

DEPUTATION ONE – WEST PARK RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MR D KEMP: Lord Mayor and Councillors, my name is Douglas Kemp. Can I introduce Ken Tyro, Peter Owen and Neil Craven. We are all representatives of the three Residents' Associations in the area that surround the West Park Centre and it is about the West Park Centre that I wish to speak today.

I would ask the Leader of the Council to approve the appointment of a small committee to work with the Centre to develop and business and action plan to retain and manage the Centre in a way consistent with the needs of the city. I would also ask that he instruct officers to remove the ban on the West Park Centre accepting new tenants.

Many of you will be aware that the Centre in fact is one of the most well-used Council –owned facilities in Leeds with, typically, between 2,000 and 3,000 a week using the centre of a day-time and evening and the weekend. It includes not just residents' associations but the police, various NHS bodies, dance associations, theatre groups and two youth clubs, and of a weekend the Centre is used by the Leeds Reformed Baptist Church with a congregation of over 200. In many respects these are small fry compared to the other main aspect of the Centre's work, and that is in regard to the music and the music tradition of Leeds.

The Centre has almost 40 groups which use the Centre – I say "use" the Centre; rely on the Centre. These include groups such as the Leeds Symphony Orchestra with 85 adult musicians, Leeds Festival Chorus who perform at the Leeds International Concert season with 170 members, West Riding Opera, the Phoenix Concert Bank, the Late Starters Strings with over 60 members, recently the Leeds International Piano Competition held a three day workshop there for children aged between ten and twelve. This was attended by 370 children.

The Centre is also the home of YAMSEN, the Yorkshire Association for Music and Special Educational Needs, which provides fortnightly workshops for adults who are mentally and physically handicapped. That has almost 100 members. There is a Special Needs choir with about 60 members, the One-A- Chord Choir with 80 members, YAMSEN music days which accommodate 80 to 90 children with profound and complex needs which operate five times a year, a wheelchair dance group, accessible music technology club, the City of Leeds Music Ensemble, the City of Leeds Youth Orchestra, with over 80 members, the City of Leeds Youth Wind Band, the City of Leeds Youth Opera, the Leeds Youth Percussion Ensemble, who are performing at the opening ceremony of the European Fencing Championships in July, and many more - many more.

The Council facilities include large rehearsal rooms, a large hall and many offices. These offices have recently been vacated courtesy of the departure of Northern Ballet Theatre and Education Leeds. These would make ideal offices to be rented off on yearly contracts at reasonable commercial rates. The Centre is accessible, there are car parking spaces for over 100 vehicles and secure parking. There are also two large gyms which were released with the departure of the Northern Ballet Theatre.

In the Spring of 2009 the Executive Board asked Council in respect as a matter of priority to consult with users and local community organisations and report back within six months. It is a bit longer than six months since Spring 2009 and nothing has happened. It is important that there is a sensible, realistic appraisal of the future of West Park Centre. It is not just a building that can be left to decline and decay. If it does, it will be a sin, a stain on the musical heritage of Leeds and Yorkshire. Thank you, gentlemen and ladies. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Can I call on Councillor Gruen, please?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, thank you. I move that the matter under discussion be referred to the Executive Board.

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: I second, my Lord Mayor.

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

Can I thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon, gentlemen.