

**COUNCIL VERBATIM  
12 JULY 2017**

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**LEEDS CITY COUNCIL**

**EXTRAORDINARY  
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Held on

Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> July 2017

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
CIVIC HALL,  
LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR  
(COUNCILLOR J DOWSON)

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**VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL  
EXTRAORDINARY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12<sup>th</sup> JULY 2017

THE LORD MAYOR: Welcome, everybody. This is my first full Council meeting so can plead with you please to all behave! *(laughter)* I have had lots and lots of children come in to see how democracy works in the Council Chamber and I always tell them how well behaved they are, unlike some of the Councillors in the Council Chamber. I know you are all going to be brilliantly behaved today, especially as we have got some honoured guests here with us.

ITEM 1 – LEEDS WEST INDIAN CARNIVAL

THE LORD MAYOR: We are actually here to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Chapeltown Carnival, something dear to my heart because it actually takes place in the ward that I actually represent. Councillor Taylor, Councillor Rafique and I go every year and in fact Councillor Taylor and I have actually, at the behest of Arthur, dressed up in Carnival costume and taken part in the full parade. Those pictures are actually on lock down, you will not get hold of them!

As I say, we are here to celebrate. We have got Arthur France here with us and Ian Charles, two of the founder members of the Carnival and I would like to pass on now to Councillor Blake who is going to say a few words.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was going to mention at the start just how fitting it is that the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Carnival falls in your year as Chapeltown representative, and I hate to tell you, Lord Mayor, but I have got a copy of the photograph that you referred to, so maybe we can discuss that later on! A very memorable Carnival that particular year.

It gives me enormous pleasure to welcome Arthur France and Ian Charles to the Council Chamber today. I am absolutely delighted that you are here to speak to us and to enable us, I think, to really articulate to you just how important Carnival is to the city of Leeds.

We are talking about attendances now in the range of 150,000 from the starting point all those 50 years ago. Neither of you look possibly old enough to have been involved at that time, do you think? I think that is true.

Just looking back at the origins of the Leeds Carnival, Ian Charles actually I understand joined your first mas camp when you left your home in Arima to go to the College in Port of Spain and I know Arthur was always fascinated by Carnival and, particularly with roots in St Kitts, how could he fail to be so.

I think sometimes your parents would not let you attend, is that correct, but actually you stuck with it and your determination to see it through. I am delighted that Arthur is here still chairing the Leeds Carnival Committee. He first suggested setting up the Carnival Committee in 1966. It is really hard to think back to that time.

I understand that you actually approached the United Caribbean Associated for backing but initially you were rejected and the idea had to go on the back burner but, thank goodness, you pushed forward, you selected a committee and by 1967 the Carnival preparations were under way.

Most of the organisations I think at the beginning took place in Ian's home in Manor Drive, and I think your first three costumes were produced at your home. How extraordinary is that.

I think we are talking about a really legendary contribution to the rich tapestry that is Leeds. Looking back to the first procession, I think that a thousand people going through with the steel band competition and then going forward to the extraordinary celebration that Carnival is now. Just think, those of you who I know enjoy every year going along, the celebrations in Potter Newton Park, the actual parade but also the King and Queen Show, the Prince and Princess Show, the Calypso Monarch Show to name but a few of the extraordinary celebrations that go along with Carnival.

It gives me I have to say a particularly enormous amount of pride when I talk to colleagues from London, and particularly Notting Hill, to just keep reminding them that Leeds is the longest running Carnival in Europe. I think they tried very hard indeed and actually employed some academics to try and undermine the claim that is ours and that is yours.

20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, a really special year for us and I encourage you all to look at the programme, see how you can take part and really enjoy the celebrations going forward. We expect even more visitors this year and I know we have a long list of people coming from across the world. I am fairly sure this is a coincidence but on the same weekend as Carnival this year we also have the West Indies Test Cricket at Headingley. How special is that? If we tried to do that I do not think we would have managed to do it. A really special weekend in anticipation.

An absolutely crucial element of our bid for European Capital of Culture. Let us all be proud of our Carnival, let us all, I think, really recognise the contribution that both Arthur and Ian have made but they would be the first to tell all of us about the many, many other people who have been involved in making Carnival become such a success in the City of Leeds and a real extraordinary contribution from emerging artists. We will have seen many episodes in the last few weeks demonstrating the enormous contribution and talent and commitment that goes into putting the costumes together, and I think the rich mix of traditional, authentic, contemporary and innovative is seen at every single parade that we have had so far.

We are indebted to your determination, to your vision, to your persistence, even to your absolute refusal to not be heard and I think that is a real testament to the real passion that you have brought to the City of Leeds.

The hashtag is Carnival Happy 50, so I urge you all to be Carnival Happy in the couple of months ahead before we are all celebrating together.

I would ask you all, please, to stand and show your appreciation to these two extraordinary gentlemen and the contribution they have made to the City of Leeds.

*(Standing ovation)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter, would you like to say a few words?

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. It gives me great pleasure to join Councillor Blake in this tribute to Ian Charles and Arthur France for their contribution to the life of this city and for their determination in making sure that the Carnival even got off the ground, because back in 1967 there was not necessarily all the support you could have hoped for initially, but through your determination not only was the Carnival established in Chapeltown but went on from strength to strength. In 2005 it began being broadcast on BBC Radio along with the Notting Hill Carnival. As has been said, it is now the longest lasting Carnival in Europe and you brought to the city not just a city event, not just a regional event, not just a national event but now an international event that brings great credit to you and to the City of Leeds. Most importantly, it shows off to a very, very positive degree the thriving West Indian culture in the city and that has to be good for all of us.

There is another aspect as well and that is that it has generated significant amounts of money over the years which has been injected into the local economy, predominantly the local economy in Chapeltown and that part of Leeds which much needs that sort of investment.

Most of all, of course, it is hugely enjoyable and enjoyed by people from all walks of life all over the city and, as I have said, way beyond. We owe you a debt of gratitude. Thank you very much indeed for those 50 years of hard work which has well and truly paid off. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Elliott – I do apologise, Councillor Elliott, I am bringing you in too soon. It is actually Councillor Golton who is speaking next. I do apologise.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am quite used to being Councillor Elliott's warm-up act!

I am very much proud to be here today to congratulate Ian Charles and Arthur France as the inspiration behind something which has reached its 50<sup>th</sup> year and is so important to the people of Leeds.

I am going to talk in my personal capacity because I grew up in the Chapeltown and Harehills area. I lived on Airlie Place and Avenue Crescent and this event was the highlight of my community's year. The way that it has developed over the years is actually a testament to how that community has been viewed and participates with the rest of the city.

I can remember when I was a young lad I had friends that lived in more affluent parts of the city and as they gave me my lift home after visiting friends they would lock the doors of their cars as they entered the area where I lived, and if they

did actually venture to visit me when I worked at the Fforde Green pub for a drink, they would nervously look over their shoulder as they walked through the streets. There was a lot of prejudice around and a lot of suspicion between different communities in Leeds at that time and the event itself reflected that because it was more about the community pulling together and celebrating what they knew were the true values of that part of the city.

I am glad to say that as we have become a more cohesive city and we appreciate better each other's diversity, that event has grown because it has been enabled to be more inclusive and it is at this very point in the 50<sup>th</sup> year that we can really truly celebrate that this is a city event where we can all celebrate what makes us different, what brings us together, in the words of Jo Cox again, and I do hope it is the biggest, most successful event ever this year but I do hope that actually we all remember that this is about the community of Chapeltown and they should not be overwhelmed with the support they get from the rest of the city. It still remains a community event because is the secret behind it.

When I first went to the Carnival I had not heard of Ian Charles or Arthur France and that was because it was not just about them, it was not a personality issue, it was about the whole community and everybody participating. I learned about it better through the people such as Susan Pitter and Hughbon Condor, the great designer of those costumes. What a great celebration in an area which is supposed to not have much going for it, it celebrates poetry, philosophy, dance, engineering and technical ingenuity – if you saw how those costumes work – and it is a real testament to what can be achieved in a community. Thank you for your leadership in bringing it to its 50<sup>th</sup> year, gentlemen. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: And now Councillor Elliott.

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. For two young West Indian students who had a vision of Carnival in the UK, who would have thought that 50 years on we would be congratulating them here in the Civic Hall today for the scale and quality of that which has resulted.

It is my honour and privilege on behalf of my Group, the Morley Borough Independents, to congratulate Arthur France and Ian Charles whose imagination and determination brought the Leeds West Indian Carnival into being.

For Leeds residents and for Leeds City Council the Carnival is wonderful. The celebrations enjoyed by the people of Leeds and beyond is almost too much to take on board. The Carnival has, I believe, for Leeds City Council been a wonderful way of letting the world know that we in Leeds encompass traditions, cultures and differences.

The Morley Branch of the Royal Society of St George invited Hughbon Condor to their annual parade in 2016 when he brought a wonderful dragon which joined the parade, and this year he brought the amazing creature – I have no other words other than the amazing creature – which preceded the coach of our wonderful Olympians. Morley was absolutely delighted to have part of your Carnival in their town.

A big thank you to you and many, many congratulations to these gentlemen who have been aided by a multitude of supporters brought about that which we witness in our great city on an annual basis. Thank you, Arthur, and thank you, Ian. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wilford.

COUNCILLOR WILFORD: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. To paraphrase the late Jo Cox who said there are more things we have in common than divide us, this is certainly true in the case of Leeds West Indian Carnival.

Carnival is embedded in the culture of the city with its beautiful and intricate costumes, its sound system beats and grooves, its aroma of food, its taste, the smiling faces of adults and children coming from near and far to celebrate diversity and belonging.

I applaud Arthur France and Ian Charles and all those who work tirelessly to make Carnival the joyous experience it is and let us celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, a lasting legacy for our communities and our city. One love – thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dobson.

COUNCILLOR M DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Gentlemen, welcome and thank you so much for what is a monumental effort on behalf of the civic life here in Leeds.

Like Councillor Golton I was going to just reminisce briefly on some memories of attending the Carnival as a child. I actually said to Councillor C Dobson today, “Jog my memory, what sort of era did we go to the Carnival” because I remember going with mum and dad, we walked down, we lived on the Ambertons on the Gipton estate, we would walk down for the Carnival and then in later years I remember my sister over there taking me along. I said, “You will have been coming home from university, won’t you?” She said, “No, no, no, it was before that. It was pre-1976.” Who would have thought that all those years later we would be here thanking you both and your team for, like I say, the most monumental effort in to the cultural and civic life of this city.

It is one of those things, isn’t it, we have probably all done it in a tiny degree, we have tried to organise something in our various wards and you might organise an event for 200, 300 people, up to a couple of thousand and it is a headache – it is an absolute headache. So for you gentlemen and your team to put on an event of that size and scope and diversity in Leeds every year for up to 150,000 people, it is beyond anything I could comprehend.

On behalf of our Group, the Garforth and Swillington Independents, just to echo everything that has been said and I would just like to say to the Lord Mayor, I have got the picture too!



Thank you so much, gentlemen, and thank you for being with us today.  
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you all for your comments. I would like to invite Arthur France to respond.

MR A FRANCE: Thank you very much for inviting us here and it is an honour and a privilege to be here to listen to all these beautiful speeches.

I am very privileged and honoured to be born on the island of Nevis in the family that I was born in and that is what makes me the person I am. We cannot be responsible for the past but we will be certainly responsible for the future and if all of us pull together we leave something, I believe a legacy – our children and grandchildren, your children and my grandchildren will reap these benefits.

The strength of Leeds Carnival, apart from the passion in me and Ian and the rest of them is the meaningful relationship we have with the Leeds City Council. Without the full support of the Leeds City Council it started but we start without money but with the funds and the support of the City Council that makes Leeds Carnival what it is and trust me you should give yourselves a round of applause because I go around the country and the rest of the cities envy Leeds. It was only a couple, two weeks ago a group from London came up and they asked me, “How did you manage to keep this going?” and I said, “The main thing is you have got to, we came here really with Leeds” and it is not what you could get, it is what you could bring to the table and collectively the union we have, the working relations that make Leeds Carnival what it is.

To celebrate 50 years now you are having people from all over the world. The Premier, the Government of Nevis will be here to celebrate 50 years; the Premier, his wife, the Deputy, his wife and the Secretary. In fact there are more Government officers who come into Leeds to help to celebrate 50 years and at least we put London in the shade for London has to look up to Leeds.

Thank you very much for all your support and may we continue and celebrate the century in 50 years’ time. (*Standing ovation*)

THE LORD MAYOR: That was a wonderful speech, thank you, Arthur. We have mentioned photos before and some of you may have seen what I think is an iconic photograph taken. It is a black and white photograph taken outside Cowper Street School that is now Hillcrest School of five young people leaning against a car, and that was at the start of the Carnival. That was the people who initiated the Carnival. I know one or two of those people and somewhere in their lofts must be a picture of Dorian Gray because they have not changed a bit, seriously!

Some wonderful words spoken and the sentiment I think, Arthur, has come over that we do actually love the Carnival, we respect the people who have struggled to put that Carnival on and your persistence in the 50 years and I know that if you could you will be here for that 100<sup>th</sup> celebration, coming here to accept our congratulations and you too, Ian. Thank you for coming.

I would like to call for a vote on the motion, please, if you would like to show hands. Thank you, that is passed. I would now like to declare the Extraordinary Meeting closed. Thank you. *(Applause)*

*(The meeting closed at 1.26pm)*