

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

**EXTRAORDINARY
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Held on

Wednesday, 7th September 2011

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(COUNCILLOR REV A TAYLOR)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF
LEEDS CITY COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7th SEPTEMBER 2011

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon. Can I remind people about mobile telephones and if they are switched on, could they please make sure that they are turned off.

There are no announcements, so can I move on to Item 1, the Declarations of Interests.

ITEM 1 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: The list of written declarations submitted by members is on display in the ante-room, on deposit in public galleries and has been circulated to each member's place in the Chamber.

Are there any further individual declarations or corrections to those notified on the list?

COUNCILLOR TOWNSLEY: Lord Mayor, can I declare a personal interest in that I am a member of Equity.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can members show that they have read the list, they have agreed to its contents insofar as they relate to their own interests? Can I have a show of hands, please? (*Show of hands*) Thank you.

ITEM 2 – MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we therefore move on to Item 2 and can I call upon Councillor Keith Wakefield, please?

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

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor, I second.

(a) Executive Board

(i) Development and the Economy/Development and Regeneration

THE CHAIRMAN: Councillor Wilkinson, please.

COUNCILLOR WILKINSON: I have never been on my feet as quick as this! To speak on Minute 218, page 170. A few weeks ago on my way into Council I tuned into Radio Leeds just as Councillor Wakefield was being introduced. After listening to him for a few minutes I thought he would have made a perfect replacement on Radio 2 for Terry Wogan.

One of the callers was a gentleman who congratulated the Council on the efficient way in which the refuse collection service is performing. The caller did not say in which area in Leeds he lived but he is most certainly not living in Wetherby, Boston Spa or Clifford.

COUNCILLOR: I think it was Garforth.

COUNCILLOR WILKINSON: I have been thinking that these leafy rural areas are being singled out for bad service but on speaking with colleagues this is not the case. They too have experienced collection failures on a regular basis.

I had an email on Monday of last week from a frustrated resident who has experienced non-collections on a regular basis, telling me that half his street is on one collection round whilst the other is on a different one. On the face of it, this does not make sense. In any event, he has not had a regular collection of his green or black bins since the new rounds became operational, which is almost a year ago.

Another email from a Wetherby resident, whose brown bin is regularly missed, has resorted to putting his garden waste into his black bin. This is certainly not what the Green Party members of the Coalition want to hear.

I must admit there has been a reduction in complaints received by me since Councillor Dobson took the helm, but the service is far from perfect. When can my residents expect their bins to be emptied on a regular basis? Yes, vehicles do break down and crews do not turn up for work but, come on, we can do better than this. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Robinson.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on page 20, Minute 22 on the future of the burial service in Leeds.

As many on the Executive Board and on the Council will be aware, we have been reviewing the burial procedures that we use in this city and the sites and one of the sites is on a boundary with my ward and the Crossgates and Whinmoor ward for Whinmoor Grange.

There has been a long consultation taking place over the summer and the final consultation event will take place this evening in the village of Scholes, organised by ward members – 6.30 at the Manor House if any Councillors wish to attend, or members of the public. I know Councillor Dobson will be there.

I would just like to raise a few concerns in the Chamber today as well for the Executive Board to note when this comes back to them. This consultation has gone a long time and a lot of people have given their views and it has gone back and forth, and I would like to thank, first of all, the officers for their time because they have put a lot of work into this. One of the areas they have put so much work into is finding some of the old records. I was amazed, quite frankly, how long this has gone on and how far back it has gone - long before I was on this Council and long before many members I imagine were on this Council.

One such letter that came forward from all the documents was a letter from Councillor Peter Gruen and this was about the proposed burials at Whinmoor Grange and it was before the boundaries were changed and the wards were changed – this was back in December 1999.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Years ago.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: One of the residents was asking about living on Morwick Terrace and they said that Morwick Terrace would overlook this site and if there would be any compensation that would be brought forward.

I have tried to get an answer out of officers about this because the same concerns have been raised with me and I hope that Councillor Gruen, since he has already raised it once, will be able to find some answers for the people of Morwick Terrace as well because the value and view of their property is going to be starkly affected by having a cemetery built on the back of them.

Also, another letter that came forward was to do with officers saying about the A64 York Road. It is being insisted upon by certain officers that they do not believe that there are any highways concerns. We have been adamant as Harewood ward members that the A64 on that junction is inadequate and needs reviewing. It certainly needs reviewing in the light of the planning appeals that have recently gone against the City of Leeds.

What I would hope is that the Executive Board will look at this again and make it clear to officers that something needs to be done. The junction from Scholes, the junction with Thorner Lane is completely inadequate for having funeral cortèges coming out of there. It is completely inadequate for the current traffic levels.

The final point I would like to make is that, as one resident rang me about this earlier this week and has spoken with me about the cemetery site and about funerals being there and he said that for Leeds City Council, if you are handed an orange you should make orange juice and actually we should see this as an opportunity as opposed to something which would end up being a blight on the community. He suggested – and I must be honest, I never thought about it before – about planting trees in the area in keeping with the rural setting as a memento there as opposed to headstones. I am sure yourselves, like I have read in the papers recently across other Local Authorities, have seen about the defacing that has gone on. We know what has happened in Harehills about the lack of upkeep that has happened with these sites and maybe this might provide a new alternative that will be in keeping with the rural area, would encourage the green environments to be maintained around there and would hopefully not encourage vandalism or any sort of antisocial behaviour like that on the site.

I hope that these, as well as the other concerns of residents, will be considered by the Executive Board when it comes forward later this year. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. On the revised numbers, page 2, Minute 217, and page 20, Minute 22.

The first one relates to the issue of taxis at Leeds Bradford airport. I think, Lord Mayor, we have all, over the summer, experienced the disaster in public relations, if that is the right word, that the airport has undertaken by introducing car parking charges and certainly within my ward, and I think it is probably leaking over into Horsforth and Guiseley at the moment, there is a big issue in relation to people parking on the streets because it is too expensive just to drop into the airport to pick somebody up or drop them down.

This is compounded, I think, by the closed shop, for all intents and purposes, that the airport runs currently with regard to taxis/private hire. I do think that we ought to expedite the proposal to provide a Hackney carriage rank at the airport because I feel that, given the circumstances that we are facing at the moment, a number of people are being disadvantaged – certainly the ability for individuals to choose as to which method they wish to approach the airport in is limited and I do think that there are a number of concerns in relation to the business plan, if that is the right word, of the airport, which pushes people towards their preferred carrier.

Lord Mayor, I hope that the Executive Board and through them the various planning committees would expedite matters in relation to this particular item.

I think, Lord Mayor, again, over the summer it has been touched on at some length – and that is the minute concerning Grimes Dyke and the series of planning appeals that, unfortunately, the Council lost over the spring and summer, particularly in relation to housing developments, and I do feel that the Secretary of State, who must be a friend to somebody but I do not think he is a friend to Leeds at the moment, has done us down a little bit on this particular issue. I do think that the citizens of Leeds are being disadvantaged by his complete failure at the moment, having gone through a process where you actually say, “I am mindful to get rid of the Regional Spatial Housing Targets” and then proceed to do absolutely nothing about it. Having given this Local Authority – and all other Local Authorities within the country – an indication that they need no longer take note of these, and I think there is really a classic example because this was one that was called in and dealt with theoretically by him, that was an opportunity for him to actually put into practice what he has been telling us over the last few months and, in fact, he bottled out, if that is the right word, and caved in, I think, to the strong house building lobby which is pressurising, as we all know, for more development within the greenfields in particular, and probably on to green belt if they can get there.

It would be less of a problem, I think, if I felt that the housing developers were actually going to build houses, but they are not doing that. House building is now at an all time low and I do think that the policy that the Council had, which was, I think, to direct housing development as a way of regenerating former industrial sites was, a very positive one and has worked very well in Leeds. I do think that the Secretary of State and his civil servants should bear that in mind and hopefully – hopefully – come up with some more sensible proposals in the autumn about what a reasonable target for housing development within Leeds is. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Downes.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on page 3, minute 220, about NGT.

I would like to welcome the best and final offer as it was put forward for the NGT. Throughout there has been cross-party agreement on this with the major parties within Leeds. I hope that this bid will be successful and one day we will be able to see a rapid transport solution for Leeds.

One thing I would like to say, though, is that recently we saw in the media about a transport fund being set up for West Yorkshire. This transport fund is not new. It was started in Manchester several years ago and when I was Deputy Chair of Metro, along with Councillor Greaves, we were looking at the possibility of setting up one then. We spoke to the then Leaders, predominantly Labour Leaders, across West Yorkshire, who all dismissed the idea of starting the funding up several years ago. I cannot help but think that, had they have had the foresight to have done so then, we would have been well down the line now with our transport funding so that, should the bid fail or should we have required more money for the bid, we would have been able to prudentially borrow against that transport fund so we would not have been so reliant on national money to solve a local problem, bearing in mind the current financial situation we are in.

Another thing with the report in the papers, it says that there should be a lobbying campaign with the wider community. It has been some time since that Executive Board report and I have seen very little evidence of such a lobbying campaign to try and ensure

that Leeds gets its NGT. I know that there has been a campaign for High Speed Rail 2, which is also very much needed, but we really need to be continuing to press and to shout from the rooftops about this project.

The final comment I would make is that, Heaven forbid, if we do not get NGT, what are the plans for Plan C for any local funding to get a project started? There does not seem to be any idea on that.

With that whilst I repeat, Lord Mayor, I welcome the application of the bid and the fact that the Council is supporting it financially, but I think more could be done and should be done to try and ensure its success or, if not its success, what we do to resolve not just the transport problems and congestions within Leeds but also the wider economic impact that is caused by the lack of a rapid transport system here in Leeds. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Pryke.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This is on the new numbering pages 4, item 221, the Interim Affordable Housing Policy. I acknowledge the remarks made by other Councillors in the earlier session on this.

I am a relatively new member of Plans Panels. I am on Plans East but I have had the privilege to attend Plans West and Plans Central meetings at a substitute already this year, and I am struck by the general lack of knowledge of the detail of our affordable housing policy amongst colleagues in this room.

The Interim Affordable Housing Policy, I will remind people, has been produced because the officers and the Executive Board decided that the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document – the SPD – which was not imminent, it has got to be produced to tie in with the core strategy – originally was anticipated in spring of 2010 and the timetable has slipped, so it was thought necessary to have an Interim Affordable Housing Policy.

The history of affordable housing policies in Leeds and the percentages of new housing that we would require to be affordable – and “affordable” itself is a debatable definition of the type of housing that is put up and is supposed to be affordable, it begs the question of who can actually afford the affordable rent and a lot of people in Leeds cannot.

We go back to 2003 when we first had an informal policy. The Affordable Housing Policy was then in the Informal Housing Policy and there was a supplementary planning guidance issued in 2003, augmented in 2005 and revised in 2010.

The previous Regional Spatial Strategy advocated that Leeds should have 30% - 40% affordable housing throughout the city but in Leeds we have actually had the SPD policy at varying rates between 25% and 15% - 25% in the outer areas, outer suburbs and inner suburbs, and 15% in the inner areas and the city centre.

In 2008 we changed those rates with an informal policy to 30% in the outer areas, 30% in outer suburbs and inner suburbs, and 15% in inner areas and the city centre. We have not achieved those rates throughout that period.

The new policy, which has been adopted by the Executive Board, sets a new rate of 35% for the outer areas, 15% for the outer suburbs and the inner suburbs and only 5% for the inner areas and the city centre. As Councillors who watch the proportion of affordable

housing that is actually being built around the city, most will acknowledge that we are not achieving those rates either.

I really want to question why we have policies which we cannot implement. They are unachievable as set out at the moment and it is not just the current market situation. Indeed, in drawing up the Interim Affordable Housing Policy there was only a four week public consultation period and there were only 28 representations, mainly from developers.

Members who have been to any of the discussion in Scrutiny and elsewhere, the public meetings about the SHLAA or the current inquiry into the housing growth possibilities in Leeds will know that there are many, many individuals, Parish Councillors from outer areas particularly but many individuals around the city who are deeply concerned about housing policy in Leeds.

It might be par for the course but our consultation for this interim policy was to stick something on the website and put out a press release. That might be par for the course for consultation in procedures in Leeds, and we know from previous Scrutiny reports and complaints in this Chamber that our consultation procedures are rubbish, that I would ask to do a little bit better next time in producing a proper policy next year. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Chastney.

COUNCILLOR CHASTNEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I tentatively welcome the news that we read in the changed Minutes, which is now page 19, minute 19, the positive news, I hope, that an Options Appraisal is going to be carried out regarding the future of the West Park Centre.

I say “tentatively” not because I am a natural cynic but because I think there are still quite a few outstanding concerns and questions still to be answered, given the lack of detail that we can actually find in this minute.

Can I therefore respectfully raise a few queries with the Exec Board members accordingly in the hope he can fill in a few of the gaps on this issue?

Firstly, why has it taken so long to get going and how long is this going to take? The Deputation was a good few months ago, I think it was April actually, and I think it is fair to say the issue of the West Park Centre has actually been raised by local Councillors well before then and that is local Councillors both from Weetwood and from Kirkstall ward as well – I see Lucinda nodding.

Having said that, I think the recent delays are now getting quite frustrating and a little bit concerning, not just to us members here but also to residents and the centre users. It is a little bit disappointing that there does not actually seem to be a date set for the official start date of this appraisal or, indeed, its completion. Can I therefore urge that the clear timeframes, which are pretty important, are set for this appraisal and that we push ahead with fulfilling those as quickly as possible.

The second question, what is the appraisal actually going to entail. So far we have not got any detail of who is going to be involved, how or, as mentioned, when. As I am sure you are aware – and I think the Deputation made quite clear – we have got quite a lot of groups, individuals, who are anxious to get their concerns and interests put across on this issue. I do not think I need to tell you how important it is to make sure that they are all included in this.

Could the Exec member perhaps clarify how this consultation is going to go ahead and how the discussion is actually going to be conducted?

Lastly, what options are actually going to be considered, or appraised, if you will? I accept and I support the notion that we need to be open-minded and that consultation needs to be had before a decision is made. Having said that, you cannot discuss or seek an opinion on a completely blank sheet. There needs to be some indication of the options and the possibilities that we are actually seeking preferences on, so could Richard perhaps update us on what the different options are that are actually going to be put out for discussion and consultation and if those various options on that list are not complete yet, when we might be able to see those.

As I say in concluding, I do really want to be positive that an options appraisal is being talked about but I hope the Exec Member will accept that residents, members and users will remain a little bit anxious until we get all this necessary information about the how, the what, the when this is all going to happen.

I do note with interest, actually, just a couple of hours before coming in here ward members seem to have got an invite to a meeting which I suspect is to discuss some of these issues, from the indication. However, it is not quite clear why it has taken so long for that to happen or, indeed, the outcome of what that meeting will be so I am hoping to take the opportunity today just to put across to Richard who might be able to fill in some of these questions and update us, because I think any information you can give us either today or in the very near future would be appreciated by anyone who has got an interest in the future of the West Park Centre. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on the Grimes Dyke appeal minute as well. My colleague, Councillor Campbell, has already outlined the issues. I was just wanting to report back that I had actually managed to express the Council's frustration to Eric Pickles as Minister and asked him for our money back. Unfortunately all I could get out of Mr Pickles was an apology, but no money.

It is quite a comical episode but in terms of the £1m that this Council has spent on legal fees, it is not so comical when we are discussing front line services that the administration is having to look at and make savings.

I did suggest at an Executive Board a while back now that the Council did join with other Councils that might be faced with a similar position to more ably state our case collectively from the Minister, and I was wondering if we could have an update on if there has been any progress made on that. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ann Blackburn, please.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on page 3, minute 219 about energy saving measures for street lighting.

First of all, can I say that I am pleased in here it mentions about the importance of ward members' views being sought at the outset and I think that is of premier importance in this case, because whilst, of course, being a Green Councillor, I am all in favour of saving energy, I have to bear in mind the matter of safety as well and the fact that, of course, people have jobs these days that are not necessarily nine to five and so they can be coming home in the early hours of the morning, they can be walking obviously on pavements on

their way home, so if you decide we are going to switch a lamp off, then it could be a matter that you are opening the doors to robbers, thieves and Lord knows what.

I have got to be sensible about this. Some places, I believe, have totally switched the lights off in certain areas and if we go down that route we will have to be, as I said, just very careful.

I like the idea of dimming lights, particularly where you have motorways or whatever. If you dimmed them you could maybe save money that way. I am all in favour of it but you have just got to be very careful how you do it because I would not want us to be in a situation where we have people coming home during the night from work and maybe being attacked because the lighting was not there or was not satisfactory.

As I said, I do look forward to it going to ward members and I do look forward to seeing what the outcome is. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor R Lewis, please.

COUNCILLOR S HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, can we have some volume, please, because we cannot hear anything round hear.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: You will hear me, don't worry.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I just pass that message on to all concerned but can I also say as well that if you were not chattering amongst yourselves the way you have been and not paying attention to the debate, that might be better. *(Applause)* Councillor Richard Lewis, please. *(interruption)* It is true. Would you mind sitting down? Councillor Richard Lewis, please.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is rather strange dealing with these Minutes so long after they have actually been through because you kind of forger what it was all about three months ago, because some of these Minutes really do go back. It really does remind you how some things perhaps have not progressed as you would have wanted them to.

I will try and go through them in the order they came to me. Councillor Wilkinson, I am not sure how I end up with bins but I have to say that my colleague, Councillor Dobson, is the action man on bins. *(Applause)* I find it quite frightening that I am sitting at home late at night tapping in "A bin collection has not arrived", nine o'clock, "No bin collection on Roker Lane, Pudsey". A minute later the response comes, "Sent from my HTPC, Councillor Dobson, I will deal with this." I do not think you need to have any fears about progress with bin collection.

Whinmoor Grange, again not really me but a paper will be coming back fairly soon on the subject and obviously my colleagues are listening to what has been said on that.

I will not deal with the issue of Leeds Bradford airport, Councillor Wakefield will deal with that in his summing up because he has had some meetings over the summer both with the airport and others, as have some officers, that I was not party to so I do not know absolutely all the detail and he can give you the nuances on that.

The comment that the Government and Eric Pickles have let us down a little bit on Grimes Dyke must be the understatement of the year, but we are where we are with Mr Pickles and we are where we are with planning law and the National Planning Policy Framework, which will be very interesting over the next few months because clearly people

like Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, National Trust and all sorts of people are saying, "Hey, what are these people doing? What is happening to our protection?" Where I would be absolutely in favour of high speed rail going through the leafy parts of Berkshire and the like, and that creates a fair can of backwash from the Tory shires, I do not think it is anything like the backwash you are going to get from the policy framework you are talking about. It is going to be a big issue and somebody was telling me that George Osborne is saying that he and Eric Pickles are very determined at the same time as they are kicking off a consultation. Well, either you are determined to do something or you are wanting to consult people and I think they need to make up their minds which they are doing and I think that will be interesting.

We have actually, since the Grimes Dyke decision, taken the paper to Exec Board. We are trying to engage with the developers and there have been some quite useful meetings over the past few months to try and engage on that idea of a housing prospectus for the city. Someone was making mention – Ralph, I think – of getting not just the developers involved in consultation. Certainly at a couple of those meetings we were able to get those kind of Parish Councillors and representatives who normally do not come into meetings to actually come in and do it not in the kind of boring, structured way that we often have consultation, which is that you just ask for a piece of paper to come back in, but sitting round the table and getting a mix of views, which I think I certainly found quite refreshing because the ideas that were coming out from the community were not anti-development but were about how you mitigated that and how you made it responsible to communities.

NGT. Again, it is only a few months away and we will have a final decision. I think all we really want is a final decision. We do not want to be hanging around yet again for a third best and final bid. We want to know clearly where we are with the proposals, whether we are getting a "Yes" or a "No" and let us act accordingly.

On the idea of a transport fund, I think while I understand what Rik is saying about having the foresight to have a transport fund, I think the politics of West Yorkshire are far more difficult in that respect than the politics of Greater Manchester. I think at a time like this it is incredibly difficult to achieve. Even though every politician could sign up to the idea of a transport fund as being the kind of logical way of doing things, the financial pressures we are under still make things very difficult.

Certainly I have been part of those discussions and it has been very good to talk to other West Yorkshire colleagues and to get their take on how we can work together.

Yes, very much on the NGT, we are convinced that we need it. We are in that position at the moment where the downturn means that perhaps the traffic problems that we experienced in previous years are not as bad, but that is only going to be a short term thing. We want to be ready for the upturn again. We want to be ready for the city to be really booming and to have the infrastructure that goes with it.

It is perhaps worth diverting a little bit. We have had the inner ring road closed at weekends, or half closed at weekends, and Stewart was predicting, it was all gloom and doom, wasn't it, Stewart...

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Always is.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: ...for the inner ring road that chaos was going to ensue. Fortunately it did not but I think we have to be very concerned that we are very dependent on one road that goes through the city centre, one road that we have taken a report through today, through Exec Board, another best and final bid for money, because we really made

that investment in that existing infrastructure, let alone the kind of new developments like NGT.

Ralph gave us a history lesson on the affordable housing front. The problem with any policy is, it has to be something that can be delivered. There is no point in us having a policy that says that we will have 50% affordable housing across the city if we are not going to deliver any houses. That is hard for me – I like to have big percentages, I like to have a lot of affordable housing, but it just makes no sense if there is nothing happening.

We have a situation at the moment, regardless of the fact that all the developers are coming in to see us on the back of the Grimes Dyke, that we have not got a huge amount going on.

Councillor Chastney, the West Park Centre, I have to say that was a bit of a slap on the wrist because I do not know where things are at. None of us is perfect, not even the members of the Lib Dem Group!

This came out of a deputation from the users of the West Park Centre. I think we are very keen to engage with them, we are very keen to actually have a proper dialogue with a group of people so we can talk sensibly about a building that is in poor condition, a 60 year old school with a lot of single glazing that will require a huge amount of investment, about how it is best used and how we maximise our usage of it, but really is it best to just use the whole building? I have not got any answers. We have not framed a discussion that will limit where the discussion goes. It is about open talks with the residents and let us see what comes out of it. I am actually convinced from the positive take of the users, that we can have a very constructive dialogue on that.

I think that is probably nearly where we are. Stewart, back to Mr Pickles and I think one of our problems is that most other Authorities do not have similar experiences to us and the case that Andrew raised about the Macclesfield example worked up until, I think, 2007 and not beyond. Yes, we do need to look over the next few months really at who we can ally ourselves with and who is in a similar situation to us so that we can maximise our clout on that.

On Ann's point, all very well made. We all feel the same way about energy saving and street lighting. The devil is in the detail. I do not think it is all going to be smooth sailing all the way. I think there is going to be some very challenging, different ideas that are going to take us away from what we have always expected that every street light is on and as soon as you switch one off people start saying, "Hey, what are you doing?" but, again, one way or another that is a debate, given the scale of the financial crisis that we are facing, one of those debates that you cannot avoid. It is how you have that debate sensibly and in a reasonable way. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

(v) Leisure

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Castle.

COUNCILLOR CASTLE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on page 7, minute 229, the Library Service.

Residents of Scholes and Harewood and ward members were delighted when Scholes Library received a reprieve and my colleagues and I are working with residents at Scholes to increase usage of the library in the village. It was good news also that residents

of Shadwell were to be offered a community asset transfer of their library and ward members and residents believed that a trust would be set up to take over the management of the library building and that only if the project fell flat on its face and statutory obligations regarding the library service were not being met would the mobile library vans move into the village.

As soon as the news came out in Shadwell public meetings were held and people from a variety of different backgrounds stepped forward to say that they would like to help with the project, from giving assistance with the issue of books to surveying the building to find out what work needs doing to it, and to actually carrying out repair work.

Local residents have been coming up with ideas for a variety of different uses of the building in addition to serving as a library. The Parish Council has been doing a lot of research. They are in contact with a community library in Buckinghamshire and they visited a pub near Richmond in North Yorkshire which serves a number of community uses, including that of a library. The residents of Shadwell are keen to take on the challenge of running the village library themselves.

However, ward members and local residents at their recent meeting learned that, contrary to what we believed, there is another hurdle to be jumped and the future of the Shadwell library must come before Executive Board again before the community asset transfer can take place.

At present, Shadwell library is open for several hours at different times of the day on four days a week. Compare this with my home village of Thorner where the mobile library visits once a week in the middle of the day when people like me are at work and cannot access the mobile library.

I am appealing to members of the Exec Board to please give the residents of Shadwell the opportunity to show that they can run their library service. Councillor Yeadon, the older residents of Shadwell look forward to visiting their library, choosing books and meeting their friends. Councillor Blake, I will bet you were an avid reader as a child...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: No, she can't read now! *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR CASTLE: ...and appreciate the value that books have for children and young people. Councillor Gruen, the library is on your doorstep.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: He lives there.

COUNCILLOR CASTLE: You could learn the truth about your former Leader without having to buy Alistair Darling's book.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: He might be one of the volunteers, Ann!

COUNCILLOR CASTLE: As for Councillor Ogilvie, I am hoping that he will show real political leadership by standing up and pledging that his department will do all it can to assist the village of Shadwell in getting the project off the ground. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bill Hyde, please.

COUNCILLOR W HYDE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I refer to page 18, item 16, the closure of the East Leeds Leisure Centre.

By way of clarification of the intent of the previous administration not to close – not to close – the East Leeds Leisure Centre, Lord Mayor, at the last meeting of the Outer East Leeds Area Committee, there was some doubt expressed about the intention – and that is putting it kindly. There were members opposite who expressed more than doubt about what the intentions were of the previous Conservative-Lib Dem administration on this matter and it was alleged that we were intending to close the facility anyway.

In fact, Lord Mayor, this is totally untrue. We are on record as stating that the East Leeds Leisure Centre and the Fearnville Centre would be kept open until such time as a new facility, a new centre, was actually open and running. I just really wanted to make sure that everybody was aware of this position because the views of the local community and, indeed, the view of the former Scrutiny Board for City Development, could not be taken into account because, of course, the centre was closed at the end of March, was it not, and we were looking at this, I think, some time in June.

Just so that the record shows that that was not our intention and had we had the opportunity we would have kept East Leeds Leisure Centre open until such time as it could be replaced. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Pryke.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This is what happens when you take all the time up in the first meeting!

I am also speaking on page 7 of the re-numbered paper, minute 229, Leeds Library and Information Service proposals for the future. We are talking in the past now because the proposals have been implemented.

Richmond Hill, as members probably know, is amongst the most deprived neighbourhoods in the city. It has the highest level of child poverty in the city, yet the library in Richmond Hill has been closed. Formerly the library was open for 17 hours a week and the four computers there were in fairly constant use by local residents, particularly children who attend All Saints Primary School when they came out of school.

The library has been replaced by mobile services and the area now benefits from three hours a week of the children's library, one-and-a-half hours a week for the older people's library and three-and-a-half hours a week for the community libraries – a total of eight hours in total. Young people can access the children's library, obviously, and the community one but not the older people's one, and older people are fairly unlikely to want children's books. The computers in those libraries when they are available – and they were not for the first few weeks' circulation – and when the buses turn up on time, are only available to individuals for 15 minute sessions only and, of course, they are over-subscribed.

If you want to use a computer in one of those mobile libraries you have to book ahead and to book ahead you have to go to a computer in the central library in the city centre. This rather defeats the object and there is no doubt that we have greatly, greatly reduced the service to people who need it most in an inner city area. The Labour administration should collectively hang your heads in shame. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just very quickly running through the comments. Councillor Castle to start with, talking about Scholes library. We were pleased to be able to make the announcement on Scholes that we did. Similarly on Shadwell, we are working with the local community and yourselves to see what we can do in

terms of the community asset transfer of Shadwell Library and that work will be ongoing. I am quite happy to have conversations with Councillor Castle outside of here to discuss that in more detail.

Bill, on East Leeds Sports Centre, I think you have got slight amnesia there because it was not actually in your budget to keep East Leeds Leisure Centre open.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Yes it was.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: No, it was not.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Yes it was.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: With the greatest respect, you are all forgetting, of course, why we have had to make these exceedingly difficult decisions...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Here we go.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: ...is because of the cuts from your Government.
(Applause)

I have to say, Councillor Lyons and Councillor Mitchell have been working hard to make sure that there is youth provision going on from that centre and I thank them for what they are doing.

Finally, Councillor Pryke, on the libraries situation in Richmond Hill. I know that the library service is working with Richmond Hill Community Centre to see if they can put the computers into there so there will be more computer provision for local people. In terms of the mobile provision – and this goes for any ward – any issues that people are having with mobiles I would be grateful if you can raise them with me. There has been some issues and members have sent that information to me and I will see what we can do to sort those issues out. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving on to wind up the business, in view of the time and can I call upon Councillor Wakefield, please.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will try and deal with issues that probably have not been mentioned too much and I think the airport is one that we discussed at last Council and it was clear to me that as members we were totally opposed to the arrangements that have been made with the taxi service there, not just because it is chaotic on the road but it is also inconvenient and it is also expensive.

The latest on that, as a result of Councillor Richard Lewis and myself's discussion with them, what they have offered is a 15 minute stay in the car park for 25 minutes for taxis. I think that falls well short of what members in this Chamber expect from the airport. I think we have some way to go before we get a satisfactory arrangement.

The other component of it was the concern we all have about elderly and disabled people having to travel so far from the drop off into the airport and they have promised to bring back a paper to us to make sure that it is closer to the airport, and we will wait and see and that will be brought back here.

Finally, I think the other part that most of us, given it has got a Leeds Bradford name, are totally appalled with is the £2 tax every time you go in and £2 every time you leave. There is no justification, it is just a money-spinner for the airport and I hope they will reflect

on that. Actually what they are doing is giving all of us a bad name (*hear, hear*) because the people travel from all over the world, Europe, do not come to the company of the airport, Bridgewood, they come to Leeds Bradford and I think it is getting us a very bad reputation as a public service. I think that needs to be addressed because we want the airport to be successful, we want to allow it to grow but we do not want to be ripped off while it is being done by them.

To reassure Councillor Downes about the lack of lobbying on NGT, I think what Richard missed out is other points, obviously there, that it is in the safe hands of our MP, Alec Shelbrooke, who is now a senior member of the Government, he tells me (*laughter*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Who told you that?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He told me that. We can completely relax

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: He told you that? Oh, that explains it!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He was adviser, a senior member of the Government and I think you can relax, Rik, that it is in the safe hands of Alec Shelbrooke.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: You might be relaxed – I am not!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: That is what he keeps telling everyone.

Can we just go back to this planning appeal because I do think this is probably one of the most important issues we face over the next few years. We have all commented about what the RSS did not do and one of the things it did not allow us to do is build where we thought we needed to and build the right types. We all said the quicker that gets abolished the better and, given the rhetoric that Eric Pickles used up to the election about localism and being determined and nothing will happen, I think we have actually been betrayed on a significant issue.

We are in now a worse position than we were under the RSS, which is a pretty remarkable thing to say. I think that is a view shared by all of us here today. We now have a draft policy statement which is one of the things that Richard referred to, which is one of the things that is upsetting the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Trust and many others, because it looks like – it looks like and feels like – there is actually a presumption to build. I know there are contradictory statements in the policy document but it does appear to give developers a charter to build anywhere they like.

I like the rhetoric of we cut bureaucracy from 1,000 pages down to 52 pages as a policy document, but when you sit back and reflect, what you have actually done is give lawyers a charter to be challenging that policy interpretation for the next few years and I think that is wholly regrettable and if this is a policy that is supposed to kick-start the construction industry, which we know is struggling, then I think it is the wrong policy. I really think we are in for some very difficult challenges and in the end, because we will be challenged, as we were, it will actually be slower, lawyers will be piling into court and will get the wrong end of the stick in terms of what we need.

As Richard said, we are trying to talk to developers and I think to repeat what we said, because it really is important, the YEP flagged up this week the issue of only having 1,000 houses built in this city last year. That is the state of the market. You can have any policy you like, Ralph, but in the end that is what the market delivered. What this city urgently needs, as we all know, is affordable homes and we want the ability to persuade

developers to say, “Affordable homes and homes for the elderly are our two top priorities when we are trying to build in the city.” *(Applause)*

I just think, what is it that we have got in the city? I am delighted Scrutiny Board have got hold of the numbers but we are told – and I am sure that Councillor Procter will, some day soon, tell us that we need to prepare and accommodate up to a million people in this city. That is good news but alongside that we have got to have the right type of homes, the right type of jobs, the right type of infrastructure and the right type of schools and other things to go along with that. One of the things we need to do here as we move along in this debate is stick to the issues that we agree on.

We agree that actually landbanking should be included in our overall numbers. That is one thing we said last time. We agree that windfalls should also be a part of that and we agree that, actually, we should prioritise regeneration.

If we stick to that, and we have, when we meet the Minister for Cities, as we have, we need to just really impress upon him the importance of allowing the city to grow but under some degree of democratic control and that is where I think we can actually win over. There is a long way to go in policy debate. I had a word with Councillor Carter, who has also met the Minister and I think he is listening. What we should do is come back here and say we want to grow the city, we want to provide jobs, we want to provide homes but we do not want to leave it open for cherry picking for developers, hence the idea of the prospectus, hence the idea of talking all the time and changing that policy to allow us some democratic control which, frankly, we have not had for years.

I will just say one thing. I think Councillor Ogilvie has summed up on the other issue in terms of the libraries that has been mentioned. I always smile at Councillor Pryke when he moans about the loss of things. I have been listening to him for many years, particularly the last 18 months during the cuts and not once has he ever stood up in this Chamber and actually said these cuts are wrong for this city. *(Applause)*

If you have got a genuine issue, I prefer Councillor Castle’s approach. She is prepared to look at solutions and work with Councillor Ogilvie so we can do community asset transfer, so we can keep facilities open but just sitting and carping is not the answer at all. I think, Councillor Castle, you have the commitment from Councillor Ogilvie and I look forward to the outcome of that.

I move the Minutes, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Just before we move on to Item 3 and the White Paper, it was rather remiss of me earlier on not to welcome members of the public to today’s Extraordinary Meeting, so I do that. Under normal circumstances I would also say you would be very welcome indeed to join us afterwards for a cup of tea but, on occasions like this, because of the shortness of the meeting and in view of the savings that we are all trying to make, there will be no tea today, but you can come back a week today for the next Council meeting and I will then invite you to stay for tea.

ITEM 3 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – TRADE UNION FACILITIES

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we move on to Item 3, please, Councillor Lamb.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think I am probably about to set the record for the longest speech ever given in this place, given that I started delivering it 55 days ago before I was so rudely interrupted by the Labour Chief Whip, so where was I?

There have been quite a few emails flying around this week in response to some advice from the ever helpful Councillor Lobley, which have been quite amusing and, in light of that, I thought I should probably, having considered declaring an interest which I forgot at the start, Lord Mayor, in that I used to be a member of a trade union, so I thought I should put that on record. *(interruption)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: But then he saw the light!

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I particularly enjoyed Councillor Illingworth's comment and I can confirm I am aware that Councillor Lobley can occasionally be wobbly; whether or not he is nobbly I really do not want to go there! *(laughter)*

The one that really got me the most was from Councillor Richard Lewis who was complaining that our Chief Whip was trying to stifle debate. Of course, the reason it is now 55 days since I began this speech and tried to move this paper is because the Labour Chief Whip reneged on the Whips' agreement and prevented the debate from ever happening in the first place.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: That can't be true.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: It is regrettable that we have to be here two months on but here we are and the debate we shall have. *(interruption)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Wait a minute.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: You could have had all this ages ago, you did not have to wait this long.

Lord Mayor, coming to the White Paper, the first thing I want to stress is that, if anyone has actually read the White Paper, we recognise the valuable role that trade unions have to play in this city. This is not an attack on trade unions. The trade unions have got a proud record going back many years of improving the industrial relations of this country and we are not talking about diminishing that in any way or taking any rights away from members of trade unions in this Council.

We also recognise – and it is important as part of this debate – that wired into their DNA of the trade unions is political campaigning and, of course, they try and raise money to pay for that. There is nothing wrong with that, they are perfectly entitled to campaign politically, to make political points and there is no issue with that. The key issue here is, who pays for it and where the money comes from.

One of the things we are not touching, because there is an awful lot here in the proposals, is that we think it is perfectly reasonable and right to give paid time off to union reps. There are 84 trade unions part-time reps in the city paid for by this Authority who are entitled to time off to represent their members. Nothing wrong with that, no problem with that, no issue with it. We feel that should continue and we support that.

The fact remains, as we mentioned many times already this afternoon, the Council faces a huge financial challenge. It has some incredibly difficult choices to make and we are trying to be as constructive as we possibly can be. I remember sitting in this Chamber many times while Councillor Peter Harrand was vilified time after time after time for proposing changes which are timid in comparison to those which Councillor Yeadon is putting forward, and I hope Councillor Yeadon will recognise that certainly in our case we are trying to be as constructive as possible in our ward, both across the city and at a ward level, in trying to help

you to make the savings that you need and to maintain valuable services for people in our communities. This is not about an attack, we are trying to support and help to deal with this mess. There are some incredibly difficult choices that you are having to make as an administration. We understand that. We are not, as Ed Miliband is nationally, opposing every cut that you are making. We are trying to help and support.

This seems to be quite a simple choice. What will be left if this White Paper goes through, we will be more than meeting the statutory requirements for trade unions members in the Council. It is important to note as well that only 50% of Council employees are members of trade unions – 50% are not. They are not entitled to the same level of representation as the other trade unions members are.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: They are.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: No, they are not.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: We do not discriminate.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: We will see about that. In light of the financial challenge, imagine if you gave Nigel Richardson another £417,000 to his really challenging budget this year, what he could do with that. How many more young people in this city could be helped? Imagine if you gave £417,000 to Sandie Keane and her department, how many more older people she could help and support in this city. Imagine if you gave £417,000 to the Charities Transition Fund, to organisations that, as a result of the challenges this Council is facing, genuinely could go out of business and have to stop doing the things they do. If the Council made this change to the funding of trade unions there would be no impact on the services that trade unions are able to supply to their members.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Absolute rubbish.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: You will have your chance in a minute. These are organisations that are not short of money. Just in this week one trade union, UNISON, has vacant adverts available in excess of £1m-worth of salaries across the country – that is just one trade union. Some of the examples, they are employing eight people specifically on a salary of £24,000 each to campaign specifically against cuts across the city. You have employees who are being paid salaries of £54,000 as a legal officer, campaign fund organiser from £24,000 a year – it is just one trade union. They are not short of cash.

In 2009 public bodies in total up and down the country paid out £85m a year to trade unions. The trade unions themselves, a couple of examples, UNISON were able to afford to give £5.9m to the Labour Party to campaign. (*Applause*) Nothing wrong with that. There is nothing wrong with that, Lord Mayor...

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: What about the bankers?

COUNCILLOR LAMB: ...but there is a strong argument that it is the taxpayer who is paying for that money and it is not right. (*interruption*) Given the choices that you have – I assume you will be allowing me a little leeway at the end, Lord Mayor, for all the interruptions.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can members please pay attention to the debate in order that we can address it fully? Carry on, Councillor.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Given the challenge this Council faces where you are taking the choice to cut the budgets of voluntary groups, charities and

things, you are taking the choices to close leisure centres and libraries, crisis centres and care homes, they are your choices.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Your Government choice is to cut.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: You can make some different choices. We pointed it out in our budget and you rejected it. You can save here, you have an opportunity to save £417,000...

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Just grow up.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: ...and it is small change in the light of the financial challenge we face but there are different choices you can make.

Lord Mayor, this Council has a clear choice to make today and Labour members in particular can show us their true colours. What is more important to them – protecting valuable services for the people of Leeds, or retaining their position as the political wing of the trade unions? Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Can I second and reserve my right to speak, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, when I read this White Paper motion in July I immediately smelled a rat and had a feeling carried back 25, 30 or even 40 years to the era of Thatcher and Scargill, Ted Heath and Tony Benn, industrial relations made up of running battles, multiple legal actions and counter actions, wild cat strikes, lock outs and anarchy and great difficulty in getting any of the nation's real work done. That is why I was the first to put my name down to speak against it.

It soon became clear that I was right to have done so when the opening gambit, even before the debate has begun, is to circulate extracts from a solicitor's letter threatening dire consequences to some members merely for speaking on the matter so as to provoke the City Solicitor to seek counsel's advice. We really are in danger of returning to a culture of confrontation for confrontation's sake.

As a survivor of industrial management in Coventry in the 1970s and 1980s when that city was one of the epicentres of unrest, I can remember times when it was necessary to spend far more time dealing with multiple problems created by other people's industrial disputes than in getting on with the job in hand.

Councillor Lamb is a businessman, I believe the proprietor of a hotel or public house. Let me suggest that in scale and character that may be far closer to a wheel stall than it is to a vast organisation like Leeds City Council. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: It is better run than Leeds City Council.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: Whether we like it or not, in enormous organisations we need formality and structure in industrial relations. That will mean having trade union representatives who do their job more or less full-time and who may need offices to work from. Anything less is likely to result in chaos.

If the present arrangements are a problem, why did the previous administration not do something about them?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: We did not need to do.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: All Council expenditure, including subsidies to trade unions direct or indirect, needs to be looked at with a view to making economies but not with the deliberate aim of promoting disharmony or creating work for lawyers.

Whoever runs the City Council for the next few years, there will be reductions in numbers of employees, redundancies, changed working practices and redeployment of staff. If we are to take staff with us and not have endless unrest, we will need properly structured negotiations and the greatest amount of trust and good will.

The suggestion that subsidies given by the City Council to trade unions are ultimately diverted in some way for the benefit of a particular political party is unconvincing. A similar argument was put forward in a letter to the Yorkshire Evening Post a year or two ago in which the correspondent claimed that Councillors behaved improperly when producing and delivering leaflets and newsletters because it was self-evident that they would spend on them only money derived from their members' allowances and time that should have been devoted to doing Council work. Not even the Standards system gave any sign of twitching over that one.

I will not be supporting the motion though I might abstain on the grounds that such an important debate should not be taking place against a stage-managed background of legalistic manoeuvring. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Akhtar.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I would like to speak in relation to the White Paper in the name of Councillor Lamb.

Let me start by reminding members that we are facing a massive turmoil in the public sector as a result of Tory-led Government. Councillor Lamb's Government seems to be determined to use any means possible to destroy public services in this country. Thanks to his Government, thousands of valuable, loyal and hard working employees are using their jobs throughout the country. Everyone in this Chamber knows the vital services the Council provides will certainly be affected as a result of losing many employees.

Here in Leeds we have done absolutely everything we can to avoid compulsory redundancy. That has not been easy. The only reason we have managed to get to this point is that because we work with our trade union partners.

Councillors on Councillor Lamb's side – and I hope not all of them – in this Chamber may wish to know that the Government estimated union reps save the public sector between £167m and £397m every year and they do by resolving, preventing disputes, increasing training, reducing staff turnover, reducing absence. Let me just repeat that incredible figure again, between £167m and £397m a year.

I believe the union representatives offer a valuable service, especially in an organisation like ours which has around 30,000 employees. As in many large private sector firms, the Council convenors help us to fulfil our statutory duty to consult those members. At the moment public sector workers are being attacked by the Tory politicians. In contrast our trade unions representatives are having a constructive and positive impact on the culture of our workplace. The trade unions cannot undue the huge cuts imposed on us by the

Government but in tough times what they can do is work with us to make sure we can change the way we work and retain a skill and confidence in commitment to our workplace.

With less staff and less funding this is essential that we do continue to deliver public services. Our staff are in this Council are the largest asset. It is our staff that delivers our front line services and makes sure our vulnerable residents are protected. If our trade union partners help that workplace become more efficient and more effective, then I believe that it is value for money and they have my full support.

Let me just remind all those members, I am proud to be a trade unionist member and because of this trade union more than 5,000 private hire and Hackney drivers have made the difference to this city and let me just remind Councillor Lamb, Councillor Feldman was a great person to work with when he was Chair for the Licensing and we have those people who obviously were protecting the jobs. Thank you very much and I rest my case.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Groves.

COUNCILLOR GROVES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor and fellow Councillor, I wish to speak in relation to Councillor Lamb's White Paper.

No-one in this room can deny that the public sector is facing an unprecedented challenge. Deep, damaging and front loaded cuts are being imposed on us by Central Government. As a result of those cuts, the way in which the Council provides services will have to change. If we are to protect vulnerable residents, support families and enhance the employability of young people, the reality is that we need to find new, innovative ways to provide public services.

To do that, we need a still, stable and efficient workforce. Our trade union reps are helping us ensure that this is the case. Unlike members on the other side of the Chamber, we recognise that trade unions are hugely important for any big organisation that is undergoing significant change.

Negotiating with trade unions saves time and it saves money. For Councils looking to deliver services with less resources, it makes sense to be as efficient as possible. Working with a small number of trade unions convenors is much more cost-effective and much more productive than dealing with every one of our employees individually, or even dealing with the 300 trade union shop stewards.

What is more, the evidence shows that where employees are confident that their wellbeing is a priority, morale and motivation increases. Working with our union reps gives staff confidence that in the face of change, their employer still values good working conditions. I can assure everyone here that whatever the behaviour of this Tory-led Government, the wellbeing of our staff still remains and will always remain a priority for this Labour administration.

Let me refresh your memories about the scale of the challenge we face. This year alone we are implementing measures to save £90m – that is on top of in-year cuts in 2010 and 2011. Next year we will have to find at the very least over £50m of additional savings. We are also being told to make those savings at a time when demand for Council services is soaring and that demand is for vital services in adult social care and children's services.

This administration is doing all that it can to make sure that we protect our most vulnerable residents, despite the Government cuts.

Councillor Lamb, we value public services, we value our staff and we certainly value our trade union partners because they will be key to ensuring we succeed when it comes to delivering the change we need. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. If this was a proper, serious debate then it would have been very easy for Councillor Lamb to pose me a question, "Are we reviewing the trade union facilities which are in line with the 1992 Act, which is Tory legislation in terms of the budget?" and the answer would have been, "Yes." There are not any sacred cows, there are no taboos, there are no areas where we must look to save money.

He has not done that. There is the bit about what I, again with Councillor Leadley, oppose. What he is trying to do, along with his Chief Whip, Councillor Lobley, is to bully, intimidate and threaten members of this administration so they cannot take place in a proper democratic debate which they are entitled to. That is what they tried to do and I say to Councillor Lobley, can you reveal that full legal advice?

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Yes.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You have got part. Please send the address of where it comes from because some people think this is a cynical ploy to deflect us from the cuts that their Government is imposing. Some people feel that actually what this is about is trying to weaken our relationships with trade unions during one of the most difficult times this Council has ever faced in terms of protecting and transforming public services. That is what people think and, I have to say, I think there must be some evidence for that because it is very cynical. This is not just the Tory Party, this is the Taxpayers Alliance. Anybody knows to try to undermine trade union relationships now, when you are going through this transformation, is extremely dangerous.

If anybody wants the evidence, we have heard from Councillor Akhtar about the role of trade unions nationally. Just look at the paper this morning on social services to see the role that trade unions play. It actually is explaining to front line workers about why we are taking this decision. Just look. You talked about saving £400,000. I can assure you, the trade unions help to save millions of pounds from Employment Tribunals because we have not gone through the right procedure. They do it day in, day out, and without them we would have a queue a mile long about Employment Tribunals. Look at the role that they are doing now in reducing sickness down to below ten days which would be the first time for a very long time this Council is down. That is the positive role they play in saving millions of pounds.

Even Eric Pickles thinks they are massively important and actually I prefer the North Yorkshire Conservative Leadership approach. When Nigel Adams, the MP, tried to play a similar stunt to the one that is being played here, he was told by the Leader and the Deputy Leader of North Yorkshire to get on his bike because he was being inflammatory and unhelpful.

Do you know something about this debate, about you? I would have thought it was a sensible debate until you started putting about donations to the Labour Party. If you want to talk about donations to political parties, let us talk about David Rowland, who was their previous Treasurer, who put £4m over five years as a tax exile into the Tory Party. Let us talk about Lord Ashcroft, Councillor Lobley, who poured millions of pounds into a campaign – another tax exile.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: No he is not.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Let us talk about why the City in the last twelve months has doubled its contributions to the Tory Party from £5.5m to £11m. Let us put everything on the table and talk about why this money comes without any reference except to Labour Party.

I have got to say this. Hopefully this debate will go and we will forget it and nothing will come back, but one thing we cannot be deflected from is working with the trade unions over the biggest change, protecting public service and, above all, protecting public servants who have actually worked for us, some up to 40 years, and deserve the protection, deserve the support from trade unions and we will maintain (*applause*) that pledge to continue to work and we will not be distracted by silly threats or silly blackmail or silly legal threats. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Downes.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Speaking on this White Paper, which I will be supporting.

COUNCILLOR ARMITAGE: You ought to be ashamed.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: I am not ashamed of myself. I do appreciate the work the unions do, it is very valuable and they do play a positive role and I recognise all of that. It is the whole funding aspect.

When we consider that we have just seen the Executive Board today, for example, put on hold the decision to close three elderly homes – Dolphin Manor, Knowle Manor and, in my own ward, Spring Gardens, approximately £400,000 a year would see those centres continue to run, and £417,000 of taxpayers' money...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You will have no trade union representation.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: ...is going to pay for trade union staff.

As I said, it is about funding. My understanding is that every member of a trade union pays a subscription and that subscription should be used to pay for the staff of that trade union. Clear and simple. When people ask me about this in my ward and we say that to them, they understand that. Then they say, "Why is our Council tax being used to pay for these members of staff? Surely it should be paid out of the union subscriptions." Then when you say to them, "Well, the unions actually use that money..."

COUNCILLOR COULSON: Point of order, Lord Mayor. All trade union members do not pay subscriptions.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: OK, well, there are union subscriptions. My apologies if that is – if some of you get freebies, that is fine by me but I think the point is that their staff should be funded by subscriptions and when you say that the subscriptions plus the money from the Council means that they actually make a profit and then they decide to invest that profit back into the Labour Party's campaigns, which is true, let's face that.

COUNCILLOR ARMITAGE: No, get your facts right.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: I think when you then look at it and you think, well, is that right, should Council taxpayers be funding Labour Party campaigns.

Take that one stage further. When the Labour Party get elected and have a majority in the Council as they do now, let us flick back to 2004. They had a majority just before I became a Councillor and there was a bin strike in the offing because the Labour Party were trying to reorganise bin routes. (*interruption*) They were. You were not a Councillor then. They tried to reorganise them; absolutely the right thing to do. Absolutely the right thing to do but the unions at that point threatened to go on strike and so it became the shortest strike ever when the Labour Party capitulated and threw the plans away for bin route reorganisation.

What worries me is that if the Labour Party campaigns are funded by the unions and then the Labour Party has to negotiate with the unions who are their paymasters, we get into a situation where I think there is a prejudicial interest there.

Councillor Lobley was quite right in pointing that out because if you talk to people and you actually present the facts, cold facts, and look at it, I think you would agree that many of your members are being funded by the unions that you are now trying to support. I have nothing against the unions but that money should come from subscriptions, not from Council taxpayers' money and that is why I will be supporting this motion. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Profoundly ignorant, by the way.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter.

COUNCILLOR: Show us your membership!

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just to be very clear, Lord Mayor, my name has not been added as a new speaker, I am speaking in place of Councillor Andrew Carter, who had to leave the meeting, unfortunately.

Lord Mayor, I think many members opposite have not actually read this White Paper, which is unfortunate. Councillor Wakefield spent some considerable time in the last budget saying that we should consider all aspects and all elements.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I have said that.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: This is just one of them – by no means not the largest element but an important element nevertheless.

I too recognise the important part that trade unions play. This will come as a shock to many of my colleagues, no doubt, but I too used to be a member of a trade union. I did not pay the political levy though but I used to be a member of the trade union and, quite coincidentally, my Branch Secretary is actually sat up there in the gallery today and I know he takes considerable credit for me being on these benches – maybe not in this spot, maybe he was hoping I would be in that spot but, nevertheless, I learned some useful lessons of that time and he and his colleagues represented my interests exceptionally well at that time, as do many of the people I also know are in the gallery who represent many of the employees of Leeds City Council. That is not what this White Paper is about. That is not what this White Paper says, actually. It absolutely is not.

It is focusing in on one issue, one issue that does need to be addressed. We all know we have lost a significant number of staff across the board in relation to employees of the Council. I ask the question, have the numbers of employees who spend most if not all of their time on trade union activities reduced? The answer I have received is no and that

simply cannot be right, can it? As we reduce our overall workforce it is only reasonable and sensible that all other corresponding elements of cost reduce as well.

In terms of the Tory Party contributions, I know everyone likes to moan on about Lord Ashcroft, don't they? Of course, he would be committing a criminal offence if he donated money to a political party from an overseas entity. He does not, he did not. I worked with him very closely on the Conservative Board of Finance for the best part of 15 years. He is one of many people who contribute to our Party funds.

In terms of the Labour Party, however, if we were having this debate in a month's time or two months' time, it would be a very different debate because the Localism Bill would have received Royal Assent and those declaring an interest or, more to the point, not declaring a prejudicial interest would be thinking very long and very hard about their declarations, because it would be before the court that you would be answering. Those issues would be laid before a court and not before the Standards Board.

It is interesting, is it not, those who receive money directly to their election campaign and in contravention of the rules of this Council have not declared them on their Members' Interest forms – no doubt that will be a job for tomorrow for all of you – just in case you have forgotten who they are: Councillor Akhtar, of course, you received £104.90 from the GMB towards your election expenses; Councillor Blake, you received two lots of funding, £250 from the GMB and £200 from UNISON, we understand; Councillor Bruce, likewise, you received a sum of money undisclosed; Councillor Congreve, £220 was received; Councillor Patrick Davy, not a sum actually disclosed; Councillor Neil Dawson, £171.75. It is interesting, Tom, you were saying that actually trade unions and their activities did not translate directly into political activity. I am not quite sure that Terry Grayshon would see it that way if he hears that particular figure having been utilised in campaigning against him.

Mark Dobson, £280 received from the GMB – the GMB keeps cropping up a lot; £148 from UNISON, Jack Dunn received; Councillor Pauleen Grahame £250 from the GMC; Councillor Ron Grahame £137.87 from Unite; Councillor Kim Groves, goodness me, look at the contributions there, from the GMC £281.75. It is no surprise that members stand up and speak so passionately in this chamber when they are receiving money from them, Lord Mayor. Frankly it is inappropriate, I hope the press will report it because we will not let it lie, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Transportation to Australia!

COUNCILLOR ARMITAGE: Public flogging!

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Tolpuddle Martyrs!

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call upon Councillor Campbell, please, to exercise his right to speak.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Before I start, Lord Mayor, can I crave your indulgence for a moment and ask a general question of the group opposite, because when I left school, which was some time ago now I admit, my first job I happened to be a member of NUPE and I ask, what happened to NUPE? Can someone tell me what it was subsumed into?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It merged, UNISON.

COUNCILLOR ARMITAGE: UNISON.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: We have got some membership forms.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you. It is always interesting to know what happened in your past, Lord Mayor, and obviously, as I say, it was some considerable time ago when I started work but during the time from then up to the present day I have always been and continue to be a member of a trade union. Lately I have been a member of the National Union of Teachers, as it says on my declaration of interest here. Every year I pay my subscription, at times willingly, at times slightly reluctantly, and over the years I have been, I think for about 20 years I was actually the union representative in the school in which I worked.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Was it the NUTs, Colin? Is it the NUTs, NUT?

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Yes, the NUT.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I was not saying anything about it.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: You have been planning that all afternoon!

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: It is always nice to be heckled by the Leader of Council.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is a slow one.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: It is not as off-putting as seeing that he is now wearing co-ordinated tie and watch, but there we are! *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is red. They are always red.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I have to say, Lord Mayor, that as the union representative I always said to new recruits, be they teachers or be they ancillary staff, I would always advise them to join the trade union because if nothing else it provides you with insurance. I have to say to you that most of them took my advice.

The difference, perhaps, between what we are talking – I was going to use the term “debate”, Lord Mayor, but I think that would be dignifying this discussion because in the end we never get to have a sensible discussion about this sort of thing within Council.

One of the points that I think I need to make is that the trade union of which I am a member, the National Union of Teachers, does have full-time staff. The full-time staff are paid for by the donations, by the union dues of the members. As far as I know, and it may be Keith and perhaps we should declare that Keith in his review of expenditure was actually going to say we will actually pay for a full-time NUT official, which may be something that I am thankful for but I doubt that is going to happen.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Tom Murray did.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I think, Lord Mayor, we need to separate some of the strands. I think Councillor Lobley, who I know is very enthusiastic to ensure that no member of the Council does something inappropriate...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We are going to miss him.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: ...perhaps was a little over enthusiastic with his circulate of advice. I have a suspicion that that may perhaps have been taken the wrong way by certain members and I would like, Lord Mayor, for people perhaps to step back a little bit from that because I do not think what any of our group are saying is that we would

not actually encourage every employee of the Council to be a member of a trade union. In many ways Councillor Groves, it is interesting that she does get a donation. I agree with everything she says...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Vote our way then, Colin.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: ... but we get those services, I get those services provided by full-time staff who I employ and I pay for but within the Council there are a group of employees who get those services paid for out of the Council tax, out of the general pot, and I have to say, Lord Mayor, that for me that does not seem fair.

I know that will never happen, we actually provide the same sort of service to other trade unions and I do not think we are saying that, or in these financial times, difficult financial times, we actually say look, we are more than happy to fulfil our statutory obligations, which is that we give reasonable time for union activities, we are more than happy to do – in fact we probably go an extra mile on that one – but certainly these union representatives should be paid for in the same way that other full-time union reps.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell, can you come to your final point, please.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Certainly Lord Mayor, I will do that. I think, Lord Mayor, that that is the basis we want to have a discussion today, not this rhetoric that is bandied about because actually we are not moving along on that, we are just sitting. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Lamb.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think it would be remiss not to address Councillor Leadley's point first. He is more than welcome to come and visit my whelk still any time he likes and I will be able to show him how well run it is. The fact I have zero staff turnover for the last four years and incredibly low sickness rate, perhaps the Chief Exec might like to come and I will show him how things should be done. *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You work on your own!

COUNCILLOR LAMB: You have to pay though – I know your salary!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Alan, you are a one-man person. No wonder you have got no turnover.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: You have been, you have seen.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I have, and survived.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Some of your members came back! Lord Mayor, it is not very often that someone stands up here and listens to the debate and comes back and listens to the comments. I am actually in a position to say I have changed my mind. Having listened to the points members opposite have made, some of my colleagues might be alarmed. I think we should have gone further. We should have looked at the schools and the ALMOs that we have not as well. There is significant public taxpayer money going to pay for trade union support in this city and I think, I am just going to read it out because I do not think they have read it, Councillor Procter. I admire Councillor Wakefield, he is a great speaker in this place, he has given some fantastic speeches, passionate, but one of his great skills is to completely misrepresent the written word and the spoken word, so let us just set the record straight about what the White Paper actually says. It says:

“This Council understands and recognises the valuable role played by Trades Unions in ensuring effective industrial relations and reaffirms the principle of providing reasonable support to Trades Unions including time off for stewards for this purpose.

However, this Council believes that given the current state of the public finances taxpayer subsidy of full time Trade union officials should now be brought to an end.”

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Brought to an end.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: We are talking about moving who pays for it. The point is, the trade unions can afford themselves to pay for those 15 convenors.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: They do. They do have full-time ones, Alan.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: They can afford to pay their salaries. There is no need for the Council to continue to do it. It does not change any of the relationship. In fact, you would think, given their passion and commitment to public services, the trade unions would be coming forward and saying, “We want to help you out. We have got plenty of money. We have put £20m aside for political campaigning against this Government. We are going to be supportive and actually come and help you out.” A snip in the ocean of that. Instead of filling some of these posts over £1m, just for one trade union, they could be putting some support and delivering better services for the taxpayers of this city.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Do you want to abolish your legislation, Alan?

COUNCILLOR LAMB: One of the things I think – I was not going to bring the whole Government cuts into it but after Councillor Akhtar’s comment it would be remiss of me not to remind us why this country is in the mess it is in. (*interruption*) I know they have been looking forward to it the whole time. I cannot wait. I was on Amazon last night ordering my copy by express delivery of Alistair Darling’s memoirs and I cannot wait to read them. We now know that even the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not think that the Labour Party was fit to lead this country. They had no credible plan to deal with the deficit and while I would accept it was not this Government’s fault that there was a global financial crisis but let us not forget that this deficit did not start in 2008 with the collapse of Lehman Brothers. It started in 2001 when Gordon Brown borrowed and borrowed and borrowed and borrowed and what have we got to show for it? You may say more schools, more hospitals but, of course, that does not come out of the deficit, that comes out of PFI schemes which come from a pot of money, we still have to pay for that and, of course, Gordon Brown did exactly what he criticised the banks for, he hid them off the balancesheet. That is why we got in the mess we are.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Same waffle.

COUNCILLOR ARMITAGE: Stop waffling. Speak to the motion.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Of course, one of the reasons we are facing a crisis again is because countries around the world followed the advice of Ed Balls, the Shadow Chancellor, and thought the answer to a debt crisis was to borrow more money. The countries that followed that advice are in trouble again and as a result we face an even deeper crisis around the world.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Get to the White Paper.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Who was it who brought up the cuts? It was Councillor Akhtar, if I remember.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can members opposite please keep quiet and listen in a reasonable, acceptable way. Thank you. Carry on.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Wakefield touched on the issue of funding of the Conservative Party. I would remind him that Lord Ashcroft's contributions over the last few years amounted to 5% of Conservative Party funding. This year 99% of all Labour Party funds came from two sources – the trade unions and Alistair Campbell. That is a fact. It almost could be a joke, couldn't it, but it is a fact. It is incredible; the idea.

Having dealt with the points that Councillor Akhtar raised in his speech, which had very little to do with trade unions, let us come back to the White Paper and let us come back to what Councillor Wakefield had to say. He said I am trying to bully, threaten and intimidate.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Yes, your Whip.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: What is there in this paper which is bullying, threatening or intimidating?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: It was the email.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is the email that Councillor Lobley...

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Councillor Wakefield, I have not sent an email to anybody. What I am talking about is what is in the White Paper. There is nothing bullying, threatening or intimidating.

The facts are, Councillor Wakefield, as Councillor Downes pointed out, what do the taxpayers, what do the ordinary people of Leeds think about this? Is it fair, is it right that taxpayers are paying for trade unions? The point was made quite rightly that the 8,000 employees of this Council who are members of trade unions pay a subscription to have representation. They get more benefits and rights than the 8,000 employees that do not. Is it right that the taxpayer subsidises that? I say it is not and I think the vast majority of people of the city of Leeds would say that in a time when we face a massive financial crisis, you have got your priorities wrong on this one, the money you have got can be saved. It does not affect the representations, the relationship with the Council one little bit. The trade unions can afford to pay for this themselves.

I noticed how uncomfortable some of Councillor Leadley's comments were behind him when he was making his speech in support of this. I do not think they are all in agreement with him and I think the vast majority of people in this city would agree with this White Paper. It is reasonable, it reaffirms the support and the relationship we want to have with trade unions.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Put it on your manifesto, Alan.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I am quite sure there are a number of officers sat around the back around this place who could make very good use of this money. On the day that you are announcing more cuts to care homes, when you have already announced closures of crisis centres, leisure centres and libraries, the valuable services the people of this city want

and deserve – yes, you have some difficult challenges to make. This one is not difficult at all. You do not affect the relationship of the trade unions at all by doing this.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Do you want management to talk to every employee, Alan?

COUNCILLOR LAMB: They do not need to do that. They can still have a relationship with the trade unions.

The key facts are...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is daft, this argument.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: ...the taxpayers should not be paying for this. This should be funded by the trade unions themselves. They can afford it, they have got plenty of money to do it, there will still be the 15 representatives, there can still be a positive relationship, as there should be and as we want there to be. We want trade union members and other members of Council to benefit from good relationships with the trade unions. The reality is in this time the trade unions should take their fair share.

I make one point to Councillor Wakefield, who is wrong in what he said. He said I had not asked him if he was going to look at this.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Your whole speech has been wrong, not one point.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Your speech was wrong, Keith. It is as wrong as your red watch, to be honest! *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR LYONS: The bin strike was.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: The thing that you said was that we had never asked the question about whether or not you were going to look at this. We asked you in the budget to look at it and you said no. We asked you to look at this in the budget, you said no. You said nothing. You have been silent on it the whole time. There is £417,000 which will be saved to protect the front line services for the people of this city and we now know where the Labour Party stands. They are more interested in themselves and paying for their leaflets than they are in the vital services of the people of this city. I move, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I call for a recorded vote.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: A recorded vote has been called for a seconded. All those in favour, please?

COUNCILLOR DAVY: Before that happens I would just like to clarify a point that Councillor Procter made because I would not like any misunderstanding to be made in this Chamber.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: It is a point of explanation, not a point of order.

COUNCILLOR DAVY: Please bear with me.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is not allowed, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR DAVY: Councillor Procter, you made a comment about myself. It is very rare that I...

THE LORD MAYOR: Wait a minute. Because we do not know what you are saying could you start again, please?

COUNCILLOR DAVY: Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Is it explanation?

COUNCILLOR DAVY: Yes. Councillor Procter made a remark about my declaration of interest and my accepting funds from the union. I think it is only fair that I should make a comment.

THE LORD MAYOR: Because you have not spoken previously in the debate you cannot make, according to regulations, under...

COUNCILLOR DAVY: Lord Mayor, Councillor Procter made an accusation about me so I would like to...

THE LORD MAYOR: The vote has been called for, it has been seconded and now I am going to ask for the vote.

(A recorded vote was taken)

THE LORD MAYOR: There are 91 members present. Those voting "Yes" are 31; those voting "No" are 56; and there are four abstentions. That is LOST.

That concludes today's meeting but before I say goodbye to everyone, can I just remind you of the Lord Mayor's Charity Auction, which is online. There are some rather good items that are up for bidding, so I hope that you will go home and have a look at your computers and make some bids. Thank you very much indeed.

(The meeting closed at 3.54 pm)