couple of weeks amending budgets. The first one was at the Passenger Transport Authority where they have a bizarre way of operating, where you get a budget resolution and you vote on it, so you vote in favour and the opposition abstains. Then, after you have already agreed it, the Leader - if that is what you would call him - of the Labour Group on the PTE - and you will find out why he is not in a moment - moves an amendment and what he says is, "We would like to use around £500,000 out of the reserves for this, that and the other" - around £500,000. £501,000 - £400,000 - who knows, but around £500,000. That is seconded and the chap who seconds it adds something else in that when he confirms what he has actually moved he leaves out, he gets defeated and then another chap on the Labour benches moves a further amendment on the thing he had forgotten in the first place. If that is leadership you can have it.

Then, we come to Councillor Wakefield. It is interesting on this Order Paper today that there is a motion of no confidence in the administration. It is not tabled by the Leader of the Opposition. It is tabled by Councillor Atha. My understanding of the situation is that the Labour leadership did not even know he had put the White Paper in. If that is leadership once again, ladies and gentlemen, let him have it, because the people of this city have rumbled this lot. They have rumbled the Government, they rumbled them four years ago and they do not want them back.

What I really find, my Lord Mayor, unacceptable is ill-informed, ignorant comments from a front bench politician designed to denigrate not politically this Council but the work of the private and public sector out in the city which is constantly and continuously regenerating the city of Leeds. For somebody who aspires to be a Member of Parliament to do that is a disgrace, which brings me nicely on to the Members of Parliament.

I am delighted to hear that in the NRF debate today certain of the Members of Parliament joined in to support the Leeds case. A few weeks ago when George - and George and I have an interesting relationship over many years but one thing I have to say for George is, he does speak out. When he spoke out the first time on NRF, despite the fact that all the Members of Parliament for Leeds had had a letter from Councillor Brett and myself pointing out the iniquity of the situation, there was not one other Leeds Member of Parliament in the Chamber when George Mudie first broached the subject. No wonder they were all there today. I should think they had to be. I should think they were hanging their heads in shame. I am sorry, turning up for the second bite of the cherry is not good enough.

On the NRF we have been treated extremely badly. Nobody, I think, doubts that. How you can fail to qualify by .04 of a per cent I do not understand. Neither do any other people I have spoken to. In all these calculations there is a margin of error. What the Minister will not answer, either to us or to George Mudie, is what is the margin of error. If it is 1%, we qualify. If it is half a per cent, we qualify. How can we possibly lose out by .04 of a per cent? It is the worst piece of Treasury manipulation I have known in all my years in politics because that is what it is about. It is not about people. It is not about the people who have been helped through the NRF fund. It is about a bald calculation, a simple mathematical calculation.

Well, Mr Healey, well, Mr Brown, this is not about financial calculations. It is about money that you have given us, for which we give you credit, schemes we have set up for which by your admission and ours are working but it is about you taking that money away just at the time when it is beginning to have the most benefits. It is wrong by anybody's standards and it has cost this Council dear.

As regards the settlement in total, Keith, you can play with figures, you can go back to the dark ages of history if you want but this is the worst settlement this Council has ever had. We have never gone from one financial year into the next with £8m less. It is a disgrace. Most people, outsiders, when you tell them do not even believe it but it is a fact. We are going into the next financial year £8m less than we had this year.

You can decide to spend that £8m in your mind on anything you want. You could have not had a Council tax increase at all on that basis. We could have funded all sorts of things, but we ain't got it to spend and other Authorities like Hastings, like Sedgefield - you name them - all suddenly qualify for the new Working Neighbourhoods Renewal Funding.

How can it be in a city with 169,000 people living in Super Output Areas, how can it be that we qualify for nothing? Your Government would not even agree to what I thought was the least that they could have accepted, which was to review the position in twelve months' time. It is a three year review. It will be three years before the damage can be rectified. It will be no good then your Government or anybody's Government saying we are going to give you some money for the same sort of thing, because the schemes that have been working will have been destroyed unless, of course, we can start to save additional money throughout 2008 by clamping down on anything we regard as wasteful expenditure. That is precisely why we made the comments we made at the Executive Board because between the budget deliberations being concluded and the Executive Board, we had the exchange of letters with John Healey and it became perfectly apparent to us that there was going to be no movement at all by the Government, no movement at all, and that we were not going to get a penny piece in this particular fund.

That means that next year the Government cuts get even worse. It means that schemes that we simply cannot allow to go by the wayside have to be funded and have to be funded through mainstream funding arrangements. That is going to put a huge burden on us yet again particularly, Keith, when the settlement your Government have promised us next year - I think you quoted 1.8% from the Conservative Government - 1.8% from the Labour Government next year, so we are going to have another very difficult time.

We have said we are going to seek to find more savings through procurement at every level. We are going to look at the ways in which procurement is carried out. That is not a criticism of our procurement unit. If anything it is a support to them to say they need to put in place more controls to stop, shall we say, people buying off contract, for example.

We have said that on top of the 25% savings that we have made already in three years in terms of advertising, in terms of glossy brochures and the rest, we will seek to make more savings and in terms of consultancy. I quite agree on consultancy, it has been extremely stubborn in terms of getting it down to the level we want to see it at and a lot more work is going to be done and every department knows.

I will take no lectures - no lectures - from this side on the spending of unnecessary funds. If you want to stay here all day I will give you a catalogue of your 24 years of wasted money.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: You are not lecturing us either.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I will mention one thing, as Councillor Coupar decided to be so disparaging about my colleague Councillor Harrand. If you ever get the chance to take over a Council department, ever, and it is from Councillor Harrand, what you will inherit will be a department that has been put back on a proper footing, not one that is indebted to the tune of £24m; not one that is telling old people they cannot have adaptations to their properties; not one that is saying you cannot have this, you cannot have that because we have run out of money, and that is what we inherited from you. *(Applause)*

Let us just go on to Environment. I want to pick up the points that David made in particular. Just to tell you what we are going to be doing in terms of Streetscene. First of all it is a downright lie to say our preferred option is heat from waste or incineration or call it what you will. It is a downright lie. What we are going to be doing is increasing the bin replacement programme for both black and green bins. We are continuing the collection of fortnightly sort material from bin yards, despite the reduction in NRF which has previously funded that particular activity; resources to support the implementation of the Authority's waste strategy, including the procurement of a residual waste facility; expansion of the kerbside garden collection; and implementation of fortnightly sort collections on a trial basis.

These service developments are designed to increase the combined recycling and composting rate to 30% by the end of the year, which will keep us way ahead of the rest of the major cities in this country and you already know that our target for 2020 is 52% recycling - that is above Government limits.

More than that we have guaranteed to keep the weekly black bin collection. We have given a firm undertaking that there will be no tax on refuse collection for the people of Leeds and we are absolutely firm in that. You are not because under an administration of your party you would bow to your Government's dictates and cut the

weekly bin collection; you would introduce a tax on bin collection. We know it, the people out there know it and you will live with it on election day.

My Lord Mayor, can I reassure Councillor Blackburn that there is extra money in the budget for more litter bins. It may seem to some people like a relatively minor issue, but if you are intent on keeping the city cleaner and cleaner, you have to give members of the public the receptacles in which to place their rubbish and, like many other Councillors and particularly Councillor Blackburn, I have not been happy that there has been insufficient in that budget, it seems to me for many a long year. We have put more in in this coming year.

A comment was made, I think it was by Councillor Blake, about making Leeds a green city again. How anybody in the Labour Party can use the word "green" is beyond me when only last week we had confirmed that their Government - their Government - wants to concrete over half of Micklefield and the fields around it, that we are constantly being put under pressure for more building in Garforth, in Pudsey, in Morley, in Rothwell and anywhere else you can think of based on spurious statistics churned out by Gordon Brown's favourite housing guru Kate Barlett, who seems to want to bring the property market crashing down around the 70% of owner-occupiers who live in their own homes. I do not think that is much of a policy for us to adopt.

My Lord Mayor, if I can conclude by just mentioning the capital programme. The capital programme, my Lord Mayor, is £1b. It is a massive capital programme. It is designed to do something that a capital programme under this lot never, ever did - invest in every ward in this city no matter where it is geographically located and no matter what the political representation.

When Councillor Wakefield mentioned leadership and referred to joint administrations and coalitions, I was reminded of the story circulating in the Council just after the local elections last year when apparently he paid three visits to Morley in the space of a week. As he had never visited Morley in the previous 24 years of Labour administration, - he has owned up to it too - and his party had paid the price for the abysmal neglect of the good residents of Morley, I am astonished he wanted even to get into discussions about joint administrations. The simple fact is - and it is the one they find most unpalatable - nobody wants your Government, nobody wants you and nobody wants to work with you because they do not trust you, they do not like you and they do not want you. (*Applause*) If you go home, Keith, and look in the mirror tonight you will know why!

So, my Lord Mayor, we look forward with growing optimism to the next local elections. We realise that this budget is a very tight one, it is a very difficult one but, as I have already said, you agree with 99.4% of it so who am I to complain? I have to say I did say to Councillor J L Carter, "Do you think we have got this right if this lot agree with 99% of it? Perhaps we ought to go back and have another look!"

My Lord Mayor, it will be a very, very difficult year. Because we know what the Government proposes to give us over the next couple of years, we know that the whole of the next three years will be financial difficult to manage, but we have put in place a robust budget - and I should have thanked Alan and his team earlier and I do so now because we are extremely well blessed in this Council with our team of financial officers who regularly help politicians of all parties really to understand the complexities of running a city of this size and I do thank them very much for their efforts this time.

This budget is designed with one main thing in mind.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Survival.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I was just thinking about the word “survival” for the moment and I just wondered how much longer Keith was going to survive and I do not think much after May 1 somehow, Richard, do you? I think the prospect of having three more years in opposition with Keith as the titular head would be too much for most of them to tolerate.

My Lord Mayor, this budget is designed to deliver improved front-line services to everybody across the city in every geographical area at a price they can afford and I am happy to second the resolution. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will try and get myself some popularity by saying I will not go on as long as Andrew did.

Just to pick up on a few things that Andrew said, I had expected a kind of vision to come at the end because we had had Richard doing the “Whitehall is doing all this to us” and not much of what you are doing and I thought Andrew will wrap up and he will give us vision for the future and it was not really forthcoming, was it? A lot of smoke and mirrors, really.

We are talking about sickness levels - “You are going to do this”. There is Alan Gay sitting over there and I am sorry to point at Alan but his team have to give us approval for any amendments we make to the budget, so our amendments have to be...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You can do it - by sacking people.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Stop it Andrew, stop talking silly. We have to be able to come up with something robust, which is not the situation you were in when you were in opposition because you could come up with the kind of blue skies budget and there were not those kind of controls - you can say whatever you wanted. You can get rid of the Civic newspaper, as you often proposed in those days, you can get rid of department after department and nobody questioned it. There was not anything in there, so not surprisingly it was a damn sight easier. I just wonder how you managed to go on for about 15 minutes criticising Keith when, if you say, all he does is criticise on 0.6% with you, but that is what you do.

Let us talk about sickness levels a bit. Let us just unravel that a bit. You are right that it is usually about a small number of people who are off sick for a long time and that is about day-to-day boring management of a problem and it is something that you have told us time after time is easy to achieve. I sat here year after year listening to you saying about the improvements you were going to make on it and you have not done it. We will do it; we will achieve that.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You had 24 years to do it and didn't.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: The ludicrous argument that you are going to save £800,000, the only way you can do that is by sacking people. Surely, even Robert would work out that there is an issue of redundancy in that, would you not? Perhaps not. Poor old Robert, the ex-Socialist, full of bile, all he can do is agree with the Tories. It is a desperate, sad situation you have got yourself into, Robert, and I feel very sorry for you. We all end up as pragmatists but I am still a Socialist.

COUNCILLOR: You do not even live in Leeds.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Yes, I do live in Leeds.

Just a few other little points. Criticism of the MPs. Very easy. Let us remember Paul Truswell, for instance - his mother died a fortnight ago, he was not able to be in the House of Commons so this kind of cheap slagging off of the MPs is totally pointless and counter productive in terms of this city.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Where was John Battle?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Regardless of the politics, you should be working with them on all these issues. If you do not think they are doing enough you should be chivvying them up, you should be working with them, not coming in here and doing your little schpiel because it does absolutely no good.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Where was Fabian Hamilton?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Shut up.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Just a few little points I would also pick up from Andrew. You say that there is no commitment to an incinerator, no, it is not your preferred option. Go back to the KPMG report which went to Corporate Governance. What does that say in there? Go and have a read of it, do not take my word for it. Have a look at your own glossies. I suppose the proof of the pudding is in the eating. I will wait and I will see what comes out of your arguments on this and I will say that what we are going to do is we are going to hold a referendum of all the people who live close to the site of the proposed incinerator to see what their views are. Let us have a bit of local democracy that is meaningful on this one.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Where are you putting your incinerator?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: We will wait until you tell us.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: It will not be Morley, will it? It will not be Morley because you want their votes.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: You have already sent letters out to all the people in the area you think is affected, so that is a list I am quite happy to go on.

We talked about the worst settlement this Local Authority has ever had. It is a bad settlement but I suggest, Andrew, you can talk so much about that 24 years and I have heard him talk about how he is going to open the books on all our waste and all the terrible things we did. I have yet to see it. I am waiting for it, Andrew. You have had four years now. You come back in with all that catalogue of waste and all the terrible things we have done because you have been threatening it for the past four years and I have yet to hear a word. Come on, let us have a bit of detail here rather than that kind of rhetoric.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: All right, you are on.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: In terms of the worse settlement let us have a look...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You are on.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Good. Let us have a look at Revenue and Capital. I am sure that we could go back over the years of our administration and we would find years when we were worse off than you are in this particular year.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: You never did anything.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I am not saying this is a good year but I am certainly saying that we have had worse.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Put your house on it.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: You are going to bet what? Your house on it?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I said you put your house on it.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: No, you put yours on it, mate.

At least David did come back with some kind of sensible, constructive questions and cross-examination, I think. Sadly the Morley Independents could not manage that but perhaps that is not surprising. We certainly say to David you need to talk to us about our commitment to green issues and you will certainly find it a damn sight better than over there.

There was one thing I really do want to come back to and that is what Richard Brett said about the Housing Revenue Account and about negative subsidy. I welcome his views, I welcome what he said. I have been saying it for 18 years, though, not 18 months.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: I have never heard you.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: You have not been listening to me, Les. You should have been listening because I said it last time in the Council meeting and I have said it year after year in this Council Chamber, that the negative subsidy situation is criminal. However, it is in the context of Labour Government that has put huge amounts of capital into Council housing - huge amounts both in PFI and in terms of public borrowing. You compare that with the record of the Tory administration in central Government and what they did to us was to force our rents up and, at the same time, they reduced the amount of money...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: It was 7.8%. 7.8%

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: They reduced the amount of money that we could spend on properties so people ended up (*interruption*) I am enjoying this. I am really enjoying this. So, Les, the situation was we were demanding people pay more rent when their windows were falling out. At least thanks to a Labour Government you are in a position where you can actually say the properties are in a decent condition, thanks to a Labour Government. Let us not look at all these kind of, "Our Council is going to spend all this on capital programme, aren't we wonderful?" You are not wonderful at all. It is the Government that has been wonderful to you and that is what has achieved this. (*hear, hear*)

Let us have a look at the ALMO situation a bit more because that is good, but that did not just come about out of the blue. It came about because there were Local Authorities like Leeds, like Southampton and like Derby, that worked very hard behind the scenes to get a change in the rules to get money into Council housing. That was people like Eric Bowen, Director of Housing here did a huge amount of work on that.

What you have not done is do the work behind the scenes on the whole issue of negative subsidy. You have had four years of it. What have you been doing, because you have not been doing anything.

COUNCILLOR J C CARTER: I could sell a lot more Council houses.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I have listened to this sad budget that we have heard because there is nothing in it. There is no vision, nothing that can excite anybody. I am desperately disappointed that Richard on this first big occasion for him has not been able to pull any rabbits out of the bag though if you look at him, when Andrew was doing his budget last year all he could come out with was about caring. You really have not got a grasp that this Council is about joining up things together, having strategies for running it and a vision for the future on where you are going and you really have not got that. Until you get it, you certainly will not be getting any support from this side. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Brett to sum up.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am told, Keith, that Train to Gain is the LSC funds that you may have been referring to and that the LSC has indicated support for public services being involved as recently as October/November 2007. I am told we will be asking for in the region of £300,000, so it is certainly not true that we do not wish to be involved in that scheme to try and upskill our own employees.

I have to say, James - he is not here, James Lewis - that it applies perhaps to Richard as well, this wonderful Government and we are terrible and you are wonderful, according to you. Let me remind you of the last Chancellor's budget, Gordon Brown last year, where he abolished the 10% band. It means that, my understanding at least, is that anyone who earns less than £19,000 a year will, from 1 April, face significant increases in tax. In Leeds we estimate that virtually all women, that virtually all students, certainly most part-time workers, agency workers, will be hit in a very significant way by this. It could be that it is well over half of people that in Leeds are working will find that they are significantly worse off because of this.

If I look at the main thrust of Labour's amendment, as has already been pointed out, it is relatively minor and it does actually say something about what is not there. There is no proposal, as there has been in previous years, to tinker with and change the Council tax rate. They are saying we have got it right at 4.7%. I am mystified and I cannot understand Keith's remarks both at Executive Board and here today, telling us off to say that £12m in reserves is too little and yet his amendment appears to leave that totally unchanged. If you really believe that the amount that we are proposing for reserves is too small, then surely yr amendment should have attempted to address that and, as far as I can see, it does not.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We will review it, like you do.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I find that the £800,000 that they are proposing to save on reduced sickness is something that, as Councillor Andrew Carter has already said, we on this side find it all too easy to play games at this point and say, "We can save this, we can save that, it is some paper exercise" but, of course, when you come to do it there are no easy wins in this sort of area. The £800,000 equates to an average reduction in sickness across all our employees of one day per year and I think I am perhaps being very generous in saying that as an ambition that is fine, but as something that is practical to put in the budget for this coming year, I simply do not believe that that is something that you could achieve.

As far as Robert is concerned, I share your concern about planning enforcement and we would look to do more in that area and I am involved in some discussions to try and see whether we can do a bit more on planning enforcement.

That bring me, I think, finally, to what has been going on today and we have here a paper which tells us about what has been going on in Westminster today:

“The Government was today accused of treating Leeds like a game show on television after making a scandalous decision to slash crucial funding. In a furious attack Labour Leeds East MP George Mudie rounded on his own Government after Ministers decided the city would not be eligible for a £54 funding pot for the most deprived parts of the city.”

For once I agree with George. If this is true, he may be in the wrong party. Further, what I find anything but amusing is that at one stage George was forced to stop and reprimand the Local Government Minister, John Healey, for smiling, for appearing to be amused at his comments. This is certainly - and I agree with George - the sort of way that you decide game shows. It is not how you decide social policy. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Council. We now move to the vote on the amendment in the name of Keith Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Recorded vote, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is that seconded?

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Seconded.

(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment)

THE LORD MAYOR: Present are 97; “Yes” 43; Abstain 4; “No” 50, so that is LOST.

Can I move us then to the motion in front of us. Is this to be recorded or is this to be a show of hands? Recorded, thank you.

(A recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atkinson, could I ask how you intend to vote?

COUNCILLOR ATKINSON: I am abstaining.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. In that case the figures are present 86, “Yes” 52; Abstain 24; “No” 5. Thank you, Council. CARRIED.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Well done. Leadership from the opposition again.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Carter.

ITEM 5 - REPORT
(a) Amendments to the Constitution

THE LORD MAYOR: We are very short of time. Can I move us now to page 2, item 5 and call on Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Could I move in terms of the Notice?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter??

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: It is not down on the Order Paper, Council, before you all disappear, it is necessary to vote on this. Could I therefore have, by a show of hands, those in favour? Against? Abstentions? That is CARRIED.

(b) Late Item - Appointments

THE LORD MAYOR: Lord Mayor, I move in terms of the Notice.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Could I call for the vote? Those in favour of 5(b)? Against? Abstentions? (A vote was taken) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 6 - MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I therefore move us on to Agenda Item 6, the Minutes. Councillor Andrew Carter?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My, I move the Minutes of the Executive Board in terms of the Notice.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Now to invite comments on the Minutes and the first to speak is Councillor Lyons.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I have been very patient all afternoon and listened to some stuff and I think some of the noses should have grown longer like Pinocchio's, but I do not think they did.

I would like to speak on Minute 42, 158, regarding future risk management projects identified by this Council. One of the projects identified as red risk was waste management and, as we know the cost of the future waste strategy is going to be tremendously expensive, it is only right and proper that we get this right. By getting it right, does not just mean financially right - it means right to the people as well. I know some are walking out because incinerator is not going to be on their patch. I would have thought when you have heard Keith and some more speaking regarding this incinerator, you should be backing if you are democrats at all, you should be backing the call for a vote on whether we should be building an incinerator at all in this city, but you are not.

What you are saying is that you are treating the citizens of Leeds like mushrooms, how we deal with mushrooms. What you do is keep them on the dark and feed them on manure and that is what you are doing, because I have asked time and time again at this Council, I have asked where are you going to put it, all dead open, and we heard Andrew Carter up and speaking about everything bar what

matters to the people out there. What matters is their health. Most of all it is their health.

When we are talking about consultation we should be calling meetings and calling a referendum on not only where this incinerator goes but should it be there at all.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Like you did.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Councillor Brett - I did not interfere when any of you were speaking, please leave me alone else we will get some more time - Councillor Brett, I was at a meeting with you on the patch when you said, "I will not vote for an incinerator." I have heard this before from the Liberals and they have said, "We will not vote for an incinerator", so you should be in favour of what I am proposing now, is to go out to the people so that they can tell both you and I what they want.

To say that you put White Papers down at the drop of a hat on anything, you have been very, very quiet on the incinerator that happens to be on your patch, or is going to be in your patch - you know it and I know it. The people of Leeds will have to wait two years to find out where it is and what it is going to be and what we are going to call it, etc. We have two years to wait for this to settle down and find out what is happening.

What they are hoping is that, like you can see empty benches, that it will go away like they have just gone away. Let me tell you, it will not, and people that I have spoken to and addressed have told me without any fact, they do not want an incinerator either in East Leeds or Leeds anywhere.

COUNCILLOR: Why did you build one, then?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You are finding out the people across here that it will not be in their patches and it will not affect their patch. You go and tell the people of Leeds, all right, it is not going to be in my patch, put it in somebody else's. Put it in Richard Brett's patch. It is not good enough. What we need, we definitely need, is for people to go and be informed of just what is happening. We have got a newspaper that we put out and, apart from any politician, they put a great big photograph of an incinerator. As none of you are going to vote for an incinerator, why did you show them what it looked like? This is at public expense you have put out to show what it looked like.

Make your minds up. Call for a vote. Let the people know. Honest and fair elections that is what you should be doing, saying we are voting whether we want an incinerator or we do not. You are frightened of it so you have bunged it in his patch providing you are going to make him half leader for half of the year. That is what you have done and, as far as I can see, it ain't good enough.

As the people of Leeds what they want. You dare not do it. This Labour Group is saying ask the people of Leeds, call meetings and let us see what the people want - not what you want, what people want out there. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on page 47 Minute 168 on how the Council chooses to raise and spend its money.

Further to my question to Councillor Brett at the last Council meeting about the way in which your administration has reconfigured the way in which Youth Service money is spent in this city, the Labour Group's budget would have ensured

that those areas in greatest need received additional cash for youth work. Every ward in Leeds would have continued to receive the minimum offered by your administration but extra money would have gone into the wards where it was most needed - wards like Seacroft and Killingbeck and Burmantofts, Councillor Brett, would have received an extra £10,000. Labour's budget, unlike the Tory-led administration's budget, would have narrowed the gap for those young people whose families are in receipt of benefits and ensured that there were more constructive activities available for young people in some of our most deprived neighbourhoods.

Likewise with the childcare charges that you are raising, it is dispiriting to note that the administration opposite is neglecting its duties to the worst off in our city by raise childcare costs in a way that will penalise most those on the lowest incomes.

Yes, the Government's tax credit system will ensure that much of these increased charges is met. However, for those earning the minimum wage and those on part-time hours, the additional cost to be found from their own pockets may make all the difference between choosing to work or stop at home.

Families with children in schools in Leeds also have compelling reasons to question the way in which the administration opposite is running the education in this city. Leeds is trailing behind the national average in a whole range of educational performance measures. At primary level Key Stage 1 results showed a drop in all subjects in 2007. At GCSE level, Leeds averages lower results at five A* to C both with and without English and Maths, and the number of pupils gaining five or more GCSEs at A* to G is below both the national average and our statistical neighbours.

The Executive Board report on 8 February notes that nearly 70% of Leeds schools are below the lower quartile for contextual value added. It is no wonder performance is so low when eight of our high schools are amongst the worst in the country for truancy and it is no surprise that these schools, which are in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the city, are also producing some of the worst exam results.

Last summer the South Leeds High School alone, 92% of pupils left school without GCSEs in English and Maths and across Leeds a staggering 92% of looked-after children left school without five good GCSEs. Ofsted judges only two out of five of our secondary schools to be good or better, while the national equivalent is more than half. More than double the national average number of pupils left schools without any qualifications at all in 2007.

This is a damning picture of the educational provision on offer in Leeds. Yes, there are pockets of outstanding achievement at schools like Garforth, Morley and Roundhay, but the overall picture is one of far too many pupils being failed by this administration and its running of education in Leeds.

The lack of direction shown by the administration opposite is clear from the poor educational performance in the city. The administration is failing to drive up standards in schools, it is failing to provide sufficient focused support for vulnerable groups like looked-after children and for pupils in our most disadvantaged communities.

It is failing to deliver any strategic vision with academies and trusts springing up but seemingly no overall plan. Again, with the FE review in Leeds there has been an apparent vacuum with a total lack of leadership from the administration opposite. When will Councillor Harker make a statement on this administration's vision for improving education in Leeds? How much worse will performance have to get before

the administration opposite grasps the nettle? How many more young people in this city will leave school without qualifications to get a job or go into further training?

If we are serious about narrowing the gap and going up a league in this city, then Leeds deserves and desperately needs better for its children, young people and families than the administration opposite is willing to offer. You do not just have to take my word for it. The Leeds Skills Board, chaired by Councillor Andrew Carter, has expressed its concern about the lack of skills in Leeds's workforce and notes that it is the most basic skills and aptitudes required for productivity in the workplace that are lacking.

In this month's Leeds Chamber of Commerce magazine the Skills Board states:

"If we do not improve the skills of our workers we not only risk reducing the repetitiveness of our businesses and economy but also widening the divisions within our society. We cannot afford to let this happen."

It is encouraging to note that the Leeds Skills Board, at least, shares Labour's commitment to narrowing the gap and going up a league.

From education standards to childcare charges, this administration is failing families in Leeds and particularly those who are worst off. If we are serious about narrowing the gap and going up a league as a city, then Leeds deserves and desperately needs better for its children, young people and families than the administration opposite is currently offering. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I too want to speak on Minute 168 on page 147.

Lord Mayor, at the last Council meeting I gave several examples about the problems in some cases caused by the lettings policy. I talked about the knock-on effect this has on crime and antisocial behaviour but there are many other issues; for example we need a clear lead on tackling of problems of under-age drinking, truancy, vandalism and intimidation go hand-in-hand with antisocial behaviour.

We need to take a holistic view on these matters. We must take into account community safety and the wishes of the communities where all decisions are being made.

Because any single decision can have a massive impact on areas, we need to think about all possible consequences before we make all decisions. I am sure that you will all agree that we need to intervene quicker when problems first arise instead of waiting till it is too late.

Instead of spin, rhetoric and headlines, let me tell you what is lacking really is action, which has been missing for the last three-and-a-half years. What we need is a new way of dealing with the root causes of crime and antisocial behaviour, particularly with the younger members of our communities. We could do far more in terms of tackling truancy, abuse issues and behavioural problems. With the right support systems in place from the start and early detection of potential problems, we can put the welfare of these young children and their parents at the forefront of our agenda.

So far I see very little - if you are listening, Les - evidence from you that you are taking a lead and really making a difference to the problems facing our neighbourhoods today.

Under the previous administration this Authority, under the leadership of Councillor Wakefield, led from the front in dealing with ASB - antisocial behaviour - and the issuing of ASBOs. Since then, apart from ASBOs this administration has run out of idea. ASBOs are beautiful tools providing that the breaches are kept to a minimum. In Leeds well over half of all ASBOs issued end up being breached. However, we need to also ensure that we use other powers at our disposal.

We should be making better use of the preventative measures at our fingertips, such as parenting orders, dispersal orders, mediation, education and treatment programmes, instead of tackling the problem after the horse has bolted.

Richard, you mentioned earlier you were quick to claim credit for the reduction in crime. We have got a record number of police officers on our streets - that is as a result of the millions of funding that has been put in to policing by this Labour Government. Where we are really missing out, a lot of our crime relates to theft and burglary, petty crime. Where we are really lacking is dealing with the causes of crime. This where leadership really comes in, this is where we need to work with the police to tackle these issues, such as the lettings policy, such as the truancy, such as vandalism.

Lisa mentioned earlier on about truancy. Shockingly, within the last three months of 2007, 1201 crimes were committed in Leeds by youngsters under the age of 18. What I am saying is, let us make more use of dispersal orders to drive away the gangs roaming our streets and footpaths and ginnels night after night. Only three weeks ago one of our constituents, who I know personally, was brutally attacked by two thugs at around eight-ish in the evening in a small alleyway between Harehills Avenue and Avenue Crescent. This is a concern for the whole community in that area. We should be doing everything to tackle alleyways such as this.

Vandalism is also on the increase, particularly in our cemeteries. There has been several articles in our local press during the previous few months. Stewart and Mark, if you are still here, before you have the audacity to accuse me of fabricating case studies, I have got press articles and photos of the horrific injuries if you want to see them later on.

The abandonment of the proof of age scheme, it is no wonder under-age drinking is prevalent in our city. The lack of funding in the Tory-led budget for the alcohol proof of age merely highlights how important they see the health and welfare of young people in Leeds.

I want to see greater investment in the areas of community safety that actually work. That is why the Labour amendment provides funds to bring back the proof of age scheme that cuts down under age binge drinking. You lot promised to do this, Les. I have one article here from the Evening Post last year in which you actually said you would be delegating this responsibility to - yet another responsibility - without funding to the Area Committees but nothing has happened.

As the regional capital of the north-east, the Authority should be taking the lead on this issue. We have set aside 100k in our budget to bring this scheme back into play so move out of the way and let...

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor. If you could leave it there. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I too want to speak on page 47, Minute 168. I had a look at the budget as was proposed in the Executive Board and actually I felt you had missed a trick. One of the things that I have come to a conclusion about since I have been leading on this portfolio area, is the real lack of synergy between the Children's Directorate and Education Leeds and the cost of that on the citizens of Leeds. As we have said many times on this side of the Chamber, we feel the funding structure of £1.5m is profligate and does not give best value to the citizens of Leeds. We feel there ought to be some recognition of the duplication which takes place between the Children's Directorate and Education Leeds in terms of quite a lot of the functions - HR, payroll, communication, PR, etc. We think there should be some synergy between those costs which will make savings for us to be able to hopefully improve the outcomes of children in this city and particularly the areas that we would like to invest some of that money in is looked-after children and also we want to defray some of the additional charges that are being brought in by this administration relating to nursery charges.

Our budget, which you have just voted out would have brought in another £350,000 both for extra work with looked-after children but also for defraying the costs of the additional charges in the nurseries. We wanted to spend £100,000 on developing the looked-after children fund that Councillor Brett wanted us to pay for last September, and we think that that would have been a really good start to trying to address some of the under-achieving of this very, very vulnerable group.

This group believes that urgent action and funding is required to address this scandal of poor performance amongst looked-after children. 4% five A* to Cs, if you include English and Maths. This requires some targeted support. The JAR also identified other issues for looked-after children that urgently need to be addressed by your administration. Their disproportionate involvement in the criminal justice system, the lack of regular health and dental checks which are this Council's responsibility, poor levels of achievement as has been discussed by my colleague Lisa and myself, and poor health indicators such as teenage pregnancy rates.

This group wanted to use some of the £350,000 that we managed to find, even though we did not get all the information we needed from the Children's Directorate, that would have addressed that balance for these disadvantaged groups of children.

We also wanted to look at how we could help those more disadvantaged parents who were going to be most hit by the 47% increase in nursery charges. 550 families who are in receipt of income less than our Council allowances will now have to find another £9 per week and this is at a time when the world wide credit crunch is already putting additional pressures on the whole of the citizens of Leeds.

Had we got the details we had requested from the Children's directorate on the profligate funding structure that I have already mentioned, then maybe we would have been able to find more than £350,000 and we would have been able to completely disregard the increased charges that you are introducing, but as we were not able to get that information, then we were not able to make those proposals. Maybe next year. You will get that information and you can choose to make those changes if that is what you want.

Councillor Brett has bemoaned the lack of funding coming from central Government and the impact of this on poverty, deprivation and ill-health. Your budget, which you have just voted on, penalises the poorest parents, the most vulnerable adults and older people and tenants and exacerbates the so-called lack of funding from central Government.

Taking into account the impact of the leisure centre charge increase, childhood obesity, antisocial behaviour and poor health are also additional crimes to be laid at this administration's door. People in glass houses should not throw stones, so put your house in order and live up to the values that are in our mission statement and which our citizens deserve. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I remind Council, it is really difficult sitting here trying to listen when private conversations are going on. If you want to hold private conversations, could you do it outside, please? That is all parts of the House. Could I now call upon Councillor Hanley.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Lord Mayor, I too would like to speak on Minute 168 which is on page 47 and 48. In particular I would like to speak about the Treasury management but so much has been said this afternoon all around the Chamber about the tightness of the budget. It is mentioned in that particular Minute as well, we do appreciate it is a difficult situation but it is £8m, a lot of money. I think it has been dealt with in a very forthright way by the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Wakefield, and I think the MPs are truly doing what they can do. I am sure the Labour MPs will be there today and I am sure the Lib Dem MP will also be doing what he can on behalf of the city and hopefully his language might be a little more mature this week than it has been in the recent past.

Lord Mayor, it is an issue and we do recognise that £8m is a lot of money. Members around the Chamber have congratulated Mr Gay this afternoon on Treasury management and I too would like to join that. It is not just Mr Gay. I am sure he will be the first to say it is indeed his officers as well who are vigilant when it comes to the management of the staggering sums of money that this Authority has out on loan - well in excess of £1b. In fact in the years 2006/07 £600m was restructured and that gave us saving with the work that they have managed to carry out of almost £20m, some of it in interest but the bulk of it in discounts. £20m, a large sum of money. I think it puts the £8m into perspective.

In this year that we are in now, again we have relied on Mr Gay and his department and again restructuring has taken place and there is a further saving of not ten point-something million that Richard quoted - it is actually quoted in the papers at £12.8m, so again I believe that these put the figures into perspective.

It is the Government's job to govern. It is the Government's job to create the overall economic environment for the Bank of England - the independent Bank of England---

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: £100m to Northern Rock.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: The independent Bank of England to be able to set prudent rates and to keep our economy on track and I think this is what this allows people like Alan Gay to make the savings that he has managed to achieve on our behalf.

Lord Mayor, I was surprised today that we did not hear anything about the airport money. I thought that might have filtered in somewhere. I do not like mentioning - we keep talking about £8m but what about the £50m that we got? I must say, I was very disappointed when the debate took place in this Chamber at the last Council meeting and not just disappointment on your side, disappointment, a little twinge of disappointment on our side, because £50m was a great achievement and I think it was Councillor Morton, David Morton, who congratulated the authority on how well they had done in selling it. I personally would be more comfortable with

congratulating people like Councillor Atkinson and Councillor Cairns from Bradford who were the Chair and Vice-Chair who really turned that place up there from an airfield into an international airport. That is what made the money. The £50 is there and, again, I think it puts the £8m into perspective.

I will not mention the 5.8% rent increase. Somebody from your side says it is the minimum the Government will accept but it is still a tragedy that it is over and above what the general rate increase is. Lord Mayor, I will not mention the £3m because that is only a small number of millions - that is what we have got over and above what we are paying out for lighting on the PFI scheme. The amount of money we have got from the Government is £3m more.

I think there are pros and cons here. I am sorry about losing my voice. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I move the suspension of Council Procedure Rule 3.1 (a) and (b) to allow for the winding up of the Minutes to commence at 5.00 p.m.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. All those in favour? Against? Abstentions? That is definitely CARRIED, so we go on now with the Minutes until five o'clock. Quickly on now to Councillor Harington.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. This is also on Minute 168, page 47. Not surprisingly I welcome the Labour proposal in our alternative budget to restrict charges for the leisure centres within inflation and to make it free for those over 65. Obviously in the present climate with so much concern about obesity and people not taking exercise anything that could be done should be done to encourage more people to attend leisure centres.

This week I went, and a number of other Councillors did too, to the Sport Awards dinner. It was very impressive to see how many Leeds-based athletes were doing so well both locally, nationally and internationally, and very impressive too to see all the support they get, whether it be from coaches, amateur and professional, and their parents.

You would feel, and I think rightly feel, that a lot must be in place in the city to enable Leeds-based athletes to do well and especially if you went or have already been to the new swimming pool - a fantastic facility and obviously one that we hope many Leeds swimmers will benefit from as they are already doing. Also, as Richard not surprisingly gave us a list of other investments in the city in terms of the ballet, splendid - he did not mention but, of course, wonderful new improvements to the art gallery, the Grand Theatre and so on.

The question mark always is the extent to which this going up a league is balanced with narrowing the gap. In some ways again you could point to successes. I have been looking at the figures for the Breeze activities recently and they are impressive.

On the other hand, there are some niggles recently which not surprisingly I am going to draw attention to. In addition to increasing charges for sports centres - let us see what effect that has - there has also been the issue of the half marathon which thankfully has been restored but nevertheless there was, I would say, a spectacular miscalculation as to how much that was actually valued and why. Also there is now, of course, an issue to do with the Shakespeare Festival at Kirkstall Abbey which again I hope will be resolved.

One final issue I would like to draw attention to. I have been visiting a lot of schools recently to see the sports provision that is in place and in many or perhaps all schools there is tremendous work being done by teachers within school hours. The great issue, especially in areas like Gipton and Harehills, is what is in place to enable those children to go do sporting activities after school.

The Wedge organiser, the fantastic facilities at Carr Manor High School, the Wedge organiser there, I said to her, "What would you most need?" and she said, "Transport for every school to get the kids here."

Significantly, at the sporting dinner one of the people I spoke to involved very much in sports administration in the city said that if you did a percentage, you had not done the figures but the high percentage of the people who had done well was because they had parental support. Obviously many places in Leeds there is not that parental support and so there is a huge and, I understand, terrifically difficult and financial issue for the next year or coming years as to how to resolve that.

In other words, of course we can all list some fantastic things that are being done but at the same time there is obviously a great deal to do in order to say that we are truly narrowing the gap. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Harington. Could I call upon Councillor Andrew Carter?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Yes, my Lord Mayor. If I could just pick up a couple of points on the capital programme which were missed during the budget debate. The ward-based initiative scheme is being reintroduced. There is £30,000 per ward and Mr Gay is drawing up the normal protocol so that Members know precisely how that is to be spent, so I can confirm that in the capital programme there is an amount of £30,000 per ward to be spent over two years. The reason it is over two years is that I am conscious that if we were to say it is £30,000 next year, it might encourage, shall we say, not exactly the most sustainable of capital spending. It is over two years. If you can get a decent scheme together in one year, fine; if it takes you two, the money is still there.

The other point I wanted to comment on was the fact Councillor Brett did mention highways maintenance. I should just remind Members that if they care to compare the spending in their ward on highway maintenance this year and, indeed, next year, with 2003/4, they will find in virtually every ward in the city we are now spending almost or over three times as much as we were then, putting back the roads and footpaths into a proper state of repair which is, of course, the result of inheriting a £60m backlog. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I just advise Sophie, looking out for the microphones, there are speakers being added to the list and the first is Councillor Harker.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Surely you call them on the way they are already in the papers before you add other speakers.

THE LORD MAYOR: I have called them because they are speaking on the Minute that has just been - it seems sensible.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: No, it does not seem sensible when there is a guillotine at five o'clock and those people who have given notice could be cut off. I do not think that is sensible at all. I think people on the list should speak first and then others get to speak later.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: It was a good try. It is worth trying but it does not work.

THE LORD MAYOR: In that case could I put it to Council? Do you wish people to speak on the Minutes in relation to the order of the Minutes as they appear in the book or in relation to the order paper? Those who wish to speak in relation to the order paper? Those in favour of the order paper? OK, sorry, Councillor Harker, sorry Councillor Golton, sorry Councillor Harris, sorry Councillor Taylor. We then move to the good-looking McKenna, Andrea.

COUNCILLOR A McKENNA: I am speaking on page 49, Minute 169 on the financial health of the Authority impact on the people of Leeds.

First of all we have the much celebrated Call Centre. I do not want to go over all ground but there are a number of points that I think I have to make. We have brought up the issue at the last Council meeting. Councillor Brett wrote to the Yorkshire Evening Post promising to display the 0113 equivalent numbers next to the 0845 numbers. He also promised to change the Leeds City Council website so that Contact Leeds details were more visible. Well, Councillor Brett, I still cannot find them and I am not the only one.

You have made all these promises but I could not help but notice that there was one promise missing. You have still not committed to moving to 03 numbers. What is the matter, Councillor Brett? Can you not stomach the thought of stop ripping off the people of Leeds? Did you know that OFCOM had stopped using the 03 numbers since last November? Why have you not yet made the switch, or even made a solid commitment? It is not that hard. You could simply be providing the people of Leeds with a service that they deserve and not have to pay such a ridiculous amount.

Despite Councillor Lobley calling £4 per call a bargain, it is a ridiculous amount. I would love Councillor Lobley to come to my ward and tell the people about the bargain they are paying, and I tell you, he will get very short shrift.

I know this may seem an alien concept to you, but I really do urge you to go and think of the other people and switch to an 03 number. You never know, you might even get a little respect from the people for daring to make the change.

Councillor Brett, considering you have been Councillor Carter's understudy for just a matter of months, it has not taken you long to be talking big and failing to deliver. I suppose you have been learning from the best.

Let me move on to Relate. Councillor Brett, you promised to look and see if you could find the money for Relate. You promised to keep me informed about discussions with officers. You have not kept me informed on anything. Councillor Brett, what I do know is that you have failed to find the money for Relate and I also know that you have offered them £2,000 to shut up and go away.

You may look outraged but I know this is the truth and I have to say I am totally disgusted by the way this has all been conducted.

After the deputation at the last Council meeting, you made these people believe that you would help and that you would find the money and everything would be all right. Well, it is not all right and the fact that you have offered them £2,000 as a kind of pay-off is a disgrace and something to be ashamed of.

After all your big talk and reassuring noises, you have failed to deliver. You have failed all the hard working families in Leeds who turn to Relate for help - all those children who are sitting back and watching their entire lives fall apart. That is all down to you, Councillor Brett, and I hope that you are proud.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: No it is not.

COUNCILLOR A McKENNA: We in the Labour Group feel very differently towards Relate than you obviously do and we value the work that Relate do in recognising the vital contribution they make to this city. In our earlier budget amendment, we gave Relate the money they need. It was not really hard to find and I am convinced that if you looked a bit harder you would be able to find the money too.

What a missed opportunity, Richard, and what a let down you have proved to be for the people of Leeds. Here we have an administration that is failing at every turn by reaching dizzy new heights of incompetence and is determined to leave a legacy of service cuts, increased charges, failure after failure. Is this really what the people of Leeds deserve? Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I want to start, Lord Mayor, by noting that a number of people here today slumbering on the benches opposite through their last budget meeting because the next one they will be *here*, so keep on slumbering.

I want to refer to the budget debate in particular when both Councillors Brett and Carter drew some confusion and doubt about out...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen, can I ask which Minute you are actually speaking on?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: It is Minute 169 and Minute 171, low pay, pay and grading and, indeed, the financial health of the Council. I put it in the context of the Council budget earlier on. When we were talking about whether or not they can influence some of our pledges, in particular around people.

One of the things Councillor Carter forgets is that, as Richard Lewis said, in his day he could concoct any budget amendment and put it forward and it flew and that was it. Here we now have very serious professional issues by the Director of Finance. For example, although you have said for three years now we will reduce the...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Lord Mayor, I wish to advise that for the last three years in opposition we had exactly the same situation.

THE LORD MAYOR: Then it is not possible. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Thank you very much for that. We have for the last three years said we will make major changes in accommodation for officers, how they work, where they work and that we want them to work within the communities, serving communities and living and working with people in those communities. Get ready officers - the comfortable offices in the city centre are going.

The second thing is there is at least £2.7m in Armani-suited consultants at £1,000 a day who you are paying for, who you have increased, they are your friends and you want to have them in jobs. We want our low paid people in the city in jobs. We want people here - will you shut up, Les - we want people here...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Can I ask the relevance of this to the Minutes, Lord Mayor?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Les, you are not the chief Whip, you are not the Leader, you are not the Lord Mayor, so shut up.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: A Councillor can ask for guidance from my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am asking you to sit down, Councillor Carter. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: The fact of the matter, Lord Mayor, is that we value the people who work for this Council. We do not just value Chief Officers, we value those at pay grades 1 and 2 who have had the most frightening and frightful 18 months to two years about their pay and their conditions and we value the bin men and the bin lasses who are being docked £6,000 from their wage. At the same time at the beginning of this meeting we said a fond goodbye to one of our esteemed Directors. Do not say goodbye to him yet. You will see him in six months' time again in another guise as a consultant or some kind of leader role within this Council. Am I being cynical? No, I am not being cynical because the last three who have retired have all come back in another guise of life.

There are two rules in this Council, if you are a Chief Officer or if you are an ordinary worker below £50,000. We will address that. We will give you notice today that we will address that balance. We will not have consultants or the need for consultants to tell us the obvious. We will trust our workforce, we will trust our employees because otherwise we should not bloody well employ them. We will trust them to tell us what we want to know and the report of their right will be of a calibre that we will accept.

There are masses of changes that can be made to this budget but you are too frightened, too insipid to make them or else you have a total lack of agreement between the two parties and so you cannot make them.

The capital programme that Andrew referred to so proudly. I am delighted that the Leader has announced the return of the stolen £6m from the East Leeds Family Learning Centre that you have taken out and put in to reserves at the moment so that they can be used for any fancy scheme you dream up in the next twelve months. It ain't going to happen because you will not be around. We will put it back and ensure that jobs and skills and employment in East Leeds and elsewhere will flourish again like they used to when we had a Labour administration.

This is the last time, I am sorry to say for you, Councillor Brett, the first time but also the last time that you are either moving or seconding a budget. Enjoy it while you can. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will try to be quick. Speaking to Minute 42, 158. I think Council needs to know that the Ofsted inspection of our schools showed that 39% of our high schools have been judged as good or outstanding and that only two mainstream high schools are judged to be inadequate, which is lower in proportion than the national figure. It is my ambition that there should be none in special measures.

I would also like to say that targeted improvements in secondary schools at Key Stage 3 and GCSE have narrowed or closed the gap with performance nationally and in similar areas. Ofsted now judges Leeds to be in line with the

national average of statistical neighbouring Authorities at Key Stage 3 and in line with our statistical neighbours.

I think that Councillor Mulherin was disingenuous in many of her statements. We have a very hard working set of teachers out there who are working very hard.

One final thing on absence. I believe that the Councillor who referred to absence in his speech actually is an employee of Education Leeds. If he has the solution, why does he not go and talk to his employers, his Chief Executive?
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak to the same Minute.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: I protest at the abuse of Council time by Councillor Harker. He was down to speak on this very subject under Children's Services later on, as I am, and I too would like the opportunity to speak on the subject and will not get it. You gave it to Councillor Harker and it really is not the proper way to conduct...

THE LORD MAYOR: With respect, Councillor Driver, Councillor Harker asked to speak on the Minute that most Members are speaking on in the last three-quarters of an hour.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: So would I speak, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Then you should have asked. Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I too would like to speak to the same Minute on the budget. I was a little bit perplexed by the attitude of Councillor Mulherin towards the Children's Services budget. She seemed to be making out that she was particularly concerned about our looked-after children and trying to point out that our budget in some way entailed our looked-after children being neglected.

I do not know whether the maths that they have employed to look at the charges for nurseries, which is absolutely bearing no relation to reality, is actually the same as she has put in terms of the LAC children, because we are putting in £5m into our social care for children - £5m - so it is hardly a neglecting of that system.

Shall I point out what those areas are? As was pointed out by Ed Balls in his children's plan, he points out that it is parents that bring up children and the whole core of our attitude in our budget for children's services is that we should be supporting those parents to bring up children, and that includes corporate parents. Shall we have a look at the issues that we are going to cover?

Our social care budget actually means that we are putting millions into making sure that we have enough social workers to make sure that they are not overburdened, that they are not overworked, that they are not showing up in the sickness figures. I have to say, I hope that they will feel a lot more relaxed with our budget than the one which has been presented by the Labour Party which aims to ensure that there are job cuts within the children's services sector which, given our recent reports from the APA and from the audits that we have, pointing out the areas where we need to expand our workforce, I think is irresponsible.

Another area that we are looking at, Lord Mayor, that has been mentioned is £1.2m investment in our foster carers. The foster carers are people who look after

our children day after day in the greater part. They look after round about 90% of our children, as opposed to 10% in our homes. These people are professionals and they need to be rewarded for the professionalism that they have. That is why we have introduced payment for skills, which not only encourages our foster carers to actually get more skills to create an even better future for our children, but it makes sure that those that are going above the average at the moment are rewarded for it. I think that is a good way to spend money. That is front-line spending of money.

I have to say, Councillor Mulherin, if you think that it is a new idea to have a look at the back office and see if you can find any efficiencies in there to ensure that those front-line services are protected, I can assure you that you are wrong and it is happening right now. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I would like to comment on page 47, Minute 167 and I would like to mention the loss of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund money, how potentially it is going to hit hard the residents of Gipton and Harehills.

The Government and especially John Healey, the Minister for Local Government, has penalised this administration for its success. It has penalised it for tackling poverty and for reducing worklessness and not only has this Labour Government penalised the administration, it has *de facto* penalised the residents of Gipton. It has said well done to the residents of Gipton on the one hand but if you land on hard times and if you fall back into an SOA, then it is tough and we are not going to help. We are not ready to encourage you to do better. We are not ready to encourage you to find work. In fact, if you do not work or you are unable to work, you cannot have social housing. So, the Labour Government is saying we are not ready to support you as residents of Gipton and Harehills as we have done in the past.

I am always ready to give credit where credit is due and thank goodness we have one MP in this city from the Labour Government to criticise central Government and George Mudie needs to be congratulated on that.

I am pleased that the report is going to be brought to Central and Corporate Departments to find savings. I hope that those savings can find their way to Gipton and Harehills. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The matters I wish to raise appear very largely under Council Minutes 181 and 182 on page 55 but I really just want to say a few words about the issue of under-achievement, which continues as Councillor Harker has already admitted, effectively, to be a major problem in our schools.

I refer particularly to the statistics with regard to free school meals and those free school meals statistics show very clearly that over the past three years we have continued to operate at a very unsatisfactory level in terms of results at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3.

The sort of statistics we get from educationalists, I have been around to see them come out for a few years now, very often are a great deal of flannel. They tell you a lot about a big population but not very much about the detail. The detail is that we have about 15% of our school population whose performance continues to be as unsatisfactory now as it was five years ago and, indeed, probably five years before that. It is not good for us to ignore the fact that these statistics are as they are and it is very clear from even the words of Education Leeds, the attainment of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly below that of pupils who are not eligible, with the largest gap being attainment in writing. That is what was said about primary.

About secondary, it says similar things: "For other priority pupil groups the picture is mixed. Pupils eligible for free school meals are significantly below estimates over the past three years." That is the situation we now continue to face.

I have seen nothing in the proposals that have been mentioned so far that target this group specifically. We need to have them targeted. They are the young people who become our need statistics; they are the young people who then become the parents of families who produce yet another cycle of this same challenge and I urge the administration to look again at what they are trying to do and in the meantime obviously I would like to see the resources provided to make sure that a much better job is done in the future than has been done in the past. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Lyons, I understand that Caroline Flint came to my ward and at one of the four sites where a plant of some sort is possibly going to be built, said that we should reconsider our policy and made a speech that was quite different to the advice that we had been given which is that we should be neutral at this stage over the type of technology we are going to use.

This side wants to give leadership. I certainly do not believe in deciding by referenda what should happen.

I am not going to say any more about Councillor Mulherin's remarks because others have done that. Councillor Rafique may not be aware that the Halton Moor control study was very effectively introduced and discussed. We on this side have contributed - and you cannot deny this - to more PCSOs in the city. Of course the police have a major role in what happens with crime but to try and say that a Government that has produced, in 40 years, 40 bills to do with police, crime matters, we are certainly not short on rhetoric and with the number of different ideas that have been thrown at us I actually think in this area we need to work together to try and get the best results.

Councillor Lowe, I do not accept the remarks you made that our budget penalises the poorest. I do think from my certain knowledge of the past there are very good links between Education Leeds and the Director of Children's Services unit.

Councillor Hanley, we did actually say very clearly last year how the airport receipts were going to be spent - indeed now, I suspect, have been spent. That in no way was to do with next year's budget which is what I have been introducing today, so if you want to find out where the airport money has gone, you simply need to go back and look at the records.

Councillor McKenna, I never promised to find the money for Relate. What I promised to do was to look at it again and I was warned by Councillor Carter that if I came up with a small sum of money I would be criticised. Councillor Carter is absolutely right, I have been criticised. I probably would have been criticised if I had not found any money at all. I still think that I have done what I promised to do and I hope the, I agree, small sum of money will be of some use to Relate.

The speech of Councillor Gruen was very interesting. It was clearly Councillor Gruen's budget speech. Minute 169 is actually about other things; it is actually about financial health monitoring not about the budget, so I agree that Councillor J L Carter was probably right in telling the Lord Mayor that that perhaps was not what should have been said.

In summary, the remarks that have been made have in most cases not changed my view one iota that the budget that we have passed today is the best possible budget for Leeds. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call on Andrew Carter, who has the right of final reply.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I note that three people have got comments down on my portfolio and have not had the chance to speak, so very quickly, I hope that Councillor Finnigan was going to congratulate us on the private street works programme. It is continuing. I hope that we will be able to extend it still further. It is my wish that we do so. It is an extremely popular scheme. Why should people who live on unadopted roads pay the same Council tax as people who live with all the services provided when we can do something to help them? I hope we will be able to continue to do that.

As regards the city centre work at Albion Place, I hope that we are going to get some support from outside agencies as regards that. It is essential in our discussions with the developers, the Trinity Quarter and the Harewood Eastgate Quarter, which I chair, it is apparent that developers want to ensure and we want to ensure that the city centre enlarges and the two centres are linked. Councillor Gruen, do you want to talk or what is the problem? I think you will find I can say virtually what I want, but never mind. I am sure the people whose comments I am seeking to get at would find the comments helpful, unlike your comments, Councillor Gruen.

Just to get back to the city centre, it is essential that we have a public realm in the city centre which matches any in the United Kingdom and is better than most despite the fact, of course, that certain places get oodles of European money and we get none.

Councillor Kirkland, I am sure you are delighted with the scheme in Yeadon. I go back to the comments I made in general about the capital programme. It is essential that everybody in Yeadon - I have been impressed that the ward Councillors for both Guiseley and Rawdon and Otley and Yeadon have taken such a huge interest in making sure that this scheme came to fruition. Again, it is our intention to continue as an administration investing in all areas of the city.

Back to NRF. One thing that has not been mentioned is that we are investigating the possibilities - and I make no apology for saying that we are seeking external advice, you might say even consultants, in fact it is legal advice - as to whether we can mount a legal challenge against the Government's iniquitous decision to remove Leeds from the funding categories for the new Working Neighbourhoods Scheme. We will await the outcome of seeking that legal advice, but if it is positive we will take Her Majesty's Government to a judicial review and mount a legal challenge because what has been done is quite frankly beyond anything that I have come across and the harm that is going to be done, Councillor Taylor, as you have rightly highlighted, is immeasurable.

I will repeat the commitment that both Councillor Brett and I have made. We are going to make sure that during 2008 any areas of unnecessary expenditure is clamped down upon and money made available so that when the Government takes more money off us next year, which they will, we will be able to do something to protect some of these areas of NRF funding which have had such a vital impact on the inner city areas of Leeds.

On that issue, somebody mentioned PCSOs. I would like to point out to you that the City Council contributes substantial amounts of money to the 172 PCSOs that we have around the city. Had we not as an Authority put that money in, most areas of the city, like Morley, like Pudsey, despite the fact Councillor Lewis wants to relocate the PCSOs in Pudsey - yes you did - we will make sure they are still funded, as we have with wardens, who are mainly located in the inner city areas. If your Government had had its way, as those positions are funded through NRF and we have lost the funding, they would have gone. We have protected those positions and will continue to do so because we are aware of what a good job the wardens and, indeed, the PCSOs do.

We have heard a lot about narrowing the gap and failures supposedly in that respect from the side opposite. It must be of little comfort to them - it should be of no comfort to them - that under the ten years of Labour administration in London narrowing the gap has simply not happened. The gap between rich and poor, the gap between children suffering deprivation and those who are not, has widened. On every score your Government, despite the hurling of taxpayers' money at more and more strategies, has singularly failed to narrow the gap in any respect in this country. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote on receipt of the Minutes? All those in favour? Against? Abstentions? Those are CARRIED.

Could I then close this half of the meeting at what appears to be a goalless draw and tell the people in the public gallery, our visitors, you are more than welcome, please do come and have tea with us.

(The Council adjourned for a short time)

ITEM 7 - WHITE PAPER - VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE IN THE ADMINISTRATION

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I take us on to page 6, Agenda item 7, White Paper Motion and call upon Councillor Atha.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: My Lord Mayor, before I move this resolution can I refer to a downright untruth told by Councillor Andrew Carter when he said this resolution had been put in without the approval or agreement of my colleagues. In fact this was suggested before Christmas and has had to wait to mature until this point, so in fact he was telling an untruth which is regrettable and he is not here. I do not think it is important - it is just important that people know that people do tell untruths and every now and again someone has to identify the fact.

He also went on to refer to us as "people who no-one wants". It just happens that at the local elections we get 43 seats and the two smaller parties get only half that number, so quite a lot of people do like us and they do like us because we are prepared to stand up and say what we think and, hopefully, tell the truth.

We will not align ourselves with others we have actually no connection with philosophically or politically for any reason, whether it be money or any other reason.

In moving this resolution I shall be fair and honest. I shall praise where praise is due and I shall criticise when I think it is necessary to justify your agreeing with this resolution.

I first of all congratulate the absent Leader, Councillor Carter - just arriving like a gentle, stately galleon. Councillor Carter is the Leader of the Council all throughout the year, not just when he is in and when he is out for six months. You watch Councillor Brett when he is speaking - he addresses Councillor Carter all the time, rather like a dog looks at its master wanting a pat on the head. This, we have noticed and I admire Councillor Carter for his extraordinary leadership qualities (*laughter*) and I say that without any irony but quite seriously.

I thank him, congratulate him, because he has in fact completed, as someone has already observed, all the schemes, the major schemes, that we started in our time. When that was said before there was (*sighed*). That is the truth. We started the idea and the planning of the new pool and I was very much against it going where it went. That was a thing called the Titanic. The new museums we planned, the art gallery extension was planned, the Carriageworks was planned, we started work on that, you have got the beautiful hall that has been done and those have been completed and I think that you are to be congratulated on that and there is no irony or bitchiness about it.

It is fair to say that if we are congratulating we can also criticise and I would also give the evidence for the incompetence, inefficiencies and ineptitude which this White Paper refers to. Taking the evidence immediately, that means straight from the Evening Post or other newspapers, where these have been published, verbatim. This is so you cannot suggest that I am putting spin on the words.

The first verbatim headline is: "Crisis as 163 people apply for one Council house. 31,000 people on the Council housing waiting list." Verbatim: "No way to treat a hero. Council under fire as the war hero of 93 has his one hour a fortnight home care axed." A 93-year old war veteran whose hands and legs are wracked with arthritis so badly he cannot put on his socks, had his vital home care has been axed. Verbatim: "Flooded three times in the past three years. Anger at third flood. Calls for action over new misery on estate." These are all verbatim, no additions, no amendments to the words of the sentences.

The next heading: "Childcare freeze for poorest families to rise. Households with a gross annual income of under £20,000 will be hit by the higher charges but the review is good news for the higher earning households." The very reverse of what I thought we stand for, the Labour Party, and what I thought the Lib Dems thought at one time - the Liberals, I am not sure about the Dem part of that.

A letter in the Evening Post: "People in Morley are unhappy at losing facilities yet the politicians seem to support this, even though Morley is a growing town. If you would like to lodge your objection to a sports centre with fewer facilities for our larger town, sign the on-line petition to lodge your objection. While I am on my soap box, the litter around Morley is a disgrace."

Again, verbatim: "Money, the pot. Council pays out £2.5m on claims, equivalent to 1% of Council tax and holes in the road are the biggest reason why. Spends an equivalent amount of consultants' fees, a total of £5m equivalent to 2p off the income tax (*sic*)." This is me, not verbatim - purely on consultants and paying people out before it goes to court is equivalent to two pence off the Council tax. I did say I corrected myself as Council tax in case there was any misapprehension.

Another headline: "You are from South Wales, then you cannot use Leeds tip. Widow advised to show up in person the day after her husband's burial and the son-in-law was told he cannot dump her rubbish." Someone from South Wales comes up, helps his mother-in-law and is told he cannot dump her rubbish. What a stupidity.

“Strong winds force school to shut again. Hundreds of youngsters at a new £20m high school in Leeds were sent home because the doors could not cope with the high winds. Further problems, lack of CCTV system, inadequate canteen space, external stairwells forcing pupils outdoors irrespective of the weather.” Built in your time.

“Roadworks in suburbs”, Amberley Road closed for at least three months; Canal Road closed at least five months; Armley Ridge Road can be used only if you have got a 4x4 suspension; and five weeks major works and long delays on Kirkstall Road, all at the same time.

“Children in care losing out.” This I will not go into and read out but that is the headline and it refers in fact to the begging that Councillor Brett did in order to find the funds to give children in care that bit of extra spending money that every child has the right for to go on school visits and so on. We felt it was disgraceful that cherry pick had to be the answer when it can be properly funded. That is what is meant by that verbatim, “Children in care losing out.”

Another one: “Tell Watchdog if you think I am wrong.” That is the quote; now me. This refers to Councillor Monaghan secretly amending a Minute - secretly amending a Minute - and when found out by one of his former colleagues he was challenged and then he challenged anyone to report him to the Standards Board. The report goes on: “Councillor Monaghan did admit that some of the wording had been changed” - remember I am reading verbatim – “but he said, ‘We do not do it lightly and we do not do it that often.’” (*laughter*) So they do not alter the Minutes that often or too lightly. If you have any doubts I have the quotation and the documentation here with me.

Another one, a very interesting one from the same party - and this is the sadness because the Liberals at one time had a quality and integrity that we could admire and respect even if we did not always agree with. Councillor Brett: “All parties, including my own, have been guilty of not talking about this problem” - of social housing - “because it mainly affects safe Labour seats and not areas which are likely to swing at an election.” They said this in writing. Shades of Shirley Porter. Exactly this kind of gerrymandering that he is agreeing to but clever, swift Andrew Carter, he immediately disassociates himself with that comment as, in fact, I do think possibly the Greens did the same thing, making sure they were not associated with the gerrymandering acceptance that Councillor Brett had agreed to.

Then we go on: “Carter owes Otley Town an apology”. That is the verbatim and it refers to the inadequate consultation over Wharfe Meadows.

Next quotation in full: “It is time you, Councillor Carter, went. Lib Dem MP attacks Council Leader.” Mulholland - “Carter should consider his position and hand over to someone in touch with the local community. Councillor Carter responded” - this is all verbatim – “and called him ‘childish.’” One should get in touch with the community; the other is childish. I think possibly they are both right.

Then we come to another heading: “2004 Tsunami Appeal, cash still not spent. Council Chief” - remember, they only get Council Chiefs and officers if there is something bad to say - “Council Chief admits progress has been slow” - only four years - “but feels confident that construction can start next year.” That is five years after the tsunami, the money that has been collected and put in the bank and been presumably getting interest has still not been paid.

"Roundhay park café still closed despite promises." The same applies to the Mansion four years after the Tories promised to reopen it.

"Landlord walks free after the first court case of its kind collapses after claiming that the application he submitted for registration had either been lost in the post or in Council offices. Had he lost, Mr Warner would have faced fines totalling £140,000 as the Council's costs." There you have got, for whatever reason, complete inefficiency in losing the documents that in fact would have brought that money at the Council.

"Firework show fiasco." These are all verbatim reports from the Evening Post which I have mentioned. I could go on with more but I will not because I hope my colleagues are going to continue this long list of in fact inefficiency, examples of inefficiencies. Ten per cent bonuses for officers earning over £100,000. Cut funding to the Chinese community while funding Lib Dem Leader's trip to China. Introduce charges and increase charges for community use and community services and centres. Eighteen months' delay in providing the screen in Millennium Square. Increase dramatically charges at leisure centres. Diverted money from the most deprived areas to the wealthier areas. Spent £20,000 on launching a civic newspaper and £50,000 on launching Leeds at a do that was said to be worse than the one at Bradford, and spent £800,000 on rebranding the city to find that Live Leeds, Live Leeds or whatever it is had been used by everybody all over the world including Bradford. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Atha. Councillor Taggart.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Lord Mayor, when examining what Bernard has to say I always see him as a type of political Paul Daniels because there is sleight of hand - you are going to like it, but not a lot.

Primarily you are in a situation here where there is a lot of misdirection here. When you have got problems like Northern Rock floating around, when you have got problems like hacking NRF funding from the most deprived communities in here, what do you try and do? You try and do a funny dance somewhere else to try and take people's attention away from the actual issues.

Our amendment really is putting a slightly different case. Bernard is most charitable in providing his evidence to support his view about the deficiencies and ineptitude. I find it difficult to see how you can have an inept and inefficient administration that actually gets a four star rating. This is assessed independently by, as I understand it, people appointed by the Labour Government to assess your actual performance. It is fairly difficult to see how a Local Authority can get a four star rating if it is inefficient and inept. Clearly this particular point we would want to pay tribute to all the Council workers who have helped us to achieve that four star rating. That is clear and that is obvious. There is a contradiction there. If you are inept, if you are inefficient, you do not get four stars, not with the bunch of bods that they actually appoint to examine things.

Let us have a look and see whether we would give four stars to the Government and just run through perhaps some of their issues that they have been dealing with.

Foot and mouth. Do people remember that one? £8b to £10b it cost the taxpayers primarily because the Government refused to act. Was it inefficient? Was it inept? Was it both? I would argue it is probably both.

Sacked 100,000 civil servants. Now the Labour Party seems very keen on sacking people but Gordon Brown had a target of getting rid of 100,000 civil servants and cannot understand why there are not enough customs officers around, cannot understand why immigration applications are not being dealt with, cannot understand why asylum applications are not being dealt with, cannot understand why tax credits overpay millions and millions of pounds of tax credit, putting a lot of families under stress and under strain. Is that inefficient? Is it inept? Is it both?

If we look at their ideas in terms of generating electricity in the future, nuclear power - what a winner. We think this is a fabulous idea. Let us not talk about energy efficiency, let us not talk about renewables. We will do our best to welsh out of any of the targets that we initially agreed and we will stick nuclear in again. In my view that is inefficient and inept.

CSA reform. What has happened there? Not a great deal, but we have...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Why don't you just pay up?

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: We have inefficiency and ineptitude, of that there is no doubt.

What about the Iraq war, based upon a dodgy dossier? Of course you do not want to talk about it. It is inevitably understandable that at a point when you put up a bogus dossier the same way that you put up a bogus budget today, you do not want to talk about it. We can understand that. The final analysis of that particular conflict is that you were sold the whole Iraq war on the basis of inaccuracy and inefficiency, of that there is no doubt.

What about data loss? What about people's details - whether it is child benefit, whether you work for the armed forces, whether you are a doctor, whatever it might be, and the ineptitude and inefficiency of the way that people's personal data has been kept under control. Is it inept? Is it inefficient? Is it both? I leave other people to decide on that one.

Refusing the police's pay rise. Another classic. That particular point they bleat on and on about the fine job the police are doing, about the fact that crime levels are coming down and they cannot even pay the police a fair deal. Is that inefficient? Is it inept? Is it both?

Northern Rock. If the Council have received the same financial support that they are putting into Northern Rock we could all have a year off paying any Council tax. You say to every Council tax payer, I will tell you what we would do with Northern Rock, what you would do is you would have a financial services authority that actually had some backbone, that actually regulated in the way they are supposed to regulate so that you do not get Northern Rock handing out dodgy mortgages to Americans who cannot afford to pay them back. The bottom line is it is inefficiency and ineptitude of the most, greatest magnitude. At the point you lot want to nationalise it, or whatever you want to call it, at the point that you actually want to do that, then you do that at the expense of other things. Quite frankly, at the point where they can nationalise that and rob us of our NRF funding, at that point it is an absolute disgrace, you need to get your priorities right.

Super casinos. Who remembers those? Whatever happened to those? What a brilliant idea that was, eh? Licensing laws. Let everybody drink as long as they want and at the point where they are throwing up on the streets, somebody else picks up the bill of trying to deal with that, whether that is the police or whether that is the NHS. What another winner. Inefficient, inept, both - I argue they would be.

Flooding. At this particular point you have got the Environment Agency that has its budget cut by this Government...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Not in Essex.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: ...and he has the absolute audacity to suggest it is something to do with the administration. Get on the backs of your MPs and see if they can actually get Leeds a fair deal.

Finally we come to perhaps the most interesting localised issue. What about housing? What about protecting the Green Belt? That bunch are quite happy to sacrifice all the Green Belt that is available round the Leeds areas to build more and more houses.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: He has got you bang to rights.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Here, anything from Ed Balls, or Mrs Ed Balls, or any other balls, is talking about what we are going to do to try and deal with the housing problem. Their suggestion is that you concrete over any green areas. We are making sure that the people of Morley are fully copied into this particular discussion. The Labour Party would happily concrete over all the green areas to make sure they hit these targets that the central Labour Government wants to hit, doubling the amount of housing they want us to actually build.

They are not interested in giving us new powers to bring empty properties back into use. What they are interested in doing is making sure that we end up with not a last green blade of grass in any of our Green Belt issues.

The final thing that I would like to say about this is that this has all the smackings of *The Usual Suspects*, which is a movie that people will have seen. Bernard is like the main character there who says that the best trick that they would ever let them pull was making people pretend that he did not exist. In Bernard's case the best trick that he could ever pull is try to pretend that Leeds's problems are nothing whatsoever to do with the Labour Government. I move the amendment, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

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

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do not often waste my time with sad, peripheral figures but I will break the golden rule and address some of Councillor Finnigan's comments.

The idea that this is sleight of hand or smokescreen is frankly preposterous. If you want some actual hard evidence, let us give him some. Let us talk about the crisis – and it is a crisis – that has been created by this administration around the provision of cemeteries – an unnecessary crisis created to Tory Councillors in this very building, and it is typical of an administration intent on governing to support a few rather than considering the needs of the many. That is incompetence of the highest order. It is a classic example of an administration unwilling or unable to look at the needs of all the city's residents and not merely at their own core support.

Consider, then, the ongoing debacle surrounding the proposed extension to Garforth cemetery. In 1996 it was extended and that extension was supposed to last for 35 years. Of course, factored in to that was Whinmoor Grange. When this was scrapped it meant that Garforth cemetery extension is going to be full this year within twelve years of the original extension, so what on earth was the motivation behind scrapping Whinmoor Grange and the creation of this crisis we now face? I call that ineptitude.

Of course, we have now got a situation where the administration are attempting to snatch two acres of valuable park land in Garforth – another extension. This really is the worst case of crisis management imaginable.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: People of Garforth can be buried in Garforth.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Garforth – if I may finish, Councillor Procter – has over 700 kids, all age groups, both sexes, who play for two burgeoning football teams. They are desperate for facilities, so what does this message send to them? Clearly that we have got a Council that simply could not care less.

In the budget debate Andrew Carter had the audacity to castigate the Government for attempting to remove green space from Garforth. I will tell you what, he has got some neck, I will give him that if nothing else – pardon the pun. There are 3,500 people who attend the community bonfire on that piece of land. That would be an inevitable casualty if this extension goes ahead. What about the man who simply wants to walk his dog on a bit of green space, or the sheltered housing residents who overlook this proposed extension, octogenarians and people in their nineties whose vista on a morning when they open their curtains, Councillor Finnigan, is going to be a load of tombstones.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: A load of housing under your lot.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Again, a short term fix for a long term problem and, again, a classic example of ineptitude – as simple as that.

My colleague, Councillor Rafique, informs me the deputation that came before this Council 13 months ago on this very issue still has had no formal response from the Exec Board. Why not? What is the problem? In contrast yesterday – it is funny, I have been listening to the debate today and losing the will to live, frankly – I went to a briefing on the Central Local Government Concordat and Councillors from all over the country from all mainstream parties spoke with knowledge, eloquence and passion about the need for strong local leadership and effective delivery of quality service. The phrase that was used was “fairly and for all.” That is “fairly and for all.” One phrase in the Concordat that leaps out at me is the phrase, “Councils have a responsibility to provide leadership that is accountable, visible and responsive to the needs of the community” – a million miles away from this shambles in my ward that has been allowed to develop with this cemetery.

I think Leeds under this administration is being run like a Rotten Borough. Compare and contrast the aspirations of the Concordat – and I will use a phrase now, I am normally quite a well-mannered person but I have heard this a few times today – “this lot” or “this bunch”, so this lot, who are driven by the appeasement of the vested interest, who micromanage because they have no long term vision for Leeds, who use power to pander to the few at the expense of the many and who shirk uncomfortable decisions. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR DAVEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In supporting Councillor Atha's motion, I would like to speak regarding the issue of the Council's highways maintenance programme and in particular the substantial amount of cash that has been spent on it. It does not appear to be achieving the results that you would expect despite the huge outlays.

It was three years ago in this very Chamber, you may remember, that with much fanfare, as we have come to expect from the coalition, they announced details of their flagship policy to re-utilise the roads and footpaths in our city. This appears to have been a pipedream.

Since then the initial £19.7m which was put into the Council programme back in March 2005 to cover this investment has long been spent. In fact, figures I have been given show that by the end of this financial year over £69m has been pumped into the programme, so that is £69m in three years and that is without taking into account that as yet unspecified amount of money from the sale of the airport that has also been allocated to the programme and another £27.8m has also been put aside to be spent next year.

So what has the Leeds taxpayer received from this amount of investment? Significant improvements on the roads and footpaths in their area?

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Ask your colleagues in Armley what they think about it.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: You have blocked us in.

COUNCILLOR DAVEY: I am going to give you an example, because three years later, £69m later, I myself am not too sure. I thought maybe at the start it might be just my ward that is missing out on all this glorious transformation because walking around the communities I represent I see little difference in the roads, but I am being maybe a little bit unfair to Councillor Steve Smith because he very kindly organised one of the streets in my ward to be re-tarmacked at a substantial cost to the Council taxpayer. Unfortunately he did not seem to be aware that there was only one resident in occupation in this street and that all the properties in that street are due to be demolished. This lack of strategic thinking does not appear to be a one-off (*interruption*).

COUNCILLOR HARKER: You get the list.

COUNCILLOR DAVEY: If I can continue, this lack of strategic thinking does not appear to be a one-off as, when I spoke to my fellow Labour Councillors representing wards right across the city, I realised I was not the only one to experience such examples of incompetence. Many roads which desperately needing repairs back in 2005 have still not been refurbished, while no action whatsoever is being taken to tackle the endless amounts of new potholes now cropping up in areas such as Ardsley and Robin Hood.

In fact, as highlighted in the YEP earlier this month, the Council has paid out £2.5m in compensation in just two years with regard to potholes. £2.5m. The YEP then goes on to helpfully point out what this £2.5m could be used for including, very helpfully, 1% off the Council tax bill.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: How much was it when you took over?

COUNCILLOR DAVEY: What the YEP does not specifically mention, though, is the number of staff who are employed full-time to input and administer any claims.

I wonder if some of these back office savings that Councillor Brett was mentioning in his budget speech this afternoon will apply to this particular department. Probably not, so in fact the £2.5m figure is just the tip of the iceberg, but we know that the coalition are very proud of this highways programme and that the Conservative, Liberal and Morley Borough Independent candidates in the forthcoming election must be shouting from the rooftops about the dramatic transformation of the roads thanks to them.

Take, for example, the Conservative candidate in Headingley. In his Fighting for your Future manifesto, one of his key pledges is to tackle the Council head-on to demand better roads. "Headingley deserves better", he says. He is quite right there. If you were lucky enough to read his letter to the residents of Headingley, it calls the state of the roads "dire". Whose fault is that? It is not this side of the room

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Yours, you idiot. Ten years.

COUNCILLOR DAVEY: Life is not much better for the Conservative candidate in Otley and Yeadon. He has said many roads are in a poor condition, matted with temporary repairs, potholes where the repairs have failed. He is so angry he has taken pictures of them.

I think we need to take another project to make sure that every penny of taxpayers money which has been put into this scheme is being used productively and not simply disappearing down a black hole.

You seem to be confusing the amount of money you are throwing at the scheme with its effectiveness. Unfortunately in reality, as some of your own candidates are now highlighting, spending alone does not guarantee results. Meeting your goals needs leadership, planning and organisation – something that is sadly lacking from your administration. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I enjoyed Robert's contribution. It reminded me really of the news this week that Fidel Castro was retiring and I just wonder the people behind him, the only salvation you have got is when Raul Castro emerges from you lot.

COUNCILLOR CARTER: You are not after his job as well are you, Peter?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I will tell you something, I also admire the way Andrew Carter manoeuvred at the beginning of this year. It reminds me of the best buy of Alex Ferguson – was it Cantona or was it Schmeichel or who could it be? The best decision was to say, "Robert, come into my Cabinet and get 20,000 quid." That was his best decision ever.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Now we know what he is after. He wants to be in the Cabinet.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: It has taken us six months for Robert to come out. After six months Robert has finally come out and he has said in the budget, "We did our best." "We did our best." The "We" is quite clear, is it not? He is over there and the rest of the bunch are over there as well. They are part of the coalition.
(interruption)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: We will see the verbatim.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Andrew was trying to mock us earlier on about leadership. What kind of leadership is it when an opposition party puts down a

motion of no confidence against you and you let the rabble of the boroughs put in an amendment and you put nothing in? Nothing at all. What kind of lack of leadership is it that you even are unwilling to defend yourself and have to hide behind the skirts or Robert? A total lack of leadership.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: How do you know? The night is young.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: When we come to the laws of Andrew Carter, when we talk about the inefficiency and the ineffectiveness, the first law of Andrew Carter is, Andrew Carter is never wrong. The second law is Amanda Carter is never wrong. The third law is, if we are proved to be wrong it is either J L Carter's fault or Procter's fault or the officers' fault or it is the planners' fault or it is the academics' fault or it is Education Leeds' fault or it is the Liberals' fault or it is Councillor Wakefield's fault.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It is your fault.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: It might even be your fault. It is probably my fault.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I always blame you first, Peter. You should know that.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I should know that, Andrew, and I love it as well, because when you are off your pace, do not blame me, you are not the same person.

So, that is the third law. The fourth law, of course, is, Andrew now knows what a global village and global procurement and everything really is and he thinks globality is Calverley joining with Rodley and that is about as far it goes. If Andrew is talking about negotiating with Government Ministers, the first thing is he always slags off every single Leeds MP. He thought he had got a mate when your mate got elected but that did not last long, that did not last very long and he gives him no house room and your guy says he is whatever he is and so he does not care about him either.

How are you going to get support? I think it was Richard who said that. How are you going to get support if all you do is slag off the MPs in this city year in, year out and then you think they are going to go down and support you and work hard on your behalf? What kind of image do you portray to Ministers? You never say anything or give any credit to anybody who does anything.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: What about George?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: George is not a Minister but I am glad you appreciate what a fantastic MP for East Leeds George is and he will be an MP for East Leeds for many years.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: He did not think the same about you as a Councillor, of course. *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I very much doubt that, Les. I think, look at recent fiascos. I do not want to make Miss Jackson angry but the polling district review seems to have been a particular case in point. More than two years you started wanting – and it is Ralph Pryke, the architect of this – to gerrymander the polling district bands and the polling stations and you put one report through after another after another and we kept being told there are some that are not going to be up for discussion. Garforth, whatever happens in Garforth we are going to sweep the changes through there because Garforth is a no holds, no discussion. Two years later now we have gone back to the 2007 boundaries. I have never known such a

shambles in all my life. Honest John Bale – Honest John – you were almost driven to resignation the other day as Chair of your Corporate Governance Committee. You felt stabbed in the back. Never mind.

This is a shambles of an administration. It is incompetent and it is being driven out in May. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: They liked that, Peter, all four of them.

COUNCILLOR ARMITAGE: I will be using this *(inaudible)* of the Disabled Facilities Grant to highlight the sheer incompetence of this administration. For those who do not know, the Disabled Facilities Grant is a grant administered by the Council and which is subject to means testing and every disabled person is entitled to it. There is a limit of £25,000 and the grant is used to make alterations to persons' houses to make life easier for them.

Although the local government administer this grant, we can claim back 60% from the Government. That is if we get it right. It does not come as any surprised to me to learn that we have not claimed back our 60% subsidy from central Government. Why is this? Because you lot over there cannot get your figures right. They did not budget enough for the demand of these grants, so much so an extra £2m had to be put into the pot in August of last year and then another £750,000 in January of this year.

We are lucky in respect that of the £750,000, £530 of it came from central Government. How possibly this administration nearly lost £3m out of money that the administration needed for these grants. Could it be, perhaps, it might be a small difference but unfortunately this is a very, very serious matter and it is not laughable. I am sure that before long we will have to listen to Carter and Brett, the Laurel and Hardy of the coalition, blaming everybody, blaming the government for everything under the sun probably including the Mills and McCartney divorce.

What I want to say is this. If you had managed your affairs better we could have had extra money from the government. We received a subsidy of £1.569m from the Disabled Facilities Grant and you know what could have done to entitle us to £3.15 if we had missed out nearly £1.6m in funding because of your incompetence.

Now you are planning to deal with a lack of foresight by making people even wait longer for things to be done in their homes. You introduced charges, various priorities, allocated meaning in your words the level of priority has been delivered time 2.2 working days. That equates to the waiting just over 10.5 months. By pushing more people into lower priority bands you are saving money but at what cost? How can you sit there and push independent living on one hand while they are planning to means and independent on the other hand?

Councillor Harrand, really, the time has come for you to go and the rest of the administration and that time will come in May. We do not know what homes are going to close, which day centres are going to say open, which day centres are going to close, what they are entitled to, what they are not entitled to and I just think that the glimmer of hope is that you will not be here to run social services next year. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR JAROSZ: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I would like to speak regarding the continued inefficiency and incompetence of that lot over there, as we seem to be referring tonight, although it is not the way, again, that I would normally refer to anyone in this Chamber.

In particular I want to talk about the decision they made last August to increase car parking charges. While some of you nice gentlemen over there and ladies would feel that the estimated city-wide revenue of £107,000 in increased charges is insubstantial - in fact I am sure Councillor Lobley will think it is an utter bargain as we heard about his calling the Contact Centre is anything to go by, then I am sure he thinks car parking charges going up is an utter bargain as well.

I do not agree, particularly when you look at the money to park, for example, at the Council's Beckett Street car park opposite St James's Hospital. People who live in areas like my ward of Pudsey are having to pay these charges. Many of these people are not just vulnerable, they are very sick and incapable of working and money is scarce, so it is only right and proper indeed that as the Council it should be out duty to protect them to the best of our ability wherever we can.

Your decision to raise car parking charges at Beckett Street has failed them, just as those people in Pudsey but also every person in every ward across the city that has to visit hospital on a regular basis. The sad thing about it is that you had the chance to say no. You had the chance not to raise the charges but the charges were raised.

It is interesting, another comment made at the last Council meeting by Councillor Brett, who said, "I represent a ward in the middle of Leeds with the second highest deprivation in the city, so it is rather difficult to understand why people are saying to me that I do not understand the problems of those in greatest need or those who need extra help." Perhaps Councillor Brett needs to look at his busy schedule and ask his coalition colleagues on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and maybe they could understand about the problems of those in greater need who have to visit St James's Hospital because this issue is found sadly wanting.

When my colleague Councillor Langdale first raised this issue at Council last October and asked why Councillor Pryke in particular, as a member for the ward, had voted to increase the charges at Beckett Street by another 20p, making it up to 90 pence per hour, he had no hesitation in saying it is because the Health Trust had taken the decision to increase charges in their car parks. I find this amazing, to be honest. It reminds me of school when two children are taken in front of the Head and they say, "I thought it was all right because he did it first." Didn't anybody tell you at home that two wrongs do not make a right? Surely we as Councillors have to be better than that.

While we as Councillors cannot directly control what other bodies or organisations might do, we should be big enough and brave enough to take a stand on these issues and we do over and have control such as this one.

We cannot afford to see on such important issues as this elected representatives of the coalition serving on our watchdog committees playing passing the buck politics just because of what their political masters might have to say and vote against it.

As I have said earlier, you had the chance to make a difference and you did not. Your obsession with charges, it seems, outstrips your desire to help the most vulnerable people in this city and before you say let them eat cake, let them go on the bus because it is free on the bus, isn't it, for elderly and disabled, yes, that is fine except I have written to the PCT asking them to look at when they give people appointments because often they are given ten o'clock which means people having to pay £5 to get there. It is £2.30 each on the bus from Pudsey, you always take somebody with you.

The people of this great city deserve better and the only way it can happen is once we are in control of this Council again. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BALE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wanted to speak on this debate mainly because Councillor Atha was proposing the motion, Lord Mayor, and I am something of a fan of his. I am not a fan of Councillor Atha the politician - that would be silly, wouldn't it? - *(laughter)* but a fan of Bernard the entertainer, someone capable of lifting the spirits of friend and foe alike, on a good day anyway, and today was not such a good day but fans stay loyal, Bernard.

There is a song in the show Chicago that always makes me think of Bernard – “Give them the old razzle dazzle, razzle dazzle them” and there is a line further on that says, “Ever since the days of old Methuselah, everyone's loved a big bamboozler” *(laughter)* and Bernard, you do come to mind, but as of today someone else will come to mind too and it will be Peter Gruen because I think he out-bamboozled you today.

That is all we have heard, really, is bamboozle. I thought you would be talking about the golden age of Labour rule in Leeds, but I suppose that defies even the limits of bamboozle, does it not, because people in this Chamber remember what it was like. I have only lived here since 1995 but I was a frequent visitor in the first 15 years of the Labour administration and I saw, for example, the dead hand of Labour leads on Leeds Poly – Leeds Met as it became – the dead hand. Across the road there you have got the Brunswick Building, the Starter Bar sticking out of one end, waiting for the Phase 2 that was never to be. I think the building is going to be demolished later this year. The Polytechnic that under your rule in terms of the money you were drawing down from the central government pool was about 15% over funded against national norms. I came from a place that was 6% underfunded against national norms and the place with 6% underfunding had more teachers on the ground than Leeds Polytechnic did, because Leeds Polytechnic was encouraged to spend its money on bureaucracy and political correctness, and look how it has improved since the Conservative Government freed it from the shackles of Local Authority control.

When you talk, Bernard, about having no confidence in the present administration, you will forgive us if we look back to what it was like over those 24 years. When I came to Leeds in 1995, people at Leeds Met told me that the rhetoric from the Labour administration was second city – Leeds as England's second city. A second city, Lord Mayor, without a modern public transport system; a second city without an arena; without a conference centre; a second city with a huge cultural deficit; a second city with schools that were suffering so much from political interference that the Local Authority was eventually disqualified from running it. *(Applause)*

That is what we look back on and you will forgive us because when you make the sort claims you are making today we have to compare it with something. We have to look at your previous, as the police put it, and that is your previous.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: They have got plenty of previous.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Look at the Government that were in charge. You have been doing it all afternoon. Thatcher was in.

COUNCILLOR BALE: That is what we have to judge you on. That was the golden age – mismanaged projects, crumbling roads, once thriving peripheral towns that have been left to rot, parks that were scruffy and sad. You know that sort of

achievement – central Government have been mentioned today. It clearly was a bit of a partnership. I do not absolve the Labour Government from doing its bit.

I notice that George Mudie has been lauded today as being the best of the seven Labour MPs and that is remarkable, really. He is quoted in the YEP yesterday evening as saying, and I quote, “Manchester has been treated better than Leeds in terms of everything. I really do not understand it. I am cross about it, really”. Lord Mayor, is it not good to know that there is passion still in politics. *(laughter)* He is cross about it, really.

You know, when we compare administrations we have to look at your record and the record is a sad one. Look at what has been achieved in the last four years. Roads resurfaced; education back in our own control and on the up; town and district centres regenerated; a parks renaissance; EASEL; Council housing back on the agenda; 172 PCSOs.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Bale.

COUNCILLOR BALE: Lord Mayor, it is the way that Bernard tells is that makes it comedy. The reality is tragedy and farce. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I must say I do enjoy your delivery each Council. Councillor Lambe.

COUNCILLOR LAMBE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Do not worry, I will finish the list off for him. I would like to speak in favour of the amendment by Councillor Finnigan and I would like to thank Councillor Atha for making sure we have the chance to compare and contrast the aptitude and efficiency of the government he supports with the administration that I support.

Under this Council administration a huge amount has been achieved, culminating in the award yet again of a four star rating for this city. We turned around the social services deficit we inherited from them and now we are investing record amounts. The huge backlog in roads maintenance is being tackled and is saving the people of Leeds a fortune in claims. The Town and Village Regeneration Scheme is bringing new life into parts of Leeds that have been neglected for years. Crime has fallen across Leeds thanks to our investment in neighbourhood policing. I could go on and on but the summary of this administration’s performance is simple. We are delivering improved services to all the people of Leeds in spite of the financial settlements imposed by this government.

It is impossible to squeeze every example of the current government’s ineptitude and inefficiency into a five minute speech, so I will pick out a few familiar examples.

They said they would be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. I am sure we can all remember that one. We now have a revolving door approach to criminal justice where our prisons are bursting and the police, who are mired in red tape and bureaucracy, actually want the Home Secretary to resign. There was education, education, education but there are now more 16 to 24 year olds not in education, employment or training than ten years ago, despite billions they have wasted on the new deal. This week we learn that pupils will be able to get a French GCSE without being able to speak French. We should not be surprised – after all, this was the party who for ten years had a Deputy Prime Minister who could not speak English! *(laughter)*

Let us not forget how in his first budget Gordon Brown concealed as a minor reform to taxes on dividends the robbing of £5b a year from the pension funds of the people of this country. By now that comes to some £55b, an enormous sum. I for one will never accept that anyone who takes away the income of generations of pensioners without even having the decency to admit he was doing it, should have the right to guide the destiny of our country. (*hear, hear*)

Let us look at what has happened since Gordon Brown became Prime Minister. We had the early flurry of false announcements, re-announcements and pre-announcements as he prepared to take us into the election that never was. It was your Prime Minister who was responsible for the merger of the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise which went on to lose the personal data of half the people of this country. It was your Prime Minister who set up the regulations which failed so miserably and led to the first run on a bank in 100 years. It is your Prime Minister who has borrowed £100b more than he intended over the last five years and it is your Prime Minister who has reneged on your party's promise to give the people the final say on the European Constitutional Treaty. We now have a Chancellor who has performed so many U-turns in the past week he no longer knows which way he is facing, we have a Home Secretary who has lost the confidence of the police and we had a Work and Pensions Secretary who set up a think tank that did not do any thinking and who accepted donations that were dodgier than his winter tan. (*laughter*)

The Prime Minister continually boasts about his economic record but his actions betray him. As a direct result of his financial incompetence and fiscal incontinence the government has run out of money and now the people of Leeds are being asked to help foot the bill for his woeful mismanagement of the economy.

So, Councillor Atha, when you want to talk about ineptitude and inefficiency you should look at little bit closer to home, for while your Prime Minister is dithering, our Council Leader is delivering. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Promotion beckons!

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Councillor Finnigan got me thinking earlier on. I have been thinking to myself, what is the difference between Bernard Atha and Paul Daniels? I have been thinking about this. One of them is short, has a squeaky voice and is occasionally entertaining and, of course, the other one is Paul Daniels. (*laughter*)

I would like to talk a little today about my own ward, Roundhay Ward, which I first represented in 2003. Having spent a year working as a Councillor under a Labour administration, I really got to appreciate how little the people of Roundhay got back for the huge amounts of Council tax that they pay into the pot. It was, frankly, appalling. The roads are dropping to bits, the town centre in Oakwood was looking shabby around the edges, the park was not being looked after properly. Labour were planning on turning the Mansion House into a block of offices, which was disgusting.

Anyway, fortunately something happened in 2004 which I think was really rather marvellous and we took over control from you and, since then, what we have seen in Roundhay – this year is an example, the same as last year – a half million pound investment in our roads.

I was talking to a highways officer a little while ago and they said to me that in the early 1990s under your administration, at the rate at which you were resurfacing roads, they would be resurfaced once every 130 years. I was just thinking about

that. They had not invented tarmac, I do not think, 130 years ago. I think we were still on cobbles or dirt tracks then. There we are, half a million pounds on roads.

Continuing on from here what has Roundhay got? £540,000 for a high occupancy vehicle lane. £400,000 to smarten up Oakwood which was neglected for 24 years under your control. The redevelopment of the Oakwood Clough junction to improve traffic flow, a design of which was around for about five years before I got on the Council but it was only when we took control that we said, "We want this doing" and it got done. I will go on – I am going to go on, I have got a couple of minutes and you will have to listen.

We have got PCSOs now which under your control had all been in the city centre; we have got the toilets being rebuilt at the Tropical World café; we have got a garden waste recycling scheme right across the ward; we have got an increased budget for maintaining the park; we have got the Streetlane safety scheme which is going in; we have got one new pedestrian crossing and another one on the way; we now have inappropriate planning applications turned down, which is something which is completely revolutionary to how it used to be under your control; and we are supporting such things as the Roundhay Team who are bringing forward a design statement; we have expanded the conservation area and we have a new conservation area in place.

You think to yourself, is it just the Conservative Councillors making sure that their wards are OK? In neighbouring Chapel Allerton we can see that we have got here just a couple of examples - £502,000 Town and District Regeneration Fund; 37 streets will be resurfaced in Chapel Allerton ward in the year, which is quite an achievement, I would say, compared to probably 32 across the entire city in the early 1990s. I could go on and on with that but I am not going to. I am going to save you from it.

This basically is all done despite the Government rather than thanks to the Government. We have seen some pretty poor results from our local Labour MPs. We have got people as you would expect me to comment on, I am sure, Fabian Hamilton voting for the settlement and then speaking against it afterwards – mind you, this is not dissimilar to the King Lane Post Office debacle where he handed in a petition to stop it closing and then voted for the Post Office Modernisation Bill which shut it (*laughter*) or, indeed, for that matter the vote for no referendum on the EU Treaty having previously, as with all Labour politicians in their manifesto, saying that they would support a referendum on it.

I think it is a pretty shabby show. I think it is cheap political point scoring, or an attempt, should I say, at cheap political point scoring on your behalf and I think it has very badly backfired.

I say to you we are neither inept nor inefficient and I would ask you if you want to look for that sort of thing to look to your own Government. Thank you.
(*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. First of all, Bernard, you mentioned in your speech about Amberley Road. Can I give you a bit of information about that? The reason Amberley Road shut is because Network Rail, who we have been chasing for some years, which is a government agency, are making the bridge safe under EU regulations. In fact, one of the reasons why my end of Amberley Road has been resurfaced and Jim's has not is because of the fact we were waiting for them to do that, so that is not Leeds City Council doing that, that is the Government agency doing that. I will just put you right about that one.

Basically it is a bit like pot calling kettle, this. We could say that about all. We could say about incompetent previous Conservative governments, incompetent Labour governments, incompetent former Labour Councils. We could say loads of things about that. All administrations make mistakes and all administrations do good things. I think to some extent this administration has done a number of good things but it has made its mistakes as well.

As far as the present Government, recently what a load of disasters. I have got a bit of good news, actually, for Andrew and for Richard, that might be helpful after this budget here. Did you realise that grants totally £2.8m were mistakenly given to Newcastle-under-Lyne in stead of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Do you think that Leeds in Kent has got our actual grant and we should be getting more? *(laughter)*

I was going to go on but, as I say, as far as I am concerned this is all electioneering and we do our electioneering out there. Quite honestly, as I say, I am going to support your brilliant amendment there about this really rubbish Government and hopefully we might get them to improve a bit. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I have to say I find it quite understandable why the Opposition has put this resolution forward because actually we have only been here a little while but when you look at the record that we have to be compared against, we have got no chance of getting such a level of performance. *(laughter)*

The first one of course, I do not really have to go any further than use the term Education Leeds, because it is a lasting monument to a period in this city when we were considered by a Labour government, a Labour Council was so inept that the education service had to be taken out of its hands. When we were trying to recruit for a Chief Educational Officer, no-one would touch this Council of any worth because of the way that the politicians who were running this Council interfered with the system. I will leave the Currie (?) incident to other people.

Landmark Leeds – another term, I think, I do not really need to have that much more explanation of. The performance that there was there in terms of giving the city a lasting legacy, a legacy of hundreds and hundreds of personal injury claims thanks to the footways that were put down under the Labour administration.

Talking about the city centre, though, I think that is another major legacy that I think we will not be able to live up to. Admittedly we have tried to make Briggate a better place to go shopping but in terms of the very scale and the manner of the ego-projects that were under the labour administration, I will refer to the Ceausescu-like or should I really call it Pol Pot like Millennium Square, of course – not quite Year Zero but Year Two Zero Zero Zero. If you remember that is a huge investment that was put into the city centre whilst our outer suburbs decreased in the way that Councillor Lobley has already pointed out to us.

I will also say to Councillor Jarosz, if you are going to throw stones do not live in a glass house. I seem to remember there was a rather controversial car park that was proposed for Millennium Square as well which would have been an even bigger black hole in the Leeds economy.

I also have to say as well that we cannot quite live up to the level of the promise that is obviously there in the Labour benches from the young Turks, the likes of Councillor Davey and Councillor Lewis. Can we really compare to the mathematical skill of Councillor Lewis in terms of his average family with the two twins paying more in nursery fees than they were actually earning over a year. In terms of Councillor Davey, I know that it is a long distance between Bramhope and

your own ward but I would have thought that you would have found time to actually read the correspondence which tells you how much this administration is spending in your ward on roads being resurfaced so that if you could tip us off when a road in your ward is not actually somewhere where somebody lives.

You will be glad to know that as a young Turk you are being looked after by the elder statesman, which is my colleague to my left, who tells me that your own road in Bramhope at Meadowgarth is due to get done in the financial year after next unless, of course, you have any objections because you do feel that our programme is actually not of any benefit.

As I said, Lord Mayor, a record of that group over there and I think this is the shining example, the shining example of their performance is that the record of that group over there meant that every other party in this Council is so enamoured of them that they are willing to face working in greater co-operation, for some of them to actually work formally together so that they can actually create a consensus for progress in this city in the very face of the ineptitude that was Labour Leeds.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: I think Councillor Lobley should concentrate on some local themes. I can well remember the election campaign of 2004 which seemed in Roundhay to figure largely around the Mansion House. I used to chair the Recreation Services Committee and I regard Roundhay Park and Temple Newsam for that matter, and Bramhope, as some of the jewels in our crown and when we have visitors from outside of the country, let us get in a car and go to Roundhay. We went to the Mansion, though I have to admit I have not been there recently, and it did not look any different from it did all that time ago. I said, "Let us go down to the café by the lakeside", because it is a lovely café, is it not? It is still not open. Matthew, if I were you and your colleagues I would concentrate on local issues like that because that is what local Councillors should be doing.

As far as our MPs are concerned, Fabian Hamilton is part of the support of a government which has got the biggest school rebuilding programme which this country has ever seen and in all the Leeds constituency, including all the schools that the children in your ward go to, they are all going to be rebuilt within the lifetime of this current Parliament. I think that should be recognised.

Robert Finnigan - what can one say about Robert?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Brilliant.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: No matter what he says his natural charm and good sense of humour always comes through. There are some people who will say he is bitter and twisted and is motivated by a huge well of bile that dwells within him. I am no psychologist, Lord Mayor, but I do feel that probably he feels psychologically disturbed from actually failing to become the next Labour MP for Morley and Rothwell, which was the apple of his eye but there we go. There we go.

It is interesting, is it not, that for just a very small sum of money that the beds are shared. First of all the Greens get out of bed – they were told to by their national leadership, actually – over the incinerator and as far as the Greens are concerned it is an incinerator. By the way, Matthew, your party did not win power. If you want the results I will send them to you. Your party has not won power in any election in Leeds since 1978. You had a minority administration from 1979 to 1980 and that is it. The ward boundaries, which I have had a little bit to do with, of course, over the years, will probably last 20 or 25 years. I make a prediction now, Matthew, that in no time, at no election between now and that 25 year period will your party actually be

able to gain a majority. It is not to do with the boundaries – it is because the people of Leeds do not like you.

You are a bunch of political liars because soon we will have all the leaflets coming through our letterboxes – “We do this, we do that.” It is interesting, you look at a Liberal leaflet in Otley and it does not mention the Tories, or it might do if it wants to attack on the fence because that is unpopular, is it not? That is seen as John Procter’s baby. If you go to a Tory area it is a Tory-led Council. We even get Tory front bench spokesmen on television saying that Leeds is a Tory-run Council. They need basic teaching in arithmetic, their basic education has failed.

The Liberals are never going to have power, so despite the fact before 2004 they hated each other’s guts..

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: No we did not.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: I can recall at least one meeting of the Executive Board where the Leader of the Tories and the Liberals had to be physically separated over the issue of asylum seekers. Despite that they were trying to work together in some kind of unusual coalition. The perception of the people of Leeds, though, is that the Tories are running the show – the Tories are in control. One may criticise them but you can see people of obvious talent on the Tory benches. I mean this quite sincerely. People like you, Peter, you care about some of the things you deal with. John Procter is a fine fellow – I can tell you this because John Procter and I recently had a talk about the Polling District Review and John Procter is a fine fellow. He and I agreed 100% and I never thought I would ever say that, so you have got some people with a certain kind of ability.

You would expect, would you not, the Liberals, who used to walk round wearing sandals and eating muesli, that kind of thing, that was the image that we had of them that they were bringing some kind of radical, some change. Often the Liberals will say, “We are more left wing than you are now”, many of them say that, “We are to the left of them”, but where is it? Where is it?

I congratulate Andrew Carter on leading a coup. He has got hardly any Councillors but he is running the whole show and he should be admired for that.

However, grass cutting, one of the funniest e-mails I have read in my time in Bramley was an e-mail from a gentleman, it was to Denise Atkinson and his granddaughter had gone for a walk and had not been seen for several days and the worry was the grass was so high that wild animals like lions and tigers were now in Kirkstall Valley and perhaps the child had been eaten. It was a lovely e-mail.

You did not need boundary signs coming into Leeds then. You just had to look at the level of grass as you left Bradford or as you left Kirklees or Wakefield, because if the grass is up here you knew you were in Leeds. What have this lot done? What they should have done was examine the contract with Glendales. They have given them yet another year’s extension. No competition. The Tories are supposed to be in favour of competition. A multi-million pound programme, spending of public money, no accountability. It is a damned disgrace. If there had been a Labour administration we would have made sure that that contract would have been put out to proper open competition.

This administration has had long enough. It is time to go. The people of Leeds will decide in May. Good night and good riddance. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I assume that applause was for me standing, not Councillor Taggart finishing. How do you follow that? Your time on the Playhouse Board has not been wasted, I see. You have been taking acting lessons there.

There were one or two things that Bernard mentioned which really cannot go without being challenged. The letter you chose from the Evening Post was a particularly bad example and if you want me to explain to you why later on, I will do. Rest assured, the litter situation in Morley is being addressed and we are awaiting delivery of a new machine called a Glutton which is one of the first to come in the country. It has been funded jointly by the Area Committee and Morley Town Council. I think I have mentioned this before here, so that issue is being dealt with.

The issue of the leisure centre in Morley is an interesting one because really I think you were involved with leisure services during the life of the building and if it had been maintained correctly over 30 years, perhaps we would not be in this situation where we need to have £15m PFI credits for a new build. That is the situation. I know the author of the letter is particularly unhappy with the situation. However, I can show you example after example of people in Morley who are overjoyed with £15m coming to our town and the provision of a new leisure centre.

I think Neil Taggart very tentatively touched on Robert's career, or not a career, as an MP. Although I am somewhat partisan in this matter, can I just assure Members of Council that in my opinion and the opinion of a great number of people in Morley, Robert Finnigan would have made a far superior MP to the current incumbent in the role.

Please, I know you are all giddy and it is late but do not shout out. It looks rather awful for the people up there in the public gallery. It is almost like a vaudeville show.

You also mentioned the situation with regard to the Building Hope Appeal in Sri Lanka. It is no secret that I probably have a bit more knowledge of matters in Sri Lanka than anyone in this Council Chamber and, indeed, probably in the City Council, so to use one of the worst disasters, worst natural disasters which has ever occurred for a political benefit seems rather unsuitable to me, Bernard. The situation, frankly, is very, very difficult to deal with. There is a civil war going on there and it is not straightforward to deal with, as I know. I have today received an e-mail from Sri Lanka about some matters I am dealing with and I am in more or less constant touch with Sri Lanka at the moment.

The Call Centre, the 0345 number. What I could suggest to people is that they go along to see Paddy Clarke down there, to see what it is that is actually going on, because I have been to see him, I have looked round the Call Centre. I am told the 03 numbers are still not targeted with a price. However, some carriers are looking at charging between a local and a national rate, so in effect some people would be worse off. I would also draw Members' attention to the fact that Virgin do not charge between 30p and 50p for a call at local rate. It would be illegal for them to do so. They are charged at a national rate call and to mislead people in this Chamber and members of the public is somewhat along the lines of scaremongering.

We now go on to the situation with central Government. I know that – I will be surprised if I do not get a jeer with this one – weapons of mass destruction, that famous report which, when I am told was written in such a way to make it look worse for the situation, because spin doctors had been involved. That is one of the things that we are told. The Labour Government are synonymous with spin doctors. If it is not bad enough to send people to war, a war which is probably illegal if you want to

go down that road, those poor people who are sent there to represent Queen and country do not have relevant equipment, they are very poorly serviced. When they come back to this country they will not receive the support they should do. That is disgraceful.

The Leeds settlement is one thing I think I should touch upon. It is very poor advocacy on behalf of those people who represent the city. That is their job, they should be advocating for this city, they should be saying we need more money in Leeds and it is appalling that they do not do so.

How do we go on with the National Health Service in the cases of MRSA, because the hospitals are so filthy, they are not cleaned. It is quite simple to clean a hospital, it is not a difficult task, it is a failing of central Government. Finally, the breakdown of society I think can be laid firmly at the door of this Government with its weak legislation and the directives that it gives to the judiciary in sentencing as well as Magistrates. Quite clearly Judges are there to judge and that is what they should be allowed to do. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Grayshon.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is appropriate that since I was one of the joint Leaders of Council for the last three-and-a-half years, that I should speak in this no confidence debate.

Before I get to saying some of the points I had originally wished to make, I must comment on a few points that have been made by the Labour Group. Councillor Jarosz and parking at St James's. I simply say that however bad this situation is, it would have been hugely better if your Ministers had not lied and deceived us over Supertram because Supertram, which would have run past St James's, would have alleviated the situation hugely. That would have allowed the very people you cry on behalf of to get to and from that hospital more easily. It was your Ministers that denied us that deceitfully as well.

The suggestion that we are running a Rotten Borough is, frankly, laughable, and we will come to that in a minute. Certainly we have heard Councillor Atha when he began was not prepared for the way in which he introduced his motion by quoting from newspapers and not always to believe what one sees in the headlines. The one that immediately comes to mind in the last three-and-a-half years with regard to something we did was the one that he referred at the Call Centre which said, "The call centre where the phones go unanswered." Then in the body of the it said how the new call centre had an answer rate of 95% compared to, under the Labour administration an average answer rate of 50% and yet the headline said, "The call centre where the phones just go unanswered." Let us now believe all that we read in the headlines.

You dare not lecture us and have the temerity to talk about what we have done wrong on this side. Yes, we have done things wrong. Grass cutting was not handled as well as it could be. The school voucher scheme I personally apologised for. There have been other things but these things pale into insignificance against what you presided over. We have never put our Councillors in jeopardy when they were faced with being personally sued and losing everything where you did over the Gus John debacle. You were responsible for that. That was Tammany Hall politics of the worst kind where the Councillors involved in that could have lost everything because of your underhand behaviour. We have done nothing like that.

Councillor Golton mentioned Gateway Leeds. The Chief Executive, I know, was a senior legal officer then. Councillor Taggart has the temerity to talk about

putting a contract out to tender. Landmark Leeds or whatever it was called, I know for a fact officers who tried to tell the then dictator of Council that he could not do what he was doing were dismissed, they were thrown out of this Council, they were told never to come to meetings again so that bad, disgraceful debacle could be steamrollered through by a complete, utter dictator. Whatever you say about Andrew, I, Richard Brett, we are not dictators. We may have our inadequacies, we may have our deficiencies, but never, ever have any of us behaved in the disgraceful way in which some of your leaders have behaved. Never have we presided over some of those things.

What did you do about LATS when you knew it was coming? Nothing. You left it to us to deal with. What did you do about Equal Pay? Nothing. You left it to us to deal with. What did you do about social services? There was an independent report that showed you just abandoned it for the last three months of your administration and left us to pick up the pieces. There are many ways of running an organisation of this size where we err, where we can make mistakes. You look to yourselves, you look to your own record before you have, as I say, the temerity to lecture us about our failings. Our failings are nothing compared to yours. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 22.1, could I move that Procedure Rule 3.1 (c) and (d) be suspended to allow this White Paper to be debated and completed.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is that seconded?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I put that to the vote, Council? Those in favour of that suspension? Against? Abstentions? I think that is CARRIED.

Can we then move on to Councillor Harker.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Like Councillor Bale I was hoping that we were going to be entertained by Bernard this evening. Unfortunately we were not. He was, I think, practising for an audition of a modern version of The Mikado because all he had to give us tonight was a little list. He had a little list.

I came to Leeds in 1965 and there was a Labour Council which Bernard was on, I suspect. Yes, he was. It built, I remember, an Olympic swimming pool. Two things about that swimming pool struck me at the time. One, copper had gone through the roof because of the Rhodesia crisis but the Labour Council continued to put a copper roof on it, despite the deprivation that there was in Leeds in the 1960s. Then, when they came to measure the pool, it was not big enough.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: That is not true. That is untrue.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: We never had Olympic things there. Then in 1973 I became a teacher and I began to work for Leeds and between 1973 and 2000 the morale of teachers in this city went down and down and down and down and none of us, certainly those of us in middle management at the time, were surprised when Ofsted inspections said sorry, Leeds, too much political interference, we are going to take education away from you. I will give credit to the Leader of Council then in that Brian Walker created Education Leeds and I will give him credit for that, I think it was a brilliant thing that he did.

Since the creation of Education Leeds – and there are still problems with education, we would all be fools if we denied that and we are working on those

problems but we have all the graphs climb and climb and climb and climb. Next year we are looking forward to them continuing to climb and this administration has set the highest possible targets for the year after, and we will achieve them and we will be here to achieve them. I think that is the important thing, when you start looking at front line services today, they are improving across the city, not in odd patches here and there.

I think it was Bernard mentioned something about a misquotation that was given about housing and gerrymandering and he mentioned the ex Councillor Porter in the south. It is rather strange, I would remind the Labour Group that in 2001 when I came on to the Council, my name was between Janet Harper and who was the guy that Penny beat? Gerry Harper. Every now and again despite I told the Labour Party that they were inefficient and they kept sending me memos, internal memos, internal party memos I was not due to get. I had told your office and I still continued to get them.

Do we all remember that little committee they had? Do you remember the little committee that was supposed to organise the programme of road repairs and other things? I am sure we all do. Thank you for your indulgence, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: My Lord Mayor, I will not spend too much time as speakers have tried to attack the Government. If we start attacking previous Governments and the current Government we will be here all night so let us just deal with the issue in hand.

Lord Mayor, about a year ago Members of our communities brought a deputation to this Council about the shortage of burial spaces in our city. The deputation particularly highlighted a serious shortage of burial spaces in the Harehills cemetery. It is the customary practice of this Council to refer all the deputations to the Executive Board and for the Executive Board to bring a report to the Council. It has been 13 months since the deputation by our community members brought it to the Council about the shortage of burial space in this city - 13 months - and there is still no sign of any report to the Executive Board regarding that. I know there has been a working party set up as a result of that but I also know that, despite meetings with members of communities and the cross-party working group which has met a few times, there is still no clear progress on this particular issue.

It beggars belief that, as far as I can remember in the past three or four years since I have been on this Council, all the deputations have been brought to this Council it usually takes no more than two or three months, usually it is within a couple of months and the report goes to the Executive Board for consideration. It just shows how seriously this Council is taking this very sensitive issue.

No matter what you say, Councillor Procter, that is the reality - that is the reality. My colleague here, Councillor Dobson, already mentioned that it is not just in south, north-east, and east Leeds there is a serious shortage of burial space but throughout Leeds and you are doing absolutely nothing so far, I can assure you of that.

The people of this city are taking notice and when it comes to May's elections you will pay a heavy price in the ballot box, I can assure you of that, unless you sort something out about this very crucial issue in the coming months.

I also know that there is also some political brandings going on between *you* lot and *you* lot as to where a cemetery should go, whether we should have a larger cemetery or smaller cemeteries. I hear from the people on that side there are

serious problems there so you need to sort yourselves out before it is too late and it is May.

Such is the hypocrisy, Lord Mayor, and double standards adopted by this administration I can only say I have never seen such hypocrisy and double standards of the highest order in what you have done in this particular case. The way they have acted has shown demonstrates how incompetent, inefficient, inept, immoral and irresponsible you have become. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: I too had a little list - it was a medium sized list - but Robert has covered most of it already so I will not worry about it.

When I was chair of Neighbourhoods and Housing Scrutiny last year, we, the board, went on a small mini-bus trip round the Beeston Group Repair prospects; we also had a look at the Beverleys. We also visited this street in Beeston Hill, the name of which I cannot remember, which had been resurfaced and had the one house left being inhabited which was then subject to compulsory purchase. I am not sure what has happened since.

Because of the anomaly of the road having been resurfaced, I enquired of Highways Department whether the Ward Members for City and Hunslet had been informed of the roads that were going to be done in their ward so that they could perhaps change the order or take a road out and put another one in because that is what happens in all the other 42 wards in the city. Yes, it had, so that presumably meant that Councillors Davey, Nash and Iqbal either had not read the e-mail or had not understood it or just had not responded to it. So there is that.

On Highways I too saw the YEP thing about the £2.5m claims. What I could not understand was why the YEP chose the two years, 2004/5, and 2005/6, which come to a nice roundish total of £2.5m. I do not know why they did not give the figures for last year, which was the last full year available, and I do not know why they managed not to compare previous years, but I will compare previous years.

Take the four years that we have got, three of which are under this administration. One was shared because part of it was your administration and part of it was ours - that is 2004/5 - and the others are yours. Back in 2000/01, the amount paid out in claims for highways damages as personal injury and vehicle damage by your administration was £3,851,688. That was an average of £5,574 per claim. That is your record in your administration. Last year this administration paid out the grand total of £373,664. That is a tenth as much as you paid out. The average amount paid out was down to £1,596, so that is a fifth of the amount you paid out. *(Applause)*

What we all know is that is a result of spending more money on roads. That is no surprise. We also remember, I think it was Councillor Wakefield, saying that spending money on highways was not a priority for you.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Like the PCSOs.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: It is not the number one priority for us but at least we are doing the job. You clearly were not and that was clear inefficiency on your part.

Turning quickly, Councillor Jarosz talking about hospital parking. I do not know if you are suffering from chronic memory loss but if you looked at the transcript of that Council meeting that Councillor Langdale partially quoted later, you would have noticed that I said in that speech, I reminded you that in 2003 your administration, Labour, doubled the charges on Beckett Street car park. Slightly

different - doubling it or putting it up by 40 pence? I think doubling it beats putting it up by 40 pence.

You should also bear in mind that in that speech I castigated the Teaching Hospitals Trust for continually putting up their charges and that is the problem, because they have a captive market and are milking the people of the city. Councillor Langdale I believes works for the Trust and so obviously has an interest in cheaper parking provided by the City Council by her employers.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Councillor Jarosz, the PCT is not responsible for timing hospital appointments, so you cannot blame Councillor Blake for that. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do not know if one of the Labour Members wants to go and get Councillor Dobson in so I can fully respond to his comments that he made earlier.

Lord Mayor, I am sat here like many other members who have been here a few years just shaking our heads in absolute disbelief at what we are hearing opposite. I looked at those Members who have been here - Dobbo is in the house, very good - a few years just to cast your mind back to how this motley crowd used to run this Authority. In my scribbles in the margin are just some of the highlights.

Does anyone, those who sat on Plans East when I first joined this Council, does anyone remember John Clare, who used to trumpet the fact that he skipped through the planning agenda in 15 minutes flat as if it was some form of triumph? I am delighted that Plans Panels now take several, in fact many, hours to get through their agendas so enabling the people of this city a fair chance to debate each and every single application rather than under the Labour administration who used to gather in Room A or B and cook up the Plans Panel's agenda even when we drew to their attention that to do so was illegal.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: John Clare was never chairman. Your memory is fading, my son.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: The other scribble in my margin, Lord Mayor, relates to Councillor Towler, who I suppose you could say had responsibility for an area that I now have responsibility for, being the then Chairman of the Recreation Services Committee. It is only when I come into this role that I hear all kinds of horrific stories from officers about the conduct of that particular former Councillor - how Council officers were ordered to go and fetch and carry for him, send a car to his house to collect him to bring him into committee meetings, go and pick up his children from school, take them back to school as well - highly inappropriate, Lord Mayor.

Councillor Harris mentioned the Gus John affair, Lord Mayor, something which you are intimately familiar with. An absolute - absolute - disgrace when the then Chairman of the Education Committee conspired with a Member of Parliament to advance the prospects of one particular candidate in the process applying to be Director of Education in this city. No small wonder that that same person then took the Council to an industrial tribunal and was awarded something like £70,000 against the Council as well. No thank you, I do not want to go back to that form of governance.

Also scribbled in the margin here is "Leeds Festival". I remember when that came to Councillor Atha's committee, when he was Chairman of Culture at the time. It just did not stack up, what we were being asked to approve in terms of the Leeds Festival and a tender that had been received and the like. The city was getting something like £30,000 at that time. After some of us intervened, asked some quite awkward questions, had emergency meetings called and the like, I seem to remember faxes being sent from New York from the varying bidders at the last minute to someone who is now the Chief Executive who had to arbitrate over all of this and suddenly, hey presto, we end up in a committee meeting being asked to approve £300,000 in terms of the award of a tender.

You people really have got a very, very short memory indeed. All of those days you clearly want to forget. Those of us who have been here some time sadly had to live through it.

Lord Mayor, Councillor Dobson and his comments about Garforth really are quite laughable. He forgets to mention to everybody here that actually he came to see me in relation to the Garforth issue and he readily admits that the first person who lived in Garforth for many years and wants to be buried in Garforth cemetery and cannot be, that is a problem for him - he is the person who is objecting to the extension of Garforth cemetery, not us. We are proposing it he is objecting to it and he is trying to stop it.

Councillor Rafique, in terms of the issues of Muslim burials, you more than anybody should know that we are making good progress - good progress - and I am very pleased that the leader of the community is dealing with these matters. Taj Ali, I got a very warm e-mail from him only the other day asking about our progress and where we are going from here.

The fact of the matter is that we are making positive strides in office, in administration. You people said it would not even last six months. Here we are nearly four years later going strong and will be in the next years ahead. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR NASH: My Lord Mayor, I cannot believe I am hearing this from Councillor Procter, who has just spent 160 grand on a fence in Otley that nobody wants. However, I have stood up to correct Councillor Harker, who is under a misapprehension about the former Leeds International Pool.

It was originally the Olympic Pool, fit for Olympic Games if they ever came to Leeds. That cannot now happen because you need two swimming pools for that purpose.

COUNCILLOR: It was too short.

COUNCILLOR NASH: This is what I am going to tell those people who think they know it all. It never was too short. This is what went wrong in people's minds. The lane widths - it was Imperial measures then - were six feet one inch...

COUNCILLOR HARKER: You got it wrong.

COUNCILLOR NASH: ...and the Olympic standards for lane widths were 6'3" to 6'6". After each Games there is a debriefing meeting, how can things be improved and the big butterfly swimmers said that the lane widths were too short and therefore the Leeds International Pool lane widths were too short. If they had built it to the maximum of 6'3", then it would still have been in that net because the new lane

widths are 6'3" to 6'6". The pool is the correct, was the correct length and many international records have been broken there.

The thing is with that side, that lot, they do talk a lot of twaddle at times but they are clutching at straws. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to put right Bernard's remarks about what I said about social housing because it was never my intention when I discussed that in an open way to do anything other than say my personal view. I was not talking about housing in this city. I was certainly not talking about Councillor J L Carter and anything that is portfolio may or may not have done. I was simply reflecting on the matter that we now have a very real shortage of social housing. I believe that that is not due to anything that we have done in Leeds; it is nationwide.

Since I was elected a relatively short time ago, I have noticed a considerable tightening in the numbers of houses that come into the flyer each week and my remarks were, if you like, slightly ill-advised to be overheard by someone who might want to twist them and that is what has happened, because I was simply trying to explain that all three major parties at the last general election in 2005 did not talk seriously about social housing. I regard that as a fact. It is a fact about national politics. It does not only apply to Leeds.

If I was really being mischievous, I would say that the reason that that happens, that all three major parties do not talk about social housing in a general election, is because the reality is that general elections are decided in 100 constituencies with a small number of swing voters and, sadly - and I mean that very sincerely, sadly - many of the vulnerable people who live in social housing do not vote and it is that reality that determines the priorities for all three parties in national elections.

If I am indulged a second, Lord Mayor, I could go on to add that my party believes that there ought to be a different system of proportional voting so that every vote was counted equally and that would encourage, then, all parties to seek the votes of those who perhaps traditionally have not been very good at voting. I was certainly not suggesting that anyone who has twisted my remarks to interpret this way, I was certainly not suggesting that any gerrymandering either could or might have taken place about it.

I want to remind one or two people who have long memories of things that I remember when I was not actually a Councillor when any of these headlines were done. This one dates from 2002: "Shake up may add £75 to our Council tax bill" and that was certainly something about Labour which we do not remember with any fondness.

This one from January 2003: "Money for votes storm". I will not go into the details but some of you will remember.

This one is: "Anger at stadium deal" where a huge overspend at a sports project which I believe was started by the Labour Party and, as I recall, there was some dealings about a deal in Moortown where King Alfred's Fields were involved and money was transferred which certainly Moortown Councillors at the time thought was at least dubious.

"Poll Axe". This reminds you of what happened when in 2004 the Labour Party lost control of Leeds and I believe that from that point on there has been a change not just in the individuals who have been running Leeds but the way in which

Leeds has been run and I am quite clear in my mind that we have improved both the efficiency and the way in which we take decisions with as much involvement as possible. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Let me begin by just going back to the issue of the Audit Commission's Four Star Rating for the city. I made it very plain that I do not get over-excited about these ratings. However, we have been awarded four stars by the Audit Commission playing by your Government's rules, by meeting targets set by your Government and actually one of the big factors - and I think it is crucial - is that unless you are judged to have the efficient use of resources as core to your whole running of the city, there is no way that you can get four stars. With that at least I do agree with the Government. It is crucial for the success of any undertaking but particularly a municipality the size of this that there is proper management of the resources available, and by your Government's standards we qualify for that and we have been given four stars. So, as Robert Finnigan said, Bernard, you are really facing an uphill battle.

My Lord Mayor, Councillor Harker - and I do not want to be going back into the past all the time - did mention this group your lot set up in 2002 and I am sure you all have this happen to you occasionally - you get something that you should not get and you read it and you think, "I am going to keep this because it is going to keep coming up, it is going to keep being relevant."

This is what you were referring to. I actually have the Minutes:

"The Budget and Service Delivery Group.

Chaired by Councillor Atha.

Gerry Harper"

- of not so blessed memory -

"Michael Davey, Councillors Blake, Hyde, Harington and Wakefield.

In attendance, Andrew Fisher.

The Group agreed it should concentrate its efforts on recommending actions to the Labour Group which would have a direct effect on the all-out elections in 2004"

- it certainly did that -

"and on recommending the deletion of plans and expenditure which would militate against this purpose. Even small savings on individual items could lead to Members in vulnerable wards having resources to make a difference. It was further agreed that this top priority should be put to the full Labour Group."

There is no doubt, nobody can misunderstand the wording - you were using or trying to use Council resources to improve your electoral chances. There can be no other way of construing that document.

The only other bit of the past I want to refer to is when you lost the education function for this city. It was the blackest day for the Council on record certainly in

living memory. It was entirely down to your party - not you personally, Bernard, but to your party. Some individuals present bear a lot more of the blame than others and I will take no lectures, as ever, from Peter Gruen on efficiency, on rectitude in public life, in how to run public services, because he and some others - some not now here - were responsible for the great shame being brought on this Authority, but more than that of, I believe, destroying educational chances of young people because of their political interference. There again can be no other way of construing what happened then.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, Councillor Driver says "Rubbish". Again, I do not hold Councillor Driver personally responsible, let me say, but you know, Bernard, Geoff, it was your Government and I know what went on behind the scenes. All your MPs lobbying like fury to stop your Secretary of State taking away the education powers, but she was brave enough to resist that and take them away because of the mess you had made.

My Lord Mayor, very quickly, I am proud of what we are achieving together - and we are achieving it together - and the more you carry on the more united we become and the more determined to be the administration for the next few years to come.

Northern Ballet Theatre - picked off the ground, you were letting it go; refurbish the art gallery; Stage 7 of the Inner Ring Road now nearly completed - we got the money; East Leeds Link Road - we got the money, nearly completed; highways - we are delighted with the progress on highways because every ward in this city gets three times as much spent on highway repairs as it did previously; Town and District Centres; City Varieties; the Arena; Council housing - a Liberal/Conservative administration introduced Council housing again in this city, you failed to do it (*Applause*); low cost home ownership - we have put in place a scheme to deliver 1,000 low cost home units every year and, my Lord Mayor, in your last year in power you delivered 37.

My Lord Mayor, your resolution is a waste of time, Bernard. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: You have been very patient, Bernard. I do hope your Equity card is still valid! You are on next.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I will say I always listen to Andrew Carter with a great deal of fun and respect but he said, "We got the money." Guess where they got the money from to do all these things? The Government. He did not say that. He quoted a document that goes back so long - I would love to see it again, I think I have not got that particular Minute - but when we had the Research Committee to attack our own budget, to make resources available for where it was needed, we listed the vulnerable wards, the wards that were referred to in there. Two were in Labour control, three were not and if you look back at those Minutes that is what the Audit Commission found when we were referred to Audit for gerrymandering. The very thing that I was suggesting you were suggesting, you and all the other groups in the Council did.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Targeting Harehills.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: That is what you wrote. You cannot get round what you wrote. You can row for shore. If you did not mean it then, you were dishonest then.

You stand by your words, you wrote it. It was quick for the Tories to disassociate themselves and I would not want to accuse them of that because that is a very, very serious offence but you claimed that was the case.

When it comes to Councillor Grayshon he referred to Sri Lanka. I was out there only about three months ago and at the very spot where the Leeds Initiative was going to take place. My goodness me, by the time we do anything there the whole thing will be restored, because there is already a holiday resort. The only thing to stop it being as popular now as it was then is because people are worried that there is going to be another tsunami or it has all been destroyed or there is the internal disorder.

This money that we collected four years ago is still being held and will not be spent until the fifth year, by which time the tsunami is history for them and really we cannot justify that kind of delay.

I could have gone on and list another lot of things - I hoped my colleagues would have done those - showing these inefficiencies and so on. I could have gone on and talked about the rip-off telephone calls which we have discussed before; the grass-cutting, which somebody has already mentioned; the total failure to do anything after three years - maybe even four now - about the flooding that occurred in specific parts of Leeds and you can say "Blame the Government", you can blame the Government for the bad weather, you can blame the Government for giving your dog halitosis but the fact of the matter is you have been in power and you have done nothing and the people know you have and said so.

We have got the closing of primary schools. Councillor Harker, you did not say to Councillor Nash, "Yes, all right, I accept your statement as honest." No, you grinned like an I don't know what, as though, "It does not really matter, I was wrong, and if I got it wrong I have said it." That will not do. There is a certain amount of integrity. If you said it the pool was short and it was not and she gave the reasons for it, you would have said, "I accept that" and you should accept the fact that international events have been held there and world records have been set there using that short pool, according to you. You do not do any justice by not telling the truth.

I will tell you a truth about yourself. We have always took you for a decent chap but whether you are decent chap or not, what you will go down on the record in history when people look back and say, "Do you remember those days?" you will be remembered as the Chairman of Education, which you have not been, who was responsible for closing more primary schools not because they were not educationally sound - because some of those you closed were of the best in every respect - but you closed for the numbers. When we claim yes, there are more children in classes of under 30, we are proud of that. You closed these schools because they were just that. It will not do. Beckett Park was one. There are other schools that appear in the press regularly to show this is not a record of which you should be proud. You may be proud of other aspects which have been successful and there is no doubt about it, not one of us here wants the Council not to be successful because we live in this community and want to see it succeed.

When I come to John Bale I always enjoy his speeches because he is so coherent - not always accurate but always amusing. I do not think you said anything which controverted any accusation I made in those quotations I mentioned - not one. You got one error because you said that it was Mrs Thatcher that gave the polytechnics freedom. I think it was well after her day, actually. I think they were actually incorporated in 1992 or something...

COUNCILLOR BALE: 1989.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I think basically that is right but it does not really matter whether it was accurate or not because they got the freedom. I am glad they did. At the time I was not keen that they should do and neither was the Principal of the Polytechnic at the time, he wanted it to stay in the community. I think it has been extremely successful and in a way I am pleased that I have got very great relationships with the LMU.

I also praise Councillor Carter for taking on those issues that he has mentioned. I am reluctant to mention one because I might well have in the future a prejudicial interest connected with it, but he has shown a vision which I appreciate, but that is not to say you cannot be criticised for things that you have done wrong and we can show that. The list I gave and has been debated in part, apart from Mr Finnigan and part, in fact, by others who said that was not quite the case, the facts I quoted as facts are facts, the quotations from the papers were taken verbatim from the papers, so if you are accusing them of inaccuracy you are accusing the press of inaccuracy and that is something you want to take up with them. When it comes to Councillor Brett's letter I shall be pleased to put that on the e-mail again and let everybody judge for themselves.

Then I think Councillor Harris spoke. I cannot remember anything memorable he said. I shall do my best, but I cannot.

I think that really takes me to the diversion taken by Councillor Finnigan. It was a diversion and, if you notice, everyone who spoke hardly ever took issue with the facts. What they did was try to ridicule, abuse, insult. I wish they would stop because it hurt. (*laughter*) I really do feel it is too much at times. In the end I do not mind it because it is good fun but actually when insulted by good friends it is a pleasure. When he gets up to say something devastating about me I think he is picking on me and not the Council, so we all enjoy that lark, but there comes a point when in serious argument the jocular and that kind of humour begins to dissipate and the truth of the matters come about. The facts I gave I stand by; I will publish them if necessary and stand by them.

I said at the beginning, to be fair, I said I am prepared to congratulate where it is appropriate and criticise where it is necessary and that is in fact what I have been doing. When it comes to Councillor Finnigan and his amendment, I feel deep sadness. At one time Councillor Finnigan was a member of the Labour Council. He was a person of very left-wing ideals and sympathies. I found a very great deal of sympathy with those because, although I do not look it, I am really old Labour. I actually believe in the principles that have inspired people to create things like the Health Service and universal education. He had all those principles. Now, he has become a turncoat and turned, even when he is speaking, for accolades from Councillor Andrew Carter - Les Carter no, it has a different effect but from Councillor Andrew - he almost glows. It will not do for us who have seen you in a different light.

Either you were an honest man then when you had the Socialist principles and got on the Council because you had those Socialist principles, or you were not honest then with us and you are now what you quite clearly appear to be, a paid up member of the Conservative Party. Whether you like it or not, Robert, that is how it appears and it is not to be unfair and unreasonable - it is to be dead straight with you and it is a sadness to me to see this change.

When we come to Councillor Harris, I may come to him in a most serious manner because Councillor Harris is the only man in about 50 years on this Council I have ever heard of using the "F" word in a committee meeting. This is what is reported. I am prepared to pursue it for factual accuracy and there are people in this

room, I understand, including Les Carter who was there right by the side and who will lie if he says, "No he did not say that" or "Yes" if he did.

This will not do from someone who is prepared to exceed the bounds of good taste way beyond that of the general insult and badinage that we have in here and treat quite happily. That will not do.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor...

COUNCILLOR ATHA: You have not yet spoken on this so you cannot use that Council Procedure Rule. Would you make him sit down?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris, you have not spoken on this issue and he has not referred to anything in this Chamber. Councillor Harris, please sit. Can I remind all Councillors - I seem to have to do this every Council - this is a verbatim committee, the only one in this Council. If anybody says something another member does not like, here are the officers to take it to. When you see the verbatim, if you do not like it and you think it is inaccurate, take it to the officers and have it readdressed. We are moving on. Councillor Harris, I would like to use the "F" word because I do think it is time we finished! *(laughter)*

Thank you, Councillor Atha, and I do wish that your Equity card had run out!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: The light is on.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: The light has been on 20 minutes while he was talking.

THE LORD MAYOR: He was stopped.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I will conclude now, with your grace and favour. All I would say is a final offer to you to look again at what I said in the report and if any part of it is wrong, tell me and then I shall personally write to you and say, "Yes, you have proved it wrong." You, when you go over those figures, you have chosen the ones you want, why do you not give us the ones in the earlier years of the Labour administration and you will find a totally different picture. Are you surprised if that is the case? No, because he is making a point. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Atha. Can I call for the vote, therefore, on the amendment in the name of Councillor Finnigan. All those in favour? Against? Abstentions? That is CARRIED.

That now becomes the substantive motion. Could I have a vote on the substantive motion. All those in favour?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Let us make it unanimous, come on! *(laughter)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Those against? Abstentions? That is also CARRIED.

Thank you, Council.

ITEM 8 - WHITE PAPER MOTION ORGAN DONATION

THE LORD MAYOR: We are on to page 7 of the Order Paper and, as you can see these motions are to be passed but not debated, so could I call upon Councillor Atha again, please?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I move the item.

COUNCILLOR MORTON: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote? All those in favour of White Paper 8. Against? Abstentions? That is also CARRIED.

ITEM 9 - WHITE PAPER
AVAILABILITY OF SOCIAL HOUSING

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I move us to White Paper 9, Councillor Brett.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I move in terms of the motion.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Shameful.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: My Lord Mayor, it gives me great pleasure to second.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is a lie.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote, please?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON : Recorded vote, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Seconded.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen, would you please sit, we are about to do a recorded vote. Please now listen to the Chief Executive. Councillor Gruen, would you please sit. Leave if you wish to, but we are going to have a recorded vote. It has been duly requested and seconded.

(A recorded vote was taken)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I ask every member who actually wishes to vote has actually voted?

Then the figures are present 50, "Yes" 46, Abstain 1, "No" 3. I think that is CARRIED.

Council, can I thank you all for your attendance today and being really good boys and girls. I have enjoyed it. It is really quite deafening up here when you make all the noise. A very safe journey home.

(The meeting closed at 7.49 p.m.)