

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday 21st February 2007

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(Councillor M Iqbal)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21st FEBRUARY 2007

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of the Council, members of the public, good afternoon. A special welcome to so many members of the public here in the galleries. You are most welcome. It is nice for you to join us for this special meeting of the Council budget today. Thank you for your attendance.

First of all, as usual, if we can switch off all the electrical devices, unless you want to contribute to the Lord Mayor's charity. We have done well so far.

Can I first of all announce the death of former Councillor Reverend Dr Julian Cummins, who died on 9th February. His funeral will take place on Thursday, tomorrow, 22 February, at 2.30 at the Leeds Parish Church.

Reverend Dr Cummins served on Leeds City Council as a Liberal Democrat member for Horsforth Ward from 1982 to 1990. He did not re-stand in 1990. Following his term as Councillor he was a member of the Board of Yorkshire Forward from its creation to the end of 2002 and was also a member of the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly, representing the churches in both appointments.

Can we all stand for a minute's silence in his tribute. Thank you.

(Silent Tribute)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thanks you, ladies and gentlemen. We have another announcement. Councillor Brett.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Members of Council and members of the public, an event took place last week that stopped this city in its tracks for a time. I am speaking, of course, of the tragic death of Casey Leigh Mullen. I doubt if there is anyone in the Chamber who did not watch the story of her death unfold with increasing horror. As elected representatives of the City of Leeds, I am sure we would all wish to express our deepest sympathies to the family of Casey Leigh, to her friends and to the community in which she was growing up.

When I look at a small child I always think of the promise that is held in that young life – promise for the future and promise for what can be achieved. Sadly, that promise will now never be realised and, as well as a loss to her family and friends, Casey Leigh's death will be a loss to the community at large.

Together with my colleagues and all the Ward Councillors for Gipton and Harehills, I have marvelled at the way in which the community where Casey Leigh lived has found strength from within. Where help has been needed in the form of counselling or just someone to talk to, I am proud to say that we as a Council have been able to provide it, alongside our partners in churches, schools, the police and the health service.

Many agencies and individuals responded in a most heart-warming and compassionate way to the urgency with which this community needed support. As a Council we all owe them a debt of gratitude. I want to assure the people of Gipton and Harehills that a whole Council approach to assisting a community in distress will be there for as long as it is needed. Casey Leigh has touched the hearts and minds of many people who are experiencing mixed emotions of grief, dismay and even

anger. Leeds City Council will do everything in its power to help this community through a difficult time. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Brett.

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17th January 2007

THE LORD MAYOR: We will move on to the Council business now. Item 1 on the agenda, Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the Minutes be received.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?
(AGREED)

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I announce that the Declarations of Interest are 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 declarations?

COUNCILLOR MURRAY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. On Item 9 I would like to declare a prejudicial interest.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Can I declare an interest in the recovery of the airport and Otley Town Council as a member.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, as a Governor at Westbrook Playschool, Governor at Beckett Park School and also a member of the Leeds Bradford Airport Consultative Council.

COUNCILLOR HYDE: Yes, Lord Mayor, as Chairman of the Cross Gates Good Neighbours, because Item 11 is the item in question.

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL: Can I declare an interest as Governor of Cobden Primary and Greenhill Primary Schools, please.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Lord Mayor, forgive me, I forgot – a member of the School Organisation Committee. As I always leave the Chamber when items relating to it come up, that is why I forgot. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR HARRISON: Councillor at Swillington Parish Council.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Personal interest, Lord Mayor, employed by Education Leeds.

COUNCILLOR RENSHAW: Governor at Seven Hills Primary School in Morley, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Personal interest, Lord Mayor, as a member of Morley Town Council, as my two colleagues behind me are but they can make their own declaration if that is necessary.

THE LORD MAYOR: Two colleagues behind, Councillor Judith Elliott and Councillor Grayshon.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Item 9, personal interest, Governor at Danby College.

THE LORD MAYOR: Any further declarations? Bernard will have a long list here, I bet.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I have actually declared them but they have been included on this list, so as far as I know they have been declared and I do not need to repeat them. If I do it would be an unnecessary burden on everybody else.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. You do not have to, Councillor Atha. Any further declarations? Can we have a show of hands to confirm that these are read and the list as amended its contents insofar as they relate to their own interests? Can we have a show of hands, please? (AGREED) Thank you.

ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: There are no additional communications, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

ITEM 4 – DEPUTATIONS

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: There are four deputations to this afternoon's meeting as set down in the Order Paper – Leeds Asperger Adults Group, Stanhope United Community Group, Richmond Hill Bus Action Group and the Access Committee for Leeds are the four who will be appearing before the Council this afternoon.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Mr Rogerson. Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Could I move that all the deputations be received?

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All in favour? Show of hands, please. Any against? Any abstentions? (AGREED) Thank you.

DEPUTATION 1 – LEEDS ASPERGER ADULTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. You can now make your speech, which must not be more than five minutes. Please begin by introducing your deputation. Thank you.

MS MARGARET MARSHALL: Lord Mayor, Members of Council. I am Margaret Marshall, Chairperson of Leeds Asperger Adults Support Group. As part of this Deputation I am supported by Daniel Marshall, Catherine French and Alan Proctor, who are all members of Leeds Asperger Adults. Unfortunately David Foster from People in Action is ill and sends his apologies.

How many of you here today are familiar with the term 'AS', or Asperger Syndrome? Perhaps you are aware that Asperger Syndrome is a form of autism, a disability that affects the way a person communicates and relates to others.

I know there are several of you here today who regularly receive information and newsletters from our support group, but do any of you really understand what Asperger Syndrome is?

First and foremost there are a number of traits of autism that are common to Asperger Syndrome – difficulties with communication, difficulties with social relationships, inflexibility or rigidity of thought. People with Asperger Syndrome are often of average or above average intelligence. Because their disability is less obvious than that of someone with autism, a person with AS is, in a sense, more vulnerable.

As they get older they realise that they are different from other people and they feel isolated and depressed. People with AS often want to be sociable and are distressed by the fact that they find it hard to make friends.

Lack of awareness of these basic facts leads inevitably to lack of understanding, acceptance and support that is so desperately needed by those with Asperger Syndrome, their families and carers.

Current statistics show that nearly one per cent of the population has an autistic spectrum disorder, of which 36% will have AS, yet it is not possible to obtain a diagnosis in Leeds.

Referral for diagnosis is made to a specialist service in Sheffield, but this can take anything up to a year as firstly a referral has to be made by a GP to a local psychiatrist or psychologist before this professional then makes the referral to the specialist team in Sheffield. Of course, this only happens if the GP concerned is in agreement that his or her patient has a need to be assessed as having Asperger Syndrome in the first place.

Once a diagnosis is obtained, after a substantial length of time – and this could be years – it may appear that the individual concerned has finally got an answer to why they feel different to everyone else and why they never seem to fit in the world around them.

Unfortunately this is usually the start of an uneasy period for someone who has received such a diagnosis. Realisation that there is hardly any awareness and practically no support together with the recognition that they are dealing with a life-long condition, inevitably leads to further anxiety and depression. One of the highest rates of suicide is amongst young adults with AS.

Bearing all this in mind it seems incredible that although there will be over 2,500 individuals in Leeds with Asperger Syndrome, support from the statutory services is virtually non-existent.

So how can the Councillors of Leeds help address this situation and support those in need?

Leeds Asperger Adults believes that a local assessment and diagnosis service for adults with autistic spectrum disorders would be of invaluable support to the people of Leeds and would save time and money for all concerned.

There is already a steering group for children with autism in Leeds, made up of representatives from the statutory services in Leeds, and it would make sense to have a steering group for adults with autism and Asperger Syndrome.

Another way to show your support would be to sign the online petition for the Government to recognise that adults with AS are all individuals and, as such, need individual, appropriate support here in Leeds. Details can be found in the latest newsletter of Leeds Asperger Adults, of which several have been brought here today.

Finally, by helping to fund the newsletter of Leeds Asperger Adults there will be regular news and information for everyone in Leeds to access, whether it is needed by social services, GPs, mental health professionals or by adults with Asperger Syndrome themselves, their families and carers. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, could I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hanley.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? Show of hands, please. Any against? Any abstentions? (AGREED) Thank you.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments. Good afternoon. (*Applause*)

DEPUTATION 2 – STANHOPE UNITED COMMUNITY GROUP

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which must not be more than five minutes. Please begin by introducing your deputation. Thank you.

MS LOUISE JOHNSON: It is the Stanhope United Community Centre.

Good afternoon. My name is Louise Johnson and I am speaking on behalf of the Stanhope United Community Group, of which some are in the public gallery. We are here today due to the strong feeling of the Horsforth community regarding the intended closure of the Stanhope Centre and the proposed sale and development of the site and surrounding land. We are also upset and angry about the way this has been done without any prior consultation with the surrounding residents and user groups of the centre.

The first people knew about this was when a 'For Sale' sign went up outside the centre on the 25th January 2007. A meeting was arranged for residents and user groups of the centre on this date. About eight houses received flyers about this meeting with just 24 hours notice. So that as many people could be informed of the meeting, I went personally knocking on household doors to make residents aware of the meeting. I also put notices up in the area.

I myself heard about this in April 2006. I then asked Councillor Andrew Barker about this proposal. I was told it was not true and it was just a rumour. I approached the Evening Post in May 2006 regarding this and they covered the story and they

were also told that no plans had been made. However, we have seen detailed plans dated from February 2006.

At the meeting on 25 January 2007 we were told that the Council want to move all the user groups up to the old library site on Horsforth Town Street. I run a youth club for children as young as eight years old, so to put a youth club on a site which is surrounded by pubs and restaurants is totally out of the question. The library site is what drinkers in Horsforth call the Horsforth Mile; there are eight pubs and bars within approximately 300 yards of the old library. Police were called there just on Wednesday 7th February to deal with aggressive drunks and this is just in the middle of the week. On weekends the amount of drunks and fighting is even worse. Also, if the centre is sold then the other groups, including the Stroke Group, the Link Fellowship, Photograph Club, Parent and Toddler etc, will all cease to exist.

The Stanhope site is surrounded by memorial trees and each one was planted in memory of someone from Horsforth who died in the Great War. There is also a memorial stone. The street was opened by Lady Harewood and the stone uncovered by the Earl of Harewood on Armistice Sunday. The commemoration was covered by the Wharfedale and Airedale Observer on Friday November 13th 1925. The Earl of Harewood was quoted as saying that:

“It now remained for the living to carry out their obligations to the dead, not to do as they wished and to follow out their own selfish desires, but to do their duty to their fellow countrymen and women. The men whom they now mourned had carried us through a successful war; they had turned disaster into victory.”

The plans for the sale of the site include some of these memorial trees which are a huge part of Horsforth history which we all feel strongly about because it is our history, our children’s history and our grandchildren’s, etc.

We are here today to show how much this centre means to us and that we will not let anything happen to a memorial to our dead.

We would also like to know why it was being kept a secret. Horsforth has its own Town Council and even they were not told about this. They are now behind us and so is Paul Trussell, MP.

The sales pack available on the Leeds City Council website clearly states that bats fly close to the site, which I can personally verify. I would not be surprised if the bats were not roosting in the centre roof. Having been in touch with a bat group, it will be around April time before this can be confirmed, as they will be in hibernation until then.

We are also concerned that the expected proceeds of the sale, £235,000 of this, are not going back into youth work but are being used to pay for the new library which was completed last year. We also keep getting told that the centre is not for sale, it is just to test the market, so why is there a ‘For Sale’ sign up and why don’t the developers who are coming to look at the site know this?

We are asking you to stop the sale of this site and to protect the wellbeing of our children, our community, our history and our environment. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, could I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hanley.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Delighted to second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?
(AGREED) Thank you.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments. Good afternoon.
(Applause)

DEPUTATION 3 – RICHMOND HILL BUS ACTION GROUP

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please, you can make your speech for no longer than five minutes. Please begin by introducing your deputation. Thank you.

MS PEARL McARDLE: Lord Mayor, Leeds City Council. This is John Patterson and this is John Hodgson and I am Pearl McArdle and we are representing Richmond Hill Bus Action Group. Thank you.

The Richmond Hill, East End Park and Cross Green area has in recent years suffered from a deteriorating bus service. Our group was founded after a meeting last year attended by 60 local residents angry at the poor bus service.

The area used to be served by two bus companies, First Direct and Black Prince. Since the takeover of Black Prince by First Direct, a whole host of bus services have been cut. In effect First Bus took over Black Prince to close its routes down and eliminate any competition without regard to the local residents in the area. The numbers 61, 62 and 63 services have all been cut in recent years.

The area has a high proportion of older and poorer residents who rely on public transport as their only means of getting about. Buses now run less frequently and those services that do run are not reliable, with people having to wait an hour or more for a bus – if it turns up.

Residents who rely on buses for getting to work have severe problems with buses not coming and making them late for work. It has affected people's ability to get employment. How can people be expected to obtain and keep a job if they cannot get there on time or at all?

First Bus does not seem interested in the area. They have a policy to concentrate services on main arterial routes such as York Road or Hunslet Road, which are difficult or impossible for many of our residents to access. We are told that not even new bus shelters will be provided as the main arterial routes are given priority for the new bus shelters, so we have to wait a long time for a bus and get wet in the process.

First Bus do run a service, the number 37, which runs down York Road to Halton Moor every ten minutes. Why can't some of this number 37 be redirected through Cross Green, Richmond Hill and East End Park before ending up in Halton Moor?

The number 61, which is a short route from the city centre through Richmond Hill, is very unreliable and it seems to be the first route cut if First Bus drivers are in shortage.

I have a letter which I wish to read to you from Richmond Hill Elderly Action about the problems for the older people living in the area:

“As a local charity for older people we would like also to voice our opinions about the local bus service through Pearl McArdle.

Pearl will have given you many of the facts but we would like to add that since the routes around Richmond Hill have changed, we have seen a drop in the number of people who attend our activities purely because they now have no way of getting to the community centre where we are based. We do try and spread our activities across the Richmond Hill, Cross Green and East End Park areas, but again we face the same problems of accessibility.

At our AGM in 2006 we carried out a questionnaire that local residents who attended filled in. One of the questions we asked was, ‘What would prevent you from taking part in community activities?’ and the overwhelming response to this given was the lack of transport.

We meet older people who struggle continuously with getting about and we have heard many times that the local bus service is inaccessible, not frequent enough and indeed sometimes never turns up at all. Of course this is a major problem and makes every day tasks such as shopping, going to the post office, socialising and getting to medical appointments a hard task for the older people.”

We are told by Metro that not very much can be done as First Bus is a private company and outside Sundays all the routes are run for profit. We need buses re-regulated like they do in London so a proper, planned service can be provided to our community and others like it across Leeds.

I ask Council to pressure First Bus and Metro to provide a decent service for the residents of our area. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, could I ask that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Selby.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? Any against? Any abstentions?
(AGREED) Thank you.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments. Good afternoon.
(Applause)

DEPUTATION 4 – ACCESS COMMITTEE FOR LEEDS

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please make your speech, no longer than five minutes, and if you could begin by introducing your deputation. Thank you.

MR TIM McSHARRY: Thank you, Lord Mayor and Councillors. Our deputation today is David Littlewood from the Access Committee for Leeds, Barry Naylor from the National Federation of the Blind and myself, Tim McSharry from the Access Committee for Leeds.

There once was a Yorkshireman named J B Priestly who said, "There was no respect for youth when I was young and now that I am old there is no respect for age. I missed it coming and going."

I wonder just what he would say about the lack of care, respect and dignity that many older people and disabled people in Leeds today are forced to endure as a direct result of the running down and dismantling of social services – services that simply deliver an essential role, simply caring and supporting people, helping to maintain some independence – an unseen, unappreciated job that quite literally has also saved the lives of many people in Leeds, myself included.

This deputation is here today to make a plea on behalf of those older and disabled people in Leeds who are losing essential home-based services and access to resources and respite that is having devastating consequences not just on their own independence but also on the lives of family carers.

There is no room for complacency when the decisions of this Council discriminate and victimise a minority of individuals simply because they have the greatest need as a result of age or disability, and if you are from a black or minority ethnic community this discrimination can be even greater.

There are too many cases to mention that underline the insidious effect of ongoing cuts to social services' budgets. These cases do not point to a caring social approach or a genuine wish to tailor services to meet individual needs. No, they seem more about contracting out excellent public services to agencies that have an ethos ultimately motivated by profit not public services.

Too many suspect decisions are being taken without any meaningful involvement of those affected. The Council must move away from an in-house officer led model that is supported by a costly and time-wasting legal litigation approach to delivering public services, and instead work to establish meaningful partnerships with the many expert groups across Leeds – something that is not just about meeting your duties as a public body but also intrinsic to demonstrating a respect for diversity and individual expertise - true involvement that is clearly missing in many policy decisions.

Fortunately, many older and disabled people have a highly developed sense of humour, which is often needed when trying to make sense of this Council's social services funding policy - a perfect illustration being the supposedly 'brave' decision to close the Breeze in Scarborough, which resulted in holiday respite becoming as rare as hen's teeth.

Yes, the average age of the population is increasing and incidences of disability increase with age, but that should not be the driving force behind policies that hurt and isolate minorities across this city. As this city takes time to celebrate 800 years of its status, surely now is the time to contemplate what success really

means. Is it just about commercial and financial wealth or should it really be about how this city recognises social diversity, its vibrant communities and the needs of all its citizens and how we resource and provide social services that demonstrate exemplar standards of care that respect all life, choice and dignity.

Many older and disabled people across Leeds today are paying a high personal cost as a result of cuts to services and unjustifiable taxes on age and disability. Surely people have the right to grow old without penalty and should not feel victimised because of disability.

Leeds Social Services are fundamental to the future health and social cohesion of this city. Without care there is no community, there is no dignity without respect and there is no equality without inclusion. This Council must call a moratorium on its devastating programme of cutting social services before any more harm is done. Thank you. *(Applause)* *(Standing ovation by Labour Group)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, in referring the matter to Executive Board for consideration, I would invite the members of the Committee to stay around for a few hours to listen to the speeches about the extra investment we are putting into social services.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Hanley.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: No need to say anything else other than seconded. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have a show of hands in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? (AGREED)

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which will be given to your comments. Good afternoon. *(Applause)*

ITEM 5 – BUDGET MOTION

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I do hope the last deputation will stay to hear the budget presentation as there are some things in here I think they will be very pleased to hear.

Can I begin, as is customary, my Lord Mayor, by thanking Alan Gay and his team and, indeed, all the teams in the different departments of the Council for their hard work in bringing together the required budget information. Like so many years in the past, this year it has not been a particularly easy exercise but I would like to reiterate my thanks to all the staff of the Council who have been involved.

I would also like particularly to mention the work done in Treasury Management. In the current year their efforts have enabled us to increase our projected revenue income by several million. This information has been brought to Executive Board on various occasions and I hope all Members of Council have been informed, because it is because of the activities there that we have been able to offset overspends, particularly in the Social Services Department, ensuring that we are able to deliver the right sort of front-line services.

However, this merely goes to underline our continued reliance on far too many one-off contributions towards our revenue expenditure. It is something every member of this Council should be aware of. We need to minimise this fault line that is historic in the Council's budgetary process. It goes back a number of years that we constantly bale ourselves out of difficulties because we are fortunate enough to get some one-off revenue that we did not expect. That will not go on for ever and I shall mention a little later some of the things we are doing to rectify that inherited position.

Once again for reasons which become ever more unfathomable and detached from the reality of life here in Leeds, the settlement that Leeds has received from the Government is less than many other similar authorities. Indeed, I am not alone, I think, in wondering how it is possible for a city with all the complexities of ours to receive a grant from the Government that is less than the average for English rating authorities.

I just ask you to think about some of the Councils around this country who are rating authorities and where they are situated and whether they have the complex needs of a major city like Leeds, and ask yourself how it can be possible that Leeds receives a settlement less than the average for English rating authorities.

Indeed, had this Government funded us at a level comparable with other English authorities, we would have had another £2.2m in grant from the Government which, coincidentally, would be the equivalent of a one per cent decrease in Council Tax and so, whilst we are pleased that we are still amongst one of the authorities that levies the lowest Council Tax in the country, and whilst the increase we are proposing this year means we will have introduced the three lowest consecutive Council Tax increases in a decade, had we been treated equitably by this Government we would have been able to introduce a Council Tax increase that was less, or have increased even more our spending in front-line services.

As Councillor Harris said last year and I said the year previously – and I will repeat again now – we strive to strike the correct balance between continuing to improve front-line public services and minimising Council Tax increases. We know that an increase in Council Tax, however small, hits hardest those on fixed incomes, those who are just above the safety net below which they would be entitled to receive significant extra financial help but above which they receive nothing. It is always those people who are hit the hardest by increases in taxation, increases in fixed costs that they cannot avoid. They are indeed some of the most vulnerable people in our society and I will come back to that a little later.

Given the situation that we are in it is essential, therefore, that we look at efficiencies and the Council continues to achieve significant efficiencies in the way we deliver services.

You will recall that the Government set us targets of 2.5% savings per annum from 2005/06. They presume in all their financial calculations that we have achieved those savings. The fact that they singularly fail to achieve any savings or hit any target of their own seems to completely elude them.

Anyway, the target represents about £50m cumulatively that we are expected to achieve over a three year period. I can tell you that by the end of 2006/07 we project that we already have achieved that one year early and anticipate at least another £18m in 2007/08.

Here are some of the examples of the efficiencies we are budgeting to deliver in 2007/08.

£5.6m of savings has been achieved by reviewing service provision. Inevitably the larger element of this is £2.6m in relation to jobs and skills where we have had to deal with the outcome of losing a contract, the New Deal contract. That contract was effectively privatised by this Government, so when I hear comments over there and from some of the people who I suspect they invite into this Chamber about privatisation of services, like with so many other things I suggest they put their own house in order and look at their own national party which has stated quite clearly they expect these training contracts to be delivered by the private sector rather than by us. That puts on us a huge financial burden.

We have generated additional income for the Council by reviewing fees and charges and looking for new income generation opportunities. That alone comes to £2.75m.

We have improved the cash flow in the Local Authority with additional income of £600,000. We have challenged departmental staffing budgets and the running costs of services very robustly and the budget includes £12.5m-worth of savings for making such efficiencies and we have done that without enforced redundancies.

You should be aware, Members of Council, before Councillor Wakefield speaks, that we have done the staff saving exercises. If we go further that means only one single thing - let everybody in this Authority realise what that one single thing is, and I shall return to that later as well.

We have reduced our spend on overtime and agency staff work in Social Services. We have saved £400,000 after reviewing our procurements policies. We have continued to tackle attendance issues across the Council and I am pleased to be able to tell you that that sickness absence is heading to be half a day less this year than last year, which is an overall reduction of one day since we came into administration – an improvement of 8% in sickness absence levels.

A third of a million has been saved from a review of our telecommunications contract and, as a result of launching our e-recruitment site, we anticipate job advertising savings of a further £300,000.

On the subject of advertising, apart from savings in recruitment costs we have continued to challenge the costs of other advertising and promotions. As I continue my presentation I intend to try and save Councillor Wakefield a little time, because I read with care what he said last year and I would like to inform him that the advertising promotions and expenditure budget that he left us of £4,290,000, has been cut by us in our three years in power by 23% - almost £1m. (*Applause*) Do not lecture us again, Councillor Wakefield, about savings on PR and savings on advertising. We did it, you did not. Do not tell us you will now because nobody will believe you.

Can I now turn to the other area that Councillor Wakefield very belatedly - after 24 years of his party being in control - managed to start talking about last year, and that was consultancy. A few years ago we had a central consultancy budget in this Authority which enabled all of us to see what was being spent. They did not much like that transparency – Bernard – and so they abolished it and spread the consultancy budgets out across the Authority where nobody could find out what was really going on.

There are two things about consultancy. First of all in an Authority like ours with the sort of projects that we are now anticipating, we have not got the in-house provision to give us the right sort of advice. Take, for example, the proposed sale of

Leeds-Bradford Airport. It is inevitable that we will have to have consultancy. However, once you take away the central control, as they did, things can have a habit of growing like Topsy and so from 1 April all revenue spending and consultants will be subject to a separate approval process by the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the joint leaders and appropriate Executive Board members. We are putting back the controls that were in place up to a few years ago and that Councillor Wakefield and his predecessor thought it advisable to cover up so we could not find out what was going on.

Let me conclude on the background to the budget by saying this. We are proud of our achievements over the past three years. We have improved front-line services, we have cut waste and we have kept Council Tax increases to the minimum consistent with the objectives I set out a few moments ago. All that despite the fact that Leeds continues to receive a very poor deal in grant settlements from this Government, a gap that is getting wider and wider. I hear a groan, but I ask them all over here this simple question. The basic amount of formula grant per head of population is £172 that the Government gives. How can it then be that on top of that Manchester receives £550 per head of population, Liverpool £512 per head of population, Birmingham £451 per head of population, Nottingham £402, Sheffield £346, Bristol £275, whilst Leeds receives only £263 per head of population from this Government, meaning that the Government gives a grant to every person in Manchester of £691 and in Liverpool £678 which is £327 and £300 respectively more than it gives to the people of Leeds. It cannot be condoned, it cannot be defended. The list is endless.

We have seven of the most deprived Wards in the country in this city. The system of grant allocation has now reached the stage where it has moved from the unfair to the absolutely iniquitous and what have our MPs done about it? Absolutely nothing. Little wonder that we put so little faith in the seven Parliamentary representatives that represent them.

They came in to see us last year and we gave them all sorts of information about the unfairness of the deal. They were more bothered about defending the Government's method of calculation than of speaking up for the people they represent. The situation is iniquitous.

I want to move on to the details of our budget proposals and then conclude with a few comments about the capital programme, which is the most extensive in the history of this city.

It is essential that the Council's financial position is robust. Under the last administration the Council was being questioned by the Audit Commission for its lack of a reserves policy. We put in place a plan to ensure that our reserves are adequate for an organisation with a gross budget of £2.1b. We will have estimated reserves at 31st March 2007 of £17.3m and reserves budgeted for the forthcoming financial year of £13m.

One of the major problems that we have, however, is that this Government continues to want to fund large parts of our activities through time-limited allocations of money. That leads to raising the expectations of local people. The Government then withdraws the funding and leaves the city to pick up the bill. That makes it doubly important that we have proper levels of reserves to enable us to respond to financial pressures that result from this Government's activities rather than ours.

Now if I may turn to front-line departments. Education. Our young people are the future of this city. They are the people upon whom we, in our older age, will

depend to join in the prosperity of the city and to make it even greater, and also to play their full part in the future development of this city and all its areas.

The Dedicated Schools Grant for Leeds represents an increase of 4.5%, which is unfortunately lower than the 5.8% national average, yet again. We all know that this is because funding follows pupils and our numbers are decreasing faster than the national average. Unfortunately this does not recognise the fixed costs that remain in school buildings.

Regardless of the rises and falls in pupil numbers fixed costs go ever upwards. For example, the average fuel bills for all our schools is 15% higher this year than the year before. There is nothing they can do about it. Why are there not transitional arrangements? It seems we lose out in every possible direction. If our pupil numbers are falling to that degree, surely as with the Rate Support Grant Settlement, there should be floors and ceilings to aid authorities that are having a bigger problem because the numbers of children are falling faster because they still have to cope with these fixed costs, but oh no, when we could really do with the extra assistance, there is none there.

Nevertheless as a Council we are committed to spending more than Government guidelines and we continue to do that in Leeds. As I said to begin with, our children are our future and that is an undeniable fact.

In Neighbourhoods and Housing once again we are funding with an increase for inflation the Area Committees across the city. We are committed to the expansion and improvement of the roles that Area Committees play but all members, I think, need to understand this, that Area Committees in which local Councillors play a leading role in decision-making are not there just to put the icing on the cake. They are there to take rational decisions about additional priority areas that they can identify far better than we can, and we will expect with the additional money, both at capital and revenue level, for them to address those issues. If area management is to be a success and if it is to continue expanding then it has to be cognisant of the Council's strategy but also it has to be cognisant of the real issues in local areas. Quite frankly – and I address this to all of us - including myself with another hat on – that is down to us at area management level.

We made a firm pledge to the people of Leeds back in 2004. Actually – and not quite coincidentally – all three parties in this administration made the same pledge, that crime prevention and community safety would be the top of our agenda. In this coming year we shall be funding an extra 99 PCSOs. That means that every Ward in the city will have in place a minimum of five PCSOs. In some of the inner city Wards it is a great deal more than that. Every member of this Council knows that crime and disorder are still the things that our constituents are most concerned about.

It is not in our power to take some of the steps nationally that many of us believe should be taken. We cannot control the number of regular police officers that are able to be financed by West Yorkshire Police or, indeed, any other police force. We are not in a position to influence Government policy on national law and order issues, but Heaven only knows, all of us have been brought face to face with the reality and the tragedy of crime across this country only this last week. We will continue to do our bit by funding from the Council Taxpayers' pockets – all of our pockets – more PCSOs because they are doing an excellent job.

I know that now we get a commentary on the Leader of the Opposition's alternative budget, I note that he is seeking to make a cut which is in the legal costs of enforcing ASBOs. I think I need to inform him that, in his last full year or their last

full year of power, they issued 64 ASBOs and the legal costs were £585,000. In the year 2005/06 we had reduced the cost to £216,000. Up to the end of October this year – and bear in mind the year runs differently to the financial year, it runs from 1st January to the end of December – in the last calendar year we have figures available only at the moment up until the end of October but we had issued 97 ASBOs and we expect the legal costs to be about the same as last year, about £216,000. So, when he starts to lecture us about ASBOs costing too much legally to implement, will he please tell us why he was not saying that when it cost him twice as much as it is costing us for a third less ASBOs, because that has to be, I think, the litmus test and I do not think he can answer that. You think, Keith, that we have very short memories – we do not.

Antisocial behaviour, serious crime, drug-taking, alcohol abuse are occurring everywhere in our city. It means we need a police presence everywhere in our city. It means we need PCSO presence everywhere in our city and it means we need to implement the full range of mechanisms now at our disposal to bring the culprits to book. It is not just about issuing ASBOs. Actually what we want to see – and we are seeing in terms of youth crime is a fall in youth crime. If we continue to have to dish out ASBOs like confetti, I would suggest to you that means we are not actually tackling the problem.

Let me give this reassurance. We will do everything as a Local Authority to protect our citizens from antisocial behaviour, from crime and disorder. I just wish this Government would do the same. *(Applause)*

Furthermore, we will not play Labour's game of the old post code politics. We will continue to ensure, Councillor Richard Lewis, that there are PCSOs in every part of this city *(Applause)* not, as you indicated not long ago, that you opposed the deployment of PCSOs in certain wards of the city. That will come back to haunt you.

We have also put £150,000 into the Family Intervention Project to intervene and work with those families who, by virtue of their antisocial behaviour, are at risk of homelessness or, indeed, eviction. We are spending £1.34m on LeedsWatch CCTV and the automated number plate recognition system which this city did not have but was so effective in Bradford when they apprehended so quickly the murderers – gentlemen – of a policewoman. Where you are laughing I suggest you stop laughing and just listen.

We are spending £500,000 to improve security, reduce burglary and reduce repeat victimisation. In this city we are tackling crime and the causes of crime.

We have also introduced the new ALMOs which, despite the fact that some members over there might oppose, most others silently, unfortunately, agree will deliver savings which can be ploughed back into bringing our housing stock up to standard.

In Leisure we are continuing to put the environment at the top of our agenda. An extra £50,000 each for allotment security and to improve public rights of way. We are funding Leeds in Bloom and, for the second time in three years, we are uplifting the Libraries book fund, this time by £50,000 over and above the increase for inflation.

For almost 50 years the Labour Group when running this Council never increased the book fund other than by inflation. In the past three years we have increased the book fund by inflation plus £150,000. Libraries sit at the centre of our communities. They are places to meet, they are places to borrow books, they are

places to sit and read, they are places to use computers. They are essential to the future of our communities and they remain at the top of our agenda.

I am also delighted that we have put £60,000 aside for the Leeds 10k run, the Run for All, which is being launched by Jane Tomlinson, a Freeman of this city.

To move on, we are implementing the first strategic review of the Planning Department for 20 years. We have put money into the budget to enable us to meet the increased costs of the strategy – increased costs well worth paying as they will improve the delivery of the planning service to residents and developers alike. We have received an award – and here I must not be churlish – of £15.6m from the Government for the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, with £4.8m of this to be spent next year. I would like to compliment the staff in development who put forward the LEGI bid. It was, as I have just told you, highly successful and it is extremely important. It enables us to target in the west of the city as well as the south and the east of the city employment issues in a way we have not been able to do before and we shall be doing this from the three catalyst centres which members should already know about.

The only caveat I would place on this, however, is that once again it is one-off, time limited money. I think that the LEGI programme will be hugely successful. In three years' time the money will no longer be forthcoming from the Government. I do think that a little less of the gimmickry and more long-term thought about how important actually some of these initiatives might be would not be misplaced in the Government.

We are continuing to improve and update our Urban Traffic Control Centre and we have committed about £185,000 to continue the Leeds City Centre Freebus. In City Services we are increasing expenditure to enable us to continue with the Garden Collection pilot in five areas of the city. It has been highly successful. It has been very well received by residents and indicates our commitment to recycling. We are spending £150,000 to raise public awareness on recycling and we are making sure that the waste collection service is properly equipped to deal with the increased volumes of waste, which is why we are adding a further £129,000 in this area.

Now, if I may turn to Social Services. This year we are increasing the Social Services budget – increasing the Social Services budget – by £10.2m. *(Applause)*

Three years ago we inherited a budget for Social Services that was £185m. This year it will be £229m, an increase of 24% in three years.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Good old Tony!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It just shows, out of the mouths of babes. Good old Tony Blair. In the comparative period of time – and I am glad you have reminded me – I think it was probably Councillor Gruen muttering into what is left of his beard that made the comment – in the comparable space of time the Government have increased the money they have given to us by – how much do you think? How much do you think? About 8%. So, the Government have increased their grants to us of 8% and we have increased our spending by 24% on Social Services, and they say cuts? 24%. Why have we done it? We have done it because we are helping the most vulnerable people in this city. *(Applause)*

I will give you another figure to chew on. This Government in extra grant for all our services this year has given us how much?

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: More than Major did.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Back to out of the mouths of babes again. They really do not listen, do they?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Baby.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Babies this time, yes. I will tell you how much. They have given us £7.7m. That is the extra grant this city is getting for all its services, right? We are putting £10.2m. Where do you think it is coming from? Where do you usually think the money comes from? Just dropping out of the sky? It is coming because we are saving money to invest in front line services. £7.7 is what that lot's Government has given us and we are putting £10.2 into Social Services.

Let me tell you where some of the money is going. Once again Social Services quite rightly, to those people who say Councillor Harrand gets too much given to him, quite rightly Social Services are getting the largest increase in a department in the Authority. £2.1m going to the Partnership for Older People, a project to provide innovative private projects providing care for older people and encourage investment in preventative approaches which promote health, wellbeing and independence for older people. Another £700,000 for aids and adaptations and equipment. Let me tell you, quite honestly, this area is still under-funded. It was chronically and historically under-funded. Don't forget they had 24 years to sort all this out. We will continue to do better in that area. We will continue to regard it as a priority.

£2.4m increase in provision for people with learning difficulties across the age range – again helping those people the most who are least able to share in the prosperity of our city. A £1.6m increase for children's placements to pay our foster carers.

I have to say - I have talked about efficiencies – it is necessary to review charges. The way in which we deliver our services, sometimes we have to look at things like the line of eligibility and let me tell you – and I shall return to this later, I am sure – that 75%, I think, of Local Authorities have the same line of eligibility criteria as we do. Cities like Manchester, Sheffield – all the big cities have exactly the same problems we do. Unlike the opposition, the administrations there do not duck out of the hard choices.

We have to look at charges and there is a particular area of charging that was brought to us by officers. It goes back, I think, 15 years. It was introduced in 1993 to help sustain the independence of older residents in their own homes and over the years the system has widened to provide for customers in other settings. It now sustains and supports customers through The Sanctuary domestic violence scheme, through witness protection work with the police and a variety of dispersed accommodation settings.

It is called the Caring Service. It is a key partner in the city's development of Telecare programmes that aims to reduce inappropriate admissions to hospital and sustain people living independently.

The charges were introduced by the then Labour administration. I actually think it is a highly discriminatory tariff, because they set charges of £1.10 a week if you were a Council tenant, but if you were living in private property with precisely the same need, you paid £2.20 a week. Presumably the all-seeing eye of Labour was able to differentiate in some peculiar way and came to the conclusion that elderly people who lived in their own homes were better off than those who lived in Council

accommodation and their need, if they were vulnerable, was not as great or they had to pay more for it.

I thank Councillor Atha for letting me borrow his prop. *This* is a care ring. I would call it a lifeline, actually, for almost 4,000 people in the city.

We were asked to review the charges and we have. As from 1 April the care ring service will be free to everybody who currently has a care ring. (*Applause*) That, Councillor Wakefield, is what you can deliver when you look at hard decisions, when you realise things have to change, when you save money on things like the Breece that was losing £300,000 a year. This package on the care ring is going to cost over a million quid and I wonder how many years it would take to bet 4,000 people in the Breece? This will be free to current users. People who then meet the need criteria will get the care ring free and, so that it can be more widely used, it will still be available and they will have to pay a moderate charge.

OK, between 3,500 and 4,000 vulnerable people will get this lifesaving device free. You charged them for 14 years and you charged them at the discriminatory rate as twice as much for a person who lived in their own home as you did for someone in Council property. We are back to the word 'iniquitous', ladies and gentlemen, again.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Have you declared an interest in this item, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I was hoping you would. You can have it back now, Bernard, thank you!

We shall also be updating the alarms across the city and we will install new state-of-the-art equipment. As I told you, the emergency services will be free of charge and we are targeting support at those most in need. That is the mark of an administration that seeks to save money to invest in front-line services and help those most in need the most.

I now want to just point out finally that actually that amount of money that those very vulnerable people will be saving is the equivalent of the miserly increase in the state pension that your Chancellor of the Exchequer doled out a few months ago, and that puts it in some sort of context, does it not? Those people – those very vulnerable people – probably on all sorts of medication who are desperate to stay in their own home, be it Council or be it private, have received a boost in their income on one item as great as your Chancellor - who may be your next Leader – gave them for the whole of their state pension.

I want to move very quickly to the capital programme. We have a massive capital programme before us providing much needed projects across the whole of the city. The total through to 2010/11 is £1.3b. Once again we have made it clear in our capital programme the importance we attach to spending money to improve Council facilities everywhere in this city. That is why we are putting more money, another £3, into the Town and District Centre Regeneration Scheme; again the Parks Renaissance programme will receive £750,000 of that, £250,000 for each of three years.

We are already seeing the improvements that that particular programme is generating and I was at a public meeting this week where we were unveiling proposals which were extremely well-received by the people in that particular area.

The City Museum and Discovery Centre will open in the summer of 2008 and will give us our first city museum since the war. Bernard, I was not born until after

the war but I am sure you remember the original museum and can tell us exactly where the bomb dropped that destroyed it. You were in the plane, did you say? Sorry, no!

We are maintaining our commitment to put right the neglect of the past in terms of highways maintenance. Our programme to 2012 is now £60m. Ladies and gentlemen, I address these comments to you. Please never forget that the Leader of the Opposition when questioned as to why his party allowed the neglect of our highways and footpaths to go on so long said, "We had other priorities." So when you all write to your residents and tell them how glad you are they are going to have some more streets resurfaced, make sure you tell them, "He did not want to do them, we have done it." (*Applause*)

The neglect of roads and footpaths goes across every area of this city. Look at where we have been spending the most - Councillor Harper – in road and footpath repairs. Do you know where it is? It is Armley Ward, because this lot – we have three Labour Councillors – ignored it for 24 years. We are having to plough hundreds of thousands of pounds in because – and it is a very important point – this administration believes that a pothole in one place is as dangerous as a pothole in another. It does not matter where it is – if it is in the city it needs sorting out and that is why this administration is doing a much better job than you ever did or, if you ever get the chance, are likely to do again.

The Private Streetworks Programme has been funded for a further three years at £1.3m, again making sure that people who pay the same Council Tax as everybody else for the same sort of property actually get the street made up that they live on. They do not have to drive over boulders and potholes in the 21st century.

Interestingly there is a hidden saving in all these road repairs that Councillor Wakefield did not think were very important. We are actually depressing the amounts of claims and the amounts of money that we as an Authority have to pay out in compensation to the poor devils who had tripped up and broken their ankles in the potholes, so it is a win-win situation.

We shall continue to work with other funding agencies to improve our city centre. Lower and Mid Albion Street refurbishment work will be carried out later this year, thanks to the help of Yorkshire Forward, but let me say that the city centre generates £1.2b of income every year through retail sales - £1.2b. It is the goose that lays the golden egg. We will not see our city centre neglected and we will put right the travesty of Landmark Leeds that is now costing a fortune in all sorts of ways.

In education we are not only spending the capital that the Government have supported us with in building schools for the future as well as pressing ahead with PFI schemes, for which there is a cost, Councillor Wakefield. You might not have worked it out but there is a cost. We shall continue supporting, with our matched funding programmes, the small scale capital programmes in our schools across this city.

In housing we are providing £16.6m to the ALMOs for adaptations and non-decency work.

We are supporting the cultural life of the city by pressing ahead with the refurbishment of the City Varieties and by committing capital to keep Northern Ballet and Phoenix Dance here in the city.

We also intend to make sure we move ahead as speedily as we can with our new PFI scheme for sports centres in Morley and West Leeds.

My Lord Mayor, this is a budget for a city that is moving forward. It is to sustain and create a great city of opportunity for everybody – an opportunity whether you are young and aspiring in school or whether you are elderly and wanting to be able to stay in your own home. It is a city of opportunity and we are leading in providing that opportunity. We are improving front-line services, creating millions of pounds of capital to create better facilities fit for the 21st century.

Perhaps most important – and I go back to the point I made at the very beginning - we are supporting young people to play their full roles in the life of our city. We are supporting business by investing heavily in the infrastructure of our city, and you can see that all around you. We are doing all that despite the worst settlement of any of the core cities and the fact that we have been able, by the efficiencies that we have introduced into the running of the city, to have the three lowest consecutive Council Tax increases in a decade.

My Lord Mayor, I am delighted to move the budget resolution. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Second and reserve the right to speak, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I was hoping that we would give up budgets for Lent but we are not and we are here. Let me first start off by being the first to speak and thanking Alan Gay and his financial team and all the directors and finance officers for helping us prepare our budget amendments.

This year in particular I would also like to record our thanks to the Finance Team for their excellent handling of Treasury Management which, along with other measures, has saved this Council from a financial meltdown that would have led to millions and millions of pounds being cut from vital services to our most vulnerable people or, if it was possible, a further hike of Council Tax of equivalent of 10% to stay where they are. A special thanks to the Finance Team for their very dedicated work. *(Applause)*

It is still a bad budget. I put the blame squarely on the shoulders of this administration, and not officers, for placing this Council in a serious financial crisis. Basically what you are doing, Andrew, is paying for services which you are kidding the people of Leeds you are supporting year on year with one-off savings. It is a political trick – live now, pay later.

They are not my words – they are Councillor Carter's words in 2003. Exactly the kind of things that he has said to us and he has done worse. I remember these words about using Section 278 funds, about using capitalisation and reserves. In 2003 there was a modest amount of one-off funding, but I have to tell Council now the level of one-off funding that this Council is now putting in of non-recurring expenditure is more than £24m in the budget. Consequently, if you have read the last week's Executive Board paper - or the last Executive Board paper – on the budget, you will see that because of this crisis services for the elderly, unemployed and disabled are being targeted for cuts by this administration in order to bring down this dependency of one-off funding. This is without doubt the most serious crisis this Council has ever faced. This is casino politics – waiting for the next jackpot to fund vital services.

We all know that this budget is supposed to be a coalition budget, but for many of us over this side the idea that this budget is somehow a product of an equal partnership between different parties has long belonged to the worlds of Walter Mitty

and Fantasyland. It feels more like a coalition with Stalin and each year one of the leaders disappears from the many glossies this Council publishes and all that is left is one person protecting himself – Councillor Carter.

Indeed, he has even started to get rid of some of his own colleagues. I noticed last week when he was in the YEP about the City Varieties, there was no John Proctor. He had been left to sell sausages outside a Temple Newsome farm rather than comment on one of the most important projects in his portfolio.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: He made a lot of money out of those sausages!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I can see it on you. We all know that David Blackburn disappeared almost in week two of this coalition and there has been no sighting of David at any of the casino bids or other publicity material this Council sends.

We are all used to David disappearing, either to the Executive Board or at Council – in fact whenever there is a discussion on incinerators. However, I have got news to give to the Council. Like Paul, he has had his day out at Damascus and last week – or the last Executive Board – he announced he now has finally decided that he opposes the incinerator. What is more, he wants to work with us to stop it happening. While the spirit of coalition might be rife over there, it has not made it over here yet unless, David, this is a bid for next year. Either way, you can now go back to the Green Party and tell them that this Labour Group have saved your soul.

I say this to you, David, and the Green Party in total and all the Councillors here – if you vote with our amendment then you will be voting against an incinerator. Any other decision is a vote for an incinerator.

As for the radical Liberals – well, what a shower. It seems they are not quite as good as finding holes in this budget as they are in their roads. You know, they still do this publicity material about blaming ‘the Council’. What is amazing is, I know it is not us, I thought it was them and yet they are still talking about ‘the Council’ being to blame for all the bad state of the roads. I have not heard them yet protesting or squeaking all year particularly over massive cuts in their Wards. All they have appeared to do – and this is particularly for Richard Harker – is that they go round claiming the credit for the money the Labour Government has put into schools and yet they remain silent on issues which they are supposed to support like area management or like training, all of which have had an impact on Narrowing the Gap.

It should be no surprise, then, that unemployment in Hyde Park, where you have three Liberal Democrat Councillors, has gone up 17% and in Burmantofts, Richmond Hill and Harehills it is 15%.

It is quite clear to us that this budget is yet another reflection of the Carter dynasty. The longer they are in control the more the other two parties and members of their own group are being squeezed out. What is more, we know which side of the Tory Party this budget comes from and we know who is controlling this administration and so do the public.

I thought it might be different when David Cameron came along. I thought we might get a different Councillor Andrew Carter – not quite washing up talking to the video camera, not quite with a windmill on his roof, but a more softer, friendlier, cuddlier Andrew Carter. Like Les Carter, who has now completely gone soft on crime and has now taken to hugging hoodies in the city. We have not. It is still the same old Andrew Carter trotting out the same old stories, blaming all his woes on 24

years of Labour control. Indeed, at the last Council I thought he was going to blame the Vikings for the state of Upper Briggate! (*Laughter*)

The public, I have to say, are getting pretty fed up of this blame culture, Andrew. Let me read you a letter that I think sums it up. This went to the Evening Post:

“Dear Sir,

My name is Andrew Carter. I am supposed to be involved in running the city of Leeds but I have not the foggiest idea how to do it. I write regularly to the YEP on any and every issue whether they are relevant to Leeds or not and try to blame anything and everything on the Labour Government. For instance, the Prime Minister himself is fully culpable for Leeds United no longer being in the Premiership.”

That is a member of the public and I tell you, it has got to be an extremely perceptive comment.

I would like to remind him of a few things. Yes, there were mistakes in the letting of the contract for Landmark Leeds. Yes, it did cost the taxpayer too much in legal fees, but the pedestrianisation of Briggate which he and his party opposed vehemently, the investment in the city centre, all that proved to be the catalyst for our city's transformation into a modern, dynamic and successful capital of this region. (*Applause*)

We should all be proud that the Millennium Square and the City Square are now recognised as outstanding public spaces enjoyed by all the people in Leeds despite their opposition.

Many of us have been quite aware why Councillor Carter blames us. It is a smokescreen. It is being used – an old-fashioned political trick – to deflect us from the record of his administration – a record of incompetence, carelessness and arrogance.

Let me quickly remind you what they are. Do you remember the ongoing grass cutting fiasco? I hear that the administration was so pleased with the job that they are now reviewing whether to offer them a new one. Do we remember the promises on the golf course and mansion? You would have thought at least the Tories could have arranged a round of golf. We have heard nothing and now vital projects like South Leeds Sports Centre, the museum and City Varieties are massively over-spent – the list goes on.

I will go on. Do you want me to go on, because it gets worse? The standard of our primary education has plummeted. It used to be in the top 50 in the country. It is now 70th. The secondary education of our city is now the second worst for added value in the country. Let us remember this – this is despite all the extra money, £1,200 per pupil since 1997 given to schools. This is despite the record amounts of capital that have been invested – nearly £300m which has built 30 new schools and transformed 187 more schools. Despite all this we are going backwards in relation to our education performance ever since they took over. So their legacy continues.

This year we have witnessed the shameful spectacle of people sleeping in cars because they cannot be housed. We have seen the cutting of employment opportunities for disabled people and we have had to watch as vital contracts for the unemployed have been lost because of neglect and incompetence, but we should not

forget the very man who has been preaching to us about promises never to over-spend on big projects; we should not forget the man who has constantly told us about our record of administration and, after being in charge for not even three years, this man has taken our planning authority to the brink of failure and in this budget you are being forced to find nearly half a million pounds to bale it out – money which could have been spent for providing free care homes for all over 85s or kept open the Breece or safeguarded all the jobs at Roseville.

Let us not forget either what I said earlier about this budget tottering on the brink and being propped up by £24m of one-off money, thanks to this man. That is their record in less than three years. We have seen a tale of missed opportunities, of missed management and, most painful of all, a total lack of ambition for this great city. Compare that, if you will, with our record of 25 years.

The other people – and we heard it today – they like to blame are the Labour Government. Let me first say and let me put on record that this Labour group always wants more share and a fairer share of Government funding for Leeds. I said at Executive Board, we need additional money as recognition that we serve the whole of the Yorkshire region, especially in employment, retail and cultural facilities.

I do not want Leeds to have the same problems and deprivation as Manchester or Liverpool in order to qualify for the additional money, but I do want a fairer share and recognition of the challenges Leeds faces now and in the future.

You know, it sticks in my gullet when I remember the average revenue settlement for the last five years of a Tory Government, which is 1.8%, when inflation had been raging into double figures. Compare that to the last five years of a Labour Government where you had the average percentage settlement for Leeds as being nearer 4%. We should not forget all the additional money we have received on top of the revenue grant, which was totally missed out today by Councillor Carter. Money for Sure Start, for Enabled Renewal Fund, for Safer and Stronger Community Funds and Supporting People – money which amounts in this year alone to over £67m, a 5.4 increase from last year. Nothing was said about that today and that is the total picture.

Now compare all that with the 17 years of the Tory Government. We certainly did not get anywhere near the level of support during the years of the Tory Government and we can apply the same argument to capital. In the last five years of a Tory Government we had £150m in borrowing approval and capital grants - £30m a year to pay for all our schools, parks, sports centres, roads and social services and a pittance on housing allocation.

This put us often in an unacceptable position, having to choose between whether to replace boilers in south Leeds schools because they are always breaking down in winter, or whether to replace windows in schools in east Leeds because they were about to fall out. In housing we were faced with whether to replace roofs or look after people who had no central heating. Let us compare that capital allocation from a Tory Government with that of a Labour Government who, in the last five years, have allocated £1.7b to housing, schools and social services – well over £300m a year. *(Applause)*

This is not all, either. We should not forget the other additional money which has been vital to this Council, particularly – and we heard it today – the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme – which has brought into our Revenue Account £13.3m this year alone, and also the Prudential Borrowing Arrangements which have allowed capital spend to grow so substantially. Both of these schemes were introduced by a Labour Government.

If it is a question of which party people should trust to protect and support our public services, there is no doubt in my mind which has the best record. This is a record of a Labour Government and I am proud of comparing that to a Tory Party which is still committed to £21b cuts in public services. (*Applause*)

Now I want to talk about our amendment that puts people first and makes protecting the vulnerable our priority. Before I explain about our savings, I would like to say a few words about solving the reliance in this budget of one-off funding sources.

We accept that reviews have to take place and we agree that significant savings must be made. We will endorse and support any discussion how to reduce Council bureaucracy and inefficiency, such as moving Council departments out of the costly city centre into cheaper accommodation. I am assured by our excellent Finance Officers that this would produce significant savings in the future. I offer this warning. We will oppose any attempt to make these savings with cuts to front-line services for the elderly, the unemployed and disabled.

I want to concentrate now on the main highlights of our savings. The first major saving is aligned to what has been our consistent opposition to the structure of children's services. It cannot be right that we now have a top-heavy Education Leeds structure of directors along with a very top-heavy structure of children's services. We have more directors than Hollywood and it is costing us a fortune.

Had you listened to our advice and integrated the different departments instead of leaving them separate and scattered, you would have given the Director of Children's Services more power, more responsibility and more coherence and you would have saved £850,000.

Similarly, the Civic Newspaper, which we were regularly promised by Councillor Carter and Councillor Harris would go if it did not break even, has not broken even with advertising and still costs this Council over £100,000. We would scrap it. It seems like they agree with us. In its place we would produce a local newsletters, funded by local advertising, which we feel could be easily done. We should act locally, talk locally and we should go local in our communications.

As usual, we would also cut back the amount of communication staff we employ. Last year I told you that we employed more communication staff than Coca Cola and this year I would like to tell you, we have six times more communication staff than Nestles and more then Nestles and KPM put together.

A further saving of £350,000 can also be found by not sleepwalking into an environmental and financial disaster by building an incinerator. You have not listened to our views or the views of the Friends of the Earth, or any other sensible environmentalist and instead you are hurtling headlong into a £130m PFI bid for an incinerator.

Last week I agreed to take part in an all-leaders group to discuss waste strategy. I will give you notice now that we will not be gagged in our opposition to the incinerator. We will not stop pointing out the absurdity of the prospect of industrial, commercial and domestic waste along with biomass being transported into our city and communities for the next 30 years to keep this monstrous, insatiable machine going. Nor will we stop demanding to know where you intend to put it and we will make sure our communities are not dumped on without proper opportunities for them to raise their opposition and concerns.

Let me just state one more time for our new friends in the Green Party, voting for this budget is a vote for an incinerator in Leeds.

I am convinced we waste money on consultants, even though I accept that we need them for specialised projects. I think we waste money on feasibility studies. A good example of this is a further feasibility study being commissioned on cemeteries in east Leeds which is costing £80,000, which I know is capital. Do we really need further reports on potential cemetery sites that are contaminated, waterlogged and difficult to access and would cost this Council over £1m to put right? We would save that £80,000.

Finally in savings I want to say something about our International Relations Department and the role of elected members. I am a strong believer in marketing Leeds – let me put that on record – in all sorts of ways and I believe it is the duty of an elected member to project our city positively locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. I am proud of the work we have done in the International Department and work that has been done in places like South Africa, Rumania, China and Pakistan, to name a few. This is work done on important schemes for the developing world, as well as establishing important contacts for trade in the global economy.

I believe we could cut costs if elected members took their role seriously and went, instead of an army of officers. That to me is showing real leadership.

Now I want to turn to our priorities – where we would spend these savings. Our vision is to create a hopeful and caring future for all the people in Leeds.

Firstly, we would spend £352,000 on extending our domestic waste recycling. We are well behind other core cities, as acknowledged by the Executive board member two weeks ago. By improving the domestic waste recycling we would give a clear signal to the people of Leeds that we really do believe in the importance of a greener and more sustainable recycling strategy. Frankly, I do not believe that the promised much-needed 9% increased in recycling target can be achieved without further investment.

What people need is not gimmicks and headlines but commitment and action. We would also commit additional resources to area management to make sure that our streets are clean. This should always be a priority and remains one of ours. This is a real commitment to cleaner and greener Leeds.

The second major area we would inject money into is community safety. Despite all the words, the macho words, from that administration – and we have heard it today – you are still not tackling crime successfully. In fact, the evidence shows that you are beginning to lose your grip on crime and antisocial behaviour. Not only have burglary rates gone up 9%, ASBO breaches stand at 57% since you took over and this is despite Councillor Les Carter's assurances that we do not mess about, we do take action on all breaches. It is no good saying it – I am sorry that Les is not here but I hope he gets this message. It is about doing it.

Stubbornly they still refuse to fund the proof of age scheme which would have helped to combat under-age drinking, often the source of antisocial behaviour in our communities. In our amendment we would fund this much-needed scheme. Furthermore, we propose more revenue and capital investment into alley gating. These again are real commitments helping all our communities, protecting vulnerable people and providing the reassurance that people need to be able to live lives without harassment and anxiety.

On top of this we should not underestimate the importance of investment into play areas across the city. They are for young people constructive alternatives for

their endless energy. We would invest revenue and capital of up to £1m in improving play facilities for children and young people.

I now want to talk about one of this administration's much-emphasised priorities, Narrowing the Gap. There is no greater evil than unemployment and, as I said earlier, in the last few years unemployment figures have gone up dramatically in both central and eastern Leeds, yet they are still going ahead with the closing of the East Leeds Training Centre and destroying the Training and Skills Department's budget.

This gap is not narrowing – it is widening in our more vulnerable communities, which is not good enough. We must do more to make sure that we do not just narrow the gap, that we close the gap by putting resources there. That is what makes us, I believe, socialists.

In terms of addressing unemployment, the worst crime of all and the one that we should all condemn in the strongest terms is the cutting back of a Roseville scheme which offered disabled people dignity, work and respect instead of dependence on benefits and allowances.

I have to pay tribute to another officer, Paul Broughton, who has worked with such dedication and commitment to avoid the closing down of the Roseville scheme. It seems totally illogical and unacceptable to us that when there is a record investment in our houses we are now talking about the emasculation of unemployment opportunities for the disabled. I do not blame this officer either – I blame Councillor Harris for doing too little too late to save this vital scheme. (*hear, hear*)

On these benches we all remember his famous quote and it went, "You may say it is a hollow promise but I make this assurance in public now. If whilst I am Leader or Deputy Leader of this Authority we issue redundancy notices and make those very needy people redundant from Roseville, I will instantly resign from Council. I give that absolute undertaking."

I have to tell Council, in 2003 there were 130 employees on the structure at Roseville. There will now only be 72 on the structure and there are 89 people who work there. You may use every other word other than the word redundancies, such as redeployment, such as voluntary severance, early retirement and so on, but as far as we are concerned we have not seen the evidence that the 17 who are left who are on the books for redeployment are being found appropriate work, never mind those who have already gone. (*Applause*)

That is why we would put money into the LEODIS scheme that makes sure they are given the hope and opportunities they deserve. Of course, on the same Council day we also had promises about there being no redundancies from Councillor Harrand, who did not offer to resign. Maybe he knew something that Councillor Harris did not but, of course, I am dealing with a man of honour with Councillor Harris and we expect him to follow through his word.

I would like to turn your attention now to the saga of the Breece. Without any doubt this is a decision we should all be ashamed of. It has generated great feelings of betrayal of the elderly in this city. We should all ignore Councillor Golton's rather patronising letters to the YEP about choice. My strongest advice to you is to stop digging a hole, Councillor Golton. I have still seen no evidence that proper marketing took place or that a proper alternative has been found. Indeed, as my colleagues will later speak on, all we have is a rather insulting alternative offer which involves offering a care home and two flats in Leeds. Is a holiday in Leeds a replacement for

one in Scarborough which so many elderly and disabled people look forward to along with their family year on year? That is not a choice for anyone, Councillor Golton.

We believe the Breece should remain open and that is why we have put £300,000 in the budget to keep it open. If it is too late for the Breece – because you started closing it well before you attempted to market it – then we would ring-fence the money and provide for proper seaside breaks for the clients and carers like other Authorities do.

Furthermore on social services I would like to put on record our feelings about the so-called savings of £1m next year in privatising Homecare. This is a privatisation too far and I think it is absolutely, totally unnecessary to privatise one of the most important services that a Council can be responsible for.

We believe that these services can be run more efficiently in-house and we have faith that the people that work for this Council can deliver them without resolving to privatisation which is actually a vote of no confidence in our employees. Why should we throw away a service that has proved consistent and reliable to our elderly? Do we remember the privatisation of grass cutting? This was a disaster. Why should we take a risk with the most vulnerable people in our city? Let us remember that Care UK last year had 60 complaints in one day. The private sector do not always know best. The risk is too great and vulnerable people need our support and they should have it. That is why we have put the money back into the budget. This is our commitment to the employees of this Council and the people of Leeds who we value. For less than 10p a week on Band D this is a price I believe is worth paying. *(Applause)*

Social Services is a national as well as a local challenge, yet nearly every day in press releases or at Executive Board in Council you get Councillor Harris claiming he has put record amounts of money into social services and claiming there are no cuts to services. Every time we know this only represents a part of the story and a part of the truth.

Yes, more money has been put into community care packages and children's services but we all know there are still heartbreaking stories about cuts to those people whose needs are labelled 'moderate'. These cuts have now affected more than 1,700 people. This so-called moderate category includes people like Edith Allison, who is 80 years old, has heart disease and diabetes and she has had her vital cleaning and ironing support stopped.

These cuts are unacceptable and that is why in our amendment we have provided extra money which ensures that nobody over 80 will have the services they need cut. This will protect people like Edith Allison and Edna Sharples, 94, and Thomas Place, a 93 year-old war veteran who had help taken from him which created a very angry response from the people of Leeds who expect better from this Council. *(hear, hear)*

In conclusion, the administration's budget is a vision of cuts to Homecare, cuts to day centres and cuts to services for the disabled and the elderly. It is a vision of calamity as we sleepwalk into an ill-conceived privatisation and a vision of incompetence as capital projects run over time and over budget and some do not happen at all.

Our amendment will offer compassion and care to our elderly, protection to the less well-off and disabled and hope for those who look towards the Council to protect. These are our priorities and I say to everyone in Council, if you believe in

our values and our priorities and our social justices, then I urge you all to vote for our amendment. I move, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, this year's budget continues – although you would not think it from what you have just heard – the prudent approach of previous budgets by this administration while yet maintaining and increasing services to our Council Tax payers.

The final settlement in January saw an increase in formula grant of 2.9% comparing badly with the average for England of 3.7%, for the core cities of 4% and an average in West Yorkshire of 3.3%. Rip Off Gordon strikes again, not giving Leeds its fair share. Not only that, we find the grant is reduced by a further £1.2m to cover the scheme of floors and ceilings. This year's Council Tax increase of 4.5% in the Council part of the tax, while being much larger than I would really like to see, represents a fair balance between tax and services bearing in mind our grant.

The Council Tax in Leeds remains the lowest of all core cities and the second lowest in West Yorkshire while providing well for its citizens of Leeds, particularly those through the massive social services budget.

If you listen to the moaners on the Labour benches, they would have you believe there have been massive cuts. They would have you believe the wheels have fallen off, but the only thing that the wheels have fallen off is the Labour opposition and their atrociously-led Government by Mr Yesterday Blair and Mr Totally Forgettable Brown.

By the way, over the three budgets of this administration the social services budget has increased by a massive 24%. That is well over the rate of inflation and exceeds the increase in grant from Central Government by miles.

You cannot win with Labour. You have got the Labour Government saying we spend too much and you have got *them* saying we spend too little. That is typical of them. By the way, what is this I hear from the party of "Education, education, education" – education cuts? That is what it sounds to me. We will come to that later. Let us come down to the highlights of this year's budget.

I will not apologise for repeating some of what Councillor Carter has said. Following the up-front investment in the Corporate Contact Centre in recent years, combined with the transfer of a number of services into the centre, efficiencies totalling 155K are expected in 2007/08. Also within the customer service the Braille and Large Print Unit function will transfer to the Society for the Deaf and Blind, saving 20K but also facilitating a much-needed investment in IT and equipment for services.

The opening hours of North Seacroft One-Stop Shop – which should interest some members over there – will be extended to Saturday mornings, aligning the opening times to other facilities in the town centre at a cost of 12K. The 2007/08 budget provides an increased provision of 50K for allotments and public rights of way and 75K for Leeds's entry for Britain in Bloom Competition.

Additional budgets to the value of 100K has been provided to set up costs for a Sports Trust and the PFI development costs. Provision of 220K has been made to

continue the operation of South Leeds Sports Centre. Funding of 798K has been allocating to funds shortfalling grant funding from the DWP on the Benefits Administration. This has arisen as a result of the DWP amalgamating several grants into one and changing, as usual, the method of allocation of the overall grant. Another Labour Government cut.

Essential improvements to the resilience of ICT network through the Novell Premium Support and web filtering have been provided at a cost of 73K. Leeds Benefit Services and Student Support have identified 140K of savings on IT consumables, postage, stationery due to more efficient use of resources.
(interruption)

The fact is you do not want to listen. You never want to listen. You do not want to listen about incineration. You never listen.

THE LORD MAYOR: Members, can we let Councillor Blackburn speak – no heckling, please.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: You are going to pay at the coming election for that.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blackburn, you continue. No heckling.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: The ICT Innovation Team are expected to generate an additional income of 65K, mainly through the sale of digital pens, a thing that we have introduced in recent times. ICT have identified savings of 339K across the Authority following a review and renegotiation of telecom contracts. As a result of work by corporate HR, savings of 301K across the Authority on recruitment are expected mainly through the use of e-recruitment and the reduction in external advertising costs.

The Social Services budget for 2007/08, as the Leader of Council had indicated, is increased by £10.2m compared with last year and reflects the continuation of the challenging programme of services, improvements and business reconfiguration across the department, as I said earlier, which represents over three years of this administration's budget an increase in 24%.

THE LORD MAYOR: No heckling, please.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: The Council continues to increase the number of PCSOs through matched funding with West Yorkshire Police. 170 matched funded PCSOs are now on the streets of Leeds to provide high visibility patrolling services in each of the Wards. Of course, left to you what would have happened would be those would be patrolling only certain Wards and I suspect one of mine would not be in.

The refuse collection services have been provided with 121K for full year effect of the kerbside garden collection pilot and this is implemented in the five areas across the city. A sum of 70K provided to allow charities to dispose of waste at transfer loading stations for free, but also to enhance recycling to appropriate organisations in biodiversity and out of landfill.

A further 150K has been provided to support an enhanced programme of public education awareness across the city in relation to waste and recycling minimisation and, as I say, we have a real job to do there because at least a third of our population we have still got to win that argument with.

The budget provides a 9% increase in the volume of tonnage to be recycled and reflects the enhanced education of the awareness project.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blackburn, if you could just bear with me for a minute, please. Members, can you show some respect. No heckling. Can you let Councillor Blackburn continue.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, I am quite happy to let them heckle. They do not like what they are hearing, as usual. As I say, the budget provides a 9% increase in the volume of tonnage to be recycled and reflects the enhanced education and awareness problem, the effects of the Garden Pilot and the new recycling timber contract.

Street cleansing services are being enhanced by about 29K to include cleaning of the guided bus lanes. An additional £1.7m fully funded by NRF and other grants is being spent on improving the local environment. Of this an additional 800K is being used to resource the Intensive Neighbourhood Management Programme in each area of the city and 300K is being spent working with partners to deliver both physical improvements to the areas as well as a programme of education. A further 450K supports the enforcement activities, particularly within the inner areas. Implementation of City Services Energy Saving Action Plan will generate savings of a projected 50K.

Unlike the Labour opposition this administration does not support cuts in education which you are suggesting. It does not support excessive increases in Council Tax. It supports prudent the budget and good quality services.

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

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will try and make it brief, if for no other reason other than to get a bit of cheap publicity and applause, perhaps.

We would like basically to comment very briefly on the budget and Labour's amendment and then perhaps deal with what we regard as the fundamental challenges that actually face us. Certainly in the budget that has been proposed by the administration there are some good things for Morley. There is no doubt that we would welcome more PCSOs on our streets, additional support in our parks and also, as the administration knows, we have been pushing the regeneration of Morley Bottoms for some time and we are pleased that there is money allocation and set on one side to support that particular programme.

We would have liked to have seen more in terms of street cleansing. We would have liked to have seen more in terms of planning enforcement, which we think are big issues. We do know that across a Council I think everybody agrees that these particular areas are under-funded. We know it is difficult to try and find resources to cover those services but we do believe that more needs to be done perhaps in the future to try and increase what we can do in street cleansing and planning enforcement and other planning related issues.

We had a look at Keith's amendment. We are a little puzzled how he can take out 25% of the budget of the Chief Executive's department without sacking people and we do believe that somewhere along those lines you have got to sack people to make 25% savings there. We do not believe that that is sustainable or realistic. We are in a situation where we have significant concerns that trying to do away with 25 % of a particular department is not something that is genuinely achievable.

We think the main culprits and the main difficulty that we have got, as we have year in, year out in terms of budget time, is what happens when we get down to the support that we get from central Government. This is a theme that we come back to time and time again.

I am not so sure that Keith's argument about "our bunch were bad but your bunch were worse" is particularly helpful. I do think that the support that we have had from different central governments of different persuasions has left us with very, very difficult times, so I am trying equally to offend everybody at this particular point.

We do need to have a look around and see what is happening across other areas to see if Leeds is getting a fair deal. Last Friday we agreed the budget for the Fire Authority and, as you are running through these particular figures, you go round and see how other areas are doing compared to our particular area and, again, for no apparent reason I picked Manchester. Just go and have a look at Manchester's Fire Authority who were running their budget a couple of days before ourselves and what they got in Government grants and what we got in Government grants. Did that investigation look through, found out that for each person in the Greater Manchester Fire Authority area they were getting £29 per person. When you get to West Yorkshire you are down to £24, £25 per person. That is a puzzle. It is very difficult to understand or to explain to my constituents and any constituent who lives in the West Yorkshire area, why you are only worth 80% of what they are offering in Manchester. Do you burn 20% slower than everywhere else? Do you have people who bleed at road traffic accidents at a slower rate than they do in Greater Manchester? It cannot be fair, it cannot be reasonable that there is this inequality.

We thought we would do a little bit more and look through the fine report that Alan Gay has produced, just to have a look at some of those particular figures. Mr Gay has no axe to grind, I suspect, he is absolutely straight in giving us the information that we have got, but reading through his budget report he does remind us that the average increase across all England is 3.7%, core cities 4%, West Yorkshire 3.3% and he does remind us that if Leeds had received the average increase, an additional grant of £2.2m would have been received – enough for this extra money that Keith says he wants to put into Social Services. If we had had the average of the core cities we would have had an additional grant of £2.8m. You have got to think, this is a bit strange. Where is the fairness in all of that?

Across the page we are reminded that the Supporting People Grant, central Government grant, has remained the same again. We have certainly got an issue in Morley on the Ingle estate about the Supporting People Grant, where very difficult decisions are being taken and that is leaving people with fewer services and we are looking into that. Ultimately, the responsibility has to lie with the central Government grant that remains the same as other costs are going up.

We are told further down that Housing and Council Tax Benefit Administrative Subsidy – what it costs us to administer this scheme for those people who are on low incomes. We are losing £0.798m from there. These are facts. This is not attempting to put any political spin on things but again the Government are taking back money that we actually need that would be better spent on lots of other services.

We look across the page at the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme. Great, we are getting money from that particular fund. That has got to be good, that has got to help us in terms of supporting the wider services that we offer. So what is happening? They are terminating the scheme in December 2007. We are losing out yet again.

We went back and had a look and visited some of the other Local Authorities just to see where they are and where we are on these particular things. Manchester – which just happens to be Labour controlled – gets somewhere in the region of a grant of £30,600m, has a population of 441,200 allegedly – although I understand Manchester City Council have been pushing extra people in from all sorts of places. That works out – and my figures differ slightly from Councillor Carter's – at £693 per person.

If we take Nottingham – which again just happens to be Labour controlled – they get a grant of about £14,600m. They have a population of 226,988 and that works out at £547 per person in the Nottingham area.

Leeds gets 271, has a population of 750,404 people, according to the last census figures and that means that per head we get £379.35 per individual.

Very dry figures, but the point that concerns us fundamentally is why residents in Morley and in the rest of Leeds are only worth 54% of residents in Manchester.

Taking into account that across Leeds there were some significant neighbourhoods of deprivation, it is very, very difficult to see that somebody in Manchester is worth twice as much as we are and I have great difficulty in explaining that to my constituents in Morley, why Manchester seems to get a better deal on its Fire Authority and a better deal in terms of the grant that it actually gets.

Nottingham – not quite so bad. We are worth about two-thirds of what a resident in Nottingham is worth. Again, I cannot quite understand that. I suspect that neighbourhoods across the Leeds City Council area is as deprived as anything that you have got in Nottingham, so it is very difficult to understand why Leeds' residents are worth two-thirds of what somebody in Nottingham is and half of what somebody in Manchester is. It has got to go back to that fundamental unfairness.

If you were to knock Nottingham down to £540 instead of £547, give us seven quid - maybe we can make a deal with Nottingham City Council, you never know - that would raise £2m. If Manchester could go from £693 down to £688, that would again raise us £2m. The fundamental issue year in, year out – and I know that we have this debate each time – is that central Government of both political persuasions have not been reasonable, fair or generous with Local Authorities and ultimately central Governments of both political persuasions again have added more burdens on to Local Authorities and they expect us to do more. If that is the case then it is about further financing.

We do ultimately have to say West Yorkshire has all Labour MPs apart from two, as I understand. Leeds has all Labour MPs apart from one. They really do have to do a better job at getting in there and fighting for a better deal for our communities, whether that is with the Fire Authority, whether that is Leeds City Council and, to be honest, you have got across all the other Councils in the West Yorkshire area it is the same. There is no point in coming moaning and groaning and whingeing at us. We really seriously do have to make sure that Leeds citizens – Morley citizens – are worth more than the 54% value that they are given against somebody in Manchester or the 69% value they are given against somebody in Nottingham. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR McARDLE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I too welcome the further funding to supplement the highways programme, PCSOs, Parks Renaissance Programme which further enhances all the Town Centre and Community Parks and

also the Town Centre Regeneration project which we hope in the next couple of years actually regenerates Morley Bottoms.

The main crux of the matter is, we can have temporary funding for RESPECT, we can have temporary funding for the LEGI project, but the core of this is the grant from central Government and, as Councillor Finnigan has already alluded to, it is a grant increase of £7.65m or 2.9%. That is significantly below all other core cities and I think the proud city of Leeds, which includes Morley, Rothwell, Pudsey and Horsforth, have been short changed by this Government and perhaps successive Governments and I think the people of Leeds deserve a damn sight better. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARRISON: Lord Mayor, I would like to start today by talking about Homecare. In June 2005 Councillor Andrew Carter stood up and said, "We are committed to helping the most vulnerable in the city." These are fine sentiments but somehow the situation we find ourselves in does not stack up against the promises.

I do not know if Councillor Carter defines vulnerable people but obviously this does not include people like Michelle Leon. Michelle has multiple sclerosis and had her Homecare for ten years and was told she no longer qualified for help.

Perhaps Councillor Harrand can explain how someone with MS, a degenerative disease, someone who ten years ago did not need a wheelchair and now does, someone who cannot even make herself a hot drink, how someone like this can be told that you no longer qualify for help and that her ten year old son should take over more of the caring responsibility.

I am used to standing here and citing examples of how you have failed the people of this city and I am equally used to you turning round and saying I am wrong. I am not wrong. How can I be when Michelle had her own care reinstated after we intervened? You are making mistakes and while I am delighted that Michelle is now happy, how many more people across this city have been let down but feel unable to complain?

I am sure you know about Michelle's case as it was highlighted in the paper, but the reason why she went to this extent was because she realised that if she did not complain that people within the city – the older people, the vulnerable people – would take example from her and go ahead and complain.

Your system is not working. Michelle was told that unless her needs were critical she would not qualify for help. When did we move the line of eligibility to critical? I think I must have missed that meeting. Can anybody tell me if they attended a meeting where the line of eligibility was moved to critical? No, I do not think so.

In April 2004 you, Peter, said, "If social workers do not make the appropriate judgment or if you think there is a reason for appeal against it, that is the system and we will be flexible. We will listen and that applies to everybody. We will change our minds if the case is relevant." This is right and proper but the point is that these mistakes should not happen in the first place. How was it possible for someone to visit Michelle and decide that her needs she had ten years ago had changed to the extent that she no longer needed them? It is deplorable that she was left stranded and told that she was lucky she had a husband and a son to look after her.

When are you going to realise that the cuts you have made continue to affect people's lives in a totally unacceptable way? You take away the services they rely on and just abandon them. Where is the follow-up work? When do you go back and

the checks are made that they are OK, checks that have been assessed and serviced elsewhere? You do not, you just leave them. They are no longer your problem and get rid of them and good luck.

We would reinstate Homecare for all those aged over 80 as a matter of course. That is the difference between us. We care about the people of the city and our proposals reflect this.

I would like to talk about the Breece, the hotel that you closed after a sham of a marketing campaign – and it was a sham. The hotel that you closed in spite of letters pouring into the local paper. The hotel was closed in spite of protests and a petition of over 1,000 signatures for people asking for it to be saved.

So the Breece has gone, despite Peter saying last year, “You want to know about the Breece. The Breece will not close. I think I said that last year. I will say that next year and I am fairly sure I will say it again this year.” I am glad you were so sure, Peter – we can all sleep very soundly knowing that you are on top of things.

We have put money in to save the Breece because we think people deserve a place to holiday that offers the care and facility they need. They deserve a holiday, a break somewhere away from home, somewhere to relax, somewhere to unwind and have a nice time, which brings me to what you have offered in your budget – an apartment or a respite suite in Leeds. Surely Leeds is a fantastic city but I do think we ought to be seriously thinking about offering an older person a holiday in Leeds.

You go on and on about the fair deal from the Government. How about the blame of the state of Social Services in Leeds? You and I both know this is not the case. Social Services have received just under £3m in Government grants this year...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harrison, if you could finish the last sentence, please.

COUNCILLOR HARRISON: Yes. Just in conclusion, Lord Mayor, we know that you start rearranging your priorities for the elderly and disabled in Leeds to stop the continuing cuts to Social Services, start taking responsibility for the devastating effects on the older people. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to make a few points regarding the proposed budget and in particular social services. One important that my colleague, Councillor Wakefield, has already mentioned is Roseville Enterprises. The administration have seen fit to allocate £1m to Roseville, which does not reflect the actual cost of sustaining the enterprise in the same form as it is now.

It should also be noted this year Roseville has cost the Council in excess of £2m. It seems very clear to me that the administration have based the budget for Roseville on a restructure plan that would see job losses at Roseville. Since the coalition parties have taken power there has been a devastating decline in the number of people employed at Roseville. As Councillor Wakefield already mentioned and I make no apology for repeating, in 2003 the structure had 130 posts. In 2007 the restructure plan would see that number fall dramatically to just 72 posts, a fact that these benches find deplorable.

Roseville provides meaningful employment for many disabled people and is something I know many of my colleagues have had an involvement in over the years

and who feel very strongly that this Council should support this continued employment.

You know, you just have to speak to the people who are employed there to realise what it means to them. They feel valued and needed. Having meaningful employment has changed many of their lives from being totally dependent to being independent. The last time Roseville was debated in this Chamber at the June Council meeting, Councillor Harris gave an assurance that – and I quote – “I am telling you, if we make any of those employees at Roseville redundant, which is what we are discussing, people who absolutely depend on us for assistance and to a large degree protected employment, I will resign and will be held to it.”

Well, Councillor Harris, there are people working now at Roseville who do not have a job under the new structure, currently 17 who have been earmarked for redeployment. However you want to dress it up, those people will lose their jobs at Roseville.

May I remind you, Councillor Harris, what the definition of redundant is – laid off, let go, out of work, out of a job, superfluous, outmoded, disused, surplus, unneeded, unnecessary and unwanted. When do you propose to resign? Be assured, we will hold you to it.

Councillor Harrand also joined in assuring that – and I quote – “We will not make anybody at Roseville redundant.” He even said he would put it in writing, although, Peter, I think we are still waiting for that.

I hope I do not need to remind him of the definition of redundant, so can we now have your commitment, Peter, that the restructure plan for Roseville which includes these job losses will not be implemented?

That is why in our amendment we propose to put in extra funds to allow these employees to carry on working at Roseville. This administration cannot and should not ignore the situation these employees are in and must remember that these people do absolutely depend on us for assistance as Councillor Harris said, and protected employment, as they so justly deserve.

Colleagues, we are all aware that fortunately this coalition do not have a great deal of experience of administering this wonderful city of ours. However, they should be aware that the buck stops with them and whatever happens within their departments, the administration need to stand up and be counted.

Lord Mayor, the second point I would like to make is that of funding of the voluntary sector. A commitment has been made in the budget for an increase of 2% for inflation. This administration have agreed countless review of social services provision, not least of which Homecare, as my colleague Councillor Harrison has spoken on, which has now meant that over 1700 people – I repeat 1700 people – have had their Homecare reduced or withdrawn to date. We have been told that these people have been signposted to other providers, including the voluntary sector. We know that there has been an increase in demand...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Coupar, last sentence, please.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Can I reiterate to this coalition administration, you need to stand up and be counted or stand on your honour and resign. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LOWE: The City Services budget is probably the most important ever to be put before this Council. I say this because the decisions we make

today will determine the choices available to us in relation to waste strategy and ultimately then the LATS penalties that this city might face. This budget requires brave decisions, not just about the facts and figures but also about the impact any solution might have on people – the people we represent and who will face the prospect of having a £130m incinerator built in their community, although we have yet to find out which community that is.

Last October Councillor Carter said at the Executive Board that the Council had left itself enough elbow room to analyse all the possible technologies in relation to waste strategy. However, we see that in this budget £350,000 has been allocated to prepare a PFI bid for an incinerator. So much for the agreement in principle to exhaust all other possibilities before reaching a conclusive decision on the chosen waste solution.

This Labour group believes that it would be fundamentally wrong to sanction the release of £350,000 of tax payers' money when we believe that an incinerator is potentially an environmental disaster and definitely a financial one.

Back in January Councillor Schofield claimed in a letter to the Evening Post, "It is not true that the Tory/Lib Dem/Green Council in Leeds have decided to build an incinerator - far from a giant one, not even an itsy bitsy, teeny weeny one." What does he say now? Is he comfortable spending £350,000 on a project he says no decision has yet been taken on? Is this giving good value to the people of Leeds? We think not and we would find better uses for the money, as I will now describe.

Leeds needs leadership on the subject of waste management. The budget relies heavily on achieving a 9% growth in recycling rates but there is precious little money put to one side to help us to achieve that position. Labour would use the £350,000 you have put to one side for an incinerator to extend composting to more homes across the city. As Councillor David Blackburn's constituents said of him in the Evening Post last week, we cannot afford to be seen as playing at recycling.

Additionally we would need another £100,000 to Area Management to further clean up our filthy streets. We do, by the way, applaud the additional income and investment in street cleansing but I think it is important for Council to realise that a lot of the additional funding is actually NRF money – that ends next year – so you need to think of another way of continuing that funding.

We would review the education and awareness programmes currently being run and ensure that these were better targeted so as to maximise participation in recycling in areas where there are currently huge compliance issues and these are impacting massively on recycling performance.

I was told that at the last Exec Board meeting Councillor Blackburn offered to work with Keith Wakefield and Keith described that conversation in his speech. He is going to work with us to oppose the incinerator as part of the Review Working Group. If your offer was serious, David, then your first step must be to oppose this budget because, as has already been said several times, a vote for this budget is a vote for an incinerator.

Defend the people who have put you here, and me and everybody else in this Council chamber. Do not impose an incinerator on them and vote against this budget. Please support the Labour amendment. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, traditionally budget day has been an important day in the Council's agenda. The budget in a way is like the lifeblood going through an organisation. It tells us about how healthy that organisation is. It tells us what your values are. It tells us where you want to be and what your objectives are.

Perhaps it was a shame for Councillor Carter to follow that brilliant speech from the deputation taking the high moral ground, but I saw no values in that speech. I did not hear mention once the children's services agenda. I did not hear once Every Child Matters. All I heard is cheap political propaganda which is what you would expect from a school yard bully who has never grown up.

Instead we then had a statesmanlike speech from Councillor Wakefield, protecting people, talking about vulnerable people, talking about affordable housing and talking about Labour values and social justice. We on this side are proud to be able to associate ourselves with his amendment.

When we come to the children's services agenda, Lord Mayor, what do we see? £1.7m spent on additional officers, all a tier on top of existing directors and officers. Nothing to the front line. Nothing towards the area management and integration with area management and discussion with members.

It is a budget from the Councillors Carter and Harris of the haves and the have nots. The haves, the part-time leaders and full-time paid. The haves, the new officer structure where no-one will be paid less than £120,000 for strategic jobs. The haves, where you do not have to apply for your job but you are going to get shoed in for the second or third or fourth time in your career into the next promotion. The have nots – the workers of this Council who are going to be denied their jobs by further privatisation in social care; that disgusting word of being 'signposted' somewhere, which you lot keep using about vulnerable people. You should be ashamed of yourself and if it is somebody else using it, equally ashamed of them. It is a disgusting word, it should not feature in our language, no matter who uses it. We certainly on this side do not use it.

The have nots – again, the staff who have to reapply for their own jobs, who go in through job content analysis and have to do more work for the same pay. The have nots, the people who have moved from their moderate to severe line. The have nots, the people you do not look after.

Your budget is short-term because you are short-term. This budget does not look to the long term because you will leave the mess for us to clear up and, Lord Mayor, we will. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Lord Mayor, we have heard plenty of talk from the Tories yet again on crime but that is nothing new. That is all they have done for the last three budgets. Is it not about time, Andrew, that we actually started seeing some real action? You have heard the golden phrase 'Actions speak louder than words'. I understand it is difficult for you, Andrew, being an old-school Tory and I

know Les is not here today – I hope he is well – wanting to bring back the stocks while your Leader Dave Cameron is walking round the country with his arms outstretched asking for hugs. Andrew, I do understand how difficult this situation must be but you are going to have to make a decision – a decision about hugs or action. Action is what we need and it is what has been missing since the administration took control in 12004.

There is a great comment from Les in the Economic last year that just about summed up your administration's attitude. He said that there is not much more we can do. Let me tell you, there is plenty more we can do.

He was also reported last year in the YEP saying that we do not mess about, we do take action on breaches. Let me tell you, there have been more than 200 ASBOs breached since you took over – more than 200. You say that resources have been poured into other crime prevention methods including parenting orders – that is news to me, seeing as no parenting orders have been issued at all within the past twelve months.

We hear of under-aged youths getting drunk on our streets, swearing, harassing and verbally abusing members of the public, violent flare-ups as a result of binge drinking and drug taking. What has happened to the Proof of Age Scheme, a scheme designed to put a stop to under-age drinking? It was axed. Well done, you lot.

The residents of Leeds are suffering. They are victims of antisocial behaviour, of violent crimes, muggings, vandalism, robbery – the list is endless. As Councillor Wakefield said just several minutes ago, robbery in the city has increased by 9%. These are horrifying figures and they only serve to highlight the fact that this administration is not doing enough to tackle crime at its very source.

What is being done to protect the public in Leeds? We see Councillor Les Carter week after week in the Yorkshire Evening Post harping on about this and that but all this talk is getting us nowhere. What are you actually doing to tackle the causes of crime and antisocial behaviour?

ASBO breaches stand at 57% since you took over - 57%. That is over half of all ASBOs end up being breached. People across the city are standing up for their communities and putting their own personal safety at risk by doing so. What is their reward for this bravery? The sight of the very offenders they are speaking out against roaming free.

Did you know that since 2004, 202 ASBOs have been breached 879 times. What are you doing about these ASBO breaches? Do not talk about lack of prison spaces, lack of police funding, blaming the Government for cuts, because it is getting boring. You have all the support you need from Government. This Government has pumped – let me tell you millions of pounds into the RESPECT campaign – making Leeds a RESPECT zone. You are happy to grab the headlines for that, agree you not? You have been in the papers. Les Carter has been in the papers. I am sorry he is not here today but I wish he was.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I bet he doesn't! (*Laughter*)

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Why not? It is a fantastic boost for the city, so no more excuses.

Let us talk about what you are doing with young offenders. Tell me how you are helping them turn their lives around, because I see very little evidence of this so far. We have all the powers that we need at our disposal to tackle troubled background, youth offending, drug problems, so why are we not using them? Why have parenting orders and parenting contracts been abundant?

We have not used a single one this year. Surely tools such as these are key to helping families pull together before the behaviour of their youngsters spiral out of control. We already know that ASBOs cost the Council a small fortune to issue, around £1,700 to be exact. I know Councillor Andrew Carter you mention about 2003 and 2004 – that was actually in the initial when we actually started...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Rafique, could you finish your last sentence please?

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Newcastle employed somebody (*interruption*) (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, can we stop lingering about, please, if you do not mind. We have got members of audience, it is a very important meeting and I would not accept any more heckling from anybody and when the red light shows, I will give you the opportunity to finish your sentence. We will start again and I am sorry, I am going to have to issue red cards if you do not listen to me. Councillor Judith Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Lord Mayor, thank you. I would like to speak on the development section of the budget with particular reference to planning. Investment allocated in the budget to support the strategic review is necessary. Indeed we have argued on this side for investment that will allow for more planners and more improvements in IT and web-based technology, developing a planning system for the 21st century. However, let us be clear – the massive investment announced in this budget today has come about because we are on the brink of becoming what is called a Standard Authority. We have until March 31st to prove that we can improve in performance enough to keep control of our planning authority. Recent improvements in performance are still regarded as fragile. Leeds is on the list of Local Authorities being considered for intervention. Worse, if improvement does not take place we could lose our four star CPA rating and lose out on the freedoms and flexibilities that that brings. We have to ask, Lord Mayor, why the situation was allowed to get so bad before action was taken.

Lord Mayor, it is clear in all the documents coming out of the department that the performance of the Plans Panels is critical to improvement. It is the responsibility of Councillor Carter to ensure performance improves. Too many residents and members of the public, including developers, have been in despair at the way their applications have been dealt with, many having to wait hours at the back of meetings and this has happened under your time in office. This is the public face of the Council and for many their experience has been appalling.

We need leadership, not drift, and we need clarity on how things are going to improve. What changes will there be to the Plans Panel? Will there be less members for Plans after May on East and West Panels? Will there be an extra Panel to cover the south? How will these changes help? Please tell us what you are planning to do.

This loss of confidence is spilling out across the city. Under Labour in the 1990s Leeds transformed itself, gaining national and international recognition. Now the talk is of lack of ambition, lack of vision – all the schemes you mentioned started under Labour control. Were are the transformational schemes and projects for the future? Have there been any new ideas since your alliance took over? Where are the new schemes that will continue to regenerate our city over the next 20 years?

Lord Mayor, we can look to the budget to try and find the ambitious new projects that would put us back in line with Manchester, Birmingham or Newcastle but we will look in vain. The most depressing reading in last Sunday's papers was the competition that is taking place between Manchester and Birmingham to become the official second city in England. The only thing the two cities could agree on was that Leeds is no longer in the race. That is the scale of the damage that your administration has inflicted on us. We say, enough is enough. Leeds needs leadership, not the roundabout of indecision and dithering given us by this administration.

Lord Mayor, I support the budget amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield. It is time to put pride back into Leeds. It is time we picked up our position in the country and it is time this tired administration admitted it is not up to the job and let people who can take over. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR WILSON: As the chair of the Advisory Board at Roseville I would just like to say a few words. That Panel is made up of five members – uniquely, I think, one from each party – and they do work extremely well. I think Debra, who is a valued member of the board, is fully aware of the strenuous efforts that the Board has been making to retain the numbers at Roseville.

I would just like to point out that the people that have left Roseville, most of them were sub-contractors and there were some that were shipped in from other departments. I think that is what has been going on.

I would like to say that one of Roseville's problems has been that the ALMOs have not been responsive to the demands from Roseville for work. There are six ALMOs and I am sure it covers every Councillor in this Chamber. They could have all been a little bit more supportive of Roseville.

Nevertheless, I can tell you that I am not aware of any disabled employee at Roseville being made redundant. I am pretty sure that is correct.

I would just like to leave a plea to all the members of this Chamber. Please support Roseville in your three new ALMOs. They are will worth supporting. I am perfectly willing to take anybody round at any time but I am not aware of any disabled person being made redundant. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to touch on Councillor Carter's big announcement about caring. He puffed himself up to make

the announcement – obviously this is a starring role in his press release. I think like when we all get phone calls from Florida offering us free holidays or see good offers in the Sunday papers, we always have to read the small print of what is being said.

I think we have to think very carefully about what is actually at the heart of this seemingly good offer on caring that Councillor Carter has offered. What I think we have to look at very carefully is that many of the people who have been offered this service for free used to have Homecare under the previous Labour administration.

What does this mean, under the previous labour administration – people who had a person coming to visit them and now have been offered a gizmo, a gimmick, a piece of technology. Let us also look at this moderate charge – ‘moderate change’, no figures given – for new people coming on to the system. These are new people getting older who, if Councillor Carter’s amendment is followed, will never get free Homecare, will never get a person to come and visit them, will never get that human contact. We all have to get Homecare right because if we do not get Homecare right the number of older people ending up in hospital rises and the number of older people ending up in residential care rises and the number living independently in their own homes falls.

I think this is a very clear divide between that administration and this Labour group. You offer people a piece of technology, a gimmick – a piece of plastic, electronics. We offer people Homecare, a person, somebody to come round, human contact, something that makes their lives richer. I quite clearly think this sums up the divide and I hope that people now reflect on that, support Councillor Wakefield’s amendment and reject the budget offered by Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It was interesting earlier to hear different figure from Keith Wakefield, who was saying £850,000 saved and the £1.7m on additional officers that Peter Gruen seemed to think were not needed.

It is actually the Labour Government’s policy to create new responsibilities in the Every Child Matters 2004 Act across all children’s services not just in this Council but in all agencies across the city. That has to mean some additional costs. It is very easy to say that we should put any extra cash into the front line. We have been trying to assess quite how much is spent on the front line in Leeds on children’s services and it is very difficult to come up with a hard figure because there are a lot of partners involved. It is not just the Council – the Health Service, the Police, all the voluntary sector – but it seems to me that in excess of a billion pounds each year is spent on the front line. We are here having people jibbing at a relatively small sum of money. £850,000 is less than 0.1%. It has been hinted that this actually has got nothing to do with improving services.

We were accused of not having enough ambition, yet you seem to be wanting to do more of the same. If we are unhappy with the outcomes that there are at the moment – and we certainly think that there are things that could be a lot better - it seems to me that you have to do something different. There has to be some change and the officers that have been recently appointed and are shortly to take up their duties are going to be change agents.

I hope that Labour will decide which of the figures they want to save and it looked to me as though it was not going to be spent on front-line services in children’s services,

it was going elsewhere. There does seem to be this difference and a total misunderstanding about what Every Child Matters means and what needs to be done to achieve those aims. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Wakefield referred to the housing crisis within the city and I would just like to say some things about the initiatives that we have taken to deal with that particular problem.

It is facing a new housing crisis but we have been in this position before. Last time we faced a housing crisis on this scale it was brought on by high interest rates, house price deflation and negative equity. The last time round we had two safety valves – one was low house prices and the other was the rapid turnover from Council housing. This time round there are no safety valves. We have the double whammy of a crisis in rented accommodation and affordability in the housing market – a huge crisis for Leeds as fewer and fewer homes are available to rent at a price that ordinary people can afford in their own communities.

Behind the headline stories in the Evening Post lies the misery of thousands of people who cannot get on the property ladder, those who cannot afford to rent privately and those who sit on the Council's waiting list for years on end. As you will know there are 30,000 on the waiting lists at the moment, 20,000 regularly making bids for properties.

The administration says it is committed to tackling the problem and we welcome initiatives like the Special Purpose Vehicle but as long as Plans East remains an elephant's graveyard for affordable housing schemes I question your political will. Not only are the people of East Leeds being short-changed but it is contributing to the problems that my colleague Judith talked to a few minutes ago of the Council as a planning authority.

We need to take action now to help people find a home that they can afford in the place that they want to live, whether it be through home purchase, renting or through Council housing. Too many people are seeing their dream of a home of their own disappear.

We have maximised the use of nominations rights which we have at our disposal, mainly through Leeds Partnership Homes, and make sure they are advertised in Leeds Homes in the free sheets. It should be the One-Stop Shop for all social housing in the city and the associations which benefited hugely from Leeds Partnership Homes should be challenged to play their part in tackling this housing crisis.

We would identify appropriate sites in Council ownership with potential for affordable housing. Just talking about housing revenue account land is nonsense. The issue should not be what portfolio or department a site sits in – it should be can that site meet local needs for housing?

Small housing sites that are unsuitable for housing associations to develop can also be utilised. We would work with self-building organisations and housing co-ops so that people can use their sweat equity to answer their housing problems in their localities and explore the potential for eco homes through this route.

We have to bring innovative and imaginative approaches to our legacy of poor quality older housing. We will make some of our own miscellaneous properties and those currently leased out to housing associations that are due to be returned to

the Council available for homesteading where appropriate and that means where those properties are a potential liability to the Council in terms of the high cost of bringing them up to the decency standard, but where they provide a potential leg-up to people who want to get on the housing ladder. We will harness local energy through training schemes to improve these homes and use these initiatives to encourage owner-occupies and private landlords in those areas to invest in their own properties.

We will lobby with anyone from the administration to put the ALMOs on a secure financial footing for the future and give them the freedoms that they should have to build properties, to build Council homes.

We are always prepared to press for additional government investments in housing in the city at any time, but that particular pressure for freedom for the ALMOs is desperately important for us as a city. The most effective way of building social housing is through Council housing.

We need to put the people of Leeds first. We need a real achievable affordable housing plan for Leeds, not a token gesture, and we need to get it right. I urge everyone to support Councillor Wakefield's amendment. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I cannot help but feel, Lord Mayor, that the Labour Group are wilfully misunderstanding the basis of the budget debate. It may well be that they wish to score political points. That would be the role of the opposition and hardly surprising, but it strikes me that we appear to be using points that are lost on me. Councillor Lewis has just raised the subject of social housing and, if you remember, last Council meeting he was very vociferous in the need for us to support social housing, yet not a mention of it this week.

It touches on a point that Councillor Carter made, which relates to the Government and the Government's attitude to Local Authorities.

If we talk about social housing – and Councillor Lewis last time was talking about social housing and saying we ought to provide more of it, more affordable, more Council housing for those people who do not remember what social housing is, more Council housing. Has he actually spoken to Ruth Kelly, because it strikes me that Ruth Kelly last week was basically saying, "There will not be any more social housing. What we are going to do is move housing away from the ALMO process that we have got at the moment and move everybody into owner occupation."

You and I know that will not work but it is just a good example of how the government are actually interfering in the services we provide.

We have touched on the points that have been made about how the government are manipulating the grant system to disadvantage the people in Leeds and it is very difficult to get over to people in the public but the Evening Post did a very good editorial last week, I think it was, which did point out to the people of Leeds how they are being short-changed by this particular government.

If we were getting a grant in something like what Manchester was getting, we would – I almost think we would be paving the streets with gold. Landmark Leeds would be replaced by gold plate. One of the things that we have got, one of the things we have had this evening is a long list of political whingeing without a lot of substance.

Actually, Lord Mayor, there are three points I would like to make. I am sitting here with my colleagues and my good friend next door has just lent me his highlighter pen because we have been going through the capital programme. Can I just hold this capital programme up for you?

Obviously members over there have not looked at this but I have never actually seen a capital programme as big as this and I have been on this Council for 20 years. This capital programme – which is an investment in your Wards as well as ours – is actually the biggest capital programme I ever remember, providing facilities, services, resources into the people of Leeds, even into the city, even into the Wards you represent.

I can remember the good old days – and one or two of my colleagues here – when you got a capital programme which was about *that* thick and you would go through it and if you were really lucky you might actually find something in your ward because there seemed to be rather a lot of capital projects in wards represented by Labour Councillors and very few in wards represented by Liberal Democrats or Conservatives.

That is not the same here. You go through this - everybody is winning on this one. (*Applause*)

Two more points. They will not say it to you but I will say it. Thank you for putting £10m extra into the Social Services budget. (*Applause*) Thank you on behalf of those people who will benefit from that who are not here today to say thank you for it. I will say it on their behalf. (*hear, hear*)

One other point. Councillor Lewis did not touch on it this time but he has touched on it before and that is about PCSOs. The one thing this Authority has done which has produced a result on the street are PCSOs. In the past you have said we do not need them – sorry, my ward does not need them – your ward does but my ward does not. Providing extra PCSOs has made a remarkable difference to the levels of antisocial behaviour in our areas. It has not cured it – I would not say it had. Extra PCSOs – can I say thank you very much, administration, for providing extra PCSOs. (*Applause*)

We have had a whinge over there about if you vote for our budget, for the administration's budget you are voting in favour of. I will tell you what – if you do not vote for it you are voting to say we do not want you to have any PCSOs in your ward; we do not want you to put £10m into the social services budget and we do not want you to spend more on the capital programme that we have ever done before. Your choice. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: First things first, Lord Mayor. I am sorry to disappoint everybody but I am not resigning. I know that is the big let-down of the afternoon. I will tell you why I am not resigning – because I made a promise which I absolutely hold to and my colleague, Councillor Wilson, has touched on it. What I said and what Peter Harrand said, what Andrew said was we will not make a vulnerable disabled person redundant at Roseville and nor will we. If we do I will resign. That is how it is.

There has been much talk of Roseville. Let us just dissect the matter. Tell the people at Roseville with pleasure, Geoff. Tell them this – and I make no apologies for it. If it is to give people dignity and work they must have the work to do – not sit there like poor supported people with no dignity because the ALMOs created by your government will not give them any work. That is the truth, that is the situation we have inherited.

At its peak Roseville made £12m-worth of windows for the houses of this city. Because the ALMOs will not give them the work that, if we are lucky, will drop to £2m next year. It is in nobody's interests – certainly not the people we are trying to help – to have them sat there twiddling their thumbs. That is not dignified, that is not helping them. That is not giving them anything. They should be given proper, constructive jobs and so I make no apologies at all that if we say to people who are sat there without anything constructive to do there is a position for you elsewhere in the Council where you can have proper dignified employment. I make no apologies for saying to those people you can move there instead of staying in a half empty shack. No apologies, and nor do I make any apologies for the fact in this world if you are able-bodied you do not benefit at the expense of those who are not and in truth that is what has been going on at Roseville. 50% of the employees there were able-bodied – not disabled. It was not a sheltered workshop at all and it is quite right if there is no work that those people must take their chances elsewhere. I make no apologies. We are here to protect the vulnerable, we are here to protect the disabled. That is what Roseville will do, that is what it will continue to do.

There has been much discussion on social services. Let me tell you this is what we are not going back to. We are not going back to the way you ran social services on a regime of boom and bust when everybody knew it was a lottery if the service could be delivered when you asked for it because the money was never there. December, January, February, March under your regime – no chance, the budgets had gone and what you are proposing here is a return to that and the public need to understand it.

Look at your amendment. It proposes a £2m increase over our budget in social services, but if you listen to the shopping list that has been announced on your side - the Breece, the eligibility criteria, the Homecare, everything you have said – that will cost £6m. You tell me, you tell us, you tell the public and you tell the vulnerable who you are promising complete thin air to, you tell them how you can deliver £6m-worth of services with a £2m increase in the budget. You cannot. It would be the most grotesque return to what you used to offer up – hollow words and absolute frustration to people. At least - and it is tough for us - if we say, "This is what you will get", that is what people get. We will not say to them, "You can have this" and then stick our heads in the sand for four months of the year because the budget was inadequate in the first place. (*hear, hear*)

Councillor Wakefield talks about Walter Mitty. We will come back to Walter Mitty in a minute. Councillor Wakefield and the issues he raised – it is interesting. He spoke for 37 minutes. For 21 of those minutes he did not mention his budget amendment. That actually tells you – that is the true side of Walter Mitty – somebody who has got his head so far in the clouds he loses the thread and forgets that the budget amendment is what he was here to talk about, not everything else. (*Applause*)

The financial crisis that Keith Wakefield refers to – he is quite right that we have a £24m dependency on one-off sources of funding. That is correct, but let me ask you this, Councillor Wakefield – are you going to cut that £24m out of the budget? Which services are you cutting in order not to use, not to be dependent upon one-off sources of funding? Is it social services, a £24m reduction on social services? Where are you going to save that money, because if you are not, do not start talking about it because it is complete hollowness without substance.

Why are we in that position? We can point at all sorts of things but let us just look at business rates. When under the Tory Government – and you think it is fair game to talk about the Tory Government...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You used to.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Let me explain. Councillor Hanley will understand this, being a legal man I am told – he must because he has got a personalised number plate that says LLB, which I assume means legal, unless it stands for something else. We will not speculate on what else it may stand for.

Councillor Hanley will understand this in legal terms. Once you decide to introduce into an argument one side of the equation you are entitled to bring the other in. If it is fair game for you to talk about the poor deal the Council got from the Tory government, it is equally fair game for us to talk about things that they did right, let me say, in comparison to this Labour government. It is equally right – and I will come to this – for us to compare our administration with the mess you left us with three years ago, but I will return to that. Business rates were not taken away from this Council under the Tory administration. Today, under the Unified Business Rate Scheme, this city pays net to the Exchequer £40m a year. That is £40m of money raised in this city which goes to support Gordon Brown's fantastic dreams – he is another Walter Mitty.

If that £40m stayed in this city we would not be dependent upon Treasury management gains, we would not be dependent upon on-off sources of funding but unfortunately we have no choice because it is your government that has robbed that money from the pockets of the people of this city. That is the truth. *(Applause)*

Councillor Wakefield talks about, he has the temerity, the bare faced effrontery, to talk about capital programmes, which are projects which are massively over-spent. You have got the memory of an amoeba, in my opinion, that you cannot remember what you presided over only three years ago. A total overspend – and I accept £1 overspent is £1 we ought to try not to overspend, but the total overspend of all our capital projects that we are attempting to deliver will not amount to the overspend on just one of your famous efforts at South Leeds Stadium that was £12m over budget, 400% budget. That is what you presided over and you have the temerity to talk to us about massively overspent projects.

The newspaper. It is correct we wanted to make it self-financing but we have not been able to. We have reduced the cost of it from £250,000 to £100,000, which is more than you were able to do, and suddenly on the road to Damascus Councillor Wakefield is converted and sees the error of his ways and that is of his party for 24 years and the Council newspaper now should be scrapped.

I think we come to – and it might be a personal issue for me – the most breathtaking suggestion of all in your amendment was to do with international relations. What you said was that savings should be made by the Leaders of Council, senior politicians, going on international trips instead of officers. That is breathtaking. Do you not remember the leaflet that was circulated about Andrew Carter being on an international cruise when he was at MIPIM? Do you not remember the websites and the leaflets about my spending Council's money going to China? Do you not remember that? No, you do not remember that.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Twelve hundred quid the mobile phone bill was.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I will tell you what – do you want to repeat that publicly? If you do I will sue you, because every penny – repeat it. I give way to him to stand up and repeat that publicly. I give way to him.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Lord Mayor, I am not going to indulge in childish behaviour that we are seeing from the Leader of the Liberal Democrats. This is a budget speech. It is far more important. My heckle stands and that is all I have got to say. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Members, I have mentioned heckling already. I will not accept heckling. Please could you let the speakers continue?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, it depends how you want to take this comment but I think that just shows actually who has got the balls in this Council Chamber. Lord Mayor, the word "balls", if somebody checks in the dictionary, is a round, spherical thing which is kicked round a field usually.

What is startling, really startling about Keith Wakefield's amendment – and this is where if we have to draw on the comparisons – is that only three years ago he was in charge of this city and for 24 years prior to that the Labour Group were in charge of this city and it is appropriate that we compare factually what we have done with what you did and that the people of Leeds should understand if things were put back in your hands again not only would we face melt-down, to use your words, but there is absolutely no reason on earth to believe that you could deliver what you are now suggesting to the people of Leeds.

Let us look, for instance, at Council Tax. Not only are you all over the place on Council Tax – reduce it, increase it, reduce it – let us look at your record on Council Tax. Over the last seven years of your administration it increased by an average of 5.2%. In our three years in administration Council Tax has increased by an average of 4.43%. Why on that record should anybody with a peak increase of 9% - a peak increase of 9% five years ago – why should anybody in this city trust you with Council Tax or trust the mealy-mouthed words of your amendment?

Social Services. If you include the money we had to find to bale out your inadequate budget that increased 35% in three years. The average increase you managed in social services over the last seven years of your regime was £8m a year. The average increase under our administration has been £16m a year. Why should anybody believe now suddenly you are able to trump our spending on social services and increase it yet further when you were never, ever able to do it when you were in control?

Let us look at reserves, because the reserves are the sign of a prudently managed organisation. You took reserves in the last seven years of your administration down from just sort of £13m to £10m, a reduction of 30%. In our three years in this administration we have taken the reserves up from £10m to £13m, an increase of 30% whilst delivering record spending in every department.

Sickness. You make such a play every year of sickness under your regime decreased in the last seven years by an average of 0.1 of a day annually. In our first three years we have reduced sickness by 0.45 of a day. There is the difference.

Everything we do, I am afraid, we do four times better than you can ever dream of, which brings me back to dreams, because it was you that mentioned Walter Mitty and I wonder how much you know about who Walter Mitty dreamed he might be one day – a US Navy pilot, a surgeon, the assassin, the RAF pilot or a character facing the firing squad. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I certainly will be very brief and I had really decided not to speak today on the budget because there are people who know far more about these things than I, but I do want to pay

tribute to Keith's amendment. I know there is a lot of effort in that and I think there is a lot of good old-fashioned common sense.

I do know a bit about managing things and two of the nicest things that have happened to me since I have been a Councillor, one was acting as the Chair of Roseville – and I pay tribute to Councillors from all parts of this Chamber. I served with Ronnie for a while and with others and we tried to do our best and it was a very worthwhile company providing good employment and I know it is close to Don's heart.

The Leeds West ALMO, which is now no more sadly in my view – not everybody's view...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Are you not in the new one?

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: No, I am not there. There you are, you see, Andrew. Like other things you do not get everything right.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I saw it in writing.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Lord Mayor, to just return to Roseville, which is, I think, such an important company to people in this city. I think one of the reasons why Leeds West Homes were so supportive of them was that they were so good. They produced first class products. They had some difficulties on site that we tried to implement systems that would provide a better, safer financial company and, to be honest with you, it is very, very disappointing. I can truly understand the passion of one of my comrades here that when she talks about Roseville and the responsibility of employing people is very important.

I do hope that the new ALMOs – which I think everybody knows my view on that – are supportive and I do truly wish that they are successful. We will have to wait and see – we will have to wait and see.

Lord Mayor, I know, as I said at the beginning, I am not a financial person really but I know a little bit about managing things and I have to say that there is the odd £1.7m, £1.75m kicking about at the moment that is causing me just a bit of concern and I am wondering if colleagues on all sides of this Chamber might perhaps share that concern. That £1.75m is the amount of money it costs to run the group offices – that is the Labour office, Lib Dems, Tory, Green, etc. A big sum of money.

I often think – and I do not know what you lot think about your offices but I often think that our Labour office is under far too much pressure but the interesting thing about the cost of running those offices is this, that sometimes when we talk about Councillors and allowances they get, sometimes when we speak about MPs we worry about the amount of money they get with their car expenses, phones and all the rest of it. I am not uncomfortable with saying to you that on this side of this Chamber it costs about £12,500 per year to service this group of Councillors – a fair sum of money, relevant to the allowance that is paid.

Let me say to you or let me at least ask the powers that be, the managers, to think about what it costs to run your offices. The Tories, in excess of £20,000. The Lib Dems, in excess of £21,000. The Greens, in excess of £20,000-odd. This side, £12,500. Where on earth is the management? That is what is wrong with this Council. (*interruption*) No, no, you are not up to the job. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter to sum up, please. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, it seems like it is years ago since I stood up to move the resolution and I am conscious I only have ten minutes in which to sum up. I am sure some members over there will forgive me if I completely ignore their somewhat extraneous comments on the budget.

However, I have to say as the budget debate developed it became fairly obvious to me that it was – and I use these words advisedly – a beauty contest between successors for Councillor Wakefield. No wonder. I would have been much more accurately descriptive of what I witnessed had it not been for the fact we have got guests in the balcony and I did not want unduly to upset them!

We have not learned a great deal, have we, about what Labour would actually propose to do? I will come back to that in a moment.

Let me just deal with two issues – education and children’s services. I have to say, when Councillor Gruen – and this is all I will say about him – utters the words “Every Child Matters”, I feel like reaching for the sick bag.

My Lord Mayor, let me just tell you about the structure that we have put in place for children’s services. The structure has been described as the model for the future. Tell your Secretary of State – I will not repeat what I saw your moth utter, Councillor Gruen, but tell your Secretary of State because it was, in fact, the DfES who said it. A commissioning model – the Labour Government model. A successful model – all from your Government.

Education. I would have thought you could have been a little more circumspect, Councillor Wakefield, because 25% of our primary schools are outstanding. Who says so? Ofsted. Not us, Ofsted. The figure nationally is 9%.

I make no bones about this - and I know my colleagues do not either – there is a lot more to do. There is no complacency. Let me tell you this, do not denigrate the work of Education Leeds. Do not denigrate the work of the staff in our schools because they are doing such a damn sight better than what you left us with when you had the education function taken off this Local Authority. *(Applause)*

Let us have a look at what Councillor Wakefield was actually saying. We did not learn a lot. We learned two things. He wants to send Councillors on foreign trips and he is a socialist. That is very interesting. *(Laughter)*

I reckon that they made such a mess of criticising us leading the city that his members have said to him, “You have done it now because if ever we get back in none of us will be able to go anywhere again. You are going to have to get us out of that quick” so, of course, he has.

The other thing about Councillor Wakefield is this. The first year he was Leader of the Opposition he proposed a rate increase of 4.5%, just above what we were proposing. The following year he proposed a rate increase of, I think, half a per cent, quarter of a per cent less than we proposing and this year he has proposed an increase just above what we are proposing.

What does that tell us? It tells us he is a bit like the Grand Old Duke of York, who had ten thousand men, he marched them up to the top of the hill and he marched them down again. When they were up they were up, when they were down they were down, and when they were only half way up they were neither up nor down. Then that is not really the right comparison, because really he is the man from the Pru. He is the man from the Pru. Nothing so good as the man from the

Prudential Insurance. He is the man from the prudential borrowing. He is the man who every time we are short of money says, "Prudential borrowing".

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: And you have for roads.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Do you know how much in the last twelve months he has proposed that we prudentially borrow? £17m. He is here again proposing it again. Unbelievable. He has the temerity to tell us that this budget is a disaster - £24m of one-off spending and he has been proposing all year long prudential borrowing for everything going, as if it was money from Heaven. That is your problem, you do not understand. You do not understand the revenue consequences...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You do not.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: ...of borrowing capital.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Of course I do.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You clearly do not. The other thing we have learned is that it is a leadership-free zone over there. *(Laughter)* A leadership-free zone. They are so busy jockeying for position they ain't got a clue what they are doing. Let me just tell you the last time they heard an opposition spokesman propose in their budget presentation a reduction of £500,000 in the education budget. Listen what the comment says from the Finance Department:

"This represents a reduction in the increase in Education Leeds contract charge. This would need to be managed through a reduction in expenditure or an increase in the use of Education Leeds reserves and may impact on the services provided to schools."

He never once mentioned it in his speech. He did not even talk about the reduction that is in his budget. He never mentioned it.

What else did he do? Just have a look at City Services. He took out the money we have put in for the Waste Management Strategy. Let me just tell you, if we do not have a Waste Management Strategy that works in the next two years, his Government, his Chancellor of the Exchequer, will fine this Authority £8m. That represents 4% on the Council Tax. What we got from Councillor Wakefield was an exercise in avoidance. He made no attempt to spell out what his budget actually meant for the people of this city. He criticised us for having a strategy but produced not one single line that represented one of his own. It is the same with everything and then they have the cheek to talk about Leeds falling behind Birmingham and Manchester.

What they did not say was that Leeds is nationally recognised as the fastest growing city in the country and that is because of everything you can see happening out there. The people of Leeds are not daft, they can see what is happening and they know that you will damage it, like you have damaged everything else.

My Lord Mayor, the epitaph of Councillor Wakefield – and it will be, I think, the political epitaph – is that he bottled out of everything. He bottled out of tackling the crisis in social services; he bottled out of bringing the arena to Leeds.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You did nothing for four years. You bottled out of putting right the repairs, you bottled out of repairing the roads and footpaths and you bottled out of dealing with the backlog of repairs everywhere in this city. You failed. Everybody knows you failed. You cannot get it into your heads and you are still bitter as hell that we are working so well together.

Let me tell you, I know there are more arguments between you lot with each other than there are between any of us in three different parties. *(Applause)*

Let me tell you something else about working together. My colleague over there, I am surprised he did not say a lot more about Closing the Gap, because there is more effort going into Closing the Gap in this city in this last two years than ever there was under you. You dreamt up the slogan Closing the Gap – you did damn all about it. You are still members of a party whose Government has widened the gap between rich and poor in this country – widened the gap between those who have and have not. *(Applause)*

If you were men and women of real conviction you would tear up your Labour membership card and throw it on the floor there *(Applause)* but you will not do it. In the meantime the people of this city know we are doing a good job and we are going to go on doing a good job. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, if we could turn to vote.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: Recorded vote.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hanley has requested a recorded vote. Is that seconded?

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Seconded.

(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment)

THE LORD MAYOR: 93 Members present. 37 Members in favour of the amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield, one abstention and 55 against. Therefore it is LOST.

(A recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion)

THE LORD MAYOR: This time we have got 92 Members present, 55 Members say “Yes”, voting for the motion in the name of Councillor Carter, 34 abstentions and three against. Therefore it is CARRIED.

Members of Council, I would just like to welcome some visitors to our city of Leeds, friends from Cyprus in the gallery. Welcome to Leeds and I hope you enjoy your stay. *(Applause)* If I am not aware of any other members who are new to our city I hope you enjoy the city. Could you please join us for tea break round the back in the Banqueting Hall and we will start the Council meeting again in 30 minutes.

(Council adjourned for a short time)

ITEM 6 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXECUTIVE BOARD

THE LORD MAYOR: Members of Council, Item number 6 on the agenda papers. Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I move in the terms of the notice. I think all Members should have been circulated with an explanatory note and everyone's paper. It should have been on everyone's desk when they came into the meeting.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have a vote on this? All in favour? Show of hands, please? Any against? Any abstentions. (AGREED)

ITEM 7 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 7, Councillor Carter again.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I move Item 7 in terms of the notice, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All in favour? Show of hands, please? Any against? Any abstentions? (AGREED)

ITEM 8 – MINUTES

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move the Minutes in terms of the notice.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Second and reserve the right to speak, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Can I withdraw my comments, Lord Mayor?

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I refer to page 39 Minute 157 on Narrowing the Gap, Engaging in the Private Sector.

Lord Mayor, I welcome this initiative which is one of a number of innovative projects which include action on fuel poverty, financial inclusion and the setting up of the Corporate Contact Centre Academy.

By engaging with the private sector we move our commitment to Narrowing the Gap forward on a project that should really make a difference. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris to sum up.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I do not know what Councillor Lewis was meant to say – I will not second guess him but I am sure it was going to be all lovely and pleasant after the budget debate.

Andrew Carter said during the budget debate he was a little surprised I had not said more about Narrowing the Gap. I do not propose now to give chapter and verse on what is being done. I just want to again, if I may, underline the approach

that we are trying to take with the Narrowing the Gap that meets every Wednesday morning.

This may seem a little odd but I once more want to thank Geoff Driver for the very constructive, non-partisan way in which he is participating in that group. It may be an unusual way for an administration committee to proceed but nevertheless that is what we are doing without attempting to score particular political points in the work that that group is doing.

I am very hopeful that over the next few months we will have some new initiatives to announce and, of course, once Leeds Ahead get properly stuck into their remit of drawing money in from the private sector I am sure I will have a lot to tell Council on that particular initiative. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I just want to speak to Minute 177 on page 48, which is the Capital Strategy and Asset Management plans for the Development Department.

Lord Mayor, I particularly want to refer to the section within the report on Waste Management. At every occasion that the waste strategy has been discussed we have asked, whether it be at Executive Board in this Council Chamber, at Environment City and any meetings that we have had at all, for information about the location of the proposed incinerator.

We have been told that it is not possible to have that information although it has been clear that officers from the Development Department have been meeting to in fact discuss different sites. Now that we know that the budget has gone through for the PFI credits, the £130m, supported by the Greens, we still have not had a request for information.

If you look at the papers that cover the waste management part of the management plan, it says that:

“Securing sites and planning permissions represents the most significant risk to the successful delivery of the project.”

It goes on to say:

“The Council has commissioned a robust and comprehensive district-wide site selection exercise to identify sites which could be suitable for major waste facilities. Based on the study the Council is developing a study for developing the necessary land for these purposes and gaining planning permission by 2009 to coincide with the PFI contract closure.”

I would just like to repeat the demands of members on this side of the Chamber that if this study has been going on, could we be informed about it and we would like to know why there is this secrecy around the debate and why we are being kept in the dark. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor in response to Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I was hoping that Councillor Blake might be going to congratulate the administration on the robust

nature of the asset management plan. Still, we learn not to be too disappointed about these things.

As regards the particular issue that she raises, she has really answered her own question. Until we are briefed – and by “we” I am talking about the administration – and we see where, if indeed anywhere, a site has been identified, I do not see, quite frankly, it is very helpful – and I certainly have not been informed – to start scaremongering all over the place in the way that undoubtedly – undoubtedly – Councillor Blake and her colleagues will.

When it comes to the appropriate time and, indeed, when I have been briefed and I have discussed it with Councillor Steve Smith when our Chief Officers have briefed us both, then you can guarantee that it will be a matter in the public domain but at the moment we are a long way – a long way – from that.

What I regard as being extremely unhelpful is for a member of this Council to use blatant scaremongering tactics – for example to say that we have chosen a site at Skelton Grange when a planning application is being considered for industrial units. The lower Aire Valley, where that particular site is, is a prime regeneration site creating jobs for people particularly in East Leeds. So for Councillor Lyons to scare away potential investors is, quite frankly, disgraceful. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I withdraw, thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons, point of order.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Point of order. What Councillor Carter said has misrepresented what I said. What I said in planning, you have got to ask a lot of questions in planning and not sit there like a gooseberry to find out what is happening.

What I asked for, had this site been looked at for an incinerator and the answer was “Yes.”

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons, if you want to take part in the debate you can speak afterwards.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I am so sorry, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just to start, can I say everything we do, I am afraid to say, we do it four times better than you lot. I did not say that, Councillor Harris said that just a few minutes ago. He can listen or read the verbatim.

Can I talk about our strategy, perhaps a strategy that is not well understood and needs an awful lot of work on it. I remember when the administration, Lord Mayor, took over two years eight, nine months ago, and Steven it may have been stood up or it may have been David Morton – I cannot remember, I think David was in there at the time – sadly missed, David – but we always say that about you when you move over, don't we? They told us about a plan they had, did they not, to deal with amenity services. We would no longer send expensive trucks with staff around burning fuel and wasting time. We had this marvellous idea – if you put your bulky items next to the green bin, they will disappear. We all know the failure of that plan and when I contacted officers on many occasions which my colleague did also, we were told we have got a back-up, we are going to send a truck following the green bin who will then take it.

That one too failed because items like old settees or mattresses got wet and the staff pleaded health and safety and they could not lift them, so around the streets of Armley and my street we were growing couches and it did not work.

Quite frankly I do not know what the policy is now because on Monday I had some bulky items and I thought, I know the green bins do not do it but if I leave it next to the green bins the truck might come around and take them away, because quite frankly I did not know what to do and I am a Councillor. If I do not know I do not think many people out in Leeds know, do they? It does not necessarily follow but it is not a bad rule of thumb, Peter, is it? It is not a bad rule of thumb.

Anyway, I was not surprised to see my items still there with no follow-up to taking it away and it has come to live on my pavement. I have now rung up and I do not know how long it is going to be before it moves, but I would not quote that an example of doing things four times better than our administration, because it seems to me you have gone back to the old policy of ringing up the amenity waiting two or three weeks, if it is springtime when everybody is doing their garden you wait a damn sight more than three or four weeks, you wait a lot longer.

That to me was two policy failures straightaway. Not four times better, not once better. Actually going back to the old procedure, so at the best there I think it might be a scoreless draw like we had at Elland Road last week, although we desperately needed a win!

Interestingly enough I have taken an interest in recycling from Leeds City Council buildings, because we lecture to people, do we not, we tell the people, "You have got to recycle, you have got to put it in bins, you have got to save the planet. It is going to cost us £21m. We have got to do this."

I wrote to an officer and it was a very, very simple question I asked. I will not read the officer's name, I can show it to Steven afterwards. It was very simple, "Can you inform me the total tonnage of waste collected by DEOLA(?)" - that is the contractors who collect our waste - we do not trust your department - they are not good enough, the city bins, we have to get an outside contractor to do it. I know it is commercial waste, I will not go on that) - "from all Council-owned buildings and buildings our staff work from in Leeds. Could you also inform me the percentage of waste tonnage that is recycled?" and I am running out of time very quickly. I got an answer back and believe it or not, it said, "We collected 1800 tonnes and 8% was recycled in the last figures we had which was 2005/06." Not good enough. 1800 and 8% recycled.

They also had no data whatsoever on our schools and what was collected by DEOLA and they could not tell me any definitive answers regarding the amount of recycling that took place from social service homes and our buildings.

I honestly think if we are going to talk to people, tell them about recycling, that we had better get our own act right first, had we not? Yes? Thank you very much, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to say on this that I am pleased that Labour are going to join in the talks to do with the waste strategy. Also, yesterday we - meaning the City Services sub-group which consists of a few of us there including - I know that Councillor Lowe was interested and I know Councillor Lowe was invited on this trip to Doncaster to see the elected Mayor of Doncaster, the reason being that their recycling rates seem to be really excellent, so we wanted to learn why that was and if we could learn something.

We spoke to Mayor Winter, they are going to send us some information etc. Mayor Winter, by the way, you will be pleased to know does not agree with incineration, so he tells us.

I just wondered where Councillor Lowe was because I am sure she would have found it very fascinating had she been there like I was. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: I actually was in a Council meeting, a Scrutiny Panel Board, talking about worklessness.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: I speak to page 52, Minute 188, the Waste Review Group. I welcome the setting up of this group. I looked forward to my group representative vigorously debating the issues. I hope all parties will take the opportunity to deal with this issue that will affect this city and its inhabitants long after most of us will be here. It is key, it is important and should not be about scoring political points. While some administration colleagues and myself have agreed to differ on parts of the waste strategy, the only way that we can get a sustainable long-term solution is by constructive engagement and I believe that this body is that vehicle.

I will just pick up on what Councillor Ann Blackburn said regarding Doncaster, which I had a full report on last night. (*Laughter*) Seriously, in my view the Leaders' Working Group should consider repeating that trip because I think it might be useful.

In the discussions I have had with officers with regard to the waste strategy, one officer described the current situation as like trying to nail jelly to the wall. By sensible discussion through this group it might well result in the jelly becoming a bit more solid and arriving at a sustainable position that has cross-party support. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Jim, it is interesting. I was listening to your colleague Allison earlier in the day and she said that she would better target education and awareness. She could perhaps target at you, Jim. You acknowledge that you do not really know what is going on.

Keith Wakefield said earlier that he did not want gimmicks and headlines, he wanted commitment and action. Commitment and action lead to results and if I tell you that – these are not results that I have conjured up out of thin air, these are from the Audit Commission in the Best Value User Satisfaction Services for 2006/07. I can tell you that in Leeds 63% of people are satisfied with cleanliness standards – that is the second best of any of the core cities. 82% of people are satisfied with the household waste collection to which you referred – that is second equal of the core cities. 70% of people are satisfied with waste recycling – some of those may have been recycled – that is the best core city performance. 86% of people are satisfied with waste disposal at their local sites – that is first equal of all the core cities. I do not really think Leeds has a great deal to answer for on that. Yes, we would like it to be better and yes, we will be striving to make it better.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: What about recycling from Council buildings?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: I am glad you have reminded me of that, Jim, because I was about to move on to something else. I spoke earlier about education and awareness and if you actually look, City Services is responsible for the collection of domestic waste. Well, I am sorry, this is not a domestic building, schools are not domestic buildings – that is the responsibility of another department. I suggest you put down a question perhaps at the next Council to one of my colleagues who would better be able to answer that one for you.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: It is waste created in this place and we are not recycling it.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Indeed it is but it is not my direct responsibility, Jim, so sorry about that.

Moving on, I hear cries of “incinerator” a thousand times, I think, from over there. I was quite intrigued to read a letter in the Yorkshire Evening Post on 24th January from Councillor Allison Lowe, Lead Member for City Services and it was in response to some readers writing in expressing a lack of Labour response in relation to waste management in Leeds. She praises Greater Manchester who have not put incineration in their waste strategy. She has come up with a wonderful solution – a plant which sucks all the air out of waste leaving briquettes which can then be used as a fuel by industry. What a wonderful solution. There is perhaps a chemical engineer - it sucks out all the waste and all the evil poisons and everything. I am afraid it does not, so the Greater Manchester is an interesting one. She thinks that is a safe solution, unlike the unpopular project such as an incinerator.

She is against incineration, Keith is fundamentally opposed to incineration. Here is The Rose that is going round the city at the moment, “In Labour controlled cities like Manchester incineration has been rejected.” So, let us look at what is happening in Manchester. Here is the press release from the Greater Manchester Disposal Authority:

“The 25 year PFI contract which has just been signed is the largest waste services contract to be let in Western Europe”

and it goes on to talk about the solution and the solution includes:

“A new and existing thermal recovery facility.”

So that is the existing incinerator in Bolton and a brand new incinerator to be built, so I question why is Allison saying no incineration but promoting Manchester? It has become obvious this afternoon because in the budget debate this afternoon Allison said there is not going to be a PFI bid were she in charge. If there is no PFI bid there will not be an incinerator of either the type that we are proposing here or in Manchester.

I hope that in the budget proposals for next year you will be building into those proposals the LATS fines which the people of Leeds are going to be saddled with if you were in charge. Of course, what you are going to spend that money on instead of a PFI bid is to extend the garden waste collection scheme. That is wonderful. It will get recycling up but it will not get recycling up enough to avoid the LATS penalties. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, page 40, Minute 164, the Respect Agenda. This Government has pumped millions of pounds into the Respect Campaign, as I was saying earlier, making Leeds a Respect Zone. I think you will all agree it is fantastic news and a boost for the city. All you have got to do is lead by example and start using all the powers the Government has given you. I am not talking about the PCSOs.

We do think that the PCSOs should be put into the areas where the need is greatest. *(interruption)* Hang on, hang on. We would take extra PCSOs from the two safest wards in the city and place them in areas like Gipton and Burmantofts *(interruption)*, place them in areas...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTOR: Which two areas are they, then?

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: ...like Gipton and Burmantofts where you have already embraced such an approach. (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTOR: Who are you taking them from?

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Lord Mayor, I cannot go on like this. What about alley-gating, which is seriously underused in Leeds? Alley-gates are needed across the city. There is a massive problem in my ward with antisocial behaviour. In Chapel Allerton, St Martin's ginnel has been knocked back for alley-gating despite antisocial behaviour, vandalism, theft and drug dealing. What about the ginnel in Newton Lodge Close? I can only give examples about my ward. What about the ginnel in Newton Lodge Close? Scenes of antisocial behaviour, fly-tipping and vandalism are a regular occurrence, yet the Council refuses to close it down.

The now notorious alley behind Avenue Hill, an area of concern for the whole community – scenes of prostitution, drug dealing, drug taking. More disturbingly, this alley was the recent scene of assault and rape. How much evidence do you need to get an alley-gate installed? How many residents must complain before action is taken? How many properties have to be robbed before action is taken?

We just about found an extra hundred grand which would provide alley-gating for every problem ginnel we have got in the city. Maybe the next time your Leader, David Cameron, gracing us with his presence on one of his jaunts to the north, you could take him out to the areas where the real problems are. There are estates in our communities that are being neglected by your administration, areas that are rife with problems, areas that are suffering – really suffering – because all you lot care about is headlines. (*Laughter and applause*)

You need to start putting the people of Leeds first. That is the truth. You need to start putting the people of Leeds first. The people of Leeds want to see greater investment in community safety, they want to see the Proof of Age Scheme reinstated so that youths cannot buy alcohol and drink on the streets. They want to see alley-gates installed in troubled areas. They want to see offenders dealt with before they become a public menace. They want to be able to leave their house in a morning and not worry about coming home to find a broken window or a broken door, or their belongings pilfered by a burglar. They want to be able to walk down the street without fear of being mugged, assaulted, raped, stabbed or beaten up no matter what time of day or night.

I want to see a city that is vibrant and prosperous but I also want to see a city that is safe, a city that cares about the people living within its boundaries; a city that protects the people who are proud to call Leeds their home.

Let us put them first. Let us put them first; let us see some action. No more words, no more vote-grabbing photocalls or sensationalist headlines – just action. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I have a word of advice for Councillor Rafique. He should take his complaint to the correct venue – London. We would have alley-gating had not the Government changed the rules and insisted that we had to have a responsible officer, so all the work on alley-gating went into reverse until that appointment was made.

I think he should get his facts right before he stands up and I do get rather alarmed at the purple prose that he uses when he claims that lack of alley-gating has led to rape.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, at the suggestion of the Labour Chief Whip, I might say, could I move to suspend Council Procedure Rule 14.14 at the end of this item to bring the meeting to a conclusion.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HANLEY: There is obviously something wrong with the gentleman's hearing. It was not at my suggestion. Lord Mayor, there is something obviously wrong with my colleague over there, his hearing. It was certainly not at my suggestion.

COUNCILLOR HAMILTON: It was either yourself or Councillor Selby but it certainly came from your side.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have clarity? Mr Rogerson wants to speak.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Simply to be clear whether the reference to this item was a consideration of the Minute of the Executive Board, so to the end of this total item? The proposal then, Lord Mayor, is that at the conclusion of the Minutes of the Executive Board, notwithstanding the Council Procedure Rules relating to closure, they be suspended. All of the Minutes under item 8. At the conclusion of that item, the meeting simply be closed. That is my understanding of what is being proposed.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have a vote on this, please?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Are we allowed to speak on this or not? (*interruption*) I will take advice from the Lord Mayor and nobody else. Sit down.

THE LORD MAYOR: Silence, please. We will have a look, if everybody can stay to their seats, please.

THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES: The relevant Council Procedure Rule regarding suspension does not say that it has to be without discussion, so therefore I assume there can be discussion.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I propose that we carry on with the agenda exactly as before. I was proposing that we do not do as, I think, Councillor Carter or Councillor Hamilton was suggesting – that is ceasing the Minutes when we get to the end of this particular block of Minutes. That is what I understood was being proposed. It came as a surprise, it seems very unusual. It is not surprising that, quite frankly, some of you want to cause debate to cease, although I dare say we all might like that, but I would certainly oppose it, because I think in terms of the next item, Governance, there are issues which you may well wish to hide and stop being discussed, but it will not stop it.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we have a vote in favour of Councillor Hamilton's proposal?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Can we have a recorded vote, please?

THE LORD MAYOR: A recorded vote. I will pass on to Mr Rogerson.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: The motion before the Council in substance is that this Council meeting be concluded as and when the deliberations on Item 8 have been finished and the vote taken on that item. That is the conclusion on all Minutes of the Executive Board and other bodies. That is the proposal in the name of Councillor Hamilton.

(A recorded vote was taken)

THE LORD MAYOR: 89 members present, 51 yes in favour of Councillor Hamilton, one abstention, 37 against. Therefore the motion is CARRIED. Thank you. We will continue, so Councillor Harris.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, some minutes ago now Councillor Rafique's contribution was frankly disgraceful. To somehow make a leap between the issues of alley-gating to the suggestion that it is not safe in Leeds to walk about without fear of rape, murder, mugging and Heaven knows what, it is atrocious.

Leeds in, in essence, a safe city. Of course we have crime but, for Heaven's sake, we do not have the levels of shootings that go on in Manchester and London. For you to use those type of scare tactics, I really hope the papers do not pick that up because not only is it damaging to the reputation of the city if people get the idea that this is some sort of Wild West where if you walk outside your front door you are dead or you are duffed up, what do you think is going to happen to people who want to relocate to Leeds, who want to bring significant investment to this city? It is seriously irresponsible.

Worse still, it plants in the minds of the people of Leeds that there is a suggestion that we are not safe on our streets and we *are* safe on our streets. The incidence of crime in this city is low compared with so many places and it is very often the fear of crime that damages a person's quality of life as opposed to the actual reality of crimes being committed. You really ought to be more circumspect about what you say. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I had no intention of speaking but since the city has been tarnished, how much people have fear of crime, I think I need to tell the opposite Councillor, Harehills is not far from the ward that you represent and I am sure that you have many friends and members of families living in my ward. Perhaps you should walk around and see the impact that we have created on the alley-gating schemes up and down in Harehills via our Area Committee money and, if you are not familiar with the system, perhaps we can teach you a thing or two.

Can I also – I can understand being a newly elected member there are many things the newly elected Member of Council needs to learn but to score cheap points just before the local elections, just to score a cheap political point just before the local elections is the time for panic for my opposition Councillor from Chapel Allerton. Perhaps you should have worked with your officers and Area Committee when you got elected three years ago. Now people, no doubt people are complaining in Chapeltown to you as Councillors perhaps that you should have learned from the Liberal Democrat Councillors down the road in Harehills the work that they have put in to create a better environment for the residents.

I leave on those notes, my Lord Mayor. Please do not tarnish the city that we all respect and we are proud to represent and live and work in the city and that goes across the city. There are not any wards that are going to take the PCSOs and we do not believe in divide and rule policy. We would like to give an equal amount of services across the city. I think you are bringing what your colleagues have brought many, many years ago. This ward will have more resources and other wards will

have less resources so cut it because people out there are not going to support your proposals. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Councillor Akhtar, enjoy today and enjoy the next Council meeting because it is your last one. It is your last one.

Some of us have longer memories and some of us remember the riots and the part that you played in those riots. We remember your role in those riots and we remember all of that, so you do not teach us any lessons whatsoever. No, you teach us no lessons. We know that you are a hothead, we know what you are like. That is it. (*interruption*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen...

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, that is the most outrageous assertion I have ever heard in this Chamber. He has to be reprimanded for that. He has directly accused a person of starting a riot, of participating in a riot. It is outrageous – outrageous.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I did not. I said we remember your role. I did not say any more than that. We remember your role.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter, Leader of Council.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, this is the second time in two consecutive Council meetings when a debate has taken place with some very, very unfortunate undertones.

I am not prepared to excuse the comments made by Councillor Gruen. As a senior member of this Council, a man of long standing, the words were very clear, the implication was very clear. He was trying to implicate Councillor Akhtar (*interruption*) – yes he was. He may have spoken – please, Lord Mayor, may I be heard?

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes. Leader of Council.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: He may have spoken in the heat of the moment but you know that we have spoken about the last Council meeting when certainly in tenor some comments that were made about a cemetery were most unfortunate. I think everybody accepts that that was unfortunate.

For Councillor Gruen, who is not only a senior Councillor but a man in a senior position outside this Council, to comment as he has clearly implicating Councillor Akhtar in something extremely unpleasant and then made worse when Councillor Harris rightly challenged it I watched Councillor Gruen's face and, quite frankly, it was about to break into half a smile. Peter, this is not a humorous matter.

I would strongly suggest, Lord Mayor, that if this debate is going to continue you might consider asking us to adjourn for a while.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, could I just pour oil on troubled waters, though not with a view to setting a match to it? I think when Councillor Carter becomes most pontifical and most calm and most considered we have to look out. I think if someone has broken a rule - no matter what it may be – inadvertently or deliberately, then that ought to be established. Then when that has been established we determine what is the appropriate course of action.

At the moment everybody's recollection of what was said and how it was said varies. I have been told it referred specifically. I am told the words did not – I understood "your role" was said. When we get the verbatim – and we can ask for the verbatim quite quickly – we can then refer it. We have a system internally for determining these matters but I would defend anybody's right to speak out and say anything her or she honestly believes within the normal confines of this Chamber.

You lot – and I use the term that Councillor Carter uses about 'this lot over here' and he usually gives is with the one finger – he normally says, "You lot." I will use that phrase just once but you lot take offence so easily but when you are doling it out you do not have one iota of thought for how it is done.

Quite frankly, I think there used to be a time when in this Chamber there was a degree of not sobriety almost, but certainly a good deal of better behaviour than it is now, Councillor Cleasby – much better. There was a courtesy and a dignity and if you gave way to somebody they would stand up and say it and then you would stand up and they would sit down. There was none of this haranguing. Now what everyone is trying to do is either going to make a martyr of someone or attack someone on those grounds rather than on the issue they are debating and I think, quite frankly, it is time this Council settled down a bit and you, Lord Mayor, were to exercise, as you have done very well now, your calming influence on our colleagues over there.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Councillor – whatever his name is, I cannot remember now – Councillor Atha has asked for the matter to be established. I therefore, under Procedure Rule 14.14 (iii), ask for Council to be suspended so that we, the Leaders, may have the verbatim read back to us, and that is what I am putting. We want the verbatim read back to us and then we will resume the meeting.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can I suggest that if that is carried it is all the members of Council, not just the Leaders?

THE LORD MAYOR: Those in favour? Those against the proposal by Councillor Harris? Any abstentions? Therefore Councillor Harris's motion is carried and we shall adjourn for about ten minutes.

(The Council adjourned for a short time)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen, would you like to say something?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, thank you for the opportunity of clarifying my earlier remarks. It is clear from the verbatim report that there were two words within my total contribution which I did not mean to use and I therefore apologise for using those two words.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. We are summing up. Anybody else to speak on that item? Councillor Gruen, it is your turn again, on page 33 Minute 147 and 148.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I am going to speak on page 33 Minute 147 and 148, which refers to the primary and high schools results which came before the Executive Board.

My first comment is that I am sorry the reports were taken below the line and that the Executive Board decided to take the reports below the line, because

openness is the best way forward. Traditionally – and I know from the portfolio that I have – in the inner cities lots of added value is added by teachers and non-teachers, staff, the community, throughout the primary lives of children. There are some extremely hard-working people who are intent on making certain that our attainment and our standards go up.

I think the debate earlier during the budget referred more to what the LEA was doing in supplementing that drive for higher standards. I have to say that it does seem to us that Education Leeds were more robust, if you wish, at one stage and that of late perhaps they are not as robust in supporting and bringing in excellent people at times of the greatest need for schools. Only tough action will actually bring about that leadership and management which gels into better results.

There is no doubt in my mind – and again it has to be said – that in some of our outer area schools that same added value is not there and that some schools are coasting, plateauing more than they perhaps should. We need to look at that and ensure that children's, pupils' futures are not compromised by a lack of determination, by a lack of tracking and by tracking some of us mean not just the best pupils but those who are on the path of not gaining anything. Those are the pupils actually we worry most about. How are we supporting them?

By not having an open debate, by having this culture of secrecy which we have referred to on a number of occasions, here again are two reports which could be opened up.

Let me give you the example of one of the schools in South Leeds at Cockburn. That headteacher came out quite openly and objected to the way that Ofsted report turned out. Some of you will know that I publicly supported him and his staff through the press and Councillor Bale followed fairly quickly on from that as well. Actually I think sometimes the community will gather around the school if they perceive Ofsted not to have done as good a job as they should have done. The new Ofsted framework undoubtedly, with much less lengthy and intensive visits at schools, has put more schools into categories of late and that is a problem. I think it is a problem we face up openly and together and we support the schools in moving forward.

I think that is the message that I want to get across. Hiding it away does not help anybody but discussing it openly and supporting those schools openly is by far the better way.

Lord Mayor, I also want to refer to the Minute about the Children's Trust which comes I think on page 50, Minute 182. Just in passing to say I really would like Councillor Brett to re-engage with Members of Council at Area Committee level and elsewhere. We do feel at the moment totally extraneous from the process and more effort, I think, has to be made to engage us as stakeholders in the work on the Children's Trust that is going on at the moment and I hope he can promise that he will do so. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR MURRAY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Page 34, Minute 149, Great Preston Primary School. A little village, a little school in England's green and pleasant land. All I simply want to do is to welcome what I see here, that the news that the capital has eventually been released to complete the job of putting the two schools on one site, so I do not suppose I have got much to grumble about.

I just want to say that I do not know if Richard or Richard – any of the Richards – have actually been to the school but if they did they would have probably found out that what it is, it is a small school, the infants' school, which obviously was not built this century, Richard – it was not built last century, it was actually built the century

before, so it probably is the oldest school in Leeds. I might be wrong but I think it is. You can understand really why the money is welcomed but not only welcomed, it is necessary. It will put right what Ofsted criticised and that was the state of the building. Ofsted said the staff were great, the SMT team and all the staff are doing a good job in difficult situations on a split site. That will put that right.

The only thing to add really is, it could have been done by now. A year ago the builders were on site, they were committed, they were doing some extension work to the hall and to the kitchens, I believe, and that building could have been done. If that work had been allowed to continue there would have been less disruption, no criticism from Ofsted, the staff, the kids and the families would have been delighted and, of course, all of that would have happened – under a Labour budget all of that would have happened by now. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I speak on Minute 38 and I do so on the item on BSF schools and PFI schools. I would have no doubt, and I am sure that none of us do have, about these schools providing the best environment possible for learning for our children.

What I do have doubt about is whether the portfolio holders are doing enough to encourage these schools to make sure that our children participate in sport and health and I will tell you why, because we are all now beginning to pick up about the real growing generational problem of parents having to bury their children because of heart problems because of overweight. That is not sensationalism, it is actually borne out of a lot of research in terms of the current health of our children and it is really heartbreaking to know how many parents will have children well overweight and suffering from a range of illnesses.

I know that Leisure are doing their bit in terms of providing for a growth in sport participation and I think you have got 276. I have absolutely no problem with the Leisure's attempt – and in fact we are trying to encourage and support from our own Ward. What I do see, judging from the Executive Board, is that we have 34% of our schools – that is 97 sites – that are closed to their community to participate in sport. You have this scenario of the best provisions you could find for miles located in the school and yet children locked out who belong to that community. They are walking past the best provision in the city and will not be let in.

I would say that I think this is something that the portfolio holders need to address. You cannot have modern facilities turning their back on communities and young children. It was made even worse the other day when I listened to a Radio 5 programme. The Radio 5 programme said that Leeds City Council had banned sport within schools. Frankly, I did not believe it. I had the same reaction. I said, no way would we, given all the problems we have with health and all the commitment we have to children taking part in healthy pursuits, want to ban sport inside of schools.

So I phoned up Education Leeds and guess what? In November 2005 Education Leeds banned all sport inside of schools, which is an absolute scandal. They did it on health and safety grounds.

I would say to both of the portfolio holders, Councillors Richard Brett and Richard Harker, this is a scandal and it is time that we started to open up community and school provisions in the day they are talking about extended schools, the day they are talking about schools at the heart of communities, it is time we did more than sit back and allow our schools to be closed to local children. I hope that is something taken up urgently and soon and particularly in relation also to the banning of sport in playgrounds. It is an absolute scandal as well. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I refer to page 51, Minute 185 on the Prince Henry's Grammar School. A bit like Councillor Murray I am thanking the portfolio holder because we managed to find through our own capital receipts rather than through a grant from Government the funding which is most needed for the science facilities at Prince Henry's. Prince Henry's, as many of you know, did have the benefit of an Ofsted. That Ofsted did say - I hate to say this because it is in my Ward but I will – the best school in Leeds and the only problem it had was the quality of the school buildings.

I know that we did approach the Government because it was actually a Government inspector who said the school was in a poor physical state. We approached the Government to see about provision of a grant. The Government refused to provide that grant. Some cynics among us say that if Prince Henry's had been a failing school then perhaps it would have got a grant but because it is so successful it does not. Obviously the Ward members lobbied and we have got a partial success here with this capital fund. On behalf of the people and the pupils of Prince Henry's can I say thank you on their behalf. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I speak on page 38, Minute 155. Keith, I am not quite sure if you were actually talking also about the other report that was elsewhere on the Exec Board report in terms of access to sports pitches as well.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No, just schools.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: It is a point that you made elsewhere, though, in terms of the access within schools and it is valid to talk about the sports pitch provision which we aired fully at Executive Board. That is not a new issue, though. That is something that was going on previously and that is something that we are committed to address, to work with schools, to get better access for all communities. To make out effectively that suddenly it is a new phenomenon...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is more than a phenomenon. PFI.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: ...that communities are not being allowed access to sporting facilities within schools has been going on a lot longer than this administration came into power and that is what I thought we had all recognised in terms of playing pitches within that relevant Exec Board Report. If that has been extended that is a different agenda and a different matter but it is not a new phenomenon in terms of the Authority dealing with schools and gaining access to those facilities.

COUNCILLOR BALE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Board I wrote in December to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools to point out a number of aspects of the Ofsted inspection regime that were causing us concern. Contrary to what Councillor Gruen said, I wrote prior to his letter in the Yorkshire Evening Post - I think my letter was in December; his was in January – to express this real concern over a number of aspects of the Ofsted regime.

We were concerned, for example, that schools were being described as 'inadequate' whereas at the same time as they were publicly acknowledged as being improving schools, but what sticks in people's minds is the classification 'inadequate'. We were concerned that in a number of cases, because the categories had changed, schools that had previously been described as 'very good' were now being described merely as 'good', giving the impression again that there had been some worsening in performance when, in fact, it was in many cases improving. We are also concerned that in some cases inspectors appear to be arriving at schools with pre-conceived

ideas of the school's performance based entirely on very, very skeletal statistical information.

We pointed out in that letter to the Chief Inspector that morale in schools is a very delicate flower; that the confidence of parents, of teachers, of governors and of children themselves is something which needs to be preserved, supported and enhanced and not in any way damaged.

Speaking now not as Chair of Scrutiny but in my personal capacity as a Councillor, I now offer the same advice to colleagues opposite. The morale of children, of teachers, of governors, of parents is not helped by the sort of rash remarks that have been made in this Chamber today under the budget item about the performance of Education Leeds – I think it was by Councillor Gruen, it may have been by Councillor Wakefield. It was certainly one of those socialist comrades – I have discovered today that those two words are now allowed again. It was certainly one of those Councillors who made this point, that they were concerned about the performance of Education Leeds. Councillor Gruen has said this evening that he feels the performance of Education Leeds is no longer as robust as it was. I have to say it seems to me to be extremely robust.

I am sure Councillor Harker will be able to deal with the way in which performance of children in our schools is indeed changing over time. I have to say that my personal impression is that where there are problems of under-achievement their roots go back quite a few years to a different administration.

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: And beyond that.

COUNCILLOR BALE: I am not sure, Geoff, about more than 27 years ago. I do not go back that far – perhaps you do. I am quite sure that when there was a failing administration, a failing education authority, it was ever likely that children's performance in schools would be damaged and clearly it was. Things are now on the up and I am delighted, Lord Mayor, that is the case.

I would reiterate the advice that we have given to her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. Please be careful. We are talking about vulnerable people. We are talking about often, when we are talking about schools that are being classified as 'inadequate' schools that are in a very delicate state of morale. It is for all of us to build and support that morale, not to make rash comments.

I will be saying to teachers – as I am sure other colleagues will – drowning men and women do tend to lash out in all directions. We have seen quite a lot of it today – and that they should not take too much notice of it, as we have not. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Bale, for your comments and for the letter you sent. I think for Ofsted inspectors to say to a head, "We cannot mark you up anything other than 'satisfactory' because your Key Stage results do not warrant it despite what is going on in your school" is a shame and I do hope that the inspection regime will alter in time. I have had the opportunity to talk to ministers about this even yesterday.

Keith, you took me by surprise. There is still sport going on in our schools. I know that for certain. As a governor I can never remember in the years that I have been a governor having anything come to the governing body of the schools where I am a governor that says sport should not be played. I wonder if it is sport in the playground at break time and that is what has been talked about and that is where the health and safety...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Your office has told me.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I will look into it. I do share your concern about school playing fields being under-used and school sports facilities being under-used, but I do have to point out to Council that, unlike the old days that we keep being reminded about, we are not a free agent any more. So much power has now been delegated to school governors and school governors are the people with the responsibility for letting and hiring out their sports facilities. Some of them decide that they want to rest their pitches, particularly in secondary schools, over weekends so the pitches are fit to play on during the rest of the week. They put their students' needs before that of the community. That is an argument we have to have with individual governing bodies if that happens.

Councillor Campbell, thank you very much for your comments. I am now going to have to run from the Chamber at the end of it because there is a whole raft of Councillors who, like you, were queuing at my door for capital investment. We have under-invested in places like Morley and Wetherby and elsewhere and I am being asked to deal with that, but we only have a £6m capital budget from DfES over three years.

In the case of Prince Henry's it is probably in the worst state of any of the high schools. We nearly lost an Ofsted inspector out of a window, I understand, when the window frame began to give way behind him.

We are pleased we have been able to help one of the schools and we will move on to the others as and when the money is available.

To Peter. You took me a little bit by surprise, Peter, because I thought you were going to say something else and I have prepared quite a lot to say back to you.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Say that anyway.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I shall say it anyway. You talked about leadership and management and the Education Leeds not being quite as robust. Interestingly your comments mirror the comments that I was making to Lord Adonis yesterday in London, and probably comments I will make on your behalf to Tony Blair when I am meeting him at 9.30 on Monday morning in Downing Street.

Again – and I am not making excuses – we are finding it increasingly difficult to persuade governors to allow us the use of their Heads to go into other schools. This is something that we have begun to meet in the last six or seven months. There is now a reluctance on the part of governors in their schools to release the Superheads, as we have sometimes called them, to go and monitor elsewhere.

Under the SIPs I think this will correct itself. I would also like to say and tell Council that we and Education Leeds are setting the most ambitious targets of any Authority in the country and are aiming to build on world-class learning that takes place here in Leeds.

Our young people deserve the best and they are going to get the best. Within that programme we are particularly going to concentrate, as we have done this year, in getting the NEAT target sorted out and we have done that. We are now looking at having better resources to help and support looked-after children, BME children, to make a real difference through study support, mentoring and other programmes.

It is important and you are right, Peter, that the good practice in many of our schools – and we have a lot of good schools in this city – is spread wider. Because of that we have this year put into place a management programme. We are actually concentrating, this is the main thrust of this year is getting good management into our schools, good tracking of our children, individual learning plans and all the things that go with that.

I would like just to point out we are catching up. Key Stage 2 results level 4 under yourselves 66% in English, now 79%; in maths 61% under yourselves, now 76%. The national average is 76% - we have hit it. Key Stage 2 is under our administration.

In Key Stage 3 it has gone from 60% to 70% in English; from 56% in maths to 75%. That puts us still – and I am not happy with Key Stage 3 results and I have let everybody know I am not – we are now 4% ahead the national average in English at Key Stage 3 but we are still 1% behind in maths.

I am talking about level 4 at Key Stage 2 and level 5 at Key Stage 3. I think I have gone on long enough. It has been a long night! I think we are doing a good job. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am getting a bit irritated, Peter, by this constant reiterating that Children Leeds is not wanting to engage with Councillors. Let me put this myth to bed. Hopefully if you listen carefully you will understand.

The first thing I want to say, quite clearly – the Children's Trust arrangements make no change to the powers of this Council and no sovereign power of this Authority is transferred to any legal entity anywhere else. We are not giving anything away.

There is considerable opportunity for Councillors to be involved in and influence the provision of children's services. Area Committees will have a direct relationship with their local Children Leeds partnership in a way that reflects the Leeds Initiative District partnerships. It is still to be worked out, the locality enablers have been appointed. I know some of you are very keen to find out who is going to be working in each area but that has to be something that will wait for those enablers before that relationship is fully developed.

The Director and Deputy Director have attended all Area Committees at the end of last year to discuss matters. The Corporate Carers Group of ten Councillors has been established now to give some detailed work protecting our looked-after children. There have been in the last six months four Children's Seminars. There is another one next week. I do not think any other area of the Council has had more Children's Seminars to engage Councillors in what is going on. The one last month had just two Labour attendees. You really cannot claim that you are not having opportunities.

With Keith I have a lot of sympathy. Obesity is a very serious problem. I am an Obesity Champion for the Council. That is part of my role. I represent the Council on the Obesity Strategy Steering Group. I went just last week to the first meeting of at Watch It steering group. Watch It is a special campaign for parents and teenagers of children who have quite serious weight problems.

I agree with you and I agree with Councillor Harker that more needs to be done about working with schools but it would be wrong for me to leave this meeting with the view that somehow schools were not healthy places. We are applying for and we

have every prospect of succeeding in getting Healthy Schools Beacon Status. Anyone who thinks that our youngsters simply go into a classroom and sit needs to visit some schools. There are serious activities going on within classrooms. I suspect that the answer you have got may refer to playgrounds, it may refer to inside the buildings. In most Leeds schools there is certainly not any impression that they are not concerned about sport, obesity and fitness.

I hope we can work together to deal with the problems of schools that are closed out-of-hours. Councillor Harker has given you some of the reasons why that may be but I accept the case that more needs to be done and I hope we can work together to get a better deal for our children and young people. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRAHAME: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on page 48, comment 178, about the City Varieties. I am extremely pleased to hear that this project is finally going ahead because City Varieties is a unique, historic building and a great cultural asset for Leeds. It is important that this venue is preserved for future generations to enjoy and, as part of this, the building clearly has to be updated to ensure that it complies with health and safety legislation and that it is accessible for everyone.

These plans were originally put forward in 2003 and I am delighted that the administration have decided to stick with the original proposal. I only hope they are not going to try and take all the credit for a project which was originally put forward by a Labour administration. Sadly, this probably will not be the case although no doubt if anything goes wrong our friends on the other side of the Council Chamber will only be too happy to blame it on us.

Maybe you think I am being cynical but the fact that our colleagues are still trying to blame us for another of their disasters – namely the refurbishment of the Mansion which some of you may be amazed to hear has still not been completed. The Visitor and Education Centre yet they are still waiting for a private contractor to take over operations for the rest of the building their reason being that because of the change of the original plans by the new administration for the interior. There have been three companies interested that were deemed unsuitable. I have this information on good authority. Yet in the YEP on 13 February in the Letters page, it was stated that the Mansion is on schedule to open this summer. I am sure that we will look forward to this and Councillor Kendall, as you refer to the wholesale office plan of the previous administration, it is clear that it was more desirable than yours. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I refer to page 49, Minute 179, policy on the safety management of open water.

While I think that any members will agree that any safety on open water after the tragedy that happened a couple of years ago in Roundhay Park needs to be done, I think it is very, very important that where we have friends' groups or where we have users of our facilities, that we take them along with us with what we are doing and explain exactly what is happening and why we are doing it. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you Lord Mayor, good evening. I refer to page 48 Minute 178 and seek clarification on the amount in the paragraph under the word "Resolved – (a) that an injection of 835,000K into capital programme..." What I am trying to say is that the use of the decimal point and the 'K' seems to be somewhat confusing. What is it? Is it £8,835, is it £8,835,000 and so on and so forth

within that paragraph? It is not clear to people what it is that we are looking at. The figures are quite ambiguous. It is not clear.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I also wish to speak to Minute 179 on page 49. I think I just wish to say that at Executive Board every Member who spoke on this issue expressed their great sadness at the tragedy that led to this report and this policy coming forward to Council. It was a horrendous event, losing two young lives in Roundhay Park lake and I think there is a real recognition as to why this policy has been brought forward.

I just particularly want to refer to the plans that have been put forward for putting a fence up down the river frontage of Wharfe Meadows Park. I know at Executive Board Councillor Proctor said that he was mindful of the fact that there had not been adequate public consultation and that there would be more consultation with local Ward members and the Town Council and I assume that he will be going out to Otley to meet with members of the public to explain the decision that has been taken.

I think that it is fair to say to Council that out in Otley there has been uproar about this decision. There is a real understanding of the need to put safety at the top of the list but there is real concern, I think, in the town that this particular solution has not been properly thought through or consulted on and there are concerns that putting a fence up next to the river actually might have serious implications about safety for young people who feel that it is a challenge to climb over the fence and then find that people cannot get over to rescue them if they get into some difficulty. I welcome the fact, John, that you are going to engage in more public consultation.

The other part of the report that I want to refer to gives a very clear understanding of the important role that education has to play in the whole issue of risk and water safety, and actually at Prince Henry's there is a swimming pool attached to the school. It is very, very well used by the local community and part of the reason for that is that the community was involved in fund raising for the pool and they feel very much that it is their facility. Indeed, there have been great concerns about water safety in the past and I think – and I might be wrong – that it was under Councillor Neil Taggart's time at Leisure that we actually introduced a ten penny swim in the summer holidays to encourage children – I knew I would get this wrong, it is Councillor Nash, I give you all credit for this.

The serious point is that there is recognition that young people do need to learn to swim so that they can, if they do get into difficulty, they are much better placed to cope with it.

I would just, therefore, like to ask Councillor Proctor why it is when we have such a heightened awareness of the need for swimming and expertise and life-saving classes that a very, very well used session and facility at the pool on Saturday afternoons that is very, very well used by children has been cancelled on numerous occasions, therefore denying the chance for children and their families in the town to learn to swim together in a very safe environment?

Thank you. Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This is page 49, Minute 180. It is very good to know that two of the New Leaf Leisure Centres are going ahead. It is good to know that there still might be a leisure centre in East Leeds and it will be better still if we know when and where that is going to be. It is also good to know that there is going to be a consultation strategy. One of the things that I have said off and on over the last few months is that I do not think there has been much in

the way of consultation so far, so I look forward to that being in place so that residents and members will have a chance to say where would be best for East Leeds.

Members may know that today is Ash Wednesday – that is to say it is the first day of the season of repentance for believers who are encouraged --- (*interruption*)

Just wait. It is the day when believers are encouraged to come forward and have their foreheads daubed with ashes and repent of their sins. I was very intrigued to see in Minute 180 that it says that the progress towards an East Leeds Centre must now be tied with the EASEL proposals. I have been saying this for some time so I am glad that you have now changed your minds.

Changing your minds, my brothers and sisters, is the essence of repentance and as the scripture says, there is more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth than over 99 who already support the Labour view. (*Laughter*)

We hope that there will be more evidences of the transformation of the ruling group, more evidences that they have turned away from their wickedness, rebelled against superfluity of naughtiness, let the light of Labour shine in their hearts and show a new and better way to walk in from henceforth and for evermore and now let us have the next hymn. Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. (*Laughter and applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Excellent. You have cheered the Chamber up now after that. Councillor Atha.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Can I just say, I am a Catholic! (*Laughter*) We go to confession. Thank God he is not my priest because can you imagine what kind of things you would have to do when you came out, repentance.

I will go back to the Holy text which is before us, page 49, and Minute 178. What interests me is, to put this together, John Proctor, along with a paper I saw about Phase 2 of the Grand Theatre. Page 2 of that paper on Phase 2 of the Grand Theatre called for £2m to come from Leeds Grand Theatre. This calls for £1m from Leeds Grand Theatre. I just wonder which goldmine they have discovered in these excavations for the Grand Theatre, because we all know that the Grand Theatre had to borrow very extensively – prudentially borrow very extensively – I think about three-quarters of a million pounds. Councillor Feldman would remind me if I am wrong.

We were persuaded by officers – we were not persuaded, they tried to persuade us – to borrow £2m but we pointed out straightaway that that would be an absolute stupidity because it would mean immediately the company would be trading insolvently and we could not have that. We as Trustees were not prepared to do that. As a result of that we all got shifted off – that is one way of getting rid of those kind of problems.

The truth of the matter is the Grand is going to get a grant less, substantially less – I think maybe £45,000 or £50,000 a year less – because of this borrowing. The Grand Theatre has already got a financial problem to meet that gap.

Then we get these glib statements. It is going to produce another £2m for Phase 2 of the Grand Theatre and another £1m for the City Varieties. Quite frankly, I just do not see how that is going to be done, unless you are going to say yes, borrow the £3m, we will reduce your grant to minus £25,000, £20,000 or whatever it is a year, and then later on, years later, we will increase the grant or make you ex gratia

graded payments. If that is the scheme fine, but we really ought to know exactly what game is being played there.

When we come to Item 179 I want to say something which may not get any agreement all and may get a lot. I think if we are not careful we are going to try in society to remove every possible danger so that, quite frankly, we are in a position where we cannot move, we cannot breathe, we cannot do anything. Too damn dangerous to go on skates because you might fall and break an ankle or a wrist. Do not walk near the water you might fall in, so let's fence the beggar off at Otley.

Why stop just there? What about Wharfedale? What is wrong with others? Think of children's playgrounds. If we are not careful – we used to swing on the swings and swim in the river, we used to go swimming at Kirkby Overblow and all those places, but of course it is considered far too dangerous today. What is happening is kids are not getting the kind of excitement they would normally get in a healthy environment and as a result some may be going the wrong way.

I would say to my colleagues opposite, at the moment you are in charge and at the moment you have got the responsibility. I will tell you this, if accidents happen because you have behaved reasonably but not taken these excessive means to protect people from their own accidents, then I will guarantee to support you wholeheartedly, fully and publicly because unless we as a whole society take a stand and say so much, so far we have gone but let us go no further because it makes no sense at all.

When I say that I know that in the next year or so there will be four or five drownings. Each one will be tragic. Each one will be a great shame, but by God, we cannot protect that happening and there is one thing certain – there is a probability when we leave this Chamber tonight and go home – if it is tonight and not tomorrow morning – there is a great danger that one of us is going to be knocked over - quite likely – but we do not sit here all night, thank God. We cannot remove all dangers. Let us accept a certain level of hazard in life and not go beyond that. If this policy needs redrafting so that the officers who think they might be hung out to dry if things go wrong are given the assurance that no, we will back them and we will back them honestly, solidly and well in advance.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Lord Mayor, speaking on page 48 Minute 179 regarding the water policy. It is a very difficult position that the Executive Board found themselves in following the very tragic accident at Roundhay Park where the Coroner, as we know, said that the Council should have a water policy and ROSPA have started to look at various water bodies within Leeds and one of the first ones they have looked at is the River Wharfe in Otley, in my Ward.

The recommendation they came back with is to fence of a section about one-and-a-half miles long.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Crazy.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Yes, I agree. I totally agree. This section – parts of it, though, make sense because there is a children's play area and I think near that we need to increase the safety there and there are certain areas where I think any reasonable person would say yes, actually, that part of the riverbank is dangerous. There is a section along Bridge Avenue where there are steps into the water, where as I went past the day before yesterday there were young children feeding ducks as they came in off the water. I would hate to see people lose the chance to do that as they walk past.

The recommendation from ROSPA, the legal advice taken – and I sought to check this – was that if the Council did not accept the recommendations from ROSPA it would mean that senior Councillors and senior officers should – this is the legal advice given – if there was a tragic accident in the River Wharfe, if the recommendations had not been followed then those people who had taken the decision not to implement the recommendations could be charged with corporate manslaughter under the laws of this land. The result would mean that they could end up in prison. Obviously we have a duty of care to our officers that we do not wish this to happen.

Taking on what Bernard said, what we need to do is to try and get a way that we can absolve them from this threat because we have this duty of care. What I am looking at is I feel, along with my Ward colleagues – because I have not met a single person in Otley yet who approves of these measures and I think they are crazy. What we need to do is say to ROSPA, “You need to come back and look at the River Wharfe in particular and look at the open aspect of Wharfe Meadows park and you need to look at the fact that I would say for the last thousand years not one person has fallen into the river and drowned at that point.” I may be wrong but to the best of my knowledge nobody ever has. You take on board the history of that body of water and you look at it and say, where is the real danger? Occasionally people may have an accident. There are signs there which say “Dangerous water” – that should be sufficient. I feel that it is a very illiberal recommendation to prevent people from enjoying what is a wonderful park and to put the fencing on that section I think is to the detriment of the environment and I think that we should invite, as I say, ROSPA back to have a look and say, “Is this really the best that you can do?”

There must be an alternative solution to provide safety because at the end of the day we do not want people drowning if we can avoid it, but people come up to me and say, “If you are fencing off the river and there is no real perceived danger from that body of water, why don't you fence off roads because more people---”

A COUNCILLOR: We do fence off roads.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Yes, but not every road in Leeds. Where is this going to lead us? If the recommendation is to fence off the river there is no real danger at that point unless somebody is either foolhardy or very unlucky. Occasionally you are going to get tragedies, as Bernard says. You will get tragedies. As long as they are unavoidable ones that we have taken the proper measures as Councillors to avoid, then I think that we should be looking towards that. I am hoping that we can call ROSPA back and say, “Let us take a look at the River Wharfe and other bodies of water and are they really the best recommendations that you can come up with?”

I would just like to pick up on one last point that Councillor Blake made about the swimming pool at Prince Henry's. It is my understanding that there is a recruitment process going on to replace staff and it is down to staff shortage. I have been investigating this as well as a user of that pool and I have been trying to get staffing levels back and I understand it is due to a shortage of staff but I am working on that as well. Councillor Proctor may have something more to add. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to comment on Minute 178 on page 48 about the City Varieties and just to welcome the fact that this refurbishment project is in fact taking place. I remember when I first went backstage at the City Varieties and I think I was with you, Councillor Feldman, and we were looking around and suddenly I came across this huge door and on it had the word

“GOD”. It sort of took the breath out of my mouth until Ronnie just said, “Good Old Days, father, not who you might think!”

Can I also say as well how much I welcome the EASEL project and also the creation of the new East Leeds Leisure Centre? That refers to Minute 180 on page 49. It is good to see that Roger is on form and he has not lost any of his old skills as far as preaching is concerned and also that he is aware of it being Lent.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Do you think I preached like that?

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Perhaps that is why you left!

Can I just remind people that the people of Leeds had the sense, I think it was three years ago, they changed their minds. They saw the light and they got rid of you and they elected us. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Minute 179, page 49. Well done, Rick. I think this has finally reached an interesting and enlightening point in the Council – the first time I have really felt I needed to pay attention.

I think firstly the parallel that you have drawn with roads is very interesting because I cannot remember who it was but at the last Plans West or City Centre Plans Panel, it was drawn to our attention that the Department of Transport has at last found out that figures demonstrate that the more railings you put round the more accidents there actually are for pedestrians, so it actually does not help.

Secondly, could I ask that this discussion and exploration that you refer to does actually include all the Ward members whose Wards adjoin water because, of course, after Bernard spoke, we realised that our Ward of Kirkstall adjoins a great long stretch of the River Aire which goes, of course, from one end of the city to the other, and there will be waters along the canal. I cannot imagine reaching a point with ROSPA might look at Kirkstall Abbey and say that the whole of the abbey grounds have to be fenced off, or that the whole of the Kirkstall Valley Park and the riverside walks that we have been encouraging – and it is the policy of the Council and has been for many years - that they are all going to have to be fenced off. It is absolutely absurd.

There is a lovely little walk from where you live – what is it called? – Poole in Wharfedale - that goes to the main road alongside the river. Are ROSPA seriously going to say that all these public rights of way through our city along any stretch of water are going to have to be railed off? I am sure that legal advice – I seem to remember before from our great legal officers here--- (*interruption*) All right, whatever. You usually find that if one legal person says one thing you can usually find another legal person that says something else entirely, so I am sure there is room for further exploration on that.

However, I am sure that my request that you do keep all of us informed, but particularly those who have got any stretch of water in our wards, it would be a very interesting and important subject to pursue. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Let us deal with Wharfe Meadows first of all. This issue is incredibly simple and incredibly straightforward. This Authority had in instruction from a Coroner’s court. Simple. None of you were there, no-one from here was there but officers of the Authority were there. Officers of the Authority were in a Coroner’s court being quizzed and questioned about two deaths that took part in Roundhay Park lake and it is quite a traumatic experience being in a Coroner’s court, I can tell you.

Quite rightly so the officers of the Authority wanted to act upon the recommendations of the Coroner and so they went to the most eminent body that they could think of, ROSPA, to undertake two pieces of work – and only two pieces of work. Those of you who have read the Exec Board report will know that they have further trained members of staff from the Authority to carry out inspections on all those other water courses and if you want to know what will be happening in regard to that, read the Exec Board report because they are all listed there for you to see.

Having had this recommendation on these two sites, what were officers to do? To turn a blind eye? To forget it? To put the report in a drawer? Clearly not. Officers wanted to table it to elected members, thereby relieving themselves of the obligation and they transferred the liability from themselves to ourselves, to elected members, as I understand it, and if elected members then took a decision – and indeed there were many people who were intending to say very bold things at Exec Board. When they realised that actually suddenly it was the members of the Exec Board that could be in a Coroner's court facing action, facing corporate manslaughter charges in the future, suddenly, some voted in favour of it and I can understand why, because it is a very tricky issue.

I do not want to see any stretches of waterway unnecessarily fenced off but I too do not want to see any further deaths in this city and whether we like it or not, if we have a report such as we received, we have to act. There is a display outside the ante chamber for those who have not seen it which I think is well worth looking at.

All of that said, we have asked ROSPA, as I explained at the Exec Board, to come back again and to look at this particular area and we have made them aware of the level of public concern as well. All of that said, it is not made any easier when ROSPA are inspecting these water courses for children to walk along the parapet of bridges in front of them daring each other to jump off into treacherous courses of water. It is not helped by those situations.

Let me turn to Councillor Blake, who never resists an opportunity on a serious subject to still push the knife ever further. We still offer reasonably priced swims. Certainly it is a long, long, long time ago since Councillor Nash chaired the committee – I cannot quite remember how long ago but it is a long time ago.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: We still had public laundries then!

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Probably. A bit of inflation has crept in but we have 50p swims now – 50p swims – rather than 10p – incidentally well attended, I might say. Councillor Downes has got the point absolutely right, the issues of the Chippendale Pool are, because of staffing difficulties. Councillor Blake, I know you are a near resident – perhaps you would like to fill in an application form to do a few hours-worth of work there and solve the problem because that is what we need. We need, as you are all well aware, keyworkers in certain areas to staff facilities and this is just one of those.

Let us now move on, shall we, to Councillor Harrington and New Leaf Leisure Centre. Roger, you are all very happy and jolly about it all. I have to say, if I had rejected a £10m investment in my Ward at the Leisure Centre I do not think I would be too happy about it, yet you seem to want to trumpet the fact that you have lost £10m investment in your Ward - bizarre.

COUNCILLOR HARRINGTON: I have never, ever rejected £10m. It is a question of where not whether, as you know perfectly well.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is the fact of you. You will see from the Exec Board report that that £10m effectively, all the funding has gone elsewhere. It has gone to another Ward in the city. It has gone somewhere else. Why has it gone somewhere else? Because the other option that we did actually put forward to the Secretary of State was to actually refurbish Fernville and what did Richard Caborn say? He said, "No, we do not want to refurbish Fernville. We do not want to do that, no, because it is not a strategic site. It is not strategically located. We are not providing any PFI funds to refurbish Fernville at all."

The fact is that your Minister agreed with us, actually, that the best site was Killingbeck but, because you whipped up such a local furore against it, against those proposals, clearly they were not to go ahead, so if you are happy to lose such investment in your area fine, there are others that will have that investment and I am pleased to say that that is actually going to now go ahead.

Let us deal now, if we may, with the City Varieties. Councillor Graham, you say it was your administration's proposal and you hope we are not going to take credit for it. Again, I would advise you to read the Executive Board report. Rather than just looking at the Minute Book, read the report and then you would perhaps get a grasp of what is going on.

In the second paragraph of this particular Exec Board report it states that the report refers to:

"A comprehensive re-assessment of previous proposals and costs prepared on behalf of the Grand Theatre Board as owners of the building and which showed refurbishment costs then estimated at £4m."

We looked at what your proposed and we realised very quickly that it was not good enough and so we changed the proposals completely and we have now put in place a programme that will not see £4m spent at that much-loved music hall but £9.2m spent there. £9.2m spent there as opposed to £4m. That is nothing like the same as the proposal that you people had tabled a long time ago and were doing absolutely nothing about.

When I came into this job and looked around the city Varieties I was amazed – amazed. If anybody wants to view the City Varieties I am sure the members of the Board will not mind me saying this, they are more than welcome to do so. Go and have a look at the disgrace – the disgrace – that is there. Quite frankly, as I have said before in this Chamber, it is because of 20-odd years of Bernard's interference favouring his pet projects that places like the art gallery, places like the City Varieties have lost out and have not had a penny-piece spent on them in 20-odd years and it is us that have got to pick up these pieces and try and put things right and that is precisely what we are doing.

In terms of the Mansion, again Councillor Graham got it completely wrong. Completely wrong. (*interruption*) Lord Mayor, I do not think it is a two-way interaction in this Chamber, is it? One person stands up and speaks and the other listen, hopefully.

Lord Mayor, I think she is talking about the third party operator versus the Visitor Centre. The Visitor Centre will open as previously stated. A third party operator, which she seeks to give away private and confidential information about three people are unacceptable and have been rejected – news to me. News to me. "Reliably advised" – tell us who advised you? Why do you not tell us who these supposed operators were as well? Why do you not tell us on what grounds they

were rejected as well, because it is all news to me – all news to the elected members here. I might add, if there were such issues such as that I am sure the legal officers would have a view on it as well because there is a tendering procedure that is currently being worked through and that is the position, whether you like it or not, Councillor Graham.

Lord Mayor, I think that deals with all of the issues, those notified and those not.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am talking about page 51 Minute 186, plans for day services for older people. Certainly this is something that we welcome. We are particularly keen on getting involved in the discussion with social services department about the opportunities that might exist for social enterprises and other organisations being involved in providing day services for older people. People will know that we have already had a lot of conversations about Morley Elderly Action and what additional help they might be able to provide and the additional financial support that we may be able to seek from them to undertake that particular help.

We do think it is good news and we do look forward to a full and frank exchange in Morley about all the opportunities that exist. Can we also add brief thanks as well for a little bit of adult social care that Councillor Alec Shellbrooke gave to our Whip last night. Tom collapsed in the toilets with a little bit of food poisoning. He is doing a lot better but we do pass on our thanks as a group to Alec for picking him up and making sure that he got shipped to the right place. A bit of practical help and social care and we do appreciate it. Thank you, Lord Mayor (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Thank you. Lord Mayor. Thank you, Robert, come and talk to us, we will be delighted. Social enterprises are not just a passing phase, they are the future of social services at all levels in all places. We will be delighted to work with Morley Elderly Action, who are a stalwart and a beacon of such services and we will of course talk to you as soon as possible.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter to sum up.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. A number of things have been said. I do not propose to comment on all of them but the first one I do want to comment on is the water safety strategy. I think Councillor Proctor summed the situation up, really. We all have a lot of sympathy with the comments that Bernard made, but it is all well and good for us to flex our muscles in here. I think, as John said, at the Executive Board people probably were thinking about doing that there until they realised the serious nature of what was before us. Actually it was your Leader, Keith Wakefield, who commented on the Health and Safety legislation. I subsequently commented that the unions were, as we sat there, speaking to Downing Street about strengthening the legislation to bring it even harsher penalties for people who have been found – management who has been found – in neglect of their duty.

In a reasonable world you can take reasonable steps and you are right, you put a sign up and say it is dangerous if it is dangerous, but I am afraid the world we live in is a pretty crazy one now and you get the health and safety zealot who is able to put the argument in such a way that the poor Local Government officer who is standing there gets it well and truly in the neck.

I know from not personal experience but certainly second-hand experience through a constituent who was an employee of a Local Authority who was involved in a tragedy, the result of that tragedy was that it has pretty much destroyed his ability

to work because nobody wants to think they have any responsibility, however remote, for a tragedy. Nobody wants there to be any tragedies.

As John said, the simple fact is a Coroner instructed this Authority to carry out a water safety strategy. All we can do is to revisit as often as we can with ROSPA and try and get agreement on perhaps some things that might look a bit more sensible to us.

Put yourselves in ROSPA's position. We talked them into something that they perhaps do not entirely agree with, something happens and then they are in the frame as well, and so it goes on. It is a crazy world but at the end of the day we have to satisfy ourselves that we are protecting our staff who are responsible for these facilities and that we are protecting the general public to the best of our abilities and, at the same time, I hope, explaining to the general public that we are being as reasonable as we can be.

City Varieties. This is a project which, between Leisure and Development we are determined to see come to fruition. It is actually even more comprehensive, Pauline, than John explained to you and it is perhaps as well as Chair of Leisure Scrutiny that you understand precisely what we are doing because it is light years different from your original proposals.

It was certainly in the papers so I think I am at liberty to comment in here. We are attempting to acquire the freehold of the Swan Bar, something that you were never doing, because if we can acquire the freehold of the Swan Bar, we are able to do a much more comprehensive refurbishment of City Varieties than has ever been thought of before.

I ask you a favour, because you probably have more sway with your Government than we do. We are led to believe we could be successful with our heritage lottery bid, but you all know that your Government have said to all the lottery funding agencies they are going to have their funding top sliced very shortly to help pay for the Olympics. I hope they are not going to top slice any chance we have of getting our grant to restore this much-loved facility in Leeds, so any help you can give us in that direction will be gratefully appreciated.

The RESPECT agenda. One of the reasons that we, Councillor Rafique, are one of the RESPECT trial areas, a trail-blazer area, is because your Government think we are an exemplar in tackling antisocial behaviour and using the full range of mechanisms that they have provided - and some that have been provided for a heck of a long time - in tackling antisocial behaviour. I have to say I advise you to take up the offer extended to you by Councillor Akhtar and Councillor Taylor, because I recently took two shadow local Government spokesmen up to their Ward actually to have a look at the comprehensive alley gating that has been carried out there either directly by the Council or through the efforts of the two Councillors over there through the Area Committee.

Maybe rather than coming in here and trying to lecture us you should put some pressure on your Area Committee to do some alley gating in your own Ward. That is what you are elected to do.

Let me point out one or two facts to you, if I may. Your Government has taken on since 1997 14,200 extra police officers. They have employed 20,700 more bureaucrats in the Home Office in the same period of time. Violent crime has doubled under your Government to 1.2m violent crimes committed in the year 2005/06. Gun crime - the number of people injured by gun crime has more than doubled since 1998. Statistics from your Home Office. If I am misrepresenting the

statistics, they are the statistics that your Home Office have provided. I suppose with the record of your Home Office you do have to question. (*Laughter*) They are probably twice as high as these.

So listen. Only one in four of failed asylum seekers is ever sent back to their country of origin. 1,023 serious foreign prisoners have been freed without being considered for deportation. All facts from your Home Office.

I will give you another, even more disturbing figure. Tony McNulty, when he was in charge of asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers, put out on to the streets of Leeds at his instruction, without reference to the police and without reference to this Authority or any other agency, failed asylum seekers who could have been returned home but did so without giving them a penny-piece. Now, if we have problems on the streets of Leeds and the streets of every other city in this country, let me tell you it is the responsibility of the national Government. The national Government is responsible for two things above all – the protection of its citizens within its boundaries and the protection of its citizens from outside forces. In both these instances your Government has abysmally failed.

Now if I may comment very briefly on the waste strategy. We have not got a 'do nothing' option. We have to do something. We are progressing a comprehensive strategy that we will continue to keep under review, but if we do nothing in two years' time your Government, with its mates in the European Union, will begin to fine this Local Authority. It is one of the reasons why your Government cannot sell the environmental message because everybody suspects, probably quite rightly, that it is another Brown wheeze to extract taxation from the general public and Local Authorities – anybody except his own mates.

That is unfortunate because the environmental agenda is a very serious one and one that we should all be embracing, but when politicians are perceived as milking the public, then I am afraid you struggle to get the agenda accepted. I just wish that on your side you had come up with any concrete proposals to deal with the problems that we are having to face in this city and throughout this country on waste disposal.

I am very open minded, but I have to say to you that you trumpeted Manchester and now you are backing off as fast as you can. It seems to me your answer is, if you are supporting Manchester you want two incinerators, not one. Tell your friends that but please, will you stop talking this city down? Will you stop trying to drive investors out like you were doing, Councillor Lyons, for cheap political gain? The future of our city is much too important. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You want to speak the whole truth, not just a little bit of it.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for a vote on the receipt of the Minutes, please? All in favour? Any against? Any abstentions? CARRIED.

That concludes today's meeting. Thank you.

(The meeting closed at 8.40 p.m.)