

COUNCIL

21 FEBRUARY 2018

VERBATIM RECORD

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LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday, 21st February 2018

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL,
LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(COUNCILLOR J DOWSON)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 21ST FEBRUARY 2018

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon everyone. I would like to welcome everybody here for today's Council meeting. Just to remind everyone, as usual, that should your mobile phone go off you will be expected to go to the Lord Mayor's office and make a very large donation to the Lord Mayor's charity, Candlelighters. If you could actually switch them to silent that would be very useful, and also if I can remind you that today's proceedings are going to be webcast, as you know.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: I have some announcements. The first announcement is that I would like to offer my very sincere congratulations, for those of you who do not know, Councillor Graham Latty has been appointed by the Conservative Group to be the next Lord Mayor of Leeds. (*Applause*)

Following on that, I am ever so sorry to tell you it is with great sadness that I notify you of the death of former Lady Mayoress Mrs Celine North, who passed away suddenly last Thursday. Celine was Lady Mayoress in 2002/2003 and accompanied her husband Bryan on numerous engagements during their term of office. She also served as Justice of the Peace and as Director of Leeds Hospital Fund, and I would like to invite you all now to join me for a minute's silence.

(Silent tribute)

ITEM 1 - MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 10TH JANUARY 2018

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to Agenda Item 1, Minutes of the meeting held on 10th January. Councillor Ogilvie.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

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

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 2, Declarations of Interest. Could I invite any Members to declare any discloseable pecuniary interests now, please. Councillor Dobson.

COUNCILLOR M DOBSON: Manager Neighbourhood Network.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Agenda Item 3, Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to inform Council that we have received a response to the Council resolution from Dominic Raab MP, Minister of State for Housing, in respect of the White Paper on the Housing Revenue Borrowing Cap considered by Council in November. The response has previously been circulated to all Members of Council.

I am really pleased to announce as well that at the annual Leeds LGBT Awards, the Owlies, our Community Hub, LGBT Community Hub, won the Community Award, so a fantastic team behind that. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

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

ITEM 4 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD – BEST COUNCIL PLAN PROPOSALS

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to Agenda Item 4, Recommendations of the Executive Board – Best Council Plan Proposals. Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move in terms of the Notice.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just a very brief interjection to say thank you, basically. It was raised at Executive Board that there had been a proposal that the Child Friendly City theme would not be seen as a priority any more because we felt it had been embedded in the Council Plan, but we felt that it was

more appropriate for it to be re-introduced and the Council has listened and it has been put in place, so it is just to say thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Golton. Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This administration is nothing if not a listening administration. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: On that happy note we will call for the vote. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 5 – REPORT ON ATTENDANCE

THE LORD MAYOR: We move to agenda Item 5, Report on Attendance. Councillor Ogilvie.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harland.

COUNCILLOR HARLAND: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Very, very briefly, just to pass on our best wishes, and I am sure the best wishes of this Council, for a speedy recovery for Councillor Neil Dawson. We may disagree with him politically but he is a vibrant part of the debate in Morley. We do miss him and we wish him all the best and hope that he will be returning to the fray as quickly as possible. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Finnigan. Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. If I can thank Robert for his kind comments. I will pass those on to Neil. I know Neil appreciates all the expressions of good will that he has received from across the Chamber. As Robert says, I am sure we all hope that Neil is back on these Benches as soon as possible. Thank you. (*hear, hear*) (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I just need to call for a vote on that. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 6 – AMENDMENTS TO EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: We move to Agenda Item 6, Amendments to the Executive Arrangements. Councillor Ogilvie.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harland.

COUNCILLOR HARLAND: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Another vote. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

ITEM 7 – BUDGET MOTION

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 7, the Budget. We are now moving on to the Budget Motion and amendments. I would like to remind Members that at the conclusion of the discussion on the Budget, recorded votes will be taken on all amendments and then on the Budget Motion itself.

I would like to first ask Councillor Blake to seek leave of Council regarding recently received precepts.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I need to call for a vote on that. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED.

I would now like to invite Councillor Blake to speak on the Budget. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking to move the Budget in my name and I just want to start by reassuring the Lord Mayor that one of her more important jobs of the year is actually being ably picked up by Councillor Jonathan Pryor who is going to be running the sweepstake on the length of my speech. I have to tell all my Members that I have not actually timed it, so I have not been able to be bribed or corrupted by any Member in the Chamber!

This afternoon I am moving this Labour administration's eighth budget for Leeds and my third as Council Leader. The last eight years when we have been in power in this Council have not been easy at all. Indeed, it has not been an easy time for anyone in Local Government. Despite the challenges facing us, our great city of Leeds has flourished, bucking national trends, working to deliver a strong economy in a compassionate city. We should all be incredibly proud of the way in which we have continued to put the needs of our most vulnerable residents first, to improve our communities and bring people together in a peaceful and cohesive society and to boost the life chances of our young people by giving them the best opportunities we possibly can.

Our economy continues to be strong, acting as the powerhouse of the City Region and providing opportunities for local people while redeveloping areas that have been in decline for some years. Our reputation for excellence has shone through again. Children and Families are currently a Department for Education Partner in Practice supporting other Local Authorities to improve their Children's Services. Our bold ambition underpinning our strategy to be the best city for health and wellbeing has led to independent recognition for Leeds as the best Core City in this area. Our award winning

Migrant Access Project has continued to go from strength to strength, winning further funding to work with new and settled communities.

I want to start my speech this year by expressing my gratitude and admiration to all the staff of Leeds City Council who dedicate themselves to public service. We could not achieve our successes without their extraordinary commitment. Whether it is working together to deliver world class sporting events, such as the World Triathlon series, or jumping into action, rapid action, to ensure the safety and security of our own residents after the Grenfell Tower Tragedy, their continued resilience and professionalism in delivering services to the people of Leeds is a credit to the Council and to the city.

As an administration we will continue to do all we can to support all our staff to succeed and prosper. That is why I am delighted to confirm that this budget will introduce the National Living Wage Foundation's suggested £8.75 minimum pay rate per hour for all of Leeds City Council staff. (*Applause*) That is a real living wage delivered by Labour in Leeds, leading by example.

Before I go further, I would like to pay special tribute to our finance team led by Doug Meeson for their hard work and expertise in helping us prepare this budget. For many years now they have steered this Council through very challenging financial circumstances to maximise our resources and help avoid cuts to services. Could I ask you to show your appreciation, please, to Doug and the team. (*Applause*)

With the best will in the world, however, our staff can only do so much and regrettably I am delivering this Council budget against a backdrop of continued austerity, continued ignorance from Government of local wishes and a continued ideological drive to undermine the ability of this Council and others to deliver the services our people need.

In the face of a desperate need for long-term sustainable funding solutions, this Government has once again turned to the sticking plaster of the Council Tax Precept to try and plug a gap which gets ever wider. They are happy to shift the burden of providing good quality local services on to Council Taxpayers and, as they do so, creating a postcode lottery in which the most deprived Authorities are made to suffer the most.

At a time when living costs continue to rise faster than wages and ever more Leeds residents are struggling to meet the basic costs of life, it is wholly irresponsible for the Government to back Councils into a position where we have no choice but to raise Council Tax once again. The Tories have created a system of funding for Local Government that is at best chaotic and at worst an ideological attempt to destroy the public services many people desperately rely on.

Our budget is only deliverable this year because we have been successful in our application to retain one hundred per cent of Business Rate Growth. However, this is a one year pilot project and offers no financial planning or certainty for the following years. We saw the Secretary of State announcing extra one-off funding for Adult Social Care only 16 days ago – the day before this budget went to Executive Board. What a shambolic state of affairs. The Local Government Association says that £1.3bn is

needed to stabilise the Adult Social Care provider market which lurches from crisis to crisis. The new Adult Social Care funding of £150m that Sajid Javid announced is nowhere near what is needed.

In Leeds we have shown the best way to deal with rising demand for both adults and children's social care is to invest in preventative services, like our Neighbourhood Networks and Sure Start Centres. How are Councils suppose to plan and invest in order to deal with this crisis if we do not know how much money we will have in twelve months' time due to the Conservatives' incompetent approach?

The overall funding challenge faced by Local Authorities is stark. The LGA estimates there will be a funding gap of £5.8bn by the end of this decade. Core funding from Central Government will have been cut by a staggering 77% by 2020. We have recently seen Tory run (and I emphasise Tory run) Northamptonshire become the first Council in two decades to declare effective bankruptcy. This is just the tip of the iceberg, with four-fifths of Councils concerned about their financial sustainability due to uncertainty over funding and a rising demand for social care.

Almost all Councils have been forced to raise Council Tax this year due to the Government's funding cuts, but it is not just Local Government that is struggling. This Government's chaotic approach is undermining public services across the board, whether it is the crisis in the NHS, which is currently undergoing one of the worst winters on record, a crisis hitting our hospitals in Leeds right now; the proliferation of food banks across the whole city due to the Draconian welfare cuts; recorded crime rising at its fastest rate in a generation with 21,000 fewer police officers on our streets; our teachers are being forced to take on responsibility for feeding their children as parents and carers struggle to cope.

Piece by piece the Tories are dismantling the fabric of the compassionate and cohesive society which Britain and its great cities like Leeds are built upon, hitting people in communities right across the city. Perhaps the most striking example of a failed approach from Government over this last year comes in the shape of Universal Credit. Despite pleas from Local Government, charities, think tanks and communities themselves, the Government continues to pursue the most damaging welfare change since the hated bedroom tax.

Tory MPs Andrea Jenkyns, Stuart Andrew, Alec Shelbrooke representing people from this city, have shamefully voted again and again in favour of this cruel and unnecessary tax on benefits that people rely on just to get by. Cuts to Universal Credit mean the average family with three children will be £2,540 per year worse off and for families with four children that loss rises to £5,000 per year. At a time when around 400,000 more children are living in poverty than there were four years ago, this is simply unforgivable.

COUNCILLOR R GRAHAME: Shame on you. Shame.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: These cuts hit the most vulnerable hardest. Universal Credit will make around half a million disabled people worse off due to the removal of Disability Premiums. Leeds City Council's own Welfare Rights team has seen an increase of nearly a third in one year for requests for assistance with appeals. National

Government has abdicated responsibility for supporting the most vulnerable in society and has left it to Local Authorities to pick up the pieces.

Despite the difficulties of recent years, however, our ambition for Leeds has not waned. Systemic under-investment in public services and in the North in particular has not defeated us. Instead, we have continued to strive to be the best city in the UK, to be the most effective and enterprising Council we can be and to focus unapologetically on improving the lives of the poorest fastest. Tackling poverty and reducing inequality remains the central ambition of this Council, but we know there is still a lot more to do. Absolute poverty in Leeds affects 155,000 people, including 26,000 children. Much of this is in-work poverty. Two-thirds of those children are from a household where at least one person is in work. Just look at tax credits where 70% of Leeds families who rely on them are in work. The same goes for Universal Credit, where 43% of Leeds claimants have a job, so when you hear Theresa May talking about employment figures or the anti-welfare rhetoric we so often hear from sections of the media and fanned by certain Tory MPs, remember that many people who rely on welfare are actually in work, but that work is often poorly paid so in Leeds we have the scandal of 65,000 people earning less than the real living wage and almost 10,500 workers on zero hours contracts.

Empowering local leadership across Local Government would be the most effective way to address these challenges associated with deprivation and inequality. Where we have been granted the freedom to do things differently, such as with our family group conferencing approach or our work around jobs and skills, we have proved over and over we can deliver better outcomes than the standard national approach.

I again call on the Secretary of State for Local Government to stop delaying and putting road blocks in our way and to instead commit to making meaningful progress on devolution for Yorkshire at the earliest opportunity. 5.4 million people live in Yorkshire; we have an economy worth £100bn a year, twice the size of Wales. Most importantly, it is estimated that devolution would double the size of that economy over the next 30 years and devolution would put local people in charge of making decisions on the things that are most important to them. 18 Councils out of 20 now want the Yorkshire deal, so empower us, do not restrict us. Let us get on with delivering the jobs and inclusive growth this city so desperately needs.

We want no more of the Councillor Simon Cooke approach. For those of you who do not know, Councillor Cooke is the Conservative Group Leader in Bradford. He announced earlier this month he would be stepping down as their Leader in May, and in his press statement he listed preventing devolution among his list of proudest achievements. His statement said, and I quote:

“We have prevented the Labour Party getting its way over devolution and imposing a Labour elected Mayor based in Leeds.”

I ask you, his proudest achievement, holding back the prosperity of his city, his City Region and Yorkshire as a whole.

I call on local Tories to abandon that approach, stop blocking devolution, stand up for Yorkshire and please use all your contacts in Westminster to help us get a deal over the line.

Despite this delay our ambitions for Leeds have seen us deliver a range of schemes and improvements that are making a real difference to people's daily lives. I am going to briefly touch upon three areas of work which demonstrate the best of innovative, effective Local Government work happening here in Leeds.

We have had to take some very tough decisions. However, I hope some of you have had the opportunity to go along and visit the fantastic new Recovery Hub in East Leeds, formerly The Green care home. The Recovery Hub is specifically designed to aid recovery, rehabilitation and reablement. It works in partnership with each individual to maximise their personal potential and independence, giving them more choice and control over their lives.

The Green joins other Recovery Hubs in the North West and South of the city that together, as the new Leeds Recovery Service, have been accessed by over 220 people since last November, with 56% of those discharged returning home. These services have the added benefit of supporting hospital discharges and have significantly reduced the amount of delayed hospital discharges attributed to social care in Leeds. This is an in-house service introduced by this Labour administration that we are rightly proud of. It has ensured Council jobs remain in-house with 24 staff jobs from the former Green residential home supported to retrain and learn new skills to take up positions in this service. I think we should show our appreciation to those staff for their ability to change. (*Applause*)

Then one of the next challenges, a really huge challenge facing our city, is the need to improve the quality of the air we breathe. Air quality due to nitrogen dioxide emissions is one of the biggest public health crises facing this country and is linked to an estimated 25,000 premature deaths a year nationally, including an estimated 350 just here in Leeds.

We are showing real leadership in being among the first big cities to move to tackle this. You will hear more from Councillor Yeadon but while Ministers have had to be dragged through the courts and continue to abdicate responsibility, we were the first city to put forward public proposals that are now out to consultation. We are a national leader on this agenda. We have just heard today that the Government has been defeated again in court by ClientEarth for the third time over inadequate plans to tackle air pollution.

Added to this work we are also cleaning up our own house and as a Council now have the largest electric fleet in the country. Thirdly, we are continuing to buck the national trend in terms of dealing with an increasing demand for Children's Services. We have seen the problems this is causing Councils across the country, with reports just last week showing how many Councils are in crisis in this area due to huge overspends and 57 Councils publishing budgets that cut spending on Children's Social Care.

The total overspend in Children's Services across the country reached an eye-watering £655m last financial year. Did we see any extra funding to tackle this in Philip

Hammond's budget last November, or even in Sajid Javid's Local Government Settlement just last month? Was there any sign of action to deal with this? No, sadly but, of course, not surprisingly, there was nothing. We are doing things differently in Leeds, finding our own innovative and effective solutions by having a real focus on a preventative, restorative approach so that between 2012 and 2017 we saw the number of looked-after children safely reduced by 220, delivering a £6.7m saving for Leeds. The number of children in Leeds subject to Child Protection Plans safety reduced from 890 to approximately 500. The number of referrals to Children's Social Services in Leeds has been safely reduced by 15% against a national upward trend of 7%. We are making great headway here in Leeds, but still nationally the LGA estimates a £2bn funding gap for Children's Services by 2020.

Look at our approach to tackling homelessness. We have just 33 households registered in temporary accommodation across the whole of the city and nobody living in bed and breakfast accommodation. Manchester and Birmingham have each over 1,000 people living in temporary accommodation and Birmingham has 370 people living in bed and breakfast, costing the city an estimated £9m.

This is testament to our proactive approach to homelessness prevention and our work alongside partners such as St George's Crypt and Change Grow Live. I want to thank all Members, many of you are involved in this agenda, for your complete dedication on this agenda. It is right that we recognise the huge complexity of reasons why people become homeless, but it is important to stress that the support is there and no-one needs to sleep rough in Leeds.

Another area where up-front investment has saved money in the long run is through our long-term waste strategy. Following the completion of the RERF it now saves the Authority over £7m a year, so this administration has time and again taken tough decisions that have over a number of years saved the Council money, allowing us to reinvest in vital front-line services that so many vulnerable people in Leeds so desperately rely on, whilst improving the outcomes for those people at the same time.

We want Leeds to be a compassionate city that recognises the value of diversity, inclusion and equality. That means we all have a role to play. As an employer we must make sure this Council provides an environment in which all of our staff can flourish. As a city it means we must embrace different cultures and backgrounds and as individuals we must do what we can to be kind to our neighbours and to recognise the value that each and every person can make to our society.

I am sure all of us remember the powerful deputation on bullying by Isla Bentley, the Leeds Children's Mayor, at November's Full Council meeting, so it is significant that 2018 marks 100 years of women's suffrage in this country and some women getting the right to vote in the General Elections. In Leeds we have many links to the suffrage movement that we are hugely proud of. 1866 saw the first National Petition for Women's Suffrage and as a city Leeds had the third highest number of signatories to the petition with 106. Those signatures included many working class women, including Martha Fenton of Woodhouse Street, listed as a laundress; Emma Tingle of Woodhouse Street, listed as a charwoman; Sarah Fisher of Cemetery Street, who ran a lodging house; Charlotte Alderson of West End Terrace who was the wife a cow keeper (not sure why in Leeds) and Martha Simpson, who was a cloth fettler.

Do not let us forget in this Chamber it was local representation that led the way. By 1900 over a million single women were registered to vote in the local elections in England. In 1907 the right for women to be elected to District Councils was extended to County and Borough Councils. Nevertheless, the 1918 Act gave a staggering 8.4 million women the right to vote in General Elections for the very first time and was a monumental moment for suffrage.

We have much to celebrate and I am delighted that Leeds is one of only seven cities across England that will benefit from the share of the £1.2m Government funding to support projects celebrating the milestone.

Why is this important? For one thing, 100 years on women have been disproportionately affected by austerity. By 2020 women will have borne 86% of the total burden of welfare cuts. The total cost of the cuts is estimated to be £79bn from women since 2010 compared to £13bn from men, and let us not forget that 61% of the Council's workforce are women. This is an agenda that we must continue to work on.

This administration has made enormous strides in other areas too. Last month we entered the top 50 of the Stonewall Top 100 Employers List, the fourth highest Local Authority. We are immensely proud of the work that has been ongoing to make Leeds and the Council somewhere where people are accepted no matter what their sexual orientation. We are determined to continue to innovate and to improve to ensure we remain at the forefront of inclusivity in this area both for our staff and for the people of Leeds.

We have been working closely with the city's migrant communities too, bringing newly arrived migrants together with services and decision makers, including elected Members, to consider the contributions of migrant communities to civic life and how they can be supported to do more for themselves and for others in their community, and recognising the huge contribution to the city of Leeds of our black and minority ethnic communities. *(Applause)*

Now more than ever it is important to shout out loud how Leeds is a city of sanctuary that welcomes difference and diversity. We are clear that everyone here has something to contribute to our great city.

Next year's budget is only possible because of some of the progress this Council has achieved over the past year, based on the hard work of officers and Members alike. Our compassionate approach to economic growth is paying off and we continue our focus on promoting inclusive growth. We have helped the Leeds economy recover from the recession and it is predicted to grow by 12.8% in the next ten years. However, we are, of course, aware of the uncertainty surrounding the impact of Brexit. The lack of engagement with cities by the Government on this is concerning. It is important they allow local areas to take back control of certain powers and funding that are repatriated to the EU.

I was proud to lead the Core Cities' Delegation to meet Michel Barnier on Monday. All we ask for is for Government Ministers to engage with us now to help us

prepare for the momentous changes leaving the EU will bring to our cities in just one year's time. Surely it is not too much to ask.

As a Council we are creating jobs for Leeds residents through our capital programme which is one of the most ambitious in the country and is predicted to create over 5,000 jobs. Many of those jobs are in the construction sector, as much of the Capital Programme is focused on improving the city's infrastructure and creating economic growth, including through major projects such as the East Leeds Orbital, flood alleviation and the District Heating Network.

We have increased the number of visitors to Leeds by over 18%. Our visitor economy supports just under 19,000 people in the city and we are making sure young people from Leeds are able to get the new jobs that we are creating by promoting apprenticeships for young people with a staggering 6,000 attending our annual Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair at the First Direct Arena. (*Applause*)

As a Council we now employ 280 apprentices across all areas of the organisation. We must not under-estimate the impact of the Council's Employment and Skills Service which, in 2017, supported over 6,500 people to find work with a real focus on helping those furthest from the job market to secure new skills and paid work.

One of our major aims as a Council is to tackle poverty and address some of the deep lying inequalities which this Conservative Government's continuing austerity programme is only making worse. Our work has included through our Citizens@Leeds approach supporting just under 600 people on our personal work support programme to find work. We have established grass roots debt forums across Leeds and Leeds Credit Union has more than trebled its membership from 11,000 in 2005 to 31,000 in 2017.

While I have covered some of the excellent achievements in Children's Social Care earlier, in terms of Education we have improved school attendance and provided an additional 1,600 reception places in the city while at the same time facing a gap in funding for capital school projects from Government of approximately £71.7m. I would like to pay tribute to all the pupils and teachers in schools across Leeds for all of their hard work and dedication. Currently over 87% of schools in Leeds are judged to be good or outstanding by Ofsted.

Our ambition of doubling the size of the city centre and the South Bank, the largest regeneration in size in Europe, is progressing well. This has the potential to create 35,000 jobs and 8,000 homes in the area, as well as a new landmark city centre park of three-and-a-half hectares. With over 10,000 students now based in the area, we want to make sure they are able to access the new jobs created there, so we are continuing to press to ensure when HS2 comes, it creates jobs for Leeds residents. Our HS2 Growth Strategy will create 5,000 jobs from construction and 40,000 jobs for the broader economic impact.

Another significant achievement in City Development was the role this administration played to improve Headingley Stadium and keep international cricket in Leeds at no cost to the Council. (*Applause*) As a result of our action last week we got the welcome news that Headingley has been chosen to host the Ashes in 2023 and be a ground for the new Twenty20 competition in the years ahead. (*Applause*)

The Headingley agreement also enabled our fabulous Leeds Superleague champions Leeds Rhinos to undertake what is set to be a fantastic redevelopment of their part of the ground which is starting to take shape as we speak.

The £14m refurbishment of Kirkgate Market was completed last year and footfall has now started to increase. 2017's footfall saw a 12.5% increase on 2016 and a 5.5% increase on 2015. Footfall is heading back towards the pre-refurbishment figures. Light Night last year was bigger than ever, with around 80,000 people attending over two nights and bringing in around two million for the local economy.

Our museums and galleries continue to attract more visitors, bringing much needed income into the Council to help support services. We had over 1.1 million visits last year, including 55,000 from schools. Both the City Museum and Kirkstall Abbey are in the top ten of free entry attractions in Yorkshire and the Humber. Lotherton Hall is in the top ten of paid attractions, just ahead of Tropical World. It is now significantly ahead of other major attractions elsewhere in the region, including York Castle Museum, Castle Howard, Beningbrough Hall, Nostell Priory. Around 150,000 people now visit Lotherton Hall a year, which is up from about 13,000 just eight years ago. All in all, annual income from our visits to Leeds City Council attractions is now up to around a million pounds a year.

We are proud that we have given certainty and support to arts organisations in the city, with the four year Arts@Leeds grant programme awarding over £1.7m-worth of funding to 42 different groups. Community theatre, dance, performance and visual arts are all represented and, just to update Members, the Leeds Community Arts Network, LCAM - I think some of you might have had an email or two on their behalf – at the Carriageworks Theatre are among the recipients for that funding with a grant of £16,000 over the next four years.

We have achieved 55.9 of match funding from organisations including Arts Council England, meaning for every £1 awarded by the Council almost £30 was brought into the local economy.

Council's support in January to develop our own Capital of Culture 2023 programme has been very well received. A real desire to grow our ambition as a city, building confidence, building self-esteem not only for the whole city but for every single citizen across Leeds.

Further to Councillor Yeadon's contribution, I would also personally like to recognise the launch of the pioneering Leeds Climate Commission in September – a national leader in its field.

Council, the housing crisis facing our country is shocking. We as Councillors feel the impact on families and young people across all of our communities, so in Leeds we can be proud that this administration has stepped in with our £108m Council House Growth Programme which aims to deliver a thousand new Council homes by 2020. 71 homes are on site or due to complete with a further 59 due to start on site this year. Our £135m Beeston Hill, Holbeck and Little London Regeneration Programme has delivered

388 new Council homes and refurbished 1,295 homes. Again, in the inner city, Cross Green has seen 261 homes renovated and a reduction of empty homes by 505.

We are investing £30m in our Right to Buy Replacement Programme funding to provide new affordable housing. This has already provided nearly 500 units of housing which have already been delivered, are on site or currently pending planning approval.

In Adult Social Care as we try to deal with increased demand and demographic change, Executive Board last July agreed to invest £30m to support the delivery of 200 Council operated extra care schemes as part of the aim to deliver a thousand places overall. We are now in a position to deliver homes on the first six sites from early this year with a further two schemes to go out to tender shortly.

This year we launched the Health and Wellbeing Hub in Chapeltown, providing city-wide day services to people from the black and minority ethnic communities across Leeds. We have also increased investment in our fantastic Neighbourhood Networks by £500,000, bringing our total annual funding commitment to just over £3m. The Networks are a key to the preventative approach we take in Leeds, helping to keep older people active and living independently and giving them both a better quality of life and helping to avoid longer term care costs. Of course, we are in the middle of a £6m Big Lottery funding agreement, working with Leeds Older People's Programme to deliver the Time to Shine Project aiming to tackle issues such as loneliness and isolation amongst older people in the city.

What you see from this administration is a consistent, deliberate focus investing in front line services that help vulnerable people and contribute towards safely containing future demand.

We are determined in Leeds to continue our strategy as we move forward, despite all of the challenges imposed by National Government. Our sound financial management has laid the foundations for this year's budget. We have delivered balanced budgets year after year despite the punishing austerity and chaotic approach to Local Government inflicted on this Council by the Tories in Westminster.

By 2020 this Council will have seen its grant cut by some £267m year on year. It is only because we have been successful in applying to retain 100% of Business Rates Growth this year that the budget is less painful than previous years, but even after this income is taken into account, we still have to bridge a £33.9m gap.

As with all the savings we have delivered since 2010, our approach is borne out of a vision to make Leeds a compassionate city within a strong economy, ensuring we are able to protect front line services for those most in need. To allow us to do this we will continue to make back office savings and at the centre of this is a whole Culture of Change programme coupled with the modernisation of the work environment. The move back into Merrion House started last week and this is a big step in our plans to reduce the number of our city centre offices from 17 to just four. This will create £27m in efficiencies over 20 years as well as savings from the buildings we no longer need.

Savings will be made across a range of support service functions as well as through ongoing recruitment and retention management, plus savings through

procurement. We will continue to keep a focus on the number of senior officer posts, with posts earning over £50,000 having already been reduced by 46 since 2015. In total, we have now saved £60m a year on staffing costs since 2010.

However, our clear priority in this budget is to protect services for the vulnerable and for adults. This is why the proportion of our budget spend on Adults and Children's Services will increase to 63.4% in 2018/19. We will invest over £8m extra in Children's Services with a £4m increase the looked-after children budget, and to protect vital Adult Social Care services we will invest an extra £4.5m to cope with increased demand in this area.

However, in order to do this Government has given us no choice but to increase Council Tax. Standard Council Tax will rise by 2.99% and then a 2% rise in the form of the Adult Social Care precept – in reality a Government tax imposed upon Local Councils.

This is still likely to keep Council Tax in Leeds amongst the lowest of the Core Cities and we know that nine out of ten Councils across the country have said that they have no choice now but to raise Council Tax as a result of continuing austerity.

We are continuing to invest in and support front line services that focus on preventing increased future need and managing demand. Our investment in front line Adult Social Care services is a political decision by this administration to protect services that help cope with the growing numbers of older people in the city to help focus on preventing illnesses and isolation and promoting health, wellbeing and independence. Take our extra funding for our Neighbourhood Networks – it is guaranteed over a five year period giving them time and ability to plan their services.

We as a Labour administration have also made a political decision to protect our children's centres as well as our funding for youth services and School Improvement Service as much as we possibly can. Again, what a contrast with the Tories in Westminster, who have capped the new funding formula for schools, meaning Leeds effectively will receive a million pounds a year less than schools in the city really need. Only last month we saw the Public Accounts Committee highlight the DfE's terrible failure to tackle teacher retention with 10,000 fewer teachers in secondary schools nationwide since 2010.

We have also seen the disgrace of the Tories' Funding Formula cap, meaning funding for children with special educational needs in this city is effectively £7m a year less than needed. Last year we saw the absolute scandal of Leeds having by far the lowest funding for special educational needs of all the Core Cities, with £378 per head against a Core City average of £472.

Despite this we continue to maintain our investment for children and young people with special educational needs. Central Government cut the funding they provide for post-16 SILC education from five days to just three days, but we worked alongside our SILC providers and other partners to ensure that the five day offer could be maintained while at the same time we developed our Preparing for Adulthood strategy. We have also invested £45m to ensure world class provision for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs.

This administration is also proud to be playing its part in supporting the Police and Crime Commissioner to maintain the number of PCSOs in the Leeds district, with 635,000 set aside in our budget to do this. PCSOs play a vital role in our communities across Leeds, often working closely with Members so they are very much valued indeed. We reached a three year agreement last year; we are entering the second year of that agreement to maintain our PCSOs at the same level of 239. This is match funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner with no adverse impact on other Safer Leeds initiatives. Our investment in PCSOs cannot, however, mask the devastating effect on the Force of eight years of budget cuts implemented by Theresa May first as Home Secretary and now continuing under her Leadership. She has a truly shameful record here. Under May, 21,000 police officers have been cut from the Force nationally, with £2.3bn cuts from police budgets. No wonder we have seen the highest rise in recorded crime in this country for half a century.

The West Yorkshire Force alone has seen its budget cut by £140m since 2010 with a 20% reduction in its workforce, meaning 2,000 fewer officers, and only two weeks ago today we saw Conservative MPs from this city vote through a Police Finance Settlement in Westminster that continues to deprive the Force of the funds it needs so desperately.

I am delighted to announce that, despite all of the predictions at the beginning of the year, the number of staff employed by the Council this year will increase by 59 full-time employees. An additional nine full-time employees will be recruited to work in the Planning service to provide a much more responsive service to the public, funded by the Government's decision to increase Planning fees by 20%. There will also be recruitment of 109 new officers within Leeds Building Services. This is a bold move to recruit Council workers to do work that would have been previously done by external contractors. In the wake of the Carillion collapse and the problems caused by wholesale outsourcing elsewhere in the country, this administration is taking the sensible step of creating new in-house posts to ensure essential work can still be done.

We are now seeing more and more the collapse of the Tory privatisation dream (or nightmare from the general public's point of view.) When you look at the £2bn taxpayer funded bail out Chris Grayling has handed to Virgin Stagecoach on the East Coast franchise – the same franchise that charges eye watering fares from Leeds to London and with fares in general going up at least 3.6%, the largest increase in five years.

When Stagecoach shares went up by 13% - surprise, surprise – following Grayling's bailout, is it any wonder the Tories are so keen to support the super rich. Look at how they are funded, with one donor reportedly at their Black and White Ball paying £55,000 to spend a day with Theresa May. (*laughter*)

Again, we see the Tories favouring a one-off sticking plaster approach to funding. We have seen the problems this causes in Northamptonshire and other Tory Councils like Surrey, which is currently operating with a deficit of more than £100m.

It is not just about Tory Councils failing to stay afloat financially; it is about the effect of their decisions on people's lives. No more so have we seen the effect of Tory

failure and its impact of lives than in the NHS. Just look at what austerity has done to NHS waiting times. In Leeds's A&E departments it was reported that nearly a third of patients in January had to wait more than four hours. There came a point when patients had to be turned away unless they required urgent medical care. All the result of the Tory Government's chaotic and harmful approach to public services, driving some Councils to bankruptcy, failing to invest in preventative front line services, storing up problems and significant future costs for the public purse.

They claim to be the party of economic competence, but when you look past the rhetoric, it is clear their failures come at a significant cost.

Contrast that with the approach of this Council over the last eight years. Yes, we have made some difficult decisions but they have all been driven by a strategy to improve services and to protect the investment in vital public services that the people of Leeds rely on.

Due to the last minute change in our Section 31 grant fund from Central Government, outrageously only communicated to us at the very last minute before Executive Board two weeks ago, I am now in a position to announce today some new areas of spend.

Due to the welcome addition of £750,000 I can announce we will be investing an extra £180,000 of that to fund Community Committees to reverse the cuts to the Wellbeing and Youth Activity funding. (*Applause*) Money for all of you – all of you – to spend in your own communities, dictated by local need and local priorities.

We are also going to invest in an area that is one of our top priorities for the Council. I can announce today that we will be investing an extra £330,000 in Adults and Health to provide support for mental health services. (*Applause*) This will include a bereavement service for families where either a parent or sibling has died, funding to help reduce social isolation for men with a higher risk of suicide, and funding to help improve resilience in children and young people. (*Applause*)

Further, nothing can ever compensate for the loss of a child and many of us in this Council Chamber will have been affected in one way or another by such a loss. I can announce today that we are investing £240,000 in Parks and Countryside specifically for the Bereavement Service so that parents in Leeds who lose a child under the age of 16 no longer have to pay for their burial costs. (*Applause*) A real demonstration of a compassionate city working on behalf of our citizens.

Council, let me quote a line from this time last year from Councillor Carter's budget amendment. I think we were just about to go into some Parliamentary bye-elections and he was very gleeful, I seem to remember, and quoted a political candidate saying, "It is political madness to vote for Jeremy Corbyn." Well, isn't a few weeks a short time in politics – or a long time depending on your point of view. Who would have thought when we were standing here this time last February that Theresa May would have called a General Election and on 8th June last year she would have lost her majority and been propped up in Government by the DUP, not only losing her majority (*applause*) but also her political authority.

I will tell you why, because people are fed up with crippling austerity. People are fed up of Tory mismanagement and decimation of their public services. They have cut 21,000 police and crime is rising. The NHS has had one of the worst winters on record with operations cancelled. The housing crisis means home ownership is a distant dream for young people. The attack on welfare is plunging more and more into hardship and vital Council services across the country have been stripped back to almost non-existent in some parts.

At this Council we are different. We are a progressive, innovative Authority and one of the leading most respected Councils in the country. We have delivered balanced budgets, kept Sure Start Centres open, increased funding for Neighbourhood Networks, improved school attendance, delivered inclusive economic growth, built new Council houses, reduced the number of children in care and introduced the National Living Wage Foundations recommended pay for our staff. Leading by example for the whole city.
(Applause)

Council, I move the Budget amendment today.

(Standing ovation)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. The one thing we have learned so far today is how frightened Councillor Blake is of Jeremy Corbyn and Momentum. We all knew, didn't we, how her difficulties mounted in getting reselected in Middleton (*interruption*) and now we see a speech designed wholly and simply to address one particular audience, and that audience, most of them are not sitting in this room – most of them on *that* side are not sitting in this room but most of them who are not in that audience on *that* side of the room have been disposed of.
(laughter) (interruption)

THE LORD MAYOR: Could we have a little bit of quiet, please? Thank you.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: My Lord Mayor, don't worry. Councillor Procter was going to be moving our amendment today for reasons that he and I know about and the rest of you do not yet. However, when I got the phone call at nine o'clock this morning saying, "I am stuck between Brussels and here", I just wish Councillor Blake had been with him because she has been tripping over there this last few days.

COUNCILLOR: Absolutely.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Having listened to Councillor Blake speak I am actually very pleased that I am going to be moving the amendment.

Talk of winning raffles, I think that everybody on this side has got the last prize in that particular raffle which must have been an afternoon listening to Councillor Blake.
(laughter)

To be entirely serious about it, it is impossible, is it not, really, for any sensible politician to stand and speak for so long, as we have heard, and blame everything that is wrong on the Government and take credit for everything that is right. You may think it is funny – let me tell you, outside of these four walls it will be looked at as ridiculous.

Councillor Blake talking on the subject of devolution, I have been for a while reaching the conclusion that the road block to devolution is not Councillor Simon Cooke, whose comments I have not heard before but I find them quite surprising, I have to say. My view on devolution is very well known. I think your comments indicate that the road block to devolution, Councillor Blake, is you and one of the major issues we are going to face is any Government Minister listening to what you have had to say I think will take some persuading that Leeds is a pragmatic, forward looking Local Authority that wants to work in partnership. You may think that that is what the Government think about you and your Council. Let me tell you they do not and they are getting heartily tired of you sending our excellent Chief Executive down to London to smooth out the ripples after one of your outbursts up here. That is not going to be long, I think, before it becomes totally unacceptable.

Let me tell you and I have been as critical of the last Labour Government as anybody but when I was Leader of Council, and other people have been Leaders of Council they have known that, to get the best, you can be critical and you should be critical where you disagree, but you should also work with the Government of the day if you want to get the best for your city. You are singularly, Councillor Blake, after your display today, failing in that.

It is a simple fact that the Revenue Budget for 2018/19 has gone up, hasn't it? The coming year will see an uplift of 3.6% in the Council's Revenue Budget equal to £18m. This is not an insignificant amount of money. It is higher than inflation. Yes, the funding is sourced locally from Council Tax and Business Rates, but the Government has allocated additional grants and has enabled the Business Rate Pilot which, in itself, is worth in excess of £7.3m to the city.

In 2018/19 whilst Councillor Blake continues with her groundhog day impersonations, those on this side will note certain statistics. Before I go on to that, again to touch on devolution, it is not a sustainable position to on the one hand say that you want more powers devolved to Local Government and on the other hand say you still want Central Government to pay Revenue Support Grant on all the rest of it.

The simple fact is that if you believe in forward thinking, progressive Local Government, then funding streams that are in our power should be in our hands so that we can raise the revenue we need to run the city as we think the people of Leeds require it, and it is up to us to justify the level of Council Tax rises to the electorate. You cannot have it both ways. If you want devolved power you have to take devolved responsibility.

We have got a 3.6 uplift in the Revenue Budget for 2018/19, £51m in additional funding from the Government through the Better Care Fund and other things in Adult Social Care – quite rightly – an extra £2.1m announced this month in extra added Social Care grant, along with the £750,000 in other grant sources which you have just been busily spending and which the rest of us are similarly going to be spending in our amendments - all of which came from the Government.

An increase in Business Rates income of £15.2m, a Government backed Business Rates pilot worth £7.5m and on top of that £173m of Government grant for transport projects after the almighty catastrophic mess you lot made of the transport programme and the Transport Fund and the transport proposals for this city when you were warned over and over again that the NGT scheme would not fly because you had not dealt with the objections.

Interestingly this wicked Government still gave you the grant they were going to give you if you had won the inquiry and gave you 173 million quid. Let me say, there is precious little evidence so far that you are going to spend that as wisely as you should.

Members on my side will also know that the Council has underspent every year since 2011 and is currently underspending this year's budget by £600,000. The Council still pays double time overtime to the tune of £1.19m a year and it still pays the trade union convenors that should be paid for by the unions themselves.

I accept and have always accepted that the Council faces challenges and it has to cut its cloth accordingly. It has had to reshape and reconfigure and I pay tribute to all the Council staff who have contributed towards that, of which there are many. Councillor Blake goes on and on about cuts and what message is this sending to the Government?

We accept that Leeds historically does not get a particularly good deal from the Government and it never has. Labour, Conservative, Coalition – you can go back 30 years and the message is the same. You will recall I moved a White Paper motion in this Council in 2016 when I called upon all parties to unite and call on the Government to have a Royal Commission into the financing of Local Government and the relationship between Local Government and National Government to set a new way of working because it is overdue.

All the other parties voted with it and you put a stupid amendment down which was a farce, to be frank, on a very serious issue. It is the sort of thing we should have been uniting on but I reached the stage quite frankly, Members of Council, where I wonder why we bother sometimes. On NGT and the funding, the £173m, it was this side who lobbied furiously to make sure we got a fair crack of the whip and got it. On lifting the borrowing limit on the Housing Revenue Account, it is this side that have been lobbying. I was the first person to speak to the Chancellor about achieving just that thing.

Sometimes when you listen to Councillor Blake, as I say, you wonder why you bother. Thankfully most of us are committed to the success of this city under whatever Council leadership it happens to have, but to pretend that it has all come about through this Council is a nonsense. Leeds does not live in a bubble. We live as part of a wider

United Kingdom, a wider world, and the success of our national economy underpins the success of this city and should not be forgotten.

I move on to the economy more generally. There is often a refrain from the Labour Benches that you are driving this growth all by yourselves; that somehow without your efforts Leeds would not be doing well at all. It simply is not correct. Unemployment at its lowest for years, since 1975, more jobs are being created than ever before and please do not keep on demeaning certain sorts of jobs. It is grossly unfair and patronising to those people, those hundreds and thousands of people who are just pleased that they have been able to get into work at all.

Your initial budget proposals are somewhat puzzling, I have to say, because I do not think you have shown a huge lot of imagination in some policy areas that would have seen improved services in places where people have actually requested them. When you are increasing Council Tax by 5% it is not unreasonable for Leeds residents to ask, “What am I actually going to get for the extra money?” Well, not a lot, by the look of it.

I have no doubt our amendments will attract negative comment from those opposite – “You cannot remove union convenors or make the unions pay for themselves, you cannot cut back on double time overtime” - but you can and you should and by doing that you release more funds that you can spend on front line services.

When you are asking a Band D Council Taxpayer to pay £1,339 a year with Police and Fire precepts on top, I think people in Leeds have a right to ask, “What is the extra money we are giving you being spent on?”

There are risks highlighted throughout your budget so please do not come back to us and say that our amendments are added risks. It is perfectly obvious from what the Chief Finance Officer has said in the Robustness Report that our amendments make little difference to the robustness and effectiveness of the budget.

I want to move on to our amendment now. Our first amendment is straightforward. We do not believe that Leeds Council Taxpayers should fund another organisation’s staff, in this case the trade unions’. They have ample reserves of their own and, given the budgetary pressures Local Authorities face, this arrangement should be brought to an end. Would residents accept this is reasonable expenditure of their Council Tax? I think not. Our amendment highlights that point by spending that resource on reversing the plans to start charging for household inert waste. Residents and communities alike are up in arms and in our view it is entirely unnecessary, especially when there is a 5% Council Tax increase added on top. The question for your Benches is whether you are going to ignore what the people of Leeds are saying.

It was interesting that 71%, I think, of respondents to the Council Tax survey that was sent out highlighted environmental issues as the highest on the agenda and yet you, you are not listening. What do you do? You charge for inert waste, for household inert waste. What about the fly tipping that that will undoubtedly cause to increase?

If I may just stick on the subject of your union buddies, and I am sure you will come back to that in your new Corbynite pose, they are hardly pressed for cash, are

they? Indeed, quite the opposite. Take home pay packets of over £100,000 or more for the people at the top of the trade unions. They all fall into the wealthy category as categorised by Mr McDonnell, amongst the 5% of the wealthy. The average salary in the UK is £27,600 a year. The General Secretary of the National Association of Headteachers was paid £133,948 more than that, at an eye watering £161,000. That places him in the top one per cent of earners in the UK. Paul Kenny and Tim Roache at the GMB were paid between them £263,000 a year and Frances O'Grady, of the TUC, was paid £152,365.

My Lord Mayor, yet Local Authorities are still prepared to fork out for union convenors. Our view is this is a disgrace and a relic of the past and should be brought to an end. It is not a challenge to worker representation and collective bargaining; it is simply a desire to see organisations pay for their own staff and not rely on Council taxpayers.

Amendment 2 would look to build on what is a strong local partnership with the NHS to see if we could secure funding for our excellent Neighbourhood Networks, who do an absolutely outstanding job throughout the city. Preventative measures are very much the way forward in terms of tackling demand-led costs in this area and Neighbourhood Networks are perfectly positioned to do that. We think the investment would yield significant savings in the longer term through reduced hospital admissions and reduced access to Council Social Services.

It saves money for the National Health Service and for the Local Authority but most of all it is better for elderly people to lead more fulfilling lives for longer. It is interesting, is it not, that on Monday whilst you were in Brussels, Judith, the YEP reported that the NH Trust in Leeds has now got a £10m budget surplus for the first time in four years. I think we can negotiate much more effectively with our partners in the NHS in Leeds to get more of that money to help people at home and in their communities.

Amendments 3 and 5 look at the Council's approach to culture. Our group is on record as supporting the City of Culture bid to replace the EU scheme. In January, through Councillor Buckley's White Paper motion, we moved that in this Chamber and got all party support. Our main source of funding for this would be a £1m bid to the Leeds City Region Business Rates Pool, which has also recently benefited significantly from the 100% Business Rates Retention Pilot.

We think the Leeds project will benefit neighbouring Authorities as well as Leeds and we think that £1m would be available in terms of getting some up-front investment in this major cultural ambition that will benefit not only the whole of the city of Leeds but the whole of the City Region.

I do have to say – and perhaps some of my colleagues elsewhere in the City Region might not like what I am going to say, but I will say it anyway. Actually, the success of Leeds is almost as important to them as it is to people who live in this city. Leeds and the strength of the Leeds economy and the success of the Leeds economy is what the success and the strength of the City Region is being built on.

My Lord Mayor, there has of course been in recent weeks a furore over the Community Arts Network and I know that a compromise appears to have been reached, so clearly much of what has happened was entirely avoidable. What concerns us about all of this is the message it sent. You have set out an ambition to put culture at the front and centre in the city's ambitions; we do not dispute that but with or without the EU we need to be going for our City of Culture bid, but to have got into the spat with those organisations in the Leeds Arts Guild was wholly unnecessary and gave distinctly the wrong message.

As a consequence, my Lord Mayor, we would use the Cultural Legacy money that is squirreled away in the budget on other priorities. Most notably we would initiate and look to expand a service which residents will really appreciate.

We also want to introduce a trial glass collection round that would benefit 24,000 properties in Leeds. Bradford residents already get this; why are we not looking to get this up and running in Leeds? We would prioritise improvements in our waste services and look to deliver a better deal for residents on what they regard as a key and vital service, and so do we. Treading water like the administration has been doing on these issues is just not good enough. Let us not forget that it was our administration, Councillor Golton, in February 2010 that actually introduced the food collection from which your constituents benefit in Rothwell.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Still got it.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: We would also like to expand the garden waste collections...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Not Calverley, I'm afraid, or Burmantofts.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: ...to an eleven monthly cycle as opposed to just the nine months that is currently the case. It does not feature in these amendments but we would like to look at that. However, credit where credit is due, we do welcome the support for the garden waste expansion, included in your budget. Not before time. Many small developments have taken place and residents scratch their heads and wonder why they see the garden waste collection vehicles drive past to the next street, and it is something that does need addressing, and we welcome it.

One aspect of your budget that we definitely do not support is the planned reduction in FFI, Funding for Inclusion, as it is known. Leeds is supposed to be a compassionate city and over and over again we have heard that today and we have heard your criticism of the Government funding in that respect. Two wrongs never did make a right so why on earth are you planning to remove £1.5m from support for children with disabilities and special educational needs, reducing it from £684 to £600 per child. As you said, Councillor Grahame, shame on you. It is the very opposite of compassion.

We have an uplift in the Revenue Budget of £18m but here you are cutting school funding. Let me assure Leeds residents, we would not do that and, indeed, we have found funding to reverse that cut which, to my mind, is bordering, as I say, on shameful. £1.5m out of an overall budget of £510m net; we would reverse this by implementing an increment freeze and using some of the additional grant provided by

Government in the announcement on 6th February which you opted to put in reserves but then changed your mind, as we have heard earlier this afternoon. We would simply spend that money and reverse the funding cut.

Whilst on the subject of schools it would be remiss of me not at least to note the clear problems within the Education Department at the moment. There is a definite absence of capacity in supporting schools and while staff at lower levels are doing their best, we have seen a number of very worrying issues developing throughout the city. There is Roundhay Free School, a complete debacle, in which a community has been totally let down over a period of two years by the dithering of the administration. This came to a head earlier this week when the bungled proposals to merge two schools that require improvement into a through school were withdrawn at Executive Board on the day of the meeting. Consultation showed that 80% of respondents were against and one of the school's governing bodies were opposed – a truly baffling approach and one that leaves Roundhay and Moortown residents once again uncertain about schooling in their local areas.

There is also the developing shambles in Seacroft ward where the Farnville School is now up in the air, the original site, the playing fields now seemingly off the agenda – another community that faces uncertainty about schooling. In my own ward of Calverley and Farsley, Calverley Parkside School has recently had a very poor Ofsted report. Issues there were flagged up first to the Department in 2015 and nothing was done. Lastly, the most recent issue surrounding Boston Spa and Wetherby Secondary Schools. Officers going around behind the backs of local Councillors not aware of what they were doing, leading to avoidable negative publicity and, again, communities uncertain about the future of local schools. It is a farce and all the while we have got senior staff – and you boasted about it – supporting other Local Authorities when the capacity in our Authority is clearly lacking. It is not, again, acceptable.

Moving on, we would also like to introduce an additional £100,000 to Planning Enforcement prosecutions and also, if possible Planning Appeals Enforcement. It is an issue which all 99 Councillors are frustrated and concerned about. There simply has not been enough capacity. Interesting wording from the Leader of Council when she said. “the Government’s 20% increase” – again, never any responsibility. The Government gave Councils permission to increase planning fees by up to 20%, something we have all been saying should happen. I will be honest, I think we should be allowed to set our planning fees at whatever we want because you have to make an economic judgment as to when you reach the stage where they start to be self-defeating.

The wording was interesting, “the Government”. The Government did not, Judith – you did, and actually, if you believe in devolution you should think that is right. Once again, the words and the actions simply do not match up.

Moving on again over recent years as has been admitted the administration has gradually eroded Wellbeing budgets, and we often propose increases. Members opposite have refused. Today you cheered when you got £180,000 back – that is less than half the £500,000 that you have cut them by but it is a move forward. We would want to put £250,000 into the Wellbeing budgets to bring them back on track and in line with what they were a few years ago.

The amounts of money are very small; the amounts of good the Wellbeing funds do in local communities cannot be over-estimated.

We also want to look to introduce LED lighting in the city. We have been watching with interest developments in this area for some time and we think it is time to move ahead. The business case stacks up. In Year 2 there is a budgetary surplus. That will only increase as the scheme rolls out into subsequent years. As will inevitably be the case electricity costs continue to rise; there is, of course, a wider agenda for cutting carbon emissions. This is also a welcome aspect of the project. It also, of course, will enable us to review those areas where street lights are being turned off in the hours of darkness, something which a lot of residents are very concerned about, and I am not surprised.

In previous amendments moved by our Group we have moved ambitious plans for new housing models that could increase the supply of affordable housing and social housing as well, schemes that sat outside the Housing Revenue Account which I have already mentioned but actually sit alongside whatever we are able to do if you have not completely jiggered up the pitch as regards getting that agreement from Government.

This year is no exception and we want to continue repeating that we should set up a housing company. We know in this respect the Lib Dems and ourselves are on exactly the same page. There is a significant initiative here that can help us provide the right houses in the right place. It is not incompatible to want to see more housing built on brown field sites of the right size and wanting to defend the green belt. All your housing policies have done is to sacrifice unnecessarily green field sites for three, four and five bedroom houses when the attention should have been on providing first time houses to buy for younger people and that is what we want to see happen.

Moving on, the city's roads are in need of additional investment and we note that Highways spend is already planned, but we do not think it is sufficient and we would rephase the Capital Programme to enable a further £1.5m to be invested in approving the condition of our roads. We also believe that we all need to keep a very close eye on how you are proposing to spend the £173m of Government grant of transport funding I have already alluded to, and we do not believe we should be throwing in the towel and forgetting any ambition to have a mass transit system. We know there is no money at the moment; it does not stop that being the long-term ambition and for a city like Leeds which aspires to be a leader and a European leader at that, it ought to remain the ambition.

I am concerned that we did not negotiate hard enough with the Government on the £173m and the time frame around its spending. I would have liked to have seen some additional time in how we spend it and I think a case could still be made to Government to look at increasing that period of time so we do not waste a one-off significant sum of money of £173m.

We also have an amendment in terms of sheltered warden charges. I would just say this to you, your plans to put up the warden charges and the service charges affect 1,200 people who are all (or the vast majority) vulnerable. In terms of pensioners they are elderly pensioners who will have received the basic increase in the State pension in

one of two ways. It is either £3.80-something or £4.80, depending on which part of the pension you are in.

Leeds City Council's extra charges take away from those pensioners 75% of their pension increase. There are people who are just outside the band at which they qualify for additional assistance. It cannot be right, it cannot under any circumstances and anybody's judgment be right that 1,200 people, mainly elderly, who live in sheltered accommodation get a pension increase of £3.80 or £4.80 depending, as I said, which of the pensions they are on. They may have a small amount of savings, they may have a very small private pension but they finish up worse off than somebody on benefits who lives next door because they are not paying the increase. That cannot be right and you really have to rethink it. It is absolutely wrong by any standards of anybody and we would stop it straight away and reverse it.

I then want to comment briefly on the programme that we have for snow and ice clearance. We do not have bad winters like we used to, touch wood, but we still get bad weather and it staggers me that our priorities and our priority road and footpath gritting has not been properly reviewed. We have major routes to schools walked and encouraged to be walked by this Council by parents and kids, the walking bus, and we have roads that people have to use to drop their kids off and there is no gritting at all. We have managed to get equipment to grit the new cycle way on the A647 but you do not grit the routes to school for parents and kids every day who have to get there on foot or in the car. You need to review it and we put some money in there and we hope you will take note. It needs reviewing, it is a basic service and we have not got it right.

A couple of Council meetings ago we all witnessed an excellent deputation to Council – I think it was when we last met in January – two young people raising concerns about the provision of Changing Places toilet facilities in Leeds, most notably at the train station but also across the city. We are fortunate in Farsley, the local church, with support from various organisations, is providing a Changing Places toilet. For people with serious disabilities it is an ordeal and a concern to them when they try to live as normal a life as possible to not be able to use toilets, and for a very small sum of money, either in grant aid or adapting our own buildings, £250,000 we have suggested, we could create a lot more Changing Places toilets in this city. It is a small amount of money out of a massive capital budget and I would urge you to consider it. It will make a lot of changes, improvements to the quality of life of disabled people who want to enjoy all the good things that go on in this city, quite rightly referred to by Councillor Blake.

The last amendment is in anticipation of you voting down our first amendment despite the fact that all Opposition Groups are opposed to what you are proposing. That is to invest more money in combating fly tipping. Fly tipping is a scourge anyway, it is bad enough but the steps now you are proposing to take to charge for households dumping inert waste we believe will lead to more fly tipping. If you ain't going to reverse the ridiculous decision you have made about charging for inert waste, then you ought to put in more resource for dealing with what is undoubtedly going to happen and that is an increase in fly tipping.

My Lord Mayor, later on today I have a reference back on the Capital Programme and I just want to comment on the Capital Programme now. This Council's

capital debt will reach £2.4bn in the next couple of years. It has gone up considerably. We all support a strong capital programme providing the investment that we want to see in our city but the repayments in the Revenue Budget will amount to £26.2m based on one per cent of Council Tax increase generating £2.7m. This is the equivalent to around a 7% increase in Council Tax by 2020/21. Moving further on, it could be worse. There are all sorts of ways of calculating how this may affect us.

Last year and the year before I warned my Group that in my view there was an urgent need to begin looking at reprofiling the Capital Programme and that would become critical in the years of 2018/19 and 2019/20 and 2020/21. The reason is simple. We effectively took a holiday on interest repayments when we went for the minimum repayment provision, and I am not saying that that was wrong. At the time it took pressure off Revenue spending and we had been overpaying debt. My concern then, and even more so now, is that too many Members of this Council thought we were getting a free lunch. In point of fact all we were doing was putting off Peter to pay Paul.

At the time in 2015 the Council was supposed to be implementing another policy as well and that was to ensure that whilst we were not paying down as much debt, we were not increasing our debt liabilities through the Capital Programme by limiting borrowing to the level of debt repayment. In 2015 this was £45 and I quote from the 2015/18 Capital Programme that went to Executive Board on 11th February 2015:

“The medium term financial plan outlines the aspiration to limit the increase in the debt taken on by the Authority, therefore borrowing would be limited to the level of debt repayment the Council is required to make through minimum revenue provision.”

Although the changes to MRP policy made this more difficult, it has to be now time for us to revisit this as MRP begins to rise once more to nearly £50m in 2020/21.

It is regrettable that we have reached this situation and there is a stark warning here, that we as a Council need to wake up and we need to wake up quickly to the implications of not paying down debt as fast as we are now going to have to do and the way in which we are profiling our borrowing. I know, and I pay tribute to them, that our team in resources led by Doug Meeson are working very hard to ensure we do not have a black hole and we do not hit a very serious position.

My comment to all of you – and I include myself in this – is that it is Site Allocations Plan Councillors’ responsibility to understand the implications of the Capital Programme and the debt. None of us want to see a halt to the Capital Programme, none of us want to see the projects we all want to see developed stopped in their tracks, so the time to really get our heads round this and support our officers in resources is now, or we will be having to give stark warnings to residents about in-built Council Tax increases of 2, 3, 4, 5% before you even begin to look at how much you need to put on Council Tax to cover inflation, to cover the increased Revenue costs.

I hope that you will accept the Reference Back I am proposing later and take the matter to the Scrutiny Committee which Councillor Grahame chairs and to other Scrutiny Committees if only to fully inform more Members about the seriousness of this situation.

My Lord Mayor, in conclusion, shall I say this, that I was looking at some comparisons. In the past we all have said how our core funding compared badly with other cities in the City Region and, indeed, in West Yorkshire. This year, whether you like it or not, we have the highest per capita funding of any city in West Yorkshire. We have overtaken Bradford. Of the Core Cities, from being virtually bottom, we now only have Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham with greater funding per capita, with Sheffield, Nottingham, Bristol and Newcastle less. Those are interesting statistics when over the years that has not been the case.

My Lord Mayor, in essence our amendment is this. We will scrap the new household waste site charges; we will give our vital Neighbourhood Networks an extra £1m; we will boost recycling by launching two food waste collection rounds and a glass collection round; we will use the power of local businesses to deliver an extra £1m towards cultural legacy for Leeds; we will reverse the cuts to our most vulnerable learners, putting money into schools to support children with special educational needs; we will get tough with developers who are in breach of planning conditions, putting money into the budget for Planning Enforcement and prosecutions; we will give our Community Committees extra money, £700,000 in total taking into account the housing money, to help fund local priorities and projects; we will invest in energy efficient and cost-effective LED street lighting; we will set up an innovative new housing company to quickly deliver affordable housing in the areas that need it; we will put an extra £1.5m into maintaining our neglected road network; we will protect our most vulnerable elderly by removing the charges from sheltered warden service; we will put an extra £100,000 into cleaning snow and ice from our highways and launch a full review; we will improve access to toilets for disabled people by investing a quarter of a million pounds to convert existing toilets and create new ones to Changing Places; and we will invest £100,000 to tackle fly tipping and keep our communities clean and green.

I move the amendment. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Stewart Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I noted that the first two speeches concentrated primarily on the Westminster bubble and the different travails.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: No Lib Dem MPs any more.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: I am not being funny but you did, Andrew, you did. That summary at the end basically meant that actually your speech could have been about 50% shorter as well if you had missed out the national element. Apparently it is obligatory to actually do the Westminster bit so I will try and do mine very succinctly because I appreciate the people in the galleries have been waiting quite a long time already. (*laughter*)

Just to let you know, normally we have to do it within five minutes or three minutes and today we have got unlimited time but you do not have to take it all up.

This lot over *here*, yes, you have got your Corbynite insurgency, nationally you have got policies that you lot actually, most of you sat round here, do not actually believe will succeed but you have got to pay lip service to them anyway. *You* have got Jacob Rees-Mogg so you are in no better position than they are in terms of watching your back and thinking about how you actually justify recycling the policies of UKIP for your national policies.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: What a load of rubbish.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: They have got no policies to recycle.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Actually, I do not mind that so much because I know that at least locally through your budget amendment you have demonstrated that you quite like recycling our policies (*laughter*) especially on the environment, because the LED lighting was something that you actually abstained on when we introduced that three years ago. You are catching up. Good on you!

Now then, let us concentrate on this lot because these are actually in charge...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Allegedly.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: ...and they have to catch up on a lot more than that. OK, that is me off the cuff. I am afraid that is all you are going to get because we have some really serious stuff to talk about and I am quite forgetful and I was up until two o'clock this morning writing this, so I do not want to miss anything out, so I am afraid I am going to read it.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Email it to us, Stewart! (*laughter*) (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: I will email it to you. OK, Lord Mayor, first of all I would like to thank Doug Meeson and Richard Ellis for their help to enable the Liberal Democrat Group to compile our budget amendments this year. Once again I will recognise the difficult circumstances that the ruling administration have faced in formulating their budget this year and it has been that case for around about a decade. Government austerity is now joined by the uncertainty of Brexit, business rates conversion and the inertia around devolution that we saw the two other parties fighting over earlier.

Council coffers are diminishing; therefore the need for visible political leadership has increased. Partnerships with other Councils, the NHS, universities, schools, the police, business and the voluntary sector are essential to achieve the outcomes we want in an era of diminished resources. I have to say, I was also very pleased to see Councillor Blake go to Brussels because that is another partnership that is not being looked after particularly well by the National Government and somewhere where we might need to step in locally to actually make our case, so I was glad to see her leadership to go and see M. Barnier this week.

Of course, as politicians in a local Chamber we should not neglect our primary partnership and that is with our electors and that is why we are here today. The privilege of leadership is to get to make the choices; the responsibility of leadership is knowing how to make the right ones. The luxury of Opposition is our alternatives are always an improvement through the virtue of being untested. However, the discipline of a civilised formal budget debate with financially tested arguments is a demonstration that we take our responsibilities seriously to get the best value for our citizens and that our alternative promises from this side at least stack up financially should the baton need to be passed come Election Day in May. You never know!

We are lucky as a city, Lord Mayor, that our political culture values opposition and encourages challenge. A lot of the time we agree and come together for the common good, as on the Capital of Culture, but it is just as important because we are talking to our electorates that we do differentiate and we do emphasise our divergent priorities and philosophies and to call out those in charge for the wrong decisions they make and the ones that they refuse to take. In that spirit I introduce the Liberal Democrat Group's budget amendments.

Leeds Liberal Democrats believe in putting communities in control and trusting them to be the chief agents of change in this city. The Council's first responsibility should be as enablers and facilitators to allow individuals and groups to achieve, shape and deliver better outcomes for themselves, their families and their communities. Our proposals are practical, costed, bespoke interventions to bring leadership where it is currently lacking in improving the city's environment, its health, education, care, housing and civic pride.

On the environmental front we have already heard from Councillor Carter that this is actually the biggest priority for our electors. However, under Labour this city's recycling rates and air quality are getting worse and have led to Government intervention. Their poor record does not match the green ambitions of Leeds citizens.

The BBC's Blue Planet reminded us of the consequences on our environment if we just carry on as we are and behave in the same way. Our amendment seeks to enable every citizen in this city to make a difference and through our common effort to deliver a more sustainable future for the city.

When the Council's Portfolio Holder for Waste and Recycling was Liberal Democrat, we initiated the commissioning of the Recycling and Energy Recovery Facility, referred to by Councillor Blake and claimed by the Labour administration. It saves you £7m a year, as you reminded us earlier. However, we introduced that and we also introduced a pilot food waste collection scheme in Rothwell which I, as a Rothwell elector, still benefit from, and also under the Liberal Democrat Portfolio Holder for Recycling and Waste we increased our recycling rate year on year. This current Labour regime has benefited from the foresight of our previous administration and has saved millions in landfill tax, as I mentioned. However, the promise of those first millennial years have been wasted and Labour's lip service to the environment and its inability to invest that £7m it saves every year into the future of our city has cost this city dear.

Despite decrying the whole concept of burning waste in Opposition, this administration has fully embraced it to the point where recycling is on a downward trend

and the Government has intervened to try and halt the slide through the intervention of the quango WRAP which, of course, is wholly Government owned and intervened to make sure that we actually did put together a forward looking policy. Well, here is some help for you.

The Government also had to intervene on our appalling air quality record, imposing the creation of a clear air zone that this administration had promised to deliver in 2011 and now wants us to congratulate it on being one of the first of those Authorities that were forced to do it by the Government now in 2018.

When written a cheque for £6m by the street lights contractor just three years ago, instead of investing in low energy, low cost LED lighting as we suggested, the money was banked and street lights were switched off instead, saving less money and making the vulnerable feel less secure on our streets. It is a scandal that the Food Waste Pilot set up in Rothwell has reached its tenth anniversary and still no other part of the city benefits from this service. It is the glaring lost opportunity that this represents that forms the core of our recycling amendment.

It is essential that food waste collection is expanded to the entire city and this amendment allocates £3m for the provision of those bin rounds. This investment not only enables each household in Leeds to recycle more of their waste but it also provides the raw fuel to enable the city to generate cheaper, clean energy. A modest Revenue spend of £186,000 in the first year will raise enough capital for the city to invest in an anaerobic digester. This facility will process the city's food waste to produce methane gas. It is worth noting that the Council already agreed this month at the Executive Board to buy land close to the major gas pipeline running through Cross Green to enable the creation of a gas filling station for Council and commercial vehicles. Should our proposed anaerobic digester be constructed there, not only would we be able to refuel our own vehicles through the city's waste but also to raise revenue for the city by supplying into the city's gas supply rather than buying from it.

Leeds Liberal Democrat Group also wishes to address anomalies in the city's waste strategy that discriminate against those with limited incomes. Our amendment will invest £240,000 to end the DIY tax which has recently been introduced by this administration. Ordinary householders who make the journey to dispose of their waste responsibly at the Council's waste sorting sites should not face the prospect of being charged for their efforts once they turn up. Singling out charging for the disposal of plasterboard and tiles and white goods merely targets people who want to improve their homes but cannot afford a builder. It is a cynical DIY tax on the poor and a Council interested in fairness would not have introduced it.

In the same vein this Group considers it inequitable that this city discriminates against those who do not own a car by relying on bottle banks as the sole vehicle for recycling glass in Leeds. We are one of only two Councils in West Yorkshire, and the only major city in England, not to have doorstep glass collection, and our amendment spends £238,000 to get the ball rolling and introduce glass collections to 24,000 properties in the city.

One of the reasons this Group called for Child Friendly Leeds (and I am on to Children's now) to be kept a priority in the city's Best Council Plan which we

mentioned earlier, was because for all the progress that has been made over recent years there are always areas for improvement and the need to focus on some areas where we are falling back. Councillor Carter already referred to our Education service and how improvement in our schools is taking a backward turn.

Our first amendment, however, is quite niche in this area. It is a scheme to provide free sanitary products to school students affected by period poverty through a P-card system. Leeds is one of the worst performing Authorities in the country in the gap in attainment between well-off children and their poorer classmates. One of the key factors in any student's success is their ability to attend school regularly. It was the testimony of two Leeds schoolgirls only last year that revealed to the nation the shocking truth that a significant number of our young female students were forced to absent themselves from school each month due to the simple fact they could not afford the sanitary protection their more well-off classmates took for granted.

Our amendment seeks to guarantee the dignity of our poorer female students through the provision of a P-card that enables them to collect the products that they need free of charge when they need it at a local pharmacy. The cost for our scheme has been estimated by Children's Services to be around £400,000 and arrives just in time to benefit from the repeal of the Tampon Tax in April.

More important is the value to the wellbeing, school experience and ultimately improved outcomes of the over 8,000 girls set to benefit from this scheme, which is an investment in all our futures.

The Labour administration's commitment to making safeguarding our children its first priority I would suggest is universally recognised in this Chamber. The level of spending that the Council has dedicated to this and our children looked after has increased year on year. However, this Group believes that we should always have the option to care for our children in our city and that lack of appropriate accommodation locally can lead to too many of our looked-after children being sent outside of the city for their care.

We appreciate that child sexual exploitation cases sometimes make it necessary to place victims at a distance from perpetrators. However, other children with complex needs could be cared for closer to home if the accommodation existed here. Our amendment proposes the building of such a facility costing £1.6m, paid for through modest prudential borrowing costing £29,000 in the first year.

Moving on to Adult Social Care, Lord Mayor, although less widely publicised as well as being a Child Friendly city Leeds is also an Age Friendly city. However, as with the Child Friendly Leeds for all the success of initiatives like Neighbourhood Networks, Age Friendly Leeds has much to improve and the Liberal Democrat Group's amendment hopes to help make this happen.

Under this Labour administration we have seen the almost total closure of the Council's elderly residential homes. The withdrawal of Council delivery of care means that the city is dependent on a private sector that is under pressure and often delivering poor outcomes. The shortage of nurses, homecare workers, facilities and

accommodation within communities forces too many elderly further away from their friends and family.

This Group believes that if the city is truly to be Age Friendly then the Council will need to be less ideologically driven in the delivery of elderly care within our communities and be a facilitator of a genuinely mixed economy responsive to the distinct needs of our city's communities.

The Council's focus on negotiating contracts with large national and multi-national organisations means that smaller local enterprises lose out and the profit leaves the city. There is an obsession with extra care facilities that never get built because we rely on outside companies to deliver them.

Our amendment proposes investing £200,000 with the Leeds voluntary sector to develop a truly community responsive care delivery system for our city. This will involve the creation of Community Care Boards across the city that will identify the needs and gaps in provision for their locality and make call to action to fill those gaps. They will also act as brokers to identify quality locally based care providers for elderly residents needing home or residential care.

A parallel initiative will restructure elements of the Community Committee teams, Economic Development, Employment and Skills and Adult Social Care to work alongside the city's voluntary sector to stimulate and develop local capacity to deliver social enterprises, co-operatives and small businesses to fill the gaps identified by Community Care Boards.

Lord Mayor, it can be achieved. There is an example of Preston Council. It has been called the Corbynista Council. However, its commitment to small local enterprises actually means that 36% of their contracts as a Council are now placed with local firms and I think that is an example that we could follow here in the city.

Small local enterprises are more focused on the needs of the community that they are based in because their profitability depends on it. That is mutually appreciated as customers' regular patronage is rewarded by a personalised service that is not possible with larger companies who are more accountable to their distant shareholders. Community pharmacies have a unique role, keeping our citizens as well as our High Streets healthy and this Council recognised this in a White Paper proposed by this Liberal Democrat Group objecting to Government cuts that threatened up to a third of our community pharmacies with closure.

This week's Health and Wellbeing Board discussed the role of pharmacies as increasingly important partners in delivering future health services in the city. However, Dr Sinclair of the Leeds CCG publicly issued a health warning on the future of our High Street pharmacies as they struggle to cope with an 11.4% cut to prescription incomes. We were informed that three independent pharmacies have given notice to quit here in Leeds in the past month alone. We were warned that the loss of often family-run independent pharmacies would threaten access to convenient local health advice, out of hours delivery service and an increased reliance on rotating locum pharmacists.

Our amendment will provide practical help to safeguard our pharmacies by investing £396,000 to ensure all the city's independent community pharmacies are placed on a more secure economic footing by awarding them 100% business rate relief. In exchange, we will ensure that they commit to a Leeds Healthy Living Pharmacy Standard that ensures they develop their premises to be identified Carer Hubs that are learning difficulty and dementia friendly.

As well as increasing support for carers through the development of Carer Hubs in community pharmacies, we particularly wanted to support the growing number of carers in the city coping with a relative with dementia. Admiral Nurses work with families living with dementia in much the same way that Macmillan nurses help with families facing cancer. Admiral Nurses provide one-to-one support, expert guidance and ensure families are able to access the additional care and support that they need. I am also informed, Lord Mayor, that for each Admiral nurse that has been employed by Sutton Council, they estimate that they save £300,000 in their Health and Social Care budgets, so this would be an Invest to Save measure. Lord Mayor, our amendment will invest £318,000 to employ six Admiral Nurses to work across the city.

Moving on to housing, despite this administration's best efforts to put the genie back in the bottle, for the next 18 months at least this Council still has the biggest house building target in England and many acres of green belt are destined to disappear under housing schemes out of the reach of average incomes. Housing charity Shelter also shamed Leeds for letting developers off their obligation to build affordable homes on many sites across the city. We have a dysfunctional housing market in the city, Lord Mayor. It is at the mercy of landowners and big developers, perhaps best demonstrated by the plight of families facing eviction on the estate of affordable rented homes in Oulton proposed to be demolished and replaced with the exact same number of expensive executive homes. Effectively, ethnic cleansing of poorer people on an estate.

The Liberal Democrat Group in Leeds want to rebalance the scales back in favour of our distinct suburbs and villages and to make the difference to deliver the affordable homes that people want. Our amendment proposes to inject £500,000 of capital to set up an independent Council-owned housing company to build affordable homes for sale and rent.

The volume house builders insist that they require a minimum 20% margin of profitability on a housing scheme because that is the typical interest rate of the private finance on offer to them. This is the reason they insist on building larger more profitable properties and, even worse, not to build at all even though they have permission.

A Council-owned independent housing company can access finance at a lower rate and therefore can operate on a lower profit margin. This means that the company can build smaller, more affordable homes including bungalows for both sale and rent. The company can self-finance through the profit it makes on sales and rent. Because the company does not have to pay dividends to private shareholders, smaller developments on brown field land could become more achievable and the design and developments could better fit local needs identified in neighbourhood plans.

Just before we go to our final amendment, it would only be fair to demonstrate where the money is coming from to pay for the improvements we are proposing today. First of all, and perhaps least controversially for the Benches opposite, we propose a reduction in the general reserves to the level that was proposed in the original draft budget proposals of the administration before the latest windfall from the Government arrived. Instead of banking it we intend to use it to fund food waste collection. Similarly, we intend to follow the example of the administration to utilise Section 106 reserves to fund current spending and we will reduce the balance by a further £1,076,000 to further invest in the city-wide food waste collection scheme.

Perhaps most contentiously we would freeze increments for all staff which could raise £1,688,000 this year. The Liberal Democrat Group supports the payment of this year's 2% pay rise to staff earning less than £50,000, but we cannot approve the additional payment of some staff members and not others for simply being one year older. We do not afford the same privilege, for instance, to foster carers who can only increase their grading through demonstrating accruing a higher skills level. We believe that the taxpayers of Leeds will appreciate a higher value outcome for this money through funding our proposals to pay for the introduction of glass waste collections, employing Admiral Nurses, setting up Community Care Boards, safeguarding our community pharmacies and repealing the DIY tax.

We apply the same logic to the proposal to freeze the pay of Council management and elected Members earning above £50,000, which will raise £264,000 in 2018/19. This, together with the £223,000 saved through ending the trade union subsidy, is the equivalent of funding our proposals to end period poverty, a direct redistribution of resources from those most privileged within our organisation to a group most in need of an enabling subsidy.

Indeed, if there was any element of performance management associated with the trade union subsidy and senior management pay, their joint singular inability to deliver an agreement on the rationalisation of bin routes that has this year cost this Council £1m, money that has had to be saved elsewhere, would be justification enough for this loss of privileges.

Finally, Lord Mayor, we come to our last amendment and hopefully this is an amendment that will receive universal support and perhaps not ultimately cost the taxpayer the nominal sum that we have placed against it. It has already been noted that the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage is being celebrated when the city had a woman in charge of it and an administration with more women Councillors than men. However, it did take nearly 100 years to get there and it could only be achieved thanks to the pioneers who came before our current generation of female politicians. Alice Bacon, as the city's first female MP, was a high profile example of a woman making the political weather for 35 years in this city and will have left a significant legacy for more than one generation of women to follow her example.

How fitting, then, to mark that legacy by renaming the refurbished Merrion House as Alice Bacon House. The signage does have a £50,000 nominal cost which could be covered by slippage but could also be covered by private or public subscription. Who knows, we might even get the unions to sponsor it. All is possible as long as we say yes.

Here ends the Liberal Democrat amendment, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Robert Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. On formally moving the Morley Borough Independent Budget Amendment, can I pass on my thanks for the work of the Finance Department, especially Richard Ellis and Doug Meeson. Their work, patience and good humour is greatly appreciated by the MBI Group.

It often feels that Budget Day is little more than a glorified piece of political theatre - perhaps more of a pantomime - where the outcome is entirely foreseeable and we undertake a debate within the Council Chamber which few listen to, which ultimately fails miserably to influence the final outcome. There is generally a predictable series of scenes where one side will blame the previous Labour/Coalition/Conservative Governments while reminding the Chamber of how much better things were under the previous Labour/Coalition/Conservative Governments. It is a somewhat pointless process which fails to grasp the fundamental fact that all national Governments have little respect for Local Authorities and have spent decades either slicing budgets or directing Councils on what they will spend their budgets upon.

None of the national parties really believe in Local Government and find Councils an inconvenience, something to be overlooked, ignored, directed and undermined with ring-fencing directives, while often imposing additional responsibilities with no extra cash. Successive Governments look at ways of feeding additional finance into their core voting areas with cash allocated on a political pay-back rather than on genuine need.

I again call, as I have done I think for the last three or four years, for a Royal Commission to look at Local Government's financing. Andrew is absolutely right, we ought to be moving forward with that to remove it from this political manipulation and to give it the tools required to provide those essential services that are valued by our communities.

This year's budget provides the funding required for a further pay rise for Council staff, a fully financed commitment to the introduction of the national living foundation pay rate of £8.75 an hour from April, an additional £1m to the looked-after children's budget, protection and enhancement of Children's Services and increased finance for Adult Social Care.

The MBI fully supports all of these proposals. We see the levels of general reserve being increased, more money being put into the Learning Places budget, additional flood alleviation programmes and an increase in finance to deliver more Community Hubs, all of which we support.

We welcome the news that, after years of reducing staff numbers, we will see a modest increase in the number of full-time employees working for the Council. The Council's Revenue Budget is an increase upon last year's budget, which is welcome, along with the full retention of business rates, a proposal we have called on for many years. It is reasonable that the effort we put into economic growth of city-wide businesses should be rewarded with a high retention of additional business rates those efforts generate.

The Council is a more efficient organisation than it has ever been and our view is that there is no additional fat left to trim. The Council's relevance will become more challenged, it will become nothing more than an organisation providing the services that we are statutorily obliged to deliver and quality of life issues – libraries, parks, youth services and sports centres – disappear with the inevitable negative impact that would have on our communities. We are at a crossroads. We need to steadily increase Council spending, protecting Children's Services and Adult Social Care but we also need to address those other quality of life issues as well.

This leads us to the MBI amendment which does not look to undermine any of this. Our amendment is a clear choice we can exercise without reducing service delivery in any directorate. Our proposals will see the abolition of Community Committees which are no longer relevant or fit for purpose and offer little to the communities they claim to represent. Staff will be redeployed into other sections of the Council and the subsequent savings of around £300,000 will be immediately passed down to Ward Members by an enhanced MICE scheme along with all other Community Committee Finance. This will offer real democracy and an ability for all Councillors to respond to the needs of their communities without a cumbersome and bureaucratic process being necessary.

Our second proposal will be to abolish the rubble tax imposed by the ruling Labour Group. That is the charge of disposing of rubble at Council tips which we believe is already leading to increased levels of fly tipping. The rubble tax is a false saving and will, in the long run, cost us more. The removal of the rubble tax will be paid for by a reduction in Special Responsibilities Allowances for Councillors of 30%. Communities are being asked to dig their hands even deeper into their pockets and a show of solidarity and recognition of the sacrifices they have to make by reducing Councillors' Special Responsibilities Allowance seems fair and reasonable.

As to the amendments we have placed before us by our Councillor colleagues, some we like and will be supporting, some we believe are illegal and will not be supporting, and some we just do not understand, like a multi-million pound commitment to an anaerobic digester. We will support those which make good sense and are legitimate and we will oppose where we identify little value or those amendments impact negatively on local communities.

I formally move the MBI Budget amendments. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I formally second Councillor Finnigan's amendment and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: I have got a bit stiff sitting down there for all this time! Lord Mayor, thank you. Firstly, can I thank Doug Meeson and his team for their help in putting together my amendment and for the help in generally understanding some parts of the budget.

While I agree with the Leader that things are difficult and are likely to continue to be difficult until the time this Council and other Councils get the levels of Government support they require, we still have to live with the realities of what we receive and what we are allowed to get in Council Tax. It is basically making really the best of a bad situation and looking at what your priorities are. I think maybe with the 30 amendments that are in front of us, it is not about a lot of big bucks; it is within those priorities that we have our differences that are of little cost but are very important to our electorate.

Moving on to my amendments. In general in regard to the amendments, there is a general theme through many of these amendments to do with waste management and street cleaning. Certainly from my own observations when travelling about the city we have a problem. Increased littering, increased tipping and inadequate responses. Waste bins going missing or in some cases falling to pieces and what seems to be a lack of stock for replacement. In areas of HRA land which were formerly covered by estate caretakers, slow and inadequate services, yet the cost to the Housing Revenue Account has increased considerably. We have reflected this in part of our amendment and will support any sensible attempt to deal with these problems put forward by others.

The amendments in my name, firstly amendment 24. I again, as last year, propose an injection of £1m into the Capital Programme for the works on collapsed gulleys. Last year the entire Opposition supported my amendment and hopefully they will do this year, and I hope the administration will have some sense in this. Quite honestly, you have only got to walk around the city when there has been a bit of rain and you will see loads and loads of collapsed gulleys. You talk to Highways engineers and they say, "Oh, yes, they are collapsed", but the problem is you talk to senior officers and administration and they are in denial. We have not had any floods this year, luckily – we did the year before. Hopefully we are not going to get any this year but what we need, we need these gulleys fixing and I am not saying £1m in the Capital fund will deal with that but it is a start. We are making some more progress forward.

Amendment 25 is to put 150k into the Capital Budget to buy a further stock of litter bins. I know in my ward we spent several thousand pounds on replacing bins there was no stock or no budget to cover, and we feel that a larger amount of money needs to be put into that so when ones disappear or the doors fall off or they generally get vandalised, there are stocks there sufficient so that we can replace them. The fact is, if you lose a bit what you are going to get is, you are going to get littering. We have to give people the opportunity of somewhere to put their litter so let us spend a little bit of money just making sure we have got those stocks ready for when we need to replace them.

Amendment 26 seeks to reduce the level of Special Responsibility Allowances and basic allowances down to the levels that my Group claim at the moment. We have consistently said in our opinion they are too high and, as we do every year, we are including this in our amendment. We are also proposing a 5% cut in the salaries of the highest paid Members of Council staff above PO6 level and a further 50p increase on the car parking charges at Woodhouse Lane. From this we propose to increase Community Committee Wellbeing by £180k, allocate £165k to local environmental projects, £250k for additional funding for Neighbourhood Partnerships, £500k for local parks and cemeteries and £137k for additional resources for the Youth Activities Fund.

Amendment 26 which is in my name, quite simply takes the additional £756k that appeared two days before the Executive meeting and allocates it £156k to enable us to cease the charges of the bulky collections; £240k for the cessation of charges for inert waste; and an additional £366k for street cleaning – basically dealing with what I think is one of the problems that we have where the administration is in denial but since we have put charges in for bulky waste we definitely have more tipping. Everybody says it and everybody on this side of the Chamber will say so, and if you talk to anybody out there and if you talk to Labour Members, people who are standing for Council, that is what they are saying.

The point is, we have to do summat so basically we get rid of that, we do not bring charges in for inert waste and what we do is put some more cash into street cleaning because that is where the problem is. Our city is filthy, it needs cleaning up.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: No it is not. Your ward might be, my own is not.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: We will also be supporting a number of other amendments but what we will not be doing, we will not be supporting any that withdraw the trade union support

COUNCILLOR: Spoilsport!

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: I am sorry about this – or changes to premium payments or to do with increments to staff. We might be willing to look at reducing rates for people who are the highest paid but, let us put it this way, overtime payments and increments affect the bottom as well as the top and we have got to look after those people. The fact is, the trade unions, while I have got to say – and I have to say I am finding difficulty getting to the bottom of this – while I have got to say as somebody who used to be a Convenor at my own place of work, while the staff levels go down I would expect those costs to go down because of the sheer fact there are less people to look after. I am not one who believes that we can do it in this Chamber. This has got to be something that is negotiated and, as Robert said earlier, it is likely to be something that is probably illegal, but the point is we have got to do it that way. It would be helpful if the administration could come forward with the figures to show that the actual cost is going down over a period of time now we have got less people.

Anyway, with that, as I say, I move my amendments in my name and thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wilford.

COUNCILLOR WILFORD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The Green Group budget proposals are unique, original and perhaps controversial to some but essentially they are sensible, from replacement litter bins helping to keep our wards tidy to addressing the issue of collapsed gulleys with an injection of moneys from capital expenditure. Commonsense maintenance, Councillors.

The reductions to the budgeted contribution to the Council's general reserve which was roughly up to £756,000 and allocate moneys towards the following communities and environmental budget. End the charges for bulky waste collections and charges for inert waste, both of which lead to more expenditure in cleaning up after dumping. I am sure you all agree we need investment in Streetscene Services.

A series of sensible budget proposals to enrich communities and invest in our parks is obviously a sensible idea and how fitting with the concept of Better City Plans. With our budget cuts we will increase funding for Community Committees for ward based environmental projects and neighbourhood improvement partnerships to ensure we are looking after our communities with a welcome increase in funding.

In transferring moneys we are looking after communities and their wellbeing – all sensible initiatives I am sure you will agree.

This is the Green Group Budget – likely to be ignored by the administration and Opposition Parties but I support Councillor Blackburn's budget proposals. They are in the best interests of Leeds City Council. I urge you as sensible representatives of constituents in Leeds to accept them. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Mark Dobson.

COUNCILLOR M DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. On behalf of Garforth and Swillington Independents, East Leeds Independent and my Independent colleague behind me, Councillor Jack Dunn, we would also like to pay tribute to the hardworking staff of Leeds City Council, all the way from the people who have helped make the Council tick this last year in terms of its fiscal management – Doug Meeson has already been mentioned and Richard Ellis – but their work is really exemplary. We would also like to thank people right across the spectrum who do often very unglamorous jobs, front line services, and we really would like to pay tribute to those hard working men and women who actually make this city tick.

What we also believe firmly is that no budget or series of budget amendments put forward this afternoon are done with ill intent. Nobody in this Chamber gets into local politics to adversely affect the quality of life of the citizens within it, but we do have different ways of going about things and different priorities, and I think for us that is the key word – it is around priorities.

What we will be putting forward today are a series of low risk, low cost, compassionate, sensible and community and people driven amendments. Before we do that though, just a brief comment on some of the earlier amendments that we have heard moved this afternoon.

The Independents are of the mind that there should be no changes to the arrangements regarding trade unions and the payment for Convenors. Yes, there is a case and I think Councillor Carter made it quite well that at the top of the hierarchy of trade unions there are some people getting exorbitant salaries. However, we are wanting to frame a budget for 2018/19 for this Local Authority and it seems to me that we have to look at that in the here and the now, and we believe that Council staff are fully entitled to good, solid trade union representation and we will be not supporting any moves to remove that.

We are very supportive, however, of the amendment around the modest increase in Capital Spend on the Changing Places that has been put forward. Councillor Jack Dunn in particular, as we all were, actually, was moved by the deputation that came into Council and we think that for a modest and reasonable sum of money we can do a great deal to enhance the lives of people not living in the best of circumstances, and really bring about a more equitable situation across the city.

So, moving on to our amendments and Amendment 28. I remember vividly for five years when Neil Evans used to visit my office with the RAG list – we have all seen the red, amber and green and then the red pen comes out and the first thing that always used to get my red pen were charges for bulky waste - inert waste actually was never on the agenda at that time, that one has come forward in more recent times, as has money for replacing bins.

We see these as the most basic of Council functions and as such we believe they should remain free at the point of delivery for the people who need that particular service. Therefore, there will be a very modest increase in the Communities and Environment Budget coming forward, £240,000 to reverse charges on inert waste, £150,000 for the cessation of bulky waste charges and an increase of £150,000 around replacement bins.

I do not know if anybody else in any other wards has experienced what is rapidly turning into bin wars in my patch. I have had all sorts of emails – “I have had my bin nicked”, “I think she has done it” and “I think he has done it” and “The lid came off and it wasn’t my fault and I am being told I have got to pay for it.” It is a bit of a mess, frankly, and actually if we want to get people to use the bins properly, I think the minimum requirement should be that we provide bins.

There is an issue in this city about people who have got too many bins when we used to have a quite ludicrous system of a free for all where frankly people used to ring up for a black bin and they were given a black bin or a green or another green, and nobody actually knew if they were sometimes even on a round. It was chaotic but it has led to a stage where there is a disproportionate number of people who have got too many bins and there are some who are being charged for a single bin which I think is a basic entitlement.

Really, you know, we have had a bit of a history lesson this afternoon around women’s suffrage but I will give you another one. Local Authorities fundamentally were set up to tackle public health because a lot of cities like Leeds were filthy and people had illnesses and died of diseases that we have broadly eradicated. The reason

we have eradicated them is through years and years of Councils keeping our cities clean and tidy and vermin free.

I think if you want to set our watches back collectively to the 19th Century, charging for the most fundamental services is probably a very good way of going about it.

We would cost this by doing something that the Garforth and Swillington Independents did last year, which was by refusing to take the small incremental rise in our allowances, but also a reduction in the budget for marketing and advertising of environmental services. I for one (and I cannot speak for anybody else) get a little bit annoyed when I see marketing and advertisements for Council services which is basically a picture of a fridge dumped in a field and somebody wagging their finger at me saying, “Isn’t this bad?” Is that how we want to spend the money, or do we actually want to spend the money by simply going and picking the damn thing up?

I think in terms of priorities we have to look again at marketing over actual service delivery. It cannot all be gloss. There needs to be something to back it up.

Amendment 29 is something that has been a situation that we have revisited many times over around the provision of dementia care in this city. People with good memories may recall around a year ago I stood up in Council and gave an anecdotal story about a woman who was on a fork-mashable diet and she was trying to be fed toast when her daughter visited her. She had bed sores, she was malnourished and she was dehydrated - in private care provision in this city. This is not about public over private but if we are going to have a mixed approach to Adult Social Care and looking after the elderly, surely what is provided in the private sector has to be of an equivalent standard of what we could provide and when the Green call-in happened – and for those who spent the entire day there deepest commiserations – when that call-in happened one question that was permanently coming to the top of the agenda is, can we be satisfied as a Council that we are moving people into adequate provision across the piece, and the answer is no.

There is lots of private provision in this city - and I am fortunate to have some in my ward – that is fit for purpose and people can live in dignity in old age, but all too often it falls too far under the bar.

Another anecdotal story, but one of real relevance and it is one that has resonated with me for many months. By pure coincidence a resident in my ward rang me up one day and said, “I would like you to come and visit my mother with me immediately, now, this morning. Drop whatever you are doing. As my ward Councillor I want you to come with me.” That is an offer I simply I cannot refuse. If there is an issue I am there.

By pure coincidence we went to Councillor C Dobson’s ward – and again, no name, no pack drill, no home attached to this anecdote and no names attached. I saw a woman there who was within days of death malnourished, dehydrated, she had not been able to leave her bed for four days solid over a weekend. They were trying to give her a drink of – get this – Coca Cola, because she likes it. She had advanced dementia so I do not know how they had managed to work that out. There were faeces on the toilet door, so clearly nobody had been in to clean that room for many days on end. She was

immediately taken to St James's and she was in there for 28 days where she was brought back up to weight and rehydrated. Another day and that woman would have died. This is how serious this situation is in Leeds.

What we are asking for is no more than £100,000 to do a feasibility study around the prospect of bringing dementia care back into the Council where I believe we can do things as good if not better than the best of the private sector. That does not mean we do not use private sector provision but there has to be a mixed economy around care for the elderly.

The Better Lives Strategy and the idea of people living in their homes for longer is one – we shared a mother who had dementia and died of that condition. We strove to keep her at home as long as humanly possible but the day dawns – and I hope it does not dawn for many of you – where you have to make a decision about future care. That future care has to be of a standard for the person to be safe and secure, fed, dry and secure and for families to be able to take comfort in that. Far too often we are not able to give that guarantee.

I am asking a simple budget amendment for £100,000 – a drop in the ocean in terms of this Council's spending – to revisit this issue as a matter of urgency, and let us see if we can make the numbers stack to bring that vital, vital piece of work back in-house where we think it partly belongs.

Amendment 30, Councillor Field and I often visit, we do the rounds of our sheltered accommodation and we speak to many residents across the piece there. I will pay tribute to the housing staff who do an amazing job looking after people in our sheltered accommodation. Our wardens are second to none and I congratulate them. I think Councillor Carter made a very valid point around the £2 hike in service charge, effectively if you are on a basic pension it wipes it out in one fell swoop. Again, for a modest sum of money I would like the administration to reconsider that decision and leave the current charges as they are for another year.

Much of this money we have actually looked to the Council's Invest to Save Reserve and I like that expression, but actually for us Invest to Save, fine, if we are looking at everything in terms of pounds, shillings and pence but actually I think what has to be an element of Invest to Save is Invest to Get Best Value. Where are we getting value for money? When we talk about care homes I do not think we are getting best value from the private sector in all cases. When we talk about our streets being clean, we have to make sure that the citizens of Leeds get best value so simple amendments, costed, affordable, people driven which we hope will find favour with the Council.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Catherine Dobson.

COUNCILLOR C DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. On behalf of the East Leeds Independents I am happy to second the budget amendment proposed by the Garforth and Swillington Independents. I would like to comment specifically on amendments 28 and 29.

I support the proposal to fund the cessation of charges for bulky waste and inert waste. These charges disproportionately affect lower income households and therefore wards such as mine with a higher number of such households. Imposing charges for bulky waste has already led to an increase in fly tipping. We are told that this is not the case and, sadly, I cannot definitively prove otherwise. Until very recently I was regularly able to access data regarding the number of fly tips in my area. Unfortunately this information is apparently no longer available to me. Frankly, I really do not need to see the official figures. As I walk around my ward I see the evidence at first hand.

We are also told there are no extra costs involved in cleaning up the additional fly tipping. Initially I was sceptical but I now actually believe that this could well be true. The reason is, it simply is not getting cleaned up. I have the utmost respect for the front line staff charged with keeping our neighbourhoods clean. They are stretched to the limit and have no extra resources to deal with the increased workload. They clear what they can, when they can, as best they can. This clearly is not sustainable.

If we only look at pounds and pence, perhaps it is true to say there are no additional costs involved. If you factor in the effect on the quality of life of those living in blighted neighbourhoods and the additional stress on our front line staff, then I do argue that there is indeed a very real human cost.

In relation to amendment number 29, I know that many people in this Chamber are aware that the care and welfare of the elderly, especially those living with dementia, is an issue I am passionate about. I agree with the basic assertion of the Better Life Strategy that older people wish to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. However, realistically there comes a time when for those living with advanced dementia this is no longer an option and they need to have access to good quality residential care.

As a city that is something that we cannot yet guarantee for everyone in every case, and that is unacceptable. This is not an attack on the private sector, but the care provided by the private sector is at best variable. Some facilities undoubtedly provide excellent care; others are very good but too many are still rated as requiring improvement or worse, yet even with this bleak landscape the Labour administration persisted in closing good Council run dementia units. If this is purely and simply down to cost then we are effectively saying that we are happy that some of our elderly receive inadequate care. I for one am not happy with this. Our elderly relatives deserve the very best of care in all cases all the time. It should not be a lottery.

We have demonstrated that Council run care homes offer a good standard of care. We are good at training and retaining staff. The Labour Party nationally is promising to nationalise or renationalise, well, just about everything. It is surely not beyond the capability of this Labour administration to offer care in Council run dementia facilities if there was any real will to do so.

I believe it is now time to think outside the box and look at how we can bring dementia care back in house, and so I support the proposal to fund a feasibility study. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. We have now heard all the amendments and we have some comments. I would like to call Councillor Yeadon, please.

COUNCILLOR YEADON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking in support of Councillor Blake's budget.

Our Environmental Services are essential to make Leeds an attractive and enjoyable place to live and work. Whether it is enjoying a walk in one of our wonderful parks or simply having a bin collected, residents notice and appreciate when these things are run well. I would like to thank the teams working in these areas for their drive and creativity which has allowed us to make significant improvements to the city under the continued strain of a significantly reduced overall budget.

Our parks and green spaces are key to what makes our communities. They contribute towards people's health and wellbeing whilst helping to clean up our air. It is testament to our Parks service that in a recent YEP survey over 80% of residents questioned were overwhelmingly satisfied with our parks and green spaces. This is quite remarkable considering the service has had its budget cut by over 40%, around £7m, since 2010. The fact that we are able to provide such a satisfactory offer to our residents is in no small part due to the enterprising nature of the Parks and Countryside staff itself. The Arium and Lotherton Wildlife World both opened this year and are not only fantastic additions to the city but also help generate the income required to sustain our parks and green spaces.

Along with having well maintained parks, kerbside waste collections are a high priority for residents and I am delighted to announce in this budget we are rolling out free garden waste collections for all feasible properties in the city. (*hear, hear*) The kerbside garden waste we currently collect already contributes to over a quarter of our recycling rate. In contrast to this, if we introduced kerbside glass collections, our recycling rate would be improved by less than one per cent.

However, as I have stated before we share many in this Chamber's ambitions to introduce this service at some point in the future and it is being considered in our current Waste Review.

Whilst we have managed to bear the costs of cuts in some areas through innovation and enterprise, difficult choices have had to be made. In terms of our finances, what we have witnessed taking place at Councils elsewhere cannot be allowed to happen here. I know that many on the Opposition Benches have suggested that we remove the charge introduced for building waste at household waste sites that was included in last year's budget. These charges affect only a small proportion of materials that are brought to our sites. Many Authorities already charge for this waste and some, such as our neighbours in Kirklees, do not accept building waste at all.

While fears about fly tipping may play well on election leaflets, the evidence does not support this, with instances across the city on the decrease. The fact is that our Environmental Services continue to operate within the context of an overall budget that has been reduced by nearly £40m since 2010 due to a Tory austerity agenda. As Councillor Blake has already mentioned, the core funding received from Central Government has been cut by a horrific 77% by 2020. How can we be expected to neither cut services nor raise money in order to deal with this level of financial starvation? It would not only be short-sighted but also irresponsible to dip into our

reserves to fund a long-standing service as some of the Opposition amendments might suggest. Although we have some wonderful trees in our parks and forests, I am reliably informed there is not a single magic money tree among them. (*laughter*)

I have to say, I do admire Councillor Golton's desire to see a solution to dealing with food waste. As Stewart knows, we are exploring the possibilities of food waste collection as part of our Waste Strategy Review, which is currently being undertaken, which is in no way an intervention, Stewart, and you know that.

He does, however, need to check his figures before submitting his amendments. An anaerobic digester would cost nearer to £14m than the £4.5m that he has suggested. What is more it would need more food than we could possibly collect in Leeds to run. I also do not think a plan should come at the expense of millions from the Council reserve and freezing increments for all our hardworking staff. However, we will continue to seek a reliable and sustainable solution.

Finally, I just want to talk about the work that we are doing to tackle air pollution and reduce carbon. I would like to say how pleasing it is to have cross party collaboration on air quality here in Leeds. We should all be proud of the fact that we are the first Authority to consult on our air quality proposals and I would personally like to thank Polly Cook and her team for the tireless work in this area to make sure that the Clean Air Zone is ready to be implemented.

I urge that we must again have a united voice on this issue, making sure that the Government provides us with the adequate funding and avoiding the cost being felt by Leeds residents.

Lord Mayor, I am very proud to be able to say that Leeds is tackling climate change and I am proud to support Councillor Blake's budget for the final time. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Barry Anderson.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Because we are standing up at this time of the day just about everything has been said that needs to be said, but there are some things that do need to be said.

For example, for an administration that says they believe in equality and looking after the poor in society your inert waste tax will hit the poorer disproportionately, so where's your fairness in that one? Just like your attack on bulky waste as well. If you have not seen where the fly tipping is I invite you to come up to my ward, to go round, look round the Holtdales and have a look at the mess that is being left around there just now, and every other Councillor could probably take you out as well. I do not know who it is that is telling you it is not there, but they are not being very clever with the truth.

The next amendment that I want to bring to your attention, and hopefully you will support us on it because we genuinely believe that our Neighbourhood Networks are the best there is. They make a vital impact on this city. If we can give them some more money I think it is far better that we spend it.

A bit of a compliment to you – you have proved that you can handle budget reductions. You have come up with innovative ways. Can you honestly say that the Health Service has always used all of their budget correctly? What we are saying is, give the money to the Council and the Council will spend it wisely. That is what we are trying to say around our debate.

Now, one thing that really worried me about this Budget Motion that was put forward today – where was the vision? The vision is lacking in terms of attracting businesses to the city. Yes, you have got a vision on some things but you totally forgot about the important things. We need to get companies into this city that can raise revenue, attracting other business and provide the money that is coming forward in the future in terms of the business rates. If we can prove it is a success, if you can prove it is a success, your chances of getting it from the Government increase greatly.

Now, during your budget speech, Councillor Blake, you did not thank the Government for actually recognising that additional funding has been necessary. Yes, previous years have been terrible, not disputing that, but the Government has put their money where their mouth is this time. They have given you more money. A lot of the pressures that you keep talking about are of your own making – a lot of them are of your own making. You do not seem to want to address some of the problems that you have got because you keep saying well, somebody else can take the hit.

One other thing I would like to talk on, you mentioned PCSOs and law and order. Again, come out to the Outer North West of the city, then you will see what is happening with law and order. Speak to your own MP to the area, Alex Sobel. He will tell you how bad policing is becoming in our area. You are becoming complacent when you talk about it all the time. It is not an effective way of policing. No, I am not going mad, crime is increasing in the North of the city. (*interruption*) What are you doing about it? You are complacent by saying “Oh, the PCSOs are OK.” No, they are not. We have not got enough. You have taken them away from the areas (*interruption*) you have taken them away from our areas and put them into other areas. (*interruption*) You are a disgrace as an administration to looking after this city.

If you genuinely believe in looking after this city you should look after everybody in this city, not a narrow focus. You keep quoting a narrow focus of people all the time.

What I will finally say, as in previous years you are going to reject a lot of our amendments. (*interruption*) As in previous years – and maybe Jonathan Pryor would like to start a book on this one – how long will it be before you start introducing some of our amendments, because year after year after year we come forward with amendments, you pooh-pooh them and then within weeks you are introducing them because we are getting it right for the city and you are getting it wrong. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. First of all, I do think that the Independents – or the Garforth and Swillington Independents – raise a

very good matter as regards dementia homes. It is not that long ago that went through the hoops with the Lib Dems and, yes, Councillor Field as well (even though she was not Independent then) felt that we had to try and do something about the various ones like The Green and all of them that were proposed to close because we know that our Council can provide good care and yet we cannot say that all the private homes do. In fact, the proof is there that all of them do not because it should all be good care, not just passable care – it should all be good. Certainly we support you on that one.

Yes, we have all said something about waste both inert and otherwise. Since it was brought in last year to charge, there is dumping about and the fact is as well that unless it is on Council land, if it is on like for instance old street bin yards which sometimes the Council had, previously yes it was dumped, so it did get taken. Now it is a matter of well, who does the land belong to and if somebody is dumping farther up the street and actually there is a bin yard yonks ago that belonged to them down the street, they are not going to pay for it moving. It has made life more difficult certainly I think for all Councillors, and you might not want to admit it. We do need to go back to really saying look, do not dump, we will collect. It must save money certainly in the long run to do that.

As for inert, like tyres and that, well, we do not want people burning tyres and stuff, so again it is something that we should do, we should not be charging people for that. It is not going to make our city any cleaner by doing so.

Also, collapsed gulleys, yes, it is one we said last year and a lot of Councillors agree with but, yes, nothing happens and yes, if there are more floods it is going to be a problem. They need dealing with.

More litter bins. When we asked for litter bins from South because our ward has been put into South, we were told “Sorry, Councillors, we cannot let you have any, we have not got any left”, so yes, we paid for some ourselves but what are they doing not having any left? When I asked for some litter bins off Parks, Parks said, “Oh, don’t have one there, Councillor, have two” so I do not know what is going on but clearly we need that.

Neighbourhood Improvement Partnerships. We have two in my ward for the Bawn estate and the Heights estates and whilst we appreciate that a lot of money is being spent elsewhere in Leeds where they have more problems, we would like to continue with the work that we are doing because we are improving those areas and that is why we put in an amendment for money to do so.

I hope that you will support us. I know you will not support us with taking away 9% of your basic allowance and you will not support us by taking away 28% Special Responsibility Allowance. You are not going to vote for that, I know that, but we still believe it is right and so we will go on year after year after year saying it. It is never going to get home but we believe that it is right. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blackburn. Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am seconding Councillor Blake's Budget Motion and amendment. What a contrast we have seen this afternoon between Councillor Blake and the Labour administration's budget, which is a clear plan for delivering a compassionate city in the teeth of Tory austerity, and just a load of random nonsense from over there. (*laughter*)

Let us just start with some of the basic facts on this. Councillor Carter is right, the Council's Revenue Budget is £18m more this year than it was last year and people in Leeds are paying £80m a year more Council Tax this year than last year. It has got nothing to do with the derisory and insulting breadcrumbs and bits of funding we get from Central Government that has been handed over to the Council. We have lost £240m because of Lib Dem and Tory cuts and we are having to fill that gap with extra Council Tax rises. It has got nothing to do with the Government; it has got everything to do with hardworking people in Leeds paying for their services. That is at the centre of this budget and the fanciful idea that the Government is showering us with money and lifting austerity is completely and utterly wrong to anybody who looks at the facts.

Also, we will not hear any crocodile tears about pensioners as well. The Government has imposed a level on everybody's Council Tax bill, including pensioners who pay Council Tax, to cover the cost of social care. That is the Tories' way of funding social care at a time when they have cut Corporation Tax for the biggest and richest businesses, they have cut the Bankers' Levy, they have cut the top rate of tax but they are putting money on everybody else's Council Tax bill to cover the cost of social care. (*Applause*) I think people can see where the Conservative Party's priorities lie.

Just to answer another point Councillor Carter made around the Capital Programme and, of course, with Councillor Gruen's and Councillor Grahame's Scrutiny Board we discuss the Capital Programme regularly on a cross-party basis so we do not need any Reference Backs on that, but we did listen to Councillor Carter's words on raising borrowing and the first action this Labour Group will take is voting down all the Tory amendments because the Conservative Group amendments would have led to more borrowing than the Labour Group's budget.

Councillor Carter talks against borrowing, then moves amendments to raise it. What an absolute shambles. If this lot were in charge of the Council we would be going the way of Northamptonshire – bankrupt Tory Councillors, bankrupt Tory Council. That is the way they want to take it. Councillors unable to deliver basic services because their figures are wrong. We have seen it all over.

I now turn to Comrade Golton and his reference to the Preston model. Councillor Blake has been to Brussels but I have also been to Preston to see – I am not sure who won that one, I hear Brussels is not that interesting! I have been to Preston and actually we spend far more on local businesses and far more on local spending than Preston does and I am happy to share – as a percentage of what we spend we do, Stewart. Bearing in mind Preston are a second-tier Council so they do not have a lot of our responsibilities.

Also, again, I am happy to help Councillor Golton out around some of the things he was talking about. We have got four extra care schemes ready to go to tender fairly soon, another three schemes to come after that and in the next ten years or so we will be

playing a part in delivering half of the extra care in Leeds. I call that a mixed economy, I call that Labour delivering on our priorities in this city.

Also I would just like to say a few words because it is always again – you know it must be when the Conservative Group are thinking what do they talk about other than £240m a year cuts to Leeds Council budget imposed by your Government. We always get the old favourites out we have heard about and we always get the trade unions. Let us bear in mind, the trade union facility time is not about paying trade union staff, which should be paid out there. It is our staff's legal right to be represented... (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: At the Council taxpayers' expense.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: ...and within the Council and the co-operation we have had from the trade unions to be able to do everything we have done without any compulsory redundancies, any industrial action – I am sorry, Stewart, do you want to tell me about the industrial action when the Lib Dems tried to deal with industrial relations here? Is that what you are shouting about down there? We have done it here, we have delivered that and that is about a working relationship with the trade unions.

Isn't this just the Tory vision for Leeds? At the heart of the Tories' budget amendment is taking money out of our lowest staff. Contrast it to a Labour administration paying the National Living Wage Foundation. That is at the heart of it all – the Tories want to balance the budget on the backs of our lowest paid staff, removing their pay, removing their rights and running the economy down in this city.

I support Councillor Blake's budget. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Oh dear! There is a lot of common ground on this side of the Chamber, particularly on the environmental issues and we do welcome the Conservative Group's change of heart and their adoption of many of our policies on this. However, there is one amendment we will not support with the Tory Group and that is the amendment to move Housing Advisory Panel Funding to Community Committees. That money comes specifically from rents and service charges of Council tenants. It is a dividend for Council tenants to spend in their estates, in their wards and put value back in the estates. I know the Conservative wards do not have as many Council estates.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: I do.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: We will not support proposals to take away tenants' control of those funds. (*Applause*)

Although, like the Conservatives, we are proposing a Council-owned housing company, unless there is a change on some of the wording on that we will not be supporting the Conservative amendment as it restricts the housing company to a rent-to-buy model. We feel that we must move away from this obsession with house ownership

as the only route to a long-term accommodation and look at other models, including long lease rental. Hundreds of Local Authorities are now adopting this or proposing wholly or part-owned housing companies to meet their housing needs. A perfect example of this came up at a Plans Panel I was on only this month and there was a proposal from a developer to build flats and houses on a brown field site but because of viability issues and his need to get a 17% profit, he could not offer any affordable housing, no green space contribution, nothing, no planning gain. Councillor Peter Gruen was on the panel and he made the suggestion that we as a Council should be looking to buy that sort of land and we could then build affordable houses ourselves, and a wholly owned housing company would give us that flexibility to do just that. We would not be looking for the 17% profit, we could fund borrowing through long lease rental income but with this administration, if it is not invented here they do not want to know.

Coming to the administration's budget proposals, this budget from the administration has really nothing to say to the people of Leeds and that is why Councillor Blake spent such a short time in over an hour talking actually about the budget and more about the national picture.

This administration has no new ideas and will not listen to those who have. It will not learn from other Local Authorities, it will not listen to Members on these Benches. It barely listens to its own Members and we see what happen to them – they come over here or they decide not to stand in the next election because they are just not listened to.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: You are welcome to them.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Even the Conservative Group, which understands the importance of listening, do not think that this conversion of theirs to our environmental policies is because they have suddenly become the green wing of the Tory Party. No, they are sensibly listening to what people are saying to them, so while residents of Leeds overwhelmingly express a wish to have kerbside glass recycling, Leeds resolutely remains the only major Authority not to have it. Whilst this administration not only allows the trade unions in the Refuse Collection Service to prevent the implementation of productivity improvements that would saves Leeds citizens over £1m, it also subsidises those unions to the tune of half a million pounds and then has the gall to charge Leeds residents over £200,000 to bring the bricks and plasterboard and other remnants of their do-it-yourself jobs to the recycling centres. Whilst our residents desperately need more houses, more affordable homes, social housing, this administration ignores the means of doing that and puts in a Core Strategy and Site Allocation plan that calls for ridiculous numbers of houses that only can be delivered by huge amounts of green belt land being taken up, giving opportunities to the large national house builders to build on their terms.

Whether it is with the unions, the corporate world, the big sports clubs or national house builders, Labour in Leeds really is for the few, not the many. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am sorely disappointed I was not able to be in the Chamber to listen to the start of Councillor

Blake's speech. However, thanks to modern technology I was able to listen on the train and as I got off. Normally when I get off the train in Leeds I walk up Park Row with a skip in my step, so delighted am I to be back in my home city. Not quite today. I had got my earphones in listening to the podcast.

What did I hear? It was depressing. It was miserable. It was downbeat. What did we hear? What did we hear – you say “No” – listen to it back, my God it was. What did we hear? It was all the Government’s fault. It was the bankers’ fault. It is the capitalist system’s fault.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Yes.

COUNCILLOR: Well said!

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Aren’t they pathetic! It is everybody else’s fault...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: No, only the Government’s.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: ...it is nothing to do with Labour, nothing to do with new Communist Labour here in Leeds. (*interruption*) You will all be growing beards next! Councillor Blake was there cosying up to Corbyn only a matter of days ago. Do you remember – oh yes, she is nodding, yes, yes, because that is what you have all got to do now. “Oh yes, Mr Corbyn, yes, yes, yes, anything you say, Mr Corbyn. Momentum? Anything you say. Of course, yes, yes.”

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: It didn’t work for you, John! John, it didn’t work for you cosying up to Ryan Stephenson, did it?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: My Lord Mayor, what are the Labour Group in Leeds? They are deficit deniers. Deficit deniers, Lord Mayor. Deficit deniers.

“The central argument over the future economic strategy was no closer to being resolved. Gordon was resisting any talk of new cuts in spending to reduce the deficit and debt but there was also politics involved and in the inevitable impression that we were simply in denial about the scale of the financial hole we found ourselves in. He created the impression that we would simply keep on spending and borrowing, taking on debt, a burden that would take an eternity to pay off and would create a tax bill for generations to come.”

Generations to come, Lord Mayor. Who said that? The man who was there on Day One of the Labour Government and on the last day as well – the last day as well – someone who was in the know. He could see it, you people cannot see it. You were responsible for the hole we find ourselves in as a country. Your people were the Party who brought this country (*banging on the desk*) almost to its knees. It is a disgrace. (*interruption*) It is a disgrace, Lord Mayor, it is a disgrace. It is time to own up, time to own up. It was your Government, Blair and Brown, who spent all the money, your Chief Secretary to the Treasury who left the disgraceful saying “There is no money left”, Lord Mayor. An absolute disgrace.

COUNCILLOR J MCKENNA: Watch your blood pressure!

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: It is time to wake up, smell the coffee and take responsibility, Lord Mayor.

(Standing ovation)

COUNCILLOR J MCKENNA: Good God, John, we are going to miss you mate!

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, following that partial standing ovation, if you would all like to quieten down a little bit, I would like to call on Councillor Blake to sum up, please. *(cheering)*

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Oh my word, I was only in Brussels for a few hours on Monday – look what it has done to John! *(laughter)* John, I have to say, we are all from that performance really sad that you are not going to be with us after May.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That's what you think.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: You may know something about your position that you have not yet told me. Honestly, to go back to give us a history lesson like that in the new era. Peter who? Let us move on.

I do a little sweepstake of my own at Budget Councils, this is the third one I have done, and I get someone to take a tally of all the references – and I cannot say they are polite references – that Carter makes to me personally in his speech, and isn't this a tactic that they use when they know they are losing the argument that they make it personal. We are sick of this. This is what we are all standing up against. This is about coming to the Chamber and arguing about the things that we believe in passionately, putting forward our agenda, not descending to the sort of personal abuse that quite frankly we are getting tired of, and thank goodness we have got more women in this Council and the culture has changed *(applause)* and your Group needs to change with it, if I might say so.

There is a glimmer of light. Three years ago it was 17 references; last year it was 16 and this year it was 12, so maybe we are seeing a very slow movement to recognise that that style of politics is gone, it is over, we do not want it in this Chamber, we do not want it in this city. We want people to be able to stand up and argue what they believe in without being personally attacked in the way that you just choose to do.

Just picking up on some of the points that you made, Andrew, actually. If we could just look at the issue about Changing Places. I am sitting next to Councillor Yeadon. Councillor Yeadon is probably one of the national champions of Changing Places and in her private work before she came on the Council and since she came on the Council, has done a huge amount for the reputation of Changing Places facilities in this city. *(Applause)*

Do you know what, of course there is more to do and we really want to listen to people when they have got ideas, and particularly in facilities where we can get additional funding to come in. We are open for that change.

Also the warden charges, we are already looking at this, we are addressing it, we are moving on. (*interruption*) It is an anomaly, but the Education part of what Councillor Carter mentioned is quite fascinating. You know, all out elections are very interesting, aren't they, and Calverley is an interesting seat for many of us. I would just ask you when you are organising the meetings in schools and you put across a certain point of view that you actually check the facts and check the timelines of the number of times the Local Authority tried to talk to the Governors, tried to intervene and tried to move things forward. I am delighted that there is a new Head in there who is already making a difference but, you know, it is incumbent on all of us to look at how we can improve relationships.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: That is not true. That is not correct.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: The other issue that you raised is the FFI, Funding for Inclusion. The change in FFI was moved by schools at the Schools Forum and only the Chair, the Farsley Farfield Head, voted to keep it as it was. Let us just make sure that we get things right.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: You have just said something that is completely incorrect.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: The LCAN situation, I am very pleased to tell you, yes, it did cause a lot of email exchanges, a lot of attention but they agreed at the first meeting to double the rent that they pay on their room hire. They recognise that they have to move forward but the really important thing is that they want to work with us to make sure that they can drive in the revenue into the Carriageworks, they recognise what an incredible facility it is, that it is only in Leeds that we have such a facility and they want to work with us to keep it going.

Stewart, it feels to me that you are getting in touch with your feminine side, I have to say! (*laughter*) You have sort of been beaten to it a little bit with Alice Bacon. There is already a group of people, led by Rachel Reeves, looking into how we can commemorate Alice Bacon in this city, a really important woman in the history of Leeds. The Leeds University of Art is looking at how they can bring an installation in that will really reflect the work that she did.

I hope you will agree with that. I think that would be a more appropriate way of commemorating her phenomenal achievements rather than naming a glass fronted building after her, but there you go.

It is interesting the debate about inert waste, because as Councillor Yeadon I think said, it actually came up at last year's budget. It is not in this year's budget and not a single one of you from any of your Groups voted against it, so let us just remember that when we are involved in these discussions.

Period poverty, a really important issue. Councillor Heselwood is already on it. She is already having conversations with the manufacturers who are talking about doing a pilot study, so we can save you some money just like that. We are looking forward to what they are going to bring in.

Barry, again, I do not know what is happening over here. Which bit did you not hear about how shocking it is that this Government is absolutely decimating police numbers and it is being felt in every single part of this Council...

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: You are not holding the Police Commissioner to account, that is the point.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: ...and I recognise what you are saying but what I cannot believe is that the Lord – and I do not know his surname – stood up in the House of Lords and said he did not understand how Community Police Officers contributed to the safety of our communities with reference to some of the hate crimes that we have seen recently. I ask you, really? Are they so out of touch down there that they do not understand the contribution that PCSOs make to our communities? We suffered a bit of a down in our numbers and boy did we notice a difference. They are the eyes and ears of our community.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: Give us them back then.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I can remember the outrage from the other side when there was a suggestion they thought that we were going to cut the funding to PCSOs.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: But you were.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Do you remember that? I have to say that some people have got short memories.

Just to re-emphasise what James Lewis actually said. In doing this, can I actually ask us all to acknowledge the incredible work that James has done on the budget and looking at the finances of this city over the last year. (*Applause*) It is one of the toughest jobs that we have at the moment and I am delighted that it is in such safe hands. You know, all we have to say when we look at the amendments coming in from the Opposition is, please, you, all of you, remember the bin strike where you did not work with the trade unions and what happened in this city, and the absolutely extraordinary work that the trade unions do. We estimate for every pound that we spend on trade union facilities time saves between two and five pounds re the costs of dismissal and exit rates. This is investment in our workforce, it is an investment in our services and it is so depressing year on year that you come to this Council and attack our trade unions and you attack the workforce of this Council who have been on some of the lowest pay in the city.

I am delighted that we have addressed the issue of pay for the lowest workers in this city and I think we can be rightly proud that we can go out and work with the businesses around the city to make sure that we can say to them “Look, the Council has done it, you can do it too.” We cannot continue with a situation where so many people in this city are living on poverty wages, not being able to feed and clothe their children

and pay the rent and heat their homes. This is the absolute scandal of the society that we live in today.

I am just looking at some of the other amendments. Councillor Dobson, if I can just say, we are really ambitious for the future of care in this city. I am sorry that you do not recognise what we are doing but I would urge you to look at the work that we are doing around care that we have responsibility for in terms of extra care, in terms of home care, in terms of working on independence, dignity, all of those works, and recognise that Local Authority care homes cannot have nursing staff within them. Isn't this what we need to be addressing, that we work with the NHS and make sure that we get that quality care for those people who most desperately need it, who are in advanced stages of dementia.

One thing that never really got an airing is that when people need nursing care, they have to leave our facilities. There is a huge debate to have and do not ever suggest in this Council that Members on this side do not care about the quality of care that our older people get. I am delighted to say that the care quality in our homes is going up from 50% to 60 % in one year and that is a direct result of the approach we have taken, the money we have invested to make sure that we get the inspections regimes going in so that we can push up the quality of care and have the confidence to make sure that anyone in this city who does not deliver our quality of care will not be operating any more. That is our commitment to this city.

Lord Mayor, I am delighted to move this budget amendment this year. It has been an extraordinarily difficult year and it is not going to get any easier, but we have brought in incredible innovation, we are looking at different ways that we do our services and we do put the needs of our people first. I ask you all to keep that commitment, to keep that strength and whatever they try and say, do not ever let them keep us quiet on things that we care passionately about. We have to be out there, we have to be arguing for our corner and we have to make sure that we get the resources we need to deliver for our people in our city and with that I move the Budget speech.
Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.4 I call for recorded votes on all amendments and the Budget Motion.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I hope you are all sitting comfortably. We have got 30 amendments and then the substantive votes, which I understand is something of a record.

We are going to take it very cautiously, we are going to take it one step at a time and we are going to get through it as quickly as we can.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thanks, Lord Mayor.

(Recorded votes were held on Amendments 1 to 30)

Amendment 1

91 Members were present, 59 voted for, 32 abstentions, 0 voted against.
The Amendment was CARRIED.

Amendment 2

91 Members were present, 30 voted for, 5 abstentions, 56 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 3

91 Members were present, 35 voted for, 2 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 4

91 Members were present, 32 voted for, 2 abstentions, 57 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 5

91 Members were present, 35 voted for, 2 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 6

91 Members were present, 22 voted for, 15 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 7

91 Members were present, 26 voted for, 6 abstentions, 59 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 8

91 Members were present, 31 voted for, 4 abstentions, 56 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 9

91 Members were present, 24 voted for, 1 abstention, 66 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 10

91 Members were present, 30 voted for, 5 abstentions, 56 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 11

91 Members were present, 32 voted for, 2 abstentions, 57 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 12

91 Members were present, 18 voted for, 15 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 13

91 Members were present, 28 voted for, 9 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 14

91 Members were present, 22 voted for, 11 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 15

91 Members were present, 18 voted for, 16 abstentions, 57 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 16

91 Members were present, 37 voted for, 1 abstention, 53 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 17

91 Members were present, 28 voted for, 9 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 18

91 Members were present, 10 voted for, 23 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 19

91 Members were present, 10 voted for, 23 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 20

91 Members were present, 11 voted for, 21 abstentions, 59 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 21

91 Members were present, 8 voted for, 23 abstentions, 60 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 22

91 Members were present, 31 voted for, 2 abstentions, 58 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 23

91 Members were present, 17 voted for, 2 abstentions, 72 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 24

91 Members were present, 36 voted for, 1 abstention, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 25

91 Members were present, 35 voted for, 2 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 26

91 Members were present, 11 voted for, 26 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 27

91 Members were present, 35 voted for, 1 abstention, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 28

91 Members were present, 37 voted for, 0 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 29

91 Members were present, 37 voted for, 0 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

Amendment 30

91 Members were present, 37 voted for, 0 abstentions, 54 voted against.
The Amendment was LOST.

(A recorded vote was held on the substantive motion)

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I just ask for clarification, we actually now only have 79 people present. There seems to be an *en bloc* reluctance to push any button whatsoever. Can I just check that that is actually what you want to do? Thank you very much. I did have to check because we do not want any technical malfunction to get the vote wrong.

Budget Motion

79 Members were present, 54 voted for, 21 abstentions, 2 voted against.
The Motion was CARRIED. *(Applause)*

ITEM 8 - MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: Now, calm down, we have still got one item to dispose of. We have run out of time to hear comments on Item 8, the Minutes, but we do need to properly dispose of the item so in accordance with Rule 4.1 I invite Councillor Jonathan Bentley to formally move his Reference Back and Councillor Campbell to formally second, and Councillor Andrew Carter to formally move his Reference Back, and Councillor Robinson to formally second. Councillor Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Happy to be disposed of, Lord Mayor. *(laughter)* I formally move the first Reference Back.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Can I formally second and request a recorded vote, please.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: I move in the terms of the Motion, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Robinson

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: I formally second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. We have had a request from Councillor Campbell for a recorded vote. Is that seconded? Thank you.

I would now like to call for the vote on the amendment, the Reference Back in the name of Councillor Bentley.

*(A recorded vote was held on the Reference Back
in the name of Councillor Jonathan Bentley)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Present 91, for 18, abstentions 19, against 54. That is LOST.

We now move on to Councillor Carter's.

*(A recorded vote was held on the Reference Back
in the name of Councillor Andrew Carter)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Here we go. We have 91 people present, for 36, abstentions 1, against 54, so that is LOST.

That now brings us to the end of this meeting. Please sit down. We have done so well and now I have made a mistake. We do have to call for a vote to receive the Minutes, or the motion as amended. We have to do that, I do apologise. One more vote, people. We will do a show of hands. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

I was saying, a long meeting, thank you so much for your patience and for your contributions. Thank you.

(The meeting closed at 5.05pm)