

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday 18th July 2007

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(Councillor B Cleasby)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18th JULY 2007

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I welcome everybody to Council, 18th July 2007 and certainly welcome our guests in the public gallery.

Could I give you your first instruction, which is please turn off your mobile phones. If a mobile phone goes off in the presence of the Lord Mayor, it is now £50 to the Lord Mayor's Charity. I can assure everybody the money is going to a very good cause. Thank you, Council.

Council, it is with regret that I have two announcements to make to you. On 21st July Honorary Alderman Sheila Gill died. The funeral service took place at Our Lady of Lourdes Church on Cardigan Road on 3rd July 2007. I was present to represent the city at that event.

Again, another sad message. This morning the death was announced of the Civic Hall Warden, Roy Wordsworth. This may come as a shock to some of you who I have not already told. Roy started working for Leeds City Council in August 1996. He was Assistant Civic Hall Warden until Bob Lake retired last year and then became Civic Hall Warden in September 2006. He was taken ill in mid February this year and died at Weetfields Hospice.

I think it is only fitting and in order for us to stand in silent tribute.

(Silent tribute)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Council.

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 20TH JUNE 2007

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I then move us quickly on to agenda Item 1, Minutes of the meeting held on 20th June 2007. Councillor Procter?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I move that the Minutes be received, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call for the vote? All those in favour? Abstaining? Against? That is CARRIED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I move us on to agenda Item 2, which is Declarations of Interest. Have all members who feel they need to declare already done so? Can I then suggest that as the meeting progresses, if you feel the need to do so then do so at the appropriate time. Thank you, Council.

ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Moving on to agenda Item 3, communications. Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: there are no matters I have been asked to communicate to the council this afternoon. Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

ITEM 4 – DEPUTATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Moving on to agenda Item 4, Deputations.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: There are three deputations this afternoon, Lord Mayor. One, from the Leeds Girls High Action Group, the second from representatives of the Leeds Licensed Taxi Trade and the third and last are the Action Against Ragwort Group.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that all the deputations be received.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I then call for the vote? Those in favour? That is CARRIED.

DEPUTATION 1 – LEEDS GIRLS HIGH ACTION GROUP

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

MR M STANIFORTH: Thank you. Lord Mayor, Councillors, my name is Martin Staniforth and my colleagues are Annie Faulder, Richard Hughes and Isobel Sidebottom.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to you today about the proposals for the development of the Leeds Girls' High School site in Headingley. I speak on behalf of the Leeds Girls' High Action Group, which brings together residents and community associations in the Hyde Park and Headingley area.

Lord Mayor, the High School site is the jewel in the crown of our area, a site which, if developed sensitively, has the potential to transform the area for the local people now and in the future. At a public meeting in the spring over 100 local residents were clear about what they wanted to see there. They wanted low-density family housing; they wanted to keep the green spaces and the trees; they wanted to preserve the heritage buildings and boundary walls; they wanted and eco-friendly development with minimal impact on traffic congestion; and they wanted the existing swimming pool and sports hall off Chestnut Avenue to become a community facility.

These views reflected three main local concerns. First is the need to rebalance the local population. Headingley and Hyde Park have become a Mecca for students, and their sheer concentration has brought problems of refuse, noise and crime. High quality, mixed, family housing on the High School site would help improve matters by attracting long-term residents into the area and encouraging a wider range of local shops and amenities.

Second is the need to retain and increase green space in the area. The playing fields and open spaces on the school site offer a rare opportunity to do this in

an area where more green space is an acknowledged priority and, in so doing, to improve the health of the local population, and particularly local children, through capacity for increased exercise.

Their third was concern about traffic congestion on the A660. This has worsened markedly in recent years. The move of the school will reduce traffic at peak times, and we could help to tackle the problem of congestion through a development which would make maximum use of public transport links to the city centre rather than encouraging car use.

Sadly, the draft planning and development brief for the site rides roughshod over the community's wishes. Those plans, which have been described as "a developer's charter", propose building on much of the current green space, including protected playing pitches. They propose four to six storey apartment blocks on the Victoria Road side of the site. They show no commitment to adequate provision of affordable housing. They make no mention of the need to comply with Council policy to restrict developments for student housing in the area and they make no real assessment of the impact of the development on local traffic.

The plans as they stand will do nothing to improve conditions for residents and reverse the decline in their quality of life. They will not attract significant numbers of families into the area, which is what the local community badly needs. They will reduce, rather than increase, the amount of green space. They will impair the visual attraction of the site and if, as local residents fear, the proposed apartment blocks become student accommodation, they will worsen not improve the population mix in the area.

A well-attended meeting held last month unanimously rejected the current proposals. As well as objecting to the plans, residents were particularly unhappy that they came with the Council's logo on them, implying that the Council endorsed what was being proposed and with the unseemly haste with which they were being rushed through. They were concerned that there was no attempt to look at the cumulative impact of individual planning proposals on the community to look at the bigger picture. While they welcome the support of local Councillors, they expect Councillors to stand up on behalf of the local community and to ensure that any development on this site is sensitive to the needs of local people and is fully considered and scrutinised.

To sum up, we fundamentally object to what is currently proposed for the site which would be detrimental to the local community. We believe there is a once in a lifetime opportunity to create an exemplary sustainable development here and we would be willing to work in partnership with the Council and the school to achieve this, but this can only happen if the Executive Board rejects the current plans when it considers them next month.

Thank You. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: 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. Could I call upon Councillor Procter?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I second.

THE LORD MAYOR: The statement I made should have followed. They are agreeing to it. Thank you very much for your attendance. There is a vote. I am keen

to get the meeting over with today, obviously! All those in favour? As you can see that is unanimous. Thank you very much indeed.

DEPUTATION 2 – REPRESENTATIVES OF THE LEEDS LICENSED TAXI TRADE

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

MR B HEPINSTALL: My Lord Mayor, Councillors, the deputation present is myself, Brian Hepinstall, National Taxi Association; Ken Gill, Leeds Taxi Owners Association; Ilyas Zamen, Leeds Amalgamated Public Taxi Proprietors Association; Ali Asgah of the same. Unfortunately LITDA cannot attend today. In total we represent 100% of the Taxi Trade

I will have shortly completed 45 years as a taxi driver in Leeds and for most of those years I have represented the trade both locally and nationally. In all those years I can remember only one occasion in the early 1970s that we have had to resort to this level of protest.

Many of our members thought that we should go to the Ombudsman; another section feel that a demonstration in the city centre that would cause traffic disruption, would be the only thing that would catch your attention. I am glad to say that the moderates won the day at this particular time.

The reasons for these extremely strong feelings are as follows – and this is a list of surveys that have gone on before.

2001 Halcrow Fox had a city centre access study.

In 2003 the QA Consultants report on Evening and Night time Economy was put to the Council

In 2003 the Development Department made a final report on the Evening and Night time Economy.

Licensing Panel report to Scrutiny Board in 2004.

Licensing Panel Working Group, 2004.

2005, Corporate Scrutiny Board report on taxis.

2006, City Services Rank proposals report.

All of these reports had one common thread. It was the need for an urgent assessment of the city centre ranks to take into account the growing numbers of the public who require transport out of the city centre, the need to create ranks that would help in the dispersal of large numbers exiting places of entertainment and causing serious public order problems. They would also cut down serious illegal plying for hire of the private hire drivers who park up throughout the city centre.

Every report made recommendations on ranks. All attempts to progress these recommendations both by elected Members of the Licensing Panel and the Licensing Section has failed.

Officers who should attend meetings and explain the lack of progress on ranks just fail to turn up. Consultation with Highways has almost disappeared and it would seem only to give lip service to the taxi rank situation.

The Highways/City Services departments have failed to carry the work forward. A list of proposals were made in June 2005. They failed to respond to the recommendations they failed to respond to you, the elected Members and, more importantly they failed to respond to the requirements of the public.

A report to the Director of City services in July 2006 said, "There is a need to assess both the 24 hour ranks and the night time ranks in the city." It was proposed that 14 new ranks be created which can be inspected on drawing TF34/54/10j. It proposed to convert all existing ranks from their current 76 Miscellaneous Provisions Section 63 control, to designated on street parking places, which would give the Council's parking enforcement team the necessary power to enforce when they took over licensing enforcement.

The reports Recommendations were:

the directors to approve the proposals as indicated on drawing previously said;

to request the Director of Legal Services to advertise the draft parking places;

to provide the new night time ranks and convert the existing ranks to parking places.

Since the Council took over the parking enforcement role, 80 taxi rank spaces have become free parking places members for members of the public. Not one ticket has been issued because the order was not put at the correct time.

It is important to recognise that the public want ranks at places that are well lit, covered specifically by CCTV, under cover and, importantly, they are close to the hot spot. The shorter the distance to a rank, the less time to cause a disturbance.

The private hire traders that ply for hire illegally park up in the very places that we should have ranks. It has become so bad that the Licensing Panel have had to draw up new conditions to combat the practice. In last night's press there was another prime example of illegal private hire in the City Centre; we now have bogus illegal private hire.

There are 80 rank spaces 24 hours a day. There are a further 36 in the Station that the taxi trade pay for - a total of 116 spaces. There are a 106 night time only spaces and there are 537 taxis in Leeds. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote? Those in favour? I think that is unanimous.

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.

DEPUTATION 3 – ACTION AGAINST RAGWORT GROUP

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

MR A SLINGSBY: Good afternoon, Lord Mayor and Councillors. The name of the Group of Action Against Ragwort Group, regarding the control of ragwort. This lady is Janet Bailey, this gentleman is Colin Pitts. I am Albert Slingsby.

I would like to start off. *This* is the subject I am here about. (*Showed ragwort*) Anybody who says they have not seen it, they are like Joan Baez, Blowing in the Wind, "how long can a man turn his head and pretend he does not see?" This is absolutely terrible. It is everywhere – everywhere, everywhere.

Once again the poisonous ragwort weed has been allowed a stay of execution to do untold damage to animals and humans. This vile weed's toxins destroy the liver and cause horses to suffer a lingering death, by attacking digestive, nervous and brains, by eating about 2lbs of the plant can kill a horse the size of a Tetley's carthorse.

Humans, especially children, are at risk by picking the attractive yellow daisy-like flowers in June, July and August. The 25th July is St James's Day and Ragwort was called St James's wort previously. You should always wear gloves when handling ragwort, as its poison can go through the skin.

Contrary to DEFRA and Leeds Leisure and Learning, contrary to their belief that it does not affect the humans, in 1995 MAFF did an experiment with beehives on ragwort contaminated land. They analysed the honey which gave conclusive evidence that the poison had gone through the bees, honey and into the human food chain.

Under the 1959 Weeds Acts, Local Authorities and statutory undertakers had discretionary powers to control ragwort by ordering the occupier to remove any ragwort off their land. Local authorities are amongst the worst offenders for allowing it to grow on their land and roadside verges. At the end of Magpie Lane the grass and ragwort, which was like elephant grass, which has not been out this year, was at least two feet or a yard high and it looked more like a safari park. When eventually this area was cut the ragwort had flowered, making it a shambles because when it is cut by mechanical cutters it is churned up like mincemeat and, as it is in the flowering stage, all they have done by cutting it now, is churned it up and prepared next years and future years' seedlings. If there was a gold medal for managerial incompetence, then the handling of the Ragwort Control Act would get first prize.

The stupidity of it is, not illegal to grow it but it is illegal to allow it to flower and seed. Back in 1999 August, Leisure Services advised me if I told them of specific areas which I was concerned about, it would be investigated and appropriate action taken. This appropriate action seem to a leaf out of Lord Nelson's book – "What ragwort? I see no ragwort!"

That applies to local Councillors as while they've been having photo-shoots and sending press releases to the papers about things like Morley Sports Centre, Morley In Bloom and bus station, it is strange that none of them have seen or mentioned ragwort in their self-serving publicity stunts. (*Laughter*)

This specimen is from outside Morley Sports Centre which has grown up under the supervision of the Minister of Sport, Morley's MP, Councillors and other invited dignitaries who attended St George's Parade.

Consider the examples. This, ragwort, is not like the starving millions in Africa - it will not go away, it will not die off if you close your eyes and ignore it. It is more like Yorkshire Water's bill reminder where it says, "Please contact us if you cannot pay, as the problem won't go away if you ignore it."

On Leeds Council's website in 2003, it claims Leeds had more green space than any other European city except Vienna. I would like to bet Vienna has not got more ragwort than Leeds. In 2003 The British Horse Society sponsored Ryedale MP, John Greenway's Private Member's Bill, calling for an amendment to the 1959 Weeds Act, by introducing his Equine Welfare (Ragwort Control) Act. This act gave local authorities a statutory obligation to control ragwort. However as I look around Leeds I would need convincing that Parks and Countryside are taking drastic action with all the available workforce and not squandering our resources on consultants, risk assessment and surveys.

The animal world and local folk have been living in hope for the last four years, which is a long time. It is time to replace hope enforcing statutory obligations. If ragwort has the same devastations effect on the country's four-wheeled suicide sacred cow – the motorcar - as it has had on horses and other animals, it would not need to be eradicated as it would not have been allowed to get into this ridiculous eleventh hour situation in the first place.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I ask you to draw your speech to a close, please?

MR A SLINGSBY: Right. Just my little poem here:

Ragwort is growing everywhere, in fields large and small,
On footpaths in gardens, even cracks in the wall,
The yellow peril is poisonous and it's illegal to flower,
So let's have some direct action from the corridors of power!

Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter.

MR A SLINGSBY: *This is a victim was ragwort. (Showed photograph)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for further consideration.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call for the vote? Those in favour? I think you can see that that is unanimous.

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.

ITEM 5 - REPORTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I move Council on now to agenda Item 5, Reports, (a). Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Move in terms of the notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: (b), Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Move in terms of the notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: There is no item on the agenda for a vote. Can I suggest that as they have both been moved and seconded I ask for a vote now on both of those. All those in favour? That is CARRIED. Thank you.

ITEM 6 – QUESTIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: On to agenda item 6, Questions. Councillor Lyons.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. Can the Executive Member of Environmental Services please tell me where his administration plans to site their proposed incinerator?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not sure whether Councillor Lyons is not paying attention. I am not sure whether Councillor Lyons has got some cunning plan of which I am not aware and is trying to trip me up, or whether he has got some other motive for asking the same question Council after Council. My answer to him today is to refer back to the answer which I gave in last Council.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. You will have to decide yourself what I am doing. I have every right to stand up at Council meetings and ask questions on what I think should...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons, can I remind you, you are asking a supplementary.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Yes, I know that. You do not need to remind me. I was asking them before you came up.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to hear it.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Given that Councillor Smith has no update regarding the issue of the location could he confirm the following – is that a question? His administration has completely disregarded all other possible waste solutions but an incinerator, thus sentencing the people in one of the communities in our city to a shocking situation. Would you agree that that is so?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Of course I welcome questions from Councillor Lyons as often as he wishes to ask them. To answer his supplementary, if he looks at the strategy he will see a number of options which were considered resulting in the preferred option but it is a preferred option, it is not written in tablets of stone and we will see what happens in the coming months, thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wilson.

COUNCILLOR WILSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It looks like we have got fire and water this afternoon. Would the Leader of Council outline what measures the City Council has taken along with the budgetary provision made, to alleviate the effects of flooding over the last three years?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This is dealing with the situation retrospectively. Of course, when we come to the two White Paper debates later on this afternoon that will deal with issues to do with the funding and budgets going forward.

To answer Councillor Wilson, I will read, if I can – it is always difficult for me:

“As a result of the flooding incident affecting properties in East Leeds in August 2004 and May 2005, Executive Board authorised the creation of a cross-departmental water hazards management working group to (1) review the Council’s approach to maintaining its water assets and responding to flood incidents; and (2) draw up and implement proposals to respond to the issues identified. The working group developed its initial proposals by June 2005 and began immediate implementation of these with additional funding, of £500,000 in the year 2005/06. The Council has subsequently provided further additional annual funding of £1.1m to resource the provision and develop its recommendations further.

The working group continues to make good progress on these issues which were reported back to Executive Board in May 2006 and June 2007. A copy of its latest progress report was circulated to you all yesterday by e-mail at my request. As stated at most recent Executive Board update, we will be reviewing the current action plan to determine whether further actions or resources may be required by the Council and its partners and, following appropriate discussions, we will ensure that these are brought forward to Executive Board at the earliest opportunity.”

COUNCILLOR WILSON: By way of supplementary, would the Leader of Council care to comment on how this appears to contrast with the cuts DEFRA made to flood prevention budgets in the same period? Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: It is in stark contrast, Lord Mayor. Leader Management I believe have twice had in depth presentations made to us by the Environment Agency highlighting the increased threat not just to the city centre but to various parts of the city from flooding and it is a well-known fact that there was in place a flood defence programme to be funded by central government through the Environment Agency to the tune of about £100m. That was principally to deal with the significant threat along the River Aire through the city centre but also to look at other serious flashpoints across the city. Unfortunately the Environment Agency withdrew that scheme last year in spite of the increased perceived threat of flooding to the city and, of course, representations are being made and have been made on an all-party basis now to have that funding reinstated and that, of course, will be the subject of the debate later this afternoon.

In the meantime, with the resources available to us as a Council we continue to do everything we can to put in place and to alleviate the affects of flooding.

COUNCILLOR WILKINSON: Will the Executive Board Member responsible please update me on the progress that has been made on highways maintenance across the city?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. In response to Councillor Wilkinson, Members will be aware that we made £82.4m-worth of extra capital funding available and injected that into the highways maintenance budget over an eight year period between 2004 and 2012. £22m has already been spent on bringing nearly 900 streets back into a good condition. A further £13.7m-worth of work on a further 376 streets is programmed for delivery this year, with £46.5m to be spent over the subsequent four years. That is a measure of the appalling state of the roads and footpaths that we inherited and that have been allowed to accumulate over the previous 24 years.

This work is additional to the base funding from the Local Transport Plan and the revenue has enabled a number of highway maintenance schemes to be more than doubled.

The improvement to the highway network is reducing the number of slips and trips claims on the City Council, which has helped us to reduce the claims against the authority by £1m per annum. This £1m is funding £19m of prudential borrowing.

What that indicates very clearly is that by investing properly in the repair and maintenance of our highways and footpaths, we are getting a better deal with every day that goes past. Additionally, of course, less people, thankfully, are having accidents and not having to go through the inconvenience, not to mention the pain and suffering, that these falls we all know as Members, can cause.

Results against condition performance indicators show that the investment being made is now beginning to eat into the backlog of repairs on local roads and footways. We are already the third best out of 36 Metropolitan Authorities for principal and classified roads and the programme we have for capital expenditure this year we believe is the largest of any local authority in this country – again a measure of the parlous state of the roads and footpaths that we inherited.

We shall continue to invest heavily in the repair and maintenance of our roads and footpaths. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR WILKINSON: Thank you for such a very concise report. How does this compare to May 2004?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: The May 2004 capital budget that we inherited was £4.3m. We increased that to £8.3, then to £9.6 in the last financial year and now to £13.7 in this financial year to which, of course, you have to add the LTP contributions and the revenue contributions, but that is an indication of the huge extra investment we have had to put in to maintaining our roads and footpaths. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Does the Executive Member for Development and Regeneration agree with me that proper sustainable draining is more than ever necessary allowing for the increase in extreme weather conditions?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Absolutely. Councillor Blackburn knows that sustainable drainage systems are a high priority for the Council. In the light of the flooding that has occurred in the last few weeks, of course, we are again revisiting the issues of developers providing a sustainable drainage system on new building sites.

It is an interesting paradox that at a time when the government appears to be going to exhort us to build or to allow to be built ever more houses, we are not getting the sort of back-up we need in terms of legislative muscle to ensure that these sustainable drainage systems actually stand the test of time. I know that

Councillor Blackburn has some particular issues in certain areas which I have already taken up.

It is an issue which is extremely important. Anybody who thinks that the flooding issues we have suffered over this last few months and, indeed, in the previous couple of years are going to go away is living in a fool's paradise.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: In way of a supplemental, can he tell me what his department are doing to deal with the sustainable drainage at the development at the former Dunlop and Rankin site, bearing in mind the ongoing problems being experienced by householders in the neighbouring Kirkdale estate?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I think that is probably one of the specifics that I referred to in the first answer. Councillor Blackburn can take my word for it that the department have been asked to intervene and investigate thoroughly what is happening as regards that sustainable drainage system which apparently is not working properly.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Rafique.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Lord Mayor, will the Executive Board Member for Neighbourhood and Housing please explain the source of his statistics in response to my query on robbery and crime figures for Leeds at the Council meeting last month?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. The figures come from a system called iQuanta, which is the Home Office figures and that is where they are received from, so they are Home Office figures.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Yes thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, Councillor Les Carter was, if I can go back a few weeks, infuriated by a recent article in the Yorkshire Post that saw Leeds fall second in a table of crime hot spots. The article revealed that Leeds, Hull and Sheffield all featured in the top ten places where burglars are most likely to strike.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could you ask the supplementary question? You are making a statement.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: It is a supplementary.

THE LORD MAYOR: You are making a statement, councillor.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Can I just ask Councillor Les Carter that, according to West Yorkshire's report, Leeds has seen an increase in robbery of 9.2% and rise in crime by 7.3%. This is under your leadership, Councillor Les Carter.

THE LORD MAYOR: Come on, we want to finish at half-past seven today.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: It is no good shaking your head, this is under your leadership. You are the Community Safety Supremo.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: What is the question?

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: Before you give us a lecture and go on and start blaming the police and hence the government.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Rafique, with respect, you are asking a supplementary question. You are again making a statement. Would you please ask the question? If you are unable to ask the question, then please sit.

COUNCILLOR RAFIQUE: The question is, Lord Mayor, that we have actually asked for the picture in respect of the burglary and robbery, not just mere figures where you have quoted from.

COUNCILLOR J C CARTER: My Lord Mayor, with great difficulty I think I can try to give him some answers. What happened was when he asked the question before he did not know what he was talking about so he did not ask the right question and he did not get the figures that he wanted.

Lord Mayor, just let me give him a few. Talking about burglaries, I think he said. I have got figures here which show it is down by 40%. Theft from unauthorised vehicles, down by 54%. Theft from vehicle, down 35%. Robbery, down by 15%. Theft from person down by 31%. Criminal damage down by 14%. Woundings down by 14%.

I do not know if that gives him anything but let me just go on a little bit further because he says I have got to ignore the police and he says I have got to ignore, I think, the Home Office who actually produce the figures. I will bet he wants us to ignore them.

Who is it that is putting destitute asylum seekers kicked out on the streets of Leeds? His Home Office. Foreign prisoners, lost and released in a tangle of chaos – his Home Office. Prisons full to bursting point – his Home Office. Dangerous prisoners released early – drug dealers, burglars, fraudsters all nearing the end of their sentences and it is now reported they are committing more crime.

My Lord Mayor, I do not know what the heck he is talking about but all I can say to him is, do not address the question to me. You have got a member of the Police Authority over there. It is your Home Secretary who said the department was defunct – your Home Secretary - not fit for purpose where we are fit for purpose and we will get on with the job. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lancaster.

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Board Member like to comment on the Minister for Care Services' recent remarks about promoting 'Dignity in Care' in Leeds?

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I hope all Members are aware that the Labour Minister for Care Services, Ivan Lewis, has specifically praised the energy with which Leeds City Council has taken up their Dignity in Care cause for older people. He has especially praised us for the way we have involved all the people in the campaign, including older people themselves deciding how extra funding is to be used in care homes and day care services.

The Labour Department of Health praised us about ongoing consultation and involvement of older people in discussions at all levels. This has brought forward ideas for improved support for carers, improved community support, improved staff training and more effective care home inspection.

Our Scrutiny enquiry into Dignity in Care has won special praise for its work to raise awareness of dignity among staff, providers and other stakeholders and to see whether the needs of older people have been met in hospitals and care homes with

particular reference to nutrition, privacy and physical environment. Can you pass on my thanks to the then Chair of the Scrutiny Board and the Members of all parties who contributed such an excellent report?

We are now embarking on a major publicity campaign on Dignity in Care. There are a set of posters depicting older people from a range of communities taken in different settings, each with a quote from the older person about what dignity really means and some of those are on display in the ante chamber now.

These are to be distributed across health and social care and other public settings to help reinforce our commitment to and the need for dignity in older people.

Finally I would like to ask how many Councillors in this Chamber have signed up to be Dignity Champions on the Department of Health website. It takes two minutes. By doing this you can become a Dignity Champion and make your personal pledge to older people to do everything in your power as Councillors – which is substantial – to promote the dignity of older people in the care service in Leeds.

I am going to write to all Councillors formally this week asking them to do this and therefore send a powerful message to all older people and the people who care for them that Dignity in Care is at the top of our list of priorities for older people in this city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call Councillor David Blackburn?

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Bearing in mind the recent extreme weather events, does the Executive Member for Development and Regeneration agree with me that the amount of householders hard surfacing their gardens is having an adverse effect with regard to draining?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. That is undoubtedly the case. In 2004 the report that we commissioned on the flooding in East Leeds identified it as an important factor and recent research carried out by Leeds University in Halton has now confirmed this, that over a 33 year period covered by the study, 75% of the increase in paved areas was actually due to householders paving their front gardens.

There are no planning controls over these issues and, to be frank, I think we are up to our necks in legislation of one sort or another. We come back to the issues that are with us for a long time to come, I fear, and as I have already indicated those of flooding, and undoubtedly if you use flagged materials to cover up areas that previously drained and you are in a flood risk area, you are going to add to those problems.

What I would exhort people to do is if they want to put some form of hard surfacing down in their front gardens, they ought to look at materials which are water permeable - gravels and other ways of doing it – rather than just putting flagged areas down.

The other point is this, of course, that in some areas perhaps the workmanship has not been quite as it ought to be and where there was a possibility for drains being incorporated, they have not been incorporated. We now know we are living in very strange climatic times and I think we have to take on board all these issues and do a good education job to make sure that people are aware that they actually can contribute towards their own problems and they can, on a more positive note, contribute trying to allay and put back at least those problems. I think it is a very worthwhile point that Councillor Blackburn has raised.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: In way of a supplemental, I think I might know the answer to this after what you just said, but does he agree with me that such hard surfacing should require planning permission and not be regarded as permissible development?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: We are up to our necks in legislation and planning regulations and one thing and another. I do think, though, that we ought to move to a system of guidance where people are made fully aware – because all of this can be combated through education rather than legislation and I would prefer to see that, but we have to get across to people that hard paving their front gardens in a flood risk area will add to the risk and we have to get that message across.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In the light of the recently published White Paper on Youth Services, could the Executive Board Member for Children's Services please reassert this Council's commitment to offering excellent services for young people?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Yes, Councillor Wakefield, I can reassure that we will do everything we can to have the best youth service in the country. We are well on the way to that. We are well prepared to deliver the targets in and engage in the opportunities afforded by the government's ten year strategy.

I would encourage all Councillors in the Chamber today to attend one of the Breeze on Tour events or the mini-Breeze events taking place across Leeds this summer. I am sure there is a secondary question and I will wait for that.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Given the importance that you have agreed with, could you explain why the youth budget was under spent by £191,000 and why we have officers sitting round in this city doing absolutely nothing when you have just said how important it is and how important it is to everyone in this community?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I do not think I have met a youth officer yet who is sitting around doing nothing and if you can point me in that direction, Keith, I would be pleased to know rather than trying to do it in Council like this.

The budget for the youth provision, as far as I understand it and as far as I am aware, is in line with government expectations and the service achieves its best value targets.

There is also value added through additional work with approximately 2,000 young people under the statutory age of 13.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You are not answering the question.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I will get there. Today in Leeds the delivery of the youth service is a vibrant partnership between ourselves and the voluntary sector. Our investment in the voluntary sector has risen this year since 2004 when it was 9% to 15% this year and youth work in Leeds is nationally recognised. (*Interruption*)

The youth service in Leeds is regarded as a trail blazer in establishing an integrated youth service support service as required by the Education and Inspections Act and plans are now well advanced so that from April 2008 the Youth Service Connections, youth engagement, out of school activities and the positive activities for young people will all be brought together in a co-ordinated youth offer.

This will make Leeds one of the first authorities with that youth offer. The offer will be launched - and I invite Councillor Wakefield to be there (*Interruption*) – in November when as a result of the advanced thinking and imaginative approaches in terms of today's agenda, the youth service in Leeds has been asked by four children to be a pilot authority for establishing integrated youth centres. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Before we continue, Councillor Gruen, could I point out that it is your position to keep your group in order. Could I ask you, first of all, to keep yourself in order? Thank you very much, Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: With respect, Lord Mayor, your group should answer the question when it is asked and not make a speech.

THE LORD MAYOR: It has been the tradition in this Council for many years to allow people to answer the question. If you are not satisfied with the answer, there are other ways of taking it up but being disruptive in Council is not one of those ways and I am sure you are fully aware of that, Councillor Atha. (*Applause*)

Councillor Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Could the Executive Member for Environmental Services tell me what his plans are for working towards making Leeds a Carbon Neutral City?

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Leeds City Council signed the Nottingham Declaration on climate change on 5th June last year and that commits the Council to preparing a climate change strategy within two years to address the causes and impacts of climate change.

The Council has appointed a Climate Change officer and he is leading this work. He has established a series of corporate and city-wide themed working groups who are developing a series of evidence-based proposals for inclusion in the draft climate change strategy. It is intended to consult on that strategy in the autumn before occupying the final document in 2008, which will bring it in line with the Nottingham Declaration commitment.

Officers are researching implications for the authority in moving towards carbon neutrality for the Council's estate, fleet and services and will prepare recommendations and seek to address the most cost-effective measures. These are likely to include items such as additional energy conservation measures within the authority and in support of this the Council has recruited over 100 staff volunteers who have formed a network of energy guardians throughout the organisation to raise awareness of energy usage and to change the behaviour of all staff. The aim is to reduce energy usage and as a consequence reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the amount that the authority spends on fuel bills. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I call Councillor Murray?

COUNCILLOR MURRAY: Could the Executive Board Member for Education please tell us how he plans to tackle the problems highlighted in the recent Ofsted Report regarding South Leeds High School?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I have to share with Council my disappointment at the Ofsted Report on South Leeds High School. It illustrates some major problems that have got to be tackled. The report also hides some enormous progress. We need to remember the history of the two schools that came together to form the now South Leeds High School. They were already in special measures and therefore the

special measure category was only suspended while we brought the two schools together and launched them in their new building. It is a pity that they have gone back into special measures and we need to recognise what the Ofsted report tells us.

I have had many meetings now with a variety of people on the subject of the South Leeds High School and I have been challenging officers to look at all the various possibilities. We are beginning now to see some forward progress in what the plan will establish. We are looking at all available options to secure a real change in the teaching, the learning and the leadership and management and governance of the school because all areas of the school that I have just listed there were found wanting.

We are currently negotiating for one of our more outstanding schools in the city to work in close partnership with the leadership of South Leeds High School. At the same time we are exploring with the government the possible option of academy status and assessing the extent to which this could add value to the achievements of the young people at the school. We intend to continue exploring this possibility and intend to make an announcement in early September.

COUNCILLOR MURRAY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do have the report here in front of me and at the back of it you have got 26 judgments that were made by the Inspector. Six of them were satisfactory, 20 of them were inadequate. I think this is about as bad as it has ever been in this city.

In the short term listening to what Richard has said, what the report highlighted, what the Yorkshire Post highlighted, is that there is a core of troublemakers who do not want to learn and who are stopping others from learning.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: What is the question?

COUNCILLOR MURRAY: I am getting there. What we want to know, Les, is this - if the school and the authority are going to get touch, are they going to expel some of these children, some of these young people? What capacity do you have, what programmes do you have now for engaging the expelled who might be leaving in September to stop these troublemakers from roaming the streets? You might actually illustrate that by telling us what you are doing to support the 15 who have currently this year been expelled from the David Young Academy.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: We seem to have gone from South Leeds to David Young and I find that a bit unfair in the sense – but I will try and deal with the David Young Academy one first.

I am unaware of how many children at the moment have been expelled from the David Young Academy. It seems to vary between 15 and 17 and I have to say to this Council I find that very alarming that this school, which was put into East Leeds by the outgoing authority, was negotiated in such a way that this school now has the ability to expel children who might affect its recorded outcomes on attendance and achievement, because it is our schools that have to play host to those children and I understand that all the children expelled by the David Young Academy have been taken into other schools.

We have a system in amongst the family of schools whereby if you receive somebody who is expelled you get a bonus when you take them in, extra cash. That does not apply, though, if you take in children from the David Young Academy. The scheme that I have just described will apply to South Leeds.

THE LORD MAYOR: We now, Council, have run out of the allowed time for questions. Any further questions will be given with written answers.

ITEM 7 - MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I move us on, then, to Order Paper page 6, agenda Item 7, the Minutes. Councillor Harris.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Moved, Lord Mayor.

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

- (a) Executive Board:
- (i) Central & Corporate

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I move us on to Executive Board Minutes (i) Central & Corporate. Councillor Illingworth.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I would like to welcome this initiative and the increased role proposed for elected Members and welcome the setting up of a Member Reference Group to assist in the Strategic Planning Process.

I also welcome, Lord Mayor, that consideration be given to the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill draft legislation, although on our side we are not sure we welcome every single clause in the new Bill.

One measure that we do welcome is the proposal in Clause 121 for an increased role for back bench Councillors in referring matters to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Lord Mayor, the report stresses the importance of Members' local knowledge and awareness of spatial and demographic factors. It draws attention to Narrowing the Gap. Nowhere is there greater need for elected Member spatial and demographic information than in recreational provision for the inner city. Not only does the inner city contain a large south Asian population with a high risk of diabetes and cardiovascular disease, but also, Lord Mayor, it is particularly deficient in playing fields and public recreational land.

Lord Mayor, the latest medical evidence increasingly stresses the importance of vigorous physical recreation in combating these very serious public health problems. These remarks apply with particular force to South Headingley where one of the few areas of recreational land at Leeds Girls High School has already been the subject of a deputation today. South Headingley has some of the worst recreational provision in Leeds but similar problems are encountered right around the inner city in Burley, New Wortley, Beeston, Burmantofts, Harehills, Chapel Allerton, for example. Leeds as a whole compares badly with other cities in its playing pitch provision per head of population. The designated playing fields for my own Ward are at Tinsill, Lord Mayor, over five miles from the city centre.

This demonstrates the need for greater elected Member involvement in the strategic planning process. The draft planning brief for Leeds Girls High School was approved by the planning board, which is 100% officer membership. This report to the Board did not mention PPG 17 even once, Lord Mayor, despite the critical

importance of PPG 17 in ensuring adequate sports and recreation provision for deprived inner city communities.

Lord Mayor, it is to be hoped that a greater role for elected Members will refocus this Council into meeting the needs of deprived communities everywhere, not just in the inner city with rather less emphasis on the needs of property speculators and those who seek to profit from the ownership of land. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I also wish to comment on questions of governance and on the welcome proposals to strengthen elected Member involvement and I will not be commenting on planning issues.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: However, Plans West Panel Members have more than once considered the question of fencing being erected on the public open spaces of Tinshill Rec to provide segregated sports pitches for Ralph Thoresby School.

At its last meeting Plans Panel Members were advised that because the fence was proposed to be no higher than 1.8 metres, there could be no planning issue for members to consider. What this means is that there would be no public forum of elected Members to consider and decide whether or not public open space should be fenced.

Members of Panel were not happy about this and decided unanimously that Scrutiny must be asked to look at how such an important question of very lively public interest could be left to officers and also decided that Executive Board be asked to take the decision, not officers. It is not actually, or course, immediately very obvious which decision that would be because I do not think - it would be interesting how Mr Rogerson will advise Council on this - which decision is relevant to fencing off this public open space. The only one that we could think of at Panel was the decision to buy the fencing.

Whichever it is, it is clear I hope that everybody will agree that this is a decision that cannot be taken in the terms I used that the Plans Panel Member was in private conclave by officers but must find a forum for elected Members to consider this very important question of public interest. Thank you, Council. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I ask Members, as we are discussing items relating to the book in front of us, could I suggest that the two Members who have just spoken would have been far better addressing page 61 item 9, which is exactly the subject they are talking about, not page 16 Minute 29, which is Corporate Planning not planning issues. Councillor Minkin, with respect, you did say you were not going to discuss planning issues and you did nothing else.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: You have a question of public explanation. I profoundly disagree. I was commenting on the question as minuted on the bottom of page 16 Minute 29 proposals to strengthen elected Member involvement in corporate planning. If the question of fencing public open space is not a matter of corporate interest, profound interest, then I beg to differ. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dobson.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on Minute 29 page 16 and would like to echo Councillor Illingworth's words regarding

the importance of Members' involvement and knowledge of key decisions affecting this Council.

This would clearly have been beneficial over recent months in the Council's dealings with Leeds United. This group believes that the way the authority has conducted its business in relation to Leeds United Football Club has neither been sufficiently transparent, open and has lacked sufficient member involvement.

It is still unclear to this group why the administration supported the original deal of the proposed 1p in the £ that was on offer in the days that followed the club going into administration. It is still unclear to this group why Leeds City Council did not send a representative to the creditors' meeting, instead preferring to vote by proxy – indeed that proxy vote would have, incidentally, pushed the original 1p in the £ deal over the finish line.

Indeed it is most definitely unclear to this group how, to quote Councillor Carter, the 1p in the £ offer in the time and backed by this authority supposedly put Leeds taxpayers and small business people first and foremost in that process. Would Councillor Carter now accept this Council's decision to vote for the 1p in the £ deal did not put Leeds taxpayers and small businesses first and foremost? Would he agree with me that it was in fact a very poor offer and would he further agree this was recognised by the actions of the Inland Revenue who launched their own successful challenge against the CVA being accepted?

By the events of last week when the club was sold to the same owner - who this time offered, we believe, creditors somewhere in the region of 8p in the £ as part of the deal - it is clear the administration not only has problems with transparency and involvement but also in securing the best deal for the people of Leeds.

I am sure Councillor Carter will be magnanimous enough to congratulate the superb work of MPs George Mudie and Colin Burgin for their sustained pressure on KPMG and others as they did not secure a better deal for people of this city than anyone within the administration.

I am equally sure he will want to congratulate Councillor Selby for his tenacity in holding up the scrutiny of the original CVA and the Council's compliance with that original order.

In Councillor Carter's statement of the 12th of this month he urges – and again I am quoting – “all those who can affect this sorry state of affairs to act urgently to resolve the impasse for the benefit of this city.” That may explain, Council, the recent actions through granting of a non-domestic rate relief, the failing to observe our usual high standards of debt recovery or, indeed by virtually snatching the hand off the new owners on receipt of their first offer.

If this administration believed they were protecting a benefit to the city in the terms of the football club, then I can sympathise with that assessment. Like most Leeds people I want what is best for the future prosperity of Leeds United. We are a big club and we have a big city and the two should reflect one another. However, if that was what motivated this administration through a series of muddled, non-transparent decisions, then share it with us. We are elected Members to this Chamber and we deserve to understand how key decisions are reached.

Councillor Illingworth is quite right. As elected Members we must be involved and we must be included in this process. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to comment on Minute 30 page 17, regarding the Progress Report on the PPP/PFI programme in Leeds.

Members will recall that an expression of interest bid was submitted by the Council to DEFRA for a costly £130m incinerator back in January and that work has already begun on the submission of an outline business case to be presented in August. We as a group have expressed our grave concern and express it again today at the lack of genuine – and I stress genuine – consultation and involvement both of the public and elected Members in the debate about an incinerator and the speed at which the plans are being progressed.

It was only last December you may recall that the Labour Group asked Council as a matter of urgency for a root and branch review of the waste strategy which had an incinerator at its heart. This was rejected by the administration and we were told the best way forward was for a Waste Strategy Review Group involving all party Leaders. Councillor Carter, who told Radio Leeds listeners only a few months ago that he was an environmentalist, said in Council the Review Group, “would offer the opportunity for all of us to participate in the ongoing debate because that is what it is and it will continue to be.” He also said, “There is an opportunity here for all party Leaders or their representatives to get together in a very meaningful way.”

So, what meaningful work has been undertaken by the Review Group since then? It is now over seven months since that Council meeting and the first meeting of a Review Group was actually two days ago. What I would like to know is why has it taken seven months for the Review Group to actually meet? If Councillor Harris and Councillor Carter had shown just one ounce of inclination to deliver on their promise of a Review Group months ago, then maybe we could have answers to a number of vital questions.

There is significant evidence that the output of modern incinerators, dioxins and furans, may be carcinogenic. What assessment has been done on the environmental and health aspects of an incinerator? Incinerators have a poor track record when it comes to being delivered on time and to budget and have often been hit by hefty delays due to planning objections. How confident are you that an incinerator can be delivered by 2013? In the meantime, how will we meet our LATS targets between 2009 and 2013? We are talking here about potentially £53m-worth of fines if we fail whilst we wait for the incinerator to be delivered.

Finally, Lord Mayor, my colleague, Councillor Lyons, has tried valiantly to get an answer about the location of the incinerator from the administration but the administration continues to refuse to answer. I have heard on the grapevine that we may get an answer in August and cynics amongst us might think that the desire is to announce the bad news whilst people are on holiday when people are not paying attention. I hope this is not the case but can I give the administration one final opportunity to tell the people of Leeds where the incinerator - or sustainable energy park, as I believe Councillor Smith referred to it – is going to be located? Perhaps Councillor Harris could tell us. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: On the same minute, firstly I would like to congratulate the officers - I look at Dave Page – for winning an award down in London. I am sure more will be said later on the amount of money they have got for this city and for those people who keep a count, we now have nearly £1.5b invested in this city's housing, social services and education from this Labour government and I think that is something to be very proud of. (*Applause*) I cannot wait for the General Election in August to make sure that we continue in office.

On a serious note, I think the idea that investment, as we heard earlier from the answer to Councillor Murray's question about South Leeds, is a real key one because it is clear investing in a building does not naturally improve education. I think I am very, very disappointed in Councillor Harker's answer. I would say this about the investment. He made an announcement today about Academies and yet my colleagues in the south and west of Leeds have not been briefed, not been involved, not been told about the proposal. I think that is shameful that the policy is now being made behind the back doors without any elected Member's involvement from those areas.

Looking at the headlines last night when there was talk of 18, there are probably more in this Chamber that are being proposed, more Wards, for their communities and it still has not come here for full debate. I think that is shameful for elected Members of this Chamber.

I will tell you why, because that is a major investment and policy debate and why do we not have it? We know the Conservatives' line on Academies. What they want is independent grammar schools that have their own admissions and turn their back on the local communities and, indeed, the local authorities. That is fair enough, that is clear blue water for me. At least we know where they stand.

What I do not know is where the Lib Dems stand in this administration because we have got very important concerns. We have got concerns about the sponsorship, we have got concerns about admissions policy, we have concerns about the governance because if it is true what Councillor Murray said about exclusions, then that is something we should all be worried about, about the amount of people excluded without any responsibility. For some people to have a school as an Academy in this city that excludes local people from the local community is certainly not acceptable to our side of the Chamber.

That is why I think in the interests of democracy and Members and Ward Members who have not at all been involved in this debate, that we have an early debate here so that we can clarify the conditions that we would accept Academies, if they are the answer, into this city. At the moment it has not been debated now, it is all behind headlines of the Evening Post or closed doors of Councillor Harker. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Like Councillor Wakefield I would like to welcome the investment from New Labour in terms of the PFI scheme but I think it would be wrong to characterise that as money just given away willy-nilly. It is actually because this Council is extremely good at bidding for those funds and because we have got some extremely good officers that we get the money in Leeds. *(Applause)* Thank you, Gordon Brown, but actually we are doing the donkey work to get the money in the first place. Business rates coming back for a change, quite right. I think the point needs to be made that actually we have got a very good set of officers in this Council who have really worked hard to deliver this funding for us. We have got some of the best in the country.

I would like to invite the Leader of the Council perhaps to expand a bit on some of the work, the detailed work that goes on behind the scenes that actually enables this Council to deliver such schemes, such a lot of money attracted from the government through PFI, because I think it is obviously work that is achieving a lot of that.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I am rising to comment on the Leeds United issue but before I go on to that, just this recurring theme and comment about lack of Member involvement.

You will recall at the last Council meeting we passed an amended White Paper which called upon the Chief Executive to bring forward a report to the Executive Board which will then come to this Council to address those very issues. I would just finish that particular topic by saying, it is a bit like the pot calling the kettle black because all the mechanisms for decision-making that are in place here were the same, as far as I am aware, as they were when we took over from the party opposite and I think you will recall that back then we said something ought to be progressed in terms of what we regarded as the democratic deficit and nothing happened and so now it is going to do. One of the areas that we will be addressing, I hope, will be District partnerships because there we seem to have organisations that have grown like Topsy and are taking all sorts of decisions about which nobody on this Council has any knowledge – neither the administration nor the opposition – and that clearly is a situation that cannot continue. I hope all those issues are going to be properly addressed.

The other point I would make is this, that a lot of the organisations that have been set up have been set up at the behest of your government to involve what they call partners and increasingly those partners have been given the power as it has been taken away from elected Members, which is why I used the expression this is the pot calling the kettle.

Really if you want to make some of the comments you have made in here today – and I guess if I guess aright your tactic – really you should be pressing your own government because they have only announced again this week a bit more jiggery-pokery where the much-hated Regional Assembly is going to go but at least it had some elected Members on it, and they are going to give a Quango even more power. Get your act together, boys and girls, and talk to the people who are doing all this.

Leeds United. Councillor Dobson once again strayed perilously close to debt collection for the second Council meeting running. I am sure that has not gone unnoticed by other Members. I really think his comments were, from somebody so new to the Council, a vote of no confidence in his own Leader, because, of course, his Leader was briefed on precisely what the counsel's advice was to this Council. Indeed he was briefed on the same day that I was, so your Leader was fully aware of what the counsel was advising.

Since that time a copy of our advice has been sent to Councillor Selby and to Councillor Taggart and presume they both have got that. It sets out very clearly that our legal opinion to this Authority could not be clearer what we had to do as creditors.

As far as I am concerned I do not pretend to be an expert in liquidation – clearly Councillor Dobson along with all his other expertise is an expert in liquidation. He also apparently appears to be an expert in the law. I wonder what this Council would have said if we had received an opinion reinforced by the Chief Executive saying we should take a certain course of action and as Deputy Leader of the Council I said, "I am very sorry, that is exactly what you are not doing, you are going to do the reverse." I think you would have quite rightly called me to account.

What we have done is to act entirely on the instructions and the advice of our Chief Officer and the legal advice that we received and that legal advice is available to two members, it is available to anybody, as far as I am concerned. There is nothing secret about it. Councillor Dobson - talk to your own Leader.

COUNCILLOR SELBY: Lord Mayor, I appear to have received some praise from somebody in this Council Chamber so far. It is probably the first time I have

received it. You never know your luck – I may even get some from my good friend Andrew over there.

Yes, I am concerned, the same Minute, about Member involvement because I look at the date of the counsel's advice to us – it was dated 31st May, the day before the meeting was due to take place. What concerns me is that the decision to go into administration was made early in May but such advice and discussions that would have taken place with any Member would appear to have taken place very much towards the back end of the process rather than early and I would like to know why it is, bearing in mind Councillor Carter's press releases saying he is concerned that everybody should stand back and consider matters in detail, why he was not doing this right from the very beginning. I would have thought that would have been the most sensible course of action to have taken, but there we are.

It does seem to me as well that, having seen the advice, questions needed to be asked of our advisers and I know that Councillor Carter is very keen and has now accepted the willingness for District Audit to look into the matter. I take it that they will be referring the matter to District Audit – if not the appropriate officers no doubt will and I am sure we will see what they have to say, although it does seem possible Scrutiny might want to get involved.

I am concerned as to the way things have been done. I do believe that Members should have been made aware of what was going on. I asked officers about two weeks – at least two weeks – before the creditors' meeting what the view of the Council was going to be, because a number of Members of the public had concerns about the penny in the pound. I am pleased to see that thanks to the work of our Members of Parliament – not just the two that have been mentioned in Leeds but also Phil Willis in Harrogate, who I think is entitled to some credit and praise as well – work has been done and we have got a better deal. I do believe in much more elected Members' involvement in this issue. I can understand why one Member of the Executive cannot take part but I would have thought that other Members could have been involved, possibly a special Executive Board meeting to discuss the advice. We are told the concern of the Council is for a successful football club. I would have thought this was a case for a special Executive Board meeting to discuss counsel's opinion, to decide what to do rather than just leave it to officers. My concern is until the very end of the procedure when Members have got involved, we have relied purely on officers at a speed that we do not know.

As I said, I am concerned at that level and I believe there are lessons to be learned for the future, that elected Members are involved as soon as possible, whether it be a briefing to Members but certainly I would have thought, as I have said, this one would be a special Executive Board meeting. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I will deal with Councillors Selby and Dobson first. It is most unfortunate that Councillor Selby had not indicated to speak. Council knows that in standing to respond I cannot deal with the issues of Leeds United because of my personal and prejudicial circumstances in relation to the club. He knows full well that Andrew Carter deals with this on behalf of the administration. Andrew stood...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harris, could I just stop you there? Councillor Wakefield is indicating he wishes to make a point of personal explanation.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Under procedure Rule 14.17, I think when I have been referred to as being briefed and not telling the group, I think it is important for the Council to know that often Leaders of the parties are briefed and often briefed on confidential terms. That is how I took the briefing. I have done that before and

the group knows that if I say it is confidential I do not disclose it and that is what I did at the time. I think the Council knows that when the officer came down it was a very quiet briefing in a room and I was led to believe that it was a confidential brief.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. Councillor Harris.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: To continue where I was, Andrew Carter rose to deal with the issue of Leeds United. Had Brian Selby indicated that, he could have dealt with this point. It is impossible for me to answer this point in Council in this meeting and it is most unfortunate that you have chosen to deal with it in that way. The point is made and you have actually subverted the process of this Council, giving the administration the opportunity to respond. You have actually made that impossible and you have completely undermined the process, which was foolish in the extreme, considering your Members talk about the way in which you feel you are treated with disdain and disregard, but you have actually created a situation where you are hoist by your own petard, quite honestly.

Councillors Minkin and Illingworth used a Minute to raise planning issues but I accept that you were dealing with the question of Member involvement in the process of the Council. Liz Minkin in particular knows that every time she has raised that in a meeting where I have been, I have conceded straightway and we have come back frequently with new arrangements to try and take account of the issues that she raises. It is correct that as much as possible, bearing in mind that we are the administration, we have to have meetings sometimes *in camera*, we have to run the place by accepting that everything is not on the table 24 hours a day every second of the day, but it is right that all 99 Members be involved as much as possible and this administration, working with the arrangements we inherited, have moved significantly to improve the extent to which all Members are involved in the processes of this Council. The way in which we have extended Area Committees and devolved powers and budgets down to area committees is a clear sign of that.

The most recent changes since May and the way we have changed the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is by taking Andrew and I off that because there is always the threat of the dead hand of the leadership on such a committee, and instead have made it really a free-standing, independent, almost Scrutiny Committee of Council to look at the aspects of corporate governance and audit. We are strengthening and we continue to strengthen the involvement of all Members in what happens round here.

I now turn to the question of PFI and PPP and I turn first of all to my colleague Martin Hamilton and I concur absolutely with the point he made, and others, in congratulating officers for what they have delivered for this Authority.

It is a point well made by Martin Hamilton that the government does not just give us the money. We are in serious competition with all sorts of Authorities around this country and we have to justify why we should be given that money. In essence, it is no different from when you go to a bank and ask for a loan - you have to justify it and this administration is good at justifying its position. Notwithstanding that there is a serious revenue effect which we have to pick up in order to bridge these PFI schemes, so it is not all hand outs from central money.

On the question of the Academies, briefly I would simply say this. As I said at Exec Board – and it is mischievous of Keith to have raised it in this way – there have been no decisions. Academies are the policy of your Labour government. It is they that keep coming and knocking on our door and saying, “Academy, academy, academy.” It would be wrong of us not to listen, not to engage and not to discuss but we said at Exec Board, no decisions have yet been made. It is perfectly reasonable

when we have some proper meat on the bone that that be discussed here and I give that undertaking that it will be.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Harris.

(ii) Development & Regeneration

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to Development and Regeneration. Councillor Pryke.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This is on page 15, Minute 25 on the Exec Board's examination of what Leeds City Council did after the flooding incidents. Apart from the White Papers which are going to come up later in the meeting, obviously the Exec Board would look at the flooding incidents that happened mainly in the east of the city and so too will city development scrutiny.

We will look at the Scrutiny Commission Report as produced by Councillor Leadley a few years ago which was very comprehensive at the time but things have moved on a little bit since and we will inevitably in Scrutiny look at the way the city Council deals with flooding and I am pleased the Exec Board received a report from the Director at the time.

I know the Leaders of Council have met with Sir John Harman and Baroness Young as well to talk about their concerns with the Environment Agency in particular and the funding for – it is called the Leeds City Centre Flood Relief Scheme. It is not just the city centre – it is everything from Kirkstall Road down to Thwaites Mill, so it is a substantially larger area than just the city centre which is at risk of flooding and no doubt we will talk about the funding or non-funding of that scheme later on during the White Paper discussion.

I was pleased that also Councillor Blackburn and Councillor Carter were discussing the situation of development and the lack of the ability of the ground to absorb water that falls from the sky, but I think driveways and paving over of front gardens is a bit of a red herring because statistically the real problem is development, development, development that is preventing water from being absorbed by the ground and causing the run-off.

It is the buildings themselves and the roofs on them that causes the water to fall off and not be absorbed by the ground and even, statistically, back yard patios take up a bigger area in the country than driveways or paved over front gardens.

Also, our roads and our pavements are getting bigger and I have seen a statistic from the Environment Agency that says that junction boxes and service boxes from cable companies – Virgin I think it is now around here - take up more area of our ground than do driveways or patios or paved-over front gardens because there are so many hundreds, if not hundreds of thousands of them all over the place.

It is development that is the problem and we are not going to stop developing. We are not going to stop building, we are not going to stop building roads and pavements and all the rest, so we do have to look at how to deal with the water. There are a few easy ways of dealing with water which we can do at city Council level and, as Andrew, I think, pointed out, one is to recommend in planning porous surfaces – not only porous drives, gravel and so on but you can get relatively hard surfaces which are porous for drives, front gardens and patios. Decking is fine but it is pretty useless if you have got a concrete base underneath the decking. These things could be in planning recommendations although, of course, with the national legislation to change things like that.

Above all we have got to be aware that we have got to make space for water and there is more water coming down from the sky, as we know. West Yorkshire got away fairly lightly this year, or the incidents so far this year, I should say, compared to South Yorkshire. When the government office for Yorkshire and the Humber and the Regional Assembly – soon to die off, thanks Heavens – made some enquiries as to how our local authority managed to deal with the aftermath of the flooding, I made some enquiries and found that Leeds City Council came top of the rankings for collecting carpets, white goods and other things which Councils in the South of Yorkshire were not collecting from flood damaged houses. Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster did not help their householders as well as we helped ours, so all credit to our teams here, particularly from City Services, our Streetscene, and particularly most of all to our emergency planning people. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: I refer to page 15 Minute 25 on the impact of flooding events in June. Firstly, can I praise the presentation that was given to the Executive Board which I sat in on representing one of the Wards that was badly affected on both 15th and 25th June. I appreciate the impact of both dates but it was not until I saw the presentation that I really understood the full impact across the city and how near we were to a much greater disaster.

I would hope all Members – I am addressing this to Councillor Carter – could be given the opportunity to see this presentation because I think it was a real eye-opener. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will stick to the planning issues that Councillor Pryke has alluded to because we have got two other debates later on when we can address some of the other issues, but I do want to comment on the meeting that I had with the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, Baroness Young, which was held last Friday, I think was the day.

First of all the planning issues. Of course, Councillor Pryke is right, it is about development, but I just take issue with him slightly because the report I referred to about the hard surfaces created in the Halton area of Leeds, it was a piece of research carried out, as I said, by Leeds University and it is a staggering figure to say that 75% of the increase in paved area in that area came from paving gardens. That has to have a substantial effect. It is an independently arrived at figure and it indicates quite a large area of non-permeable hard standing and it must contribute. Now the wider issue is, of course, that development in general does and, or course, you would imagine and guess that we have over the past few weeks had talks about the planning issues and I know that officers will be watching I hope ever more vigilantly about possible impacts of rainfall, flooding, bad drainage on potential new developments and Members must play their part as well, as I am sure that they will.

One of the comments that I passed to Baroness Young was that I hope that the Environment Agency would be robust when, as statutory consultees this Authority or, indeed, any other Authority contacts them to pass their comments on the sustainability in flooding terms of any proposed development, because our planning officers and Members will rely on that advice being robust if you are – and I address that to the Plans Panel Members – to turn down applications based on flood risk assessments.

I was extremely forceful in terms of my comments there and I have to say Baroness Young responded very positively to trying to ensure that that information and that guidance was put as firmly as possible on a case by case basis.

The meeting with Baroness Young was very positive. The problem is that there is no money, regrettably. What the Council – and I am sure you would agree with what we have so far said – is that the pitiful amount of money that we are being granted from the government - £100,000 out of an even more pitiful £14m chest of money – that £100,000 will go to a hardship fund.

What we have also said is that we will commit £150,000 to try and carry out works which will at least ameliorate some of the effects of the flooding. I will come back to that later because we are seeking to enhance those sums of money by discussions with other partners, and discussions with the Environment Agency are ongoing.

At the end of the day no-one should leave this Chamber in any doubt at all that unless we get the substantial funding required for the capital works for the Leeds City Centre – and Councillor Pryke quite rightly indicated it is a wider area than that, the Flood Alleviation Scheme – unless we get the capital money for Wyke Beck and Farnley, we have a major, major problem and what was patently clear from the meeting with Baroness Young is that their budgets have been cut back, they have asked the government for more money, they hope – hope - they are going to get some more money but she was saying to us that – and I am sure this is not confidential – we shall be looking to the City Council and its partners to see how you can help. The City Centre Scheme alone is £100m and that is off the back of a fag packet because, of course, as you know the scheme was withdrawn only a matter of months ago from the schedule of schemes to be drawn up to be put at design stage.

It is interesting and I suppose in a way it is helpful that because that scheme was withdrawn we were extremely concerned and the Council wrote to Baroness Young, which was why the meeting was scheduled and actually was timed so well in terms of being able to talk about what happened in Leeds, but the same thing applies to the other two schemes. They have only got the funding for the design work.

A massive piece of lobbying is going to have to be undertaken from this Authority because the government will have to free up the money or these schemes will not be done and the problems that we saw will go on. It is a lot of money and it is all over the country, but clearly the lesson that we all have to learn is, we have developed over our ancestors' drainage schemes for so long and benefited on the cheap for so long that now the chickens have come home well and truly to roost.
(Applause)

(iv) Neighbourhoods & Housing

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to Neighbourhoods and Housing.
Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak to page 18 Minute 34, Lord Mayor, Supporting People and the Audit Commission Inspection.

If I can take people back to when Supporting People was first introduced, I think there was a consensus pretty much across the Board that the Supporting People was a good idea. Although Councillor Andrew Carter attempted to portray it as fairer charging part 2 at the time, most Local Authorities saw it as a positive move that would break the link that was often there between support services and properties rather than support services and people.

Generally it was felt that it would remove the anomalies that existed where the Local Authorities were just largely tenants who paid for services for a small number of tenants.

It was also a scheme that was seen as very generously funded, again by most Local Authorities and service providers. Even though in subsequent years the funding has been tightened up, there have not been the screams of anguish that Supporting People is a terribly onerous financial regime that puts Local Authorities under a huge amount of pressure.

Supporting People came into effect in April 2003 and at that time we were in control and Leeds was felt to be very much ahead of the field. We looked around at other Local Authorities – they were clearly struggling with the whole thing; both the Local Authorities and their service providers just did not seem to be able to understand how it would work and you looked and thought, are these people actually going to be able to get their act together before the implementation date, whereas we felt that we had done pretty well as a city and had a relatively easy transition to the new regime.

You look at this Audit Commission Report and the feeling I get is of Leeds slipping back where other Local Authorities that we looked down on at the time have completely got to grips with the challenges of the new system and are getting better inspection reports.

This report came out in May this year following an inspection in January. It reflects what has happened over two-and-a-half years of your administration, not what has happened under one year of Labour administration.

If I can just quote some of the Local Authorities and one of these was clearly one that I thought would struggle with Supporting People altogether – Manchester, three stars on its report. Sheffield, Nottingham, Barnsley, Calderdale – all two star Authorities in terms of Supporting People compared to Leeds – one star with promising prospects.

I think if you look at the report, it would be unfair to say it is about a catastrophic failure but what you do get is a completely depressing feeling of page after page of criticism which builds up cumulatively that even when you find that is more or less all good about what Leeds is doing, there is a “however” at the end of the page that says, “However, you are not doing this”.

Particularly depressing are some of the easy wins that we could have had that we have not had and I think of things like increased service user consultation, better availability of information – these are things that we really should have got right. They are not the difficult things. There are the big issues and the big issues are there in the report – the serious issues that go well beyond Supporting People. I would commend everybody to read the Exec Board report as a kind of quick summary which does get to the key issues that are going to be a cause of concern to the Local Authority in coming years.

The failures that are there, the funding is going to the wrong services. Savings are not being made where they could be so you cannot fund the services that you should be funding. I will just give you a quote from the report:

“Eligibility and value for money assessments have not been consistently applied across all services. Assessments have proved problematic in services for people with a learning disability and some mental health services. There are a

number of drawbacks, including the failure to properly assess eligibility in line with grant conditions, schemes which may be wholly ineligible continue to receive funding and schemes providing ineligible services but costing less than the ceiling continue to receive funding. Grant conditions are not fully complied with and savings are not maximised to invest in additional services addressing unmet need.”

That issue of unmet need is a huge problem here. Just another bit of quotation:

“The programme does not know how much money remains locked into some contracts though continuing to fund activities that are ineligible or not value for money.”

This is desperate stuff. This is saying that you are not spending money where you should be spending it.

THE LORD MAYOR: Finish this sentence, Councillor.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: You have got some very keen targets to achieve by August this year and I question whether this administration, Les, has the ability to manage this. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would also like to comment on Minute 34 page 18, the Supporting People programme, although my particular concerns with the Audit Commission’s Inspection Report are around the financial implications for social care services that are currently funded through the Supporting People grant.

Ineligible care costs are being funded through the Supporting People grant. In 2006/07 social services used £6.3m on learning disability services and £1.7m on mental health services. It is estimated that social services have a £5m deficit that is being spent on ineligible services which should be used towards housing-related support and not care. Care should be paid for by the social services and the local health authority and not through this housing support scheme. Due to care services being paid for through the Supporting People grant, other services that provide accommodation means people are missing out on vital support.

For example, the support recognises that people with physical disabilities and sensory impairment needs are not being met through the Leeds programme. The Audit Commission rated Leeds Supporting People programme a “fair” in comparison with when Manchester was inspected it was scored as “excellent” and Sheffield and Nottingham standing out with “good” performance ratings. Even other nearby Local Authorities are doing better than this administration, like Barnsley or Calderdale, who received “good” performance ratings.

Although Supporting People was implemented by Labour, this administration have had three years to develop plans for ensuring that care services are funded through the right channels and that the service users do not suffer at the hands of their incompetence.

Colleagues, we are for ever hearing this administration calling for more money from government and when they do get it, they show disregard and incompetence in its allocation. The time is well overdue for them to spell out what it intends to do to support the people receiving the care services that will not be funded this way in the near future, or will these service users end up in a position like the

residents of Terry Yorath House not knowing what the future holds for them and at the mercy of this administration's badly thought through policies?

You should remember that we are talking about very vulnerable people with high needs who are dependent on the services they receive - for example, the physically disabled, learning disabilities and mental health sufferers. These people face enough burdens in their lives without the added worry of their care packages.

The Inspectors also criticised the Authority for not managing the protection of vulnerable adults and children by not having safeguarding monitoring or training policies linked to this programme. This is a very worrying finding and I hope the administration can assure us that this is receiving immediate attention.

The Inspectors also noted that publicity about your fairer charging policies was inadequate. A campaign was carried out in 2004. However, nothing has been done since to publicise this policy. I have to ask why, colleagues.

Leeds has a retraction plan which will take five years to complete. In effect, £5.2m of ineligible services will be moved year on year to social services. Other cities have more robust plans with identified sources of funding to help fill the gaps. It appears that here in Leeds we are not putting much emphasis on the future and in particular the future of these care services that will be affected.

Does this administration care what will happen to the people relying on that help? If your previous decisions and policies are anything to go by, then I doubt it very much. It is time you sat up and took notice of what is happening outside this Chamber and to the people you are supposed to support.

I urge you to take action and provide a programme fit for purpose or the wellbeing of these people is on your heads. Thank you, Lord Mayor (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield. I am sorry, Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think Councillor Wakefield will be more flattered with that comparison than I am.

I think following Richard and Debra, as throughout the Council Chamber we see, many of us in the Labour Group are taking quite a keen interest in Supporting People over the last months and years and our interest solely comes from our concerns about the future of the services provided to the very, very vulnerable people who are helped out by Supporting People. It has been a great, great concern to us that the questions we have been asking and the information we have and often have not been getting has been confirmed by the Audit Commission Report.

It is quite clear that, as the Audit Commission recognises, significant funding is available for investment in these services. However, the Council does not know the true extent of excess funding and until this is addressed, the level of reinvestment to meet unmet needs remains uncertain.

That is written in a very dry language of the auditor, but what that is saying is that Leeds services have a big question mark over their future. Nobody knows what the future of Leeds services are. Nobody knows how next year, the year after, the year after that, the often long-term needs of the service users, nobody knows how those will be met.

I think this Audit Commission Report deserves more than just an appearance at the Executive Board where it is noted. I think we are right from the work we have done, from the Audit Commission Report, to ask that this work comes forward again and again and again so we can see what progress is being made. The progress that has not been made so far and that the auditors recognise when they say that work should have happened has not happened, that four years into this programme than an IT system - again this might sound like a very boring thing – to administer this programme has only just been implemented and not when the programme started. Not in the last three years of this administration have these things happened.

I finish where I started. What we want to do is help the administration where they need help and they need a lot of it, but it is to raise our concerns about the uncertainty of a lot of these services and ask for some robust planning to take place in terms of the financial underpinning of these services and make sure that they all have a future, that other social services are not cut to meet some of the incompetence that this report has exposed and make sure Leeds services go forward. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR DRIVER: Lord Mayor, I rise to speak on the same Minute about Supporting People.

Lord Mayor, at a time when many Members on all sides have been concerned to promote the integration of departmental programmes and who are concerned about effective governance of such a complex animal, I think we need to look at what has happened in this particular instance with some concern.

The Supporting People Audit Report is a study of a big department, Neighbourhoods and Housing, getting its hands on quite big government money - £30m a year, as I recall the figures – over that. Obviously when you look at the report it is plain that since 2003/04 there must have been pressure coming from first of all the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister I think it was then and, more recently, the Department of Central and Local Government.

I think it is very clear that there must have been pressure to look clearly at why it was that the amount of money being made available by central government was in decline.

One of the sad things, I think, about our experience with this particular episode is that one can see on the one hand that there has been a degree of, shall I call it secrecy and privacy in a particular department and, on the other, there has been an inability to make available to most Members any idea about exactly what was going on.

Firstly, the secrecy and privacy. In the past couple of years, Lord Mayor, we have had the growth of super-departments in this Council – I do not think Neighbourhoods and Housing is the only one. Children's Services comes to mind and there are one or two others as well, probably. What is clear about this is that they are big organisations that are always seeking more cash and more kudos, more power. One of our jobs as elected Members is to manage and control that process.

As the auditors point out more than once in their document – and it is only a case in point because Children's Services, as I have just said, is another of these elephantine institutions – Children's Services were not let into the core activities of the Supporting People programme until about six months ago, so for the last three or four years the fact that many people who need support are children and, indeed, the Every Child Matters programme shows very clearly how important that is, those two departments have not been talking to one another about this important matter.

It is interesting in the Audit Report, it goes on to say that there has been opportunity for briefing sessions for senior Councillors. Maybe they were private ones, Keith, but most of us did not know these were taking place. Most of us were evidently allowed or could have had some kind of group briefing. I do not remember a group briefing coming to our side and I do not know whether they came on the other side of the Chamber.

What is clear is they say here that Scrutiny Boards receive reports. I looked up the Scrutiny Reports for the last three years and do you know when the first report came? Ralph Pryke will know this. It was in March 2007. The first report about Supporting People never came to us until then, so there is a real concern about governance which we have really got to get a grip on.

If you look at the actual report that came and if you read the Minutes of the decisions of that group, you will see that this is also a very shallow enquiry. The people who came said, "We have just had cuts in our service" and if you read the Minutes that is all that the Members seem to think it was.

When the Audit Report appeared we know it is a lot more than that and somebody was being a bit economical with the truth.

I am not going to say that I know who the culprit is in this but I think you can see there is an issue and I think it behoves all of us as Members to recognise the importance of Scrutiny and full enquiry and honesty and openness by both officers and Executive Board Members so that we do not end up in this kind of murky situation again. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Council, three Members have indicated they wish to speak on particularly this Minute, so the first one is Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not embarrassed to name and shame. The person who is responsible for this mess and this incompetence is Councillor Les Carter and he can nod his head all day long but we all know that he is in charge of this department and it is worth going back over some of the history to this.

As Councillor Lewis said, in the first year that Labour government gave us this, in 2003 and 2004, this was about supporting vulnerable people for housing needs. It is true to say that a number of Authorities, including Leeds, got their heads in the trough and spent it, some people would say illegally but certainly ineligibly.

After that then in 2004 we all know that this administration took over and they have had three years to sort this mess out. They have had not one year, which we had. You can understand we were still waiting for clarification in 2003 and 2004 about what was eligible and what was not, but from 2004 to today this administration, Councillor Les Carter, has had opportunities to sort it out. As a result, as Councillor Coupar has said, we now spend £5.5m on ineligible services. Yes they are to vulnerable people but they are ineligible and they are illegal and some argue immoral, because as a result of that they are blocking new needs. They are blocking refugees who badly need housing support. They are blocking people who are recovering their lives from drugs and alcohol misuse who need housing support. They are blocking people with physical and sensory needs. If you do not believe me, read the report.

It is not good just blaming a Labour government because how come, as people have said, if Manchester, Barnsley, Nottinghamshire, Calderdale can all get

“excellent” and “good” and they got it because they retracted their plans without harming any of the vulnerable people. That is what it says in the report. That is what it says. They could do it.

You know, there is no excuse. There is absolutely no excuse because on this issue they have choices. I have to smile at Councillor Finnigan, the Independent Morley Member. He is independent from the administration. At Executive Board, he came to the Executive Board and blamed the bad, bad Labour government not giving us enough money.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: In a couple of minutes I will be doing it again.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: If you remember the Morley Independents last year past a budget which took millions of pounds from social services, so we do not need any lessons from you, Councillor Finnigan, about a shortage. The truth is, you had shortages, you voted against our budget amendment last year and you knew full well that that would mean cuts in social services and a failure to move on fast enough.

I would say this about governance. You are right, Councillor Carter, some of our government legislation does not include – I am talking about Andrew Carter, who made the point earlier about Members on core strategy. True and I think it is a weakness of passporting funds like this, but none of us and not a Labour government did what Les Carter did and that is he carved our Children’s Services, he carved our social services, he carved our health services and it was only him that decided where the money could be while these services looking after vulnerable people were shelved out. Nobody is responsible for that other than your good selves.

What I would say in terms of the future, we have now got ourselves the worst of both worlds. We have people, the groups I have mentioned, including Tom Leadley who does stand up courageously, travellers, people with physical and sensory impairments, refugees who cannot get the vital services they need because they are refusing to put a retraction plan and release money in here. The whole report is an indictment of the incompetence, the mismanagement and the absolute appalling record of you on Supporting People. It is time you went, Les, on this one. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: It would be almost inevitable for Keith to mention the fact that this is a £2m cut. Let us get that clear, let us put that in some of context, on top of another £2m cut. I would have been slightly more pleased with Keith if he had denounced those particular cuts and said that he would be looking towards doing something about that. We will deal with that in a little moment.

If you look through this particular Audit Commission’s Report – the Audit Commission being unaccountable anyway in any shape, way or form – and you look at some of the questions that they actually raise. One of the questions – and Keith has already hit on this particular problem – is that it says on a budget that we are cutting we think you ought to be expanding the work that you are actually undertaking and – it is quite clear about it and Keith has already mentioned it – you should be providing more services for asylum seekers, more services for travellers, more services for those who are suffering from addiction problems.

We have no problems with that if you accept that there is an ever-expanding number of people, older people, pensioners, who now need that particular help and support, how are you going to square that circle? How are you going to be able to provide more with less when you have a consistent central government attack

making sure that millions upon millions are taken year by year? Do more but we are going to give you less to actually do that.

This comes to the hub of what Keith is on about when we take it to a local level. Ingle Court in Morley. The Audit Commission said consult, you do not do consultations so well. You ought to be consulting the residents there. All of those were getting some support in terms of a warden that actually lived on site from this particular budget. This year, because of the cuts, they have had to withdraw that particular service. You do not get it on site, you have got a travelling support worker rather than actually there – one that used to be living on site.

If you consult the resident there they will say, “Do not take it off us. We want them there all the time so that we can get access to that one.” According to the Audit Commission we ought to consult and then ignore that entirely because, as Keith suggests, it is ineligible. We have got to do it for a cheaper price.

If we were to go back to the residents in Morley and say, “Yes, those in Ingle Court, yes, the Labour Party are very supportive of you having your particular services reduced because they reckon it is ineligible.” We are in a situation here where when you look at the reality, the Audit Commission are facing both directions at the same time. Consult, but if that consultation says keep the service the same, ignore it anyway because you have got to look for value for money and you have got to work within this particular budget. That is a contradiction.

Let us have an open and honest discussion and debate. The amount of services that we are going to have to provide to people under this particular budget is expanding. You cannot do that at a point where the government imposes cuts year after year after year. *(Interruption)*

It is not a cut? £2m they are actually reducing it. I will tell you what, I will take Geoff Driver out to Ingle Court and he can say, “It is not a cut. Your warden has not actually disappeared. This is something entirely different. It really is something entirely different.”

This is exactly what you get. You get a situation when you are looking both ways – we will consult but we will ignore it, we will look at what you are already providing but if we do not actually like it we will call it ineligible and we will take it off you. On that particular point it is a cut in service and the responsibility entirely and utterly lies with the government that consistently cuts this particular budget and makes sure that those vulnerable groups have to give up more to support other vulnerable groups. Take off those who have got very little and give it to those who have got even less. This is what this is about.

Let us have an open and honest discussion and debate about it. The fact of the matter is that this particular budget needs more money putting into it not less and if they were honest enough to say that, then they would have my particular backing but what they are saying is, “Do not blame us for the cuts, do not blame central government for the cuts. We will adopt what the Audit Commission says which is consult, ignore and impose cuts.” We find that entirely and totally unacceptable and a bit more denunciation about central government cuts would go down much better in this case. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Lord Mayor, I did not expect to say this but thank you to Councillor Finnigan for explaining the situation in Gipton Ward where, of course, Oak Tree Court has lost its resident warden.

The principal opposition party probably thinks it is on a win-win situation because if any service is withdrawn from anyone in this city it is a cut and the evil administration is to blame for it, but you have very happily provided us with a very good campaigning point in Gipton and Harehills Wards where no doubt Councillor Harington and his new colleague are campaigning for a cut, because you do not want resident wardens, do you? You have said it is ineligible expenditure. You want a cut and you want to make people redundant. (*Interruption*) You want to cut the budget for that.

COUNCILLOR LEWIS: You should pay for it. You pay for it from your budget.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis, you have had your turn, with respect. Now let Councillor Pryke have his turn.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: I chaired Neighbourhoods and Housing – and it changed its name a little bit – for three years and all the Labour Members of that Scrutiny Board will remember all the discussions we had on all of this, particularly on the issue of hostels and you know very well that Supporting People has had a reducing budget all the time we were in administration. You cannot deny that, Councillor Driver, and if you think that Scrutiny only looked at Supporting People once for an enquiry you obviously have not been looking through the Minutes. I think Councillor Carter might have something to say about that a little bit later on.

We all know that Supporting People has been cut by your government successively and they plan to carry on cutting it. That is your fault and your responsibility because you do not hold your MPs to account. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Now can I call the extremely patient Councillor Jarosz.

COUNCILLOR JAROSZ: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on page 19 Minute 36. Let me make it clear from the outset that I support and welcome this scheme in Waterloo and I support any proposals which delivers affordable, decent housing in Pudsey. However how affordable is affordable? Is shared ownership the solution to the current desperate social housing shortage and what can we all do to help low earners find decent homes?

The average annual pay in the UK is £24,301. The average pay in Leeds is about £400 less than that. The average house price in Pudsey is in excess of £160,000, so if these houses in Waterloo are priced at, say, £135,000, then we are looking at an annual income of £38,571. A 50% purchase would require an income of £28,295 with the required rent. A 30% purchase would still require an annual income of £24,731, which is still above the average income of the people in Leeds.

One alarming fact is that there are close to one in ten children in England who are in overcrowded housing conditions. In Leeds almost 18,000 children are living in overcrowded accommodation. As the criteria for overcrowding is very prescribed, as anybody who has ever had dealings with the housing office around the issues of overcrowding knows, my estimate would put the overcrowding at a considerably higher number than the 18,000.

Allow me to make a personal political point. My son is an apprentice-trained electrician. After five years of training he works serving the community in that capacity. However, his wages would not have covered the 30% purchase price of one of these houses. He now works as a lecturer at Leeds Building College, passing his skills on to the youth of this city and still he could not afford a 50% purchase of

one of these houses under this scheme. In other words, average wages of such professionals as nurses, teachers, fire and police officers, mean that most house prices, either affordable or not to first-time buyers, single people or those with a family to support, are still out of their reach.

The total housing stock of Leeds City Council is 60,000 but there are 31,000 on the housing waiting list. The scheme in Waterloo will include five houses for social rent, 15 houses for shared ownership and 10 apartments for shared ownership. This is the beginning but as a local Councillor I now dread advice surgeries, and I am sure we all do, because of the heartbreaking accounts of family pressures, overcrowding because of a lack of available social housing in Pudsey.

One case study that I would give you is Lee Callaway and his partner, Samantha Lumb, both originally from Pudsey but who have been housed in temporary emergency accommodation in a high rise flat in Seacroft, miles away from their family, miles away from their support network and miles away from Lee's place of work in Pudsey, living in cramped conditions with a two year old child and a new-born baby. Their two year old daughter is extremely stressed and Samantha's pregnancy was threatened on several occasions due to the increasing amount of strain put on the family. They have been waiting two years to be rehoused.

We need to work together to build more Council houses. (*Applause*) Failure to do so will result in an increase in family breakdown which is already the highest in Europe. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor J L Carter to sum up.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: My Lord Mayor, may I just start with the last person and I am not going to say a lot because I would like to deal more with Supporting People.

Can I ask why her and her group have not said to her government over the last ten years that the waiting list when the Conservatives left office across the country was one million - it now stands at 1.6m and before Councillor Jarosz blames me for that lady not getting a house, she should bear in mind that your government have done nothing for ten years but make the situation worse. (*Applause*)

Lord Mayor, can I go on to Supporting People and first of all thank Councillor Wakefield for his vote of confidence. Let me just go on to Councillor Wakefield because it is very interesting. I will come back later to Councillor Wakefield; let me just go to Richard. Richard paints this wonderful picture about when he was in office and when he took over and when he set Supporting People up and it was all wonderful.

What he did not say – let me just give you figures and I will tell you what he did not say. When was in charge there was something like 400 services which were not fit for purpose and had to be changed. He does not tell you that. He also does not tell you that he knew very well that a retraction plan had to be put in place as far as ineligibility as far as Supporting People is concerned. He does not tell you that the year he sat there, like everything else, he sat there doing nothing. In everything you look at, he has done nothing.

Let me just go on to one or two things. Let us talk about the lady over here telling me how much we are doing (*Interruption*) - I know I am being rude there and I do not mean to be rude to you because I like you too much, but for a second let us just talk about finance for a moment.

First of all, their government says we want an efficiency saving and that efficiency saving was £5m. We had to cut Supporting People by £5m. The second thing their government said was, we are not giving you any inflationary increases. Can I tell you today at this moment in time there is £10m, a quarter of what we should have, missing at this moment in time?

I do not care what anybody says over there, if I had said to social services, "Cut £5m out of your budget" – and that is what is being proposed – "Cut £5m out of your budget" and bear in mind Councillor Wakefield, a man who never saw anything, left us with a deficit budget of between £15 and £18m on social services...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: He said he did not know anything about it.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: He did not know anything about that. Another £5m on top of that would have crippled social services and who would have suffered? Not that lot. Not that lot at all, they would not have suffered. It would have been the weak, the wounded, the dispossessed and the marginalised. They are the people who would have suffered if we had taken any notice of what you say.

I could have got two stars. I could have easily got two stars. I could have ramrodded it through but, I will tell you what, those people are far more important to me than the Audit Commissioner. (*Applause*) If the Audit Commissioner says to me, "You have only got one star instead of two", to the people who are suffering under social services I can assure you of this – one star on a piece of paper does not mean as much as doing work to help those people. (*Applause*)

So, my Lord Mayor, I do plead guilty. I do plead guilty. I was not going to push it through with the figure that they wanted. I was not prepared to worsen the situation for the weakest in this city. You do not care. You do not care. We have improved the service and every time we try to improve the service we have had somebody over there whining and moaning.

The homeless have a far better service now, even with those cuts, than they had under them. What do we have when we try and do it? I had Councillor Blake screaming like a Banshee Indian across this Chamber how bad I was, how rotten I was. Lord Mayor, I will take nothing from that lot. I will only look after the poor and the weak in this city and to hell with you lot. (*Applause*)

(v) Children's Services

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to Children's Services. Can I call Councillor Lowe.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: At the last Councillor meeting I called into question the quality of information contained within the Children and Young People's Plan. Today I wish to comment on the assessment of Leeds as "good" under the Enjoy and Achieve category and I refer in particular to the provision of play facilities which I believe means that we do not meet the standard required.

I refer you to Councillor Illingworth's earlier comments, which give you some indication as to why we do not achieve the "good" standard, but we also fail on other things. For instance, we fail on the playing field standard first of all. Leeds fudges its figures by including fields such as those at Ireland Wood as being inner city and also includes agricultural land as open space. We fail on provision of parks and neighbourhood play areas and we also fall down on provision of free, open access supervised play facilities. Harrogate, Bury and Middlesbrough all make better

provision than Leeds – in fact everybody does because Leeds has no provision at all under this category.

We can address these failures and make the assessment of Leeds as “good” in this area true. How can we do that, you ask? Leeds has bid for £1.6m to fund a play development programme but £800,000 of this is proposed to be spent by Parks and Countryside on their maintenance backlog and not on better open access for our communities. This is a scandal and condemns our children to a future without outdoor play. I ask you now to renegotiate this bid and put play for children first.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In welcoming the roll out of Children’s Centres referred to in Minute 26 page 15, following on from Councillor Lowe’s comments I am sure that you will all agree with me that play is an essential part of young children’s lives, whether it is in the state of the art purpose-built provision such as children’s centres or, indeed, in open space and outdoors.

The children can learn the skills of social interaction plus learn the opportunities for exercise, countering the trend for obesity in young people at the moment.

As well as the massive multi-million pound investment in children’s centres that has come from the government, I would also like to welcome the success that we have had in achieving the £1.6m Big Lottery bid for children’s play in Leeds. However, I would like to refer to my comments at Council on April 18th and would like to ask Councillor Harker about the progress of deciding how this money will be spent. When the paper came to Exec Board not a single member of the Exec Team opposite knew anything about the detail of the bid. It was absolutely scandalous. Councillor Brett, I am sorry to say, is not here today but as Exec Member for Children’s Services he did not have any input into the bid that was submitted to the Big Lottery.

An advice note after the meeting came to Exec Board Members telling us there would be extensive consultations in order that the bid could be refined by September, also including members of the community. I would like to ask Councillor Harker if any of this has taken place and, indeed, what scope anyway is there to actually alter the bid. We have already been told that we cannot alter the locations in the original bid and in recognition of our success in getting government money to build new Children’s Centres, I would also like to ask if staff and children at these centres will be invited to comment on the proposed Big Lottery funding.

This Big Lottery funding has been set aside to create and improve free local play areas, to support innovation and new ways of providing play and particularly ensuring that good, inclusive and accessible play services and facilities are provided locally.

Can you, Councillor Harker, assure us that the bid will achieve the above criteria based on full participation of local agencies and families and members?

I am sure Councillor Harker will be aware of the concerns that are already out running around the city about the contents of this bid and in particular the lack of consultation so come on, Richard, please, can you assure us that Members first of all will be involved? We cannot wait for the protracted deliberations that Councillor Carter has outlined for us having more Member involvement. We would like to know how we can have an input. We have only got until September and we all know that a lot of us will be away in August.

Play is a vital contributor to the health and wellbeing of our children and young people. We have here a wonderful opportunity to really make a difference. What a complete waste if we do not make the most of this tremendous opportunity. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, on the same page the same Minute and Council will be indebted to you that you have goaded me into speaking on this particular Minute as you knew I was not going to.

I do welcome any money that is spent obviously on Children's Centres and I hope Councillor Harker will see fit to welcome further Labour government spending coming into this city.

Secondly, Lord Mayor, I refer you to earlier in the Council. Members will recall an infamous Newsnight programme when Jeremy Paxman asked the then Home Secretary Michael Howard the same question 13 times. I think earlier on we asked Councillor Wakefield's question at least eight times. Can I ask it again? Did the Youth Service under spend last year or not and by how much did it under spend and is he proud of the fact that he did under spend? Thank you.

COUNCILLOR LANCASTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking to the same Minute, Minute 26 page 15. Whilst welcoming the Executive Board's decision to endorse plans to build another Children's Centre, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the excellent work that has been done at another centre, the Oakwood Pupil Support Centre in East Leeds, a centre I have visited, a centre featured in last week's Yorkshire Evening Post.

The Oakwood Pupil Support Centre is proving to be the most unlikely of success stories, taking disruptive pupils aged between seven and eleven from across the city. The centre is producing some of the country's most innovative work on how to deal with children with behavioural and emotional problems. Regular visits from neighbouring education authorities are further proof of the centre's growing reputation. A National Arts Mark award for new teaching methods and an advanced Healthy Schools Award are also proof of the centre's growing reputation.

Whilst teaching disruptive children of all ages in classrooms together sounds like a recipe for disaster, this approach has produced startling results. Since opening hundreds of pupils have passed through the doors of the centre and successfully returned to mainstream education. Attendance rates currently stand at an impressive 95%. The Oakwood Centre is so important as it helps those children who have slipped through the net to get their education back on track. Parent feed-back from a recent questionnaire has shown that 95% of parents agree that their children have made good progress, that the centre has helped the children to manage their behaviour long term, that the teaching is good and that the centre is well managed.

By providing these children with a calm and structured environment in which to learn the centre is giving them a vital second chance they otherwise might not have had.

I am sure Members of Council will join with me and congratulate the Oakwood Pupil Support Centre for the encouragement and support they are giving these young people. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR FELDMAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on the same item but to be terribly parochial because the report actually says, "Design and cost Report – Allerton C of E Primary School – Provision of a new Children's Centre."

I think I ought to read out what it actually says:

“The Chief Executive of Education Leeds submitted a report on proposals to incur expenditure of £650,000 in respect of a scheme to provide a Children’s Centre at Allerton C of E Primary School. The report explained that the new Allerton C of E Primary School was to open in September 2007 following the amalgamation of Archbishop Cranmer C of E Primary School and Fir Tree Primary School. “

No doubt Members will recall that taking place.

“As a result, the site of the new school had been identified as a location for a Children’s Centre.”

Therefore, on behalf of all the children there I would like to thank the Executive Board for agreeing to this and let us hope that it is extremely successful. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I stand to address the comments that Councillor Blake made in the absence of Councillor Brett. Perhaps I can shed a little light on the subject. I apologise to Judith but I was ploughing through a pile of papers and only caught part of what you were saying, but I am sure I will be able to answer your comments fully.

I have to say it is only Councillor Blake, is it not, who can make a good news story of the awarding of £1.6m to this Authority sound like a complete disaster. We should all be rejoicing and all be thankful that we have been awarded such a sum of money from the Big Lottery fund. The bid was to install a whole range of play equipment.

Councillor Blake cries, “We have not been consulted.” I have been in this place something like 16 years now and prior to our administration being in control, I cannot say I was consulted on very much at all. I certainly was not consulted on any single lottery bid that was ever put forward by your administration, let alone where it goes. That in itself is a lesson, is it not? Just thinking about it, I cannot think in any of those years that we actually got any money from any lottery bid into my Ward under your administration. It all went to, dare I say it, the usual suspect Wards . Now, however, I am sure you will see that this administration does not behave in such a way and we are far more equally spreading the jam that there is.

I hear “Oh no you are not.” Councillor Blake will no doubt be delighted to know, as she claims not to know already, that actually a total sum of £120,000 is to be spent in her own ward, in Middleton Park – I am sure she would like to congratulate this administration for securing that sum of money for her Ward - £120,000 in Osmanthorpe, £95,000 in Harehills Park, £100,000 at Craggside Recreation Ground, £90,000 at Deepdale Community Centre, £120,000 at Meanwood Park, £95,000 at Hesketh Lane Recreation Ground and £80,000 in Tyersall Park. I think that is an amazing achievement to secure such a fantastic sum of money not by that administration, by this administration for the young people in Leeds. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I call Councillor Harker to sum up?

COUNCILLOR HARKER: I would like to thank Councillor Feldman for at least keeping to the item that is in the Minutes and I was very pleased that we have got the Children’s Centre opening there as the new school progresses and I wish the new

school all the best for its future. Interestingly Councillor Blake does come to Exec Board, she does sit there, she does speak.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Don't we know it!

COUNCILLOR HARKER: The bid, the play bid, was discussed there I think on at least one if not two occasions. She had her chance then for this consultation. It seems very strange that someone who sat through all of that should, once the bid has been granted, call for it to be renegotiated, if I understand what she said.

I unfortunately did not hear all that Councillor Lowe said but I thought there was some criticism at the beginning of her speech of the Early Years service and provision, which I find strange, given that we have had double beacon status for the Early Years service in the city and we have probably the best Early Years provision that you can find anywhere in the country.

I thank the other Councillors this afternoon for their contribution to this Minute but this Minute, as I said earlier, was a cost design statement – a good cost design statement and I do not feel that I have got anything more to add to a good cost design statement. (*Applause*)

(vi) Leisure

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to Leisure. Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Would you like to speak on Leisure?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Yes, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: If you do not wish to, Councillor Gruen, we can move on.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, Councillor Procter just had some figures in an area of portfolio which was not his, so I hope he will have some figures to hand on his own portfolio because for the last three years I have been trying to ascertain this deal which he and his officers tried to manage for Roundhay Golf Club. I have to say I have come up against the utmost difficulty, both at very senior officer level and at Executive Board level.

Councillor Atha and I questioned this issue about three years ago when Councillor Procter came grandstanding into this Chamber and told us what a good deal he had done in a 75 year (*Interruption*) – I am going to come to the Mansion later for Councillor Loble's benefit. He came grandstanding here and told us that having a 75 year lease to flog off, basically, the Roundhay Golf Club was a good deal for the city. Councillor Atha and I said, "What was the deal?" and, of course, we were never told and still have not been told, despite the fact that three years later this good deal has fallen through altogether and I have asked how much officer time was expended in putting together this deal and yet another very senior officer in Legal and Democratic is refusing to answer those questions.

The theme of this Council meeting so far has been one of probity and governance. I have to say that probably Alistair Campbell learned some lessons from Councillor Procter because he is all smoke and mirrors.

Perhaps, John, you can tell us today in a new phase of openness and truthfulness, how much money the city would have gained if this deal had gone through.

I have some misgivings because I know, John, if it was a good deal you would have told us three years ago. You would have said, "We have got £Xm for this and it is fantastic and it is all going to go into Wetherby, that deprived area of Leeds." No, he did not do so, so let us speculate like we did three years ago, Bernard.

We think a good deal would have been £1m or more, John. Do us the honesty of listening at least. Was it £1m or more you would have got for this deal? That probably would have been a quite good deal. Was it half a million or less, because that might have been a very poor deal for the city for something like 75 years?

Nothing has happened in three years on this front and now we come to the Mansion – the infamous Mansion that is going to be. I am from the probity and truthfulness of how you are conducting your portfolio. What is happening with the Mansion? Councillor Kendall told us by the summer the facility would be open and people could come into the Mansion. Councillor Kendall, tell us if you did not say that. I give you permission to stand up and speak in a minute.

Councillor Loble, this is your Ward for the time being and you are proud of it for the time being and tell us – very shaky foundations, I know – what is happening to the Mansion? Are you unable to have sufficient influence with Councillor Procter to get him to prioritise this and bring it back into use? What has happened to the Lakeside Café? Nothing. Absolutely nothing has happened to the Lakeside Café.

Tell us what is going on. Come on, Honest John, this is your opportunity to tell us what is going on. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor, speaking to Minute 27 on page 16. I would like to welcome the investment of half a million pounds in the golf courses around Leeds, in particular the £133,000 in Middleton Golf Course - yet more investment in the area. This is an investment in an area which is regarded as one of the more deprived areas of Leeds and we should not think of leisure golf as only for the wealthy and that it is an investment which demonstrates this administration's commitment to leisure services for all. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter to sum up.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thanks, Lord Mayor. I have to say, Peter, talking about honesty within departments, it does raise the spectre that in some way I or the department act dishonestly and I will be checking the verbatim very carefully – very carefully – because I know for a fact that you would not dare suggest that I would act in any way dishonestly, now would you, Peter?

I did think yet again that someone in the Labour Group may be rising to congratulate this administration in investing large sums of money in its remaining golf courses - £78,000 has been invested, Gotts Park £61,000, £191,000 in Temple Newsam, £65,000 at Roundhay and £133,000 at Middleton.

What all of Councillor Gruen's complaints relate to is the fact that he is not actually leader of the Labour Group. That is his major problem. If he was leader of the Labour Group, or even if he could graduate two places to his right he would actually be a Deputy Leader of the Labour Group and then at that time – I might say it is the only problem that afflicts Councillor Gruen, the same problem that afflicts

Councillor Atha because if either of those people occupied either of those exalted posts, they would be in a position to have seen the pink papers and know exactly the position we were in with the Roundhay Golf club deal. In fact, I know, colleagues here know that Councillor Atha did see those pink papers. He did see those pink papers. He was privy to those papers and he did see the information that was in there.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I was not.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is the only way he could have made the comments that he did in the Yorkshire Evening Post that concerned a number of us.

What we said and what I said in this Chamber at that time in relation to the deal that was on the table with Roundhay Golf Club – and indeed Councillor Wakefield and Councillor Carter and Councillor Harris and myself said exactly the same thing at Executive Board in the closed part of the meeting and that was we all expressed concern – concern – about the deal that was on the table in relation to Roundhay Golf Club. Concern. We all expressed that.

It is difficult when there is a deal on the table and it is moving forward in a place like this to say, “I have clearly got concerns about it.” We wanted more information, we asked for that information, that information took a long time coming back to us and the result was that the bidder pulled out of the deal. That was the situation, that was the circumstance and those people who understand how the pink papers work and confidential information works will respect that and understand that that was the situation.

When people over there say “Tell us how much, how much”, it is irrelevant. It is not a bid any more. The bid is not on the table. It was withdrawn. All of this, I might say, was a process that was started off not under this administration but under your administration. We did not set the documents, we did not set the specification.

COUNCILLOR McKENNA: It was going well until you took over.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: It was Councillor Blake who did that. She might not remember it but it was her who set it. What we inherited was a position where we were either told we could move forward or we could abort it and if we abort it we would have wasted a sum of money that is detailed in the report, actually, in terms of the fees that had been paid. We thought that was not a good idea, that we should move forward and see if there was an opportunity to conclude a deal in terms of Roundhay and thereby invest substantial sums of money into the golf courses of this city.

I am pleased with the proposal that we have before us and what this Minute reflects. It reflects the largest single investment in our golf course since I can remember – since, I guess, anyone else can remember – because certainly that administration has invested nothing in the golf courses of this city. I am not sure how many of them are or are not golfers.

Councillor Gruen’s repeated chants – and he is chuckling away to himself there – “The Mansion, the Mansion”. I have to say that when the visitor centre at the Mansion opens and we have taken back (*Interruption*)

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: When?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, it is rather boring listening to the same chants from over there time and time again. We have taken back the Mansion

from the contractors in relation to the visitor centre. It is about to go through its fit out. It will be truly amazing when it opens, a building that will be open to the public, available to the public and much used by the public, unlike the proposal under their administration when the doors would have been closed, the officers would have been in there with a few little offices for their chummy pals, no doubt. *(Interruption)*

Lord Mayor, the Mansion, is a fantastic building. It will look truly splendid. I might just say, Lord Mayor, if any of those people who are not in the know about what the mansion proposal was, I am more than happy to talk them through it stage by stage and have explained to them that their proposals suggested the retention of an area known as the Phoenix Bar which was dilapidated, falling down, in a shocking state. They were going to retain it. We decided to replace it, rebuild it and it is that that is the focus of the brand new visitor centre, Lord Mayor. It will be stunning and they will be choking on their words. *(Applause)*

(vii) Adult Health Social Care.

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to Adult Health Social Care.
Councillor Coupar.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on Minute 24 page 15, which is the Executive Board's response to the deputation by concerned residents and carers of Terry Yorath House.

A report was initially published for May's Executive Board which was then deferred to June and then further deferred until July. Firstly, I would like to know why it has taken this administration three months to respond to extremely worried people who were looking to you to deal with their concerns and questions compassionately and with expedience.

There is no excuse for taking such a long time to respond to this deputation bearing in mind they are very real and grave concerns they have about the future of their loved ones.

It is important to remember the original points the deputation raised back in April. They said that change was not required at Terry Yorath House, that the consultation process had been flawed, that the organisation chosen to do the research was inappropriate and that inappropriate research methods were used and the concerns of residents and family carers had been misrepresented in the draft consultation.

The report does little if anything to allay these fears and is in fact excuse after excuse as to why you are determined to carry on regardless of their concerns.

Lord Mayor and colleagues, it may surprise you to learn that the report submitted in May differs very much to the report submitted in July. In May a description given to Terry Yorath read, "When built the establishment was considered good accommodation but it is limited by today's standards. Bedrooms do not have full en suite facilities." Then in July, "The home has groups of four single en suite bedrooms that are built around a central lounge/dining room. The centre is purpose built and all on the ground floor."

Why is there such a big difference between the negative impression the May response gives and the much more positive description in the July response? Has work been done since May that we are all completely unaware of, or was it always this way but a negative impression of the building better suited this administration?

Again in May you say that the CIL is an arm's length organisation answerable to disabled people. Then in July you describe it as an organisation of disabled people. Which is it? It still does not answer the concerns of the action group that it is not on an appropriate organisation to carry out the consultation. It is viewed as already having pre-conceptions that independent living is best and perhaps most unbelievably of all in May the report stated that it is clear there is concern that the Council is not effectively consulting with disabled people and there is a need to establish a forum for organisations to ensure full participation, yet by July this recommendation had been completely removed.

I would love to know how history was re-written to remove the need for this forum. Does this administration believe that they consult effectively with disabled people? Certainly not if inspectors or user groups are to be believed.

Will we still have a consultative forum or not and when will we have an explanation as to the reasons for the removal of this extremely important recommendation?

Councillor Harrand, I believe you have still not apologised for your derogatory comments about these worried people. Neither have you been to speak to them or heard first hand what they have to say. It is a disgrace that the Executive Board Member pays so little attention to such an important issue.

You, the administration, need to convince the people of Leeds that you know how to run social services properly because you certainly have not convinced these benches. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR ARMITAGE: Can I comment on page 16, Minute 8, not what is on the Order Paper which is page 15 Minute 24, Lord Mayor.

I want to talk about the concerns I have about the provision of the respite suites which were intended for a replacement of the Breece. There appears to be some confusion over the replacement of the provision. At one point there were six respite and two purpose built two bedroom apartments. Perhaps it is just me but I understand that this was to mean that there were going to be eight new facilities to be built. This is incorrect. The two bedroom apartments are two of the separate respite suites, giving a grand total of six new facilities. Even there confusion arises. The new respite suites are not new. They are merely a conversion of existing areas of care homes. Does this mean that the care homes are losing residential places for our elderly?

I have heard of being economical with the truth but I have at best not been fully informed and at the worst misled over exactly what the replacement provision should be. There are six respite suites in care homes across this city including Beeston, Wortley and Garforth. The administration said this would be replaced by a 34 bedroom hotel, which was the Breece.

When people holidayed at the Breece, they made friends. They arranged to meet there the following year to meet up again. One respite suite in a care home in Leeds does not provide the opportunity either to meet old friends or to make new ones. When staying at the Breece trips were arranged for holidaymakers to visit the theatre etc and entertainment was provided four nights per week.

If the sale of the Breece was supposed to help provide better facilities or short breaks, as Councillor Harrand's letter to Members stated on 10.10.06, then I ask the question, do disabled people only deserve a few days somewhere in Leeds rather than two weeks at the seaside? What criteria is there for the respite? Where will

these be advertised and, most importantly, when will they be open? What facilities will there be in respite suites for the elderly, disabled and families who used to rely on the Breece?

Quite apart from the sea view I can tell you what they do not have is kitchen facilities. Holidaymakers are expected to eat alongside care home residents although they can and are welcome to take their meals back to their rooms and sit there and eat them on their own there. It is ridiculous to expect people on holiday to either eat on their own or in a communal dining area in a care home.

Perhaps Councillor Harrand can explain how he gives complete privacy to holiday makers as described in the YEP on May 15th by a Leeds City Council spokesperson. The Breece had various menus, a dining room, a main lounge, packed lunches were provided for guests who went out on day trips. Is it possible to even start to try and compare this provision with the respite that we have got now – or what we should have now?

Having made some enquiries into the comprehensive costs of the holiday, the cost to stay at one of the respite units is £73.95 per person per night. That equates to £739.50 for two people for five nights. This compares with the off-peak rate of £418 for a twin room en suite at the Breece for a week. Why is there such an enormous price difference in this?

Councillor Harrand is happy to appear in the paper as showing us all that Council is committed to Dignity in Care so, I ask, how does a slap in the face for holidaymakers in respite suites demonstrate his commitment?

With regard to the Dignity in Care grants, many of which have been supplemented by the money from the sale of the Breece, I find it very disturbing that it is only after I have asked a number of questions about the allocation of the Department of Health money it emerges that a number of care homes do not meet the minimum decent standards where requesting grants to bring them up to standards. The decision was taken by a grant allocation group that the money should not be used to bring care homes up to standard.

How can we be part of the Dignity in Care campaign if we are unwilling to spend money on ensuring homes meet the decency standard?

THE LORD MAYOR: Could you bring it to an end, Councillor Armitage?

COUNCILLOR ARMITAGE: Yes. How can a 14" television be considered a greater improvement to dignity than ensuring older people's homes are brought up to a decent standard? Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR KENDALL: Lord Mayor, I wear two hats like many people in this Chamber. One is as Lead Member, one is as Ward Member. Councillor Harrand can be assured of my support when wearing the first hat, Lead Member for Adult Health and Social Care, but today I am wearing the second hat on behalf of Roundhay Ward. Terry Yorath House is in my Ward and I am speaking in support of the residents today so Peter, watch your back.

On behalf of the residents of Terry Yorath House I am keen for the right solution. Indeed, ten or twelve solutions, as each of the ten or twelve residents have got individual needs. To this end I have visited several times to talk to residents, parents and staff and I have also been to Endercliffe Mews...

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Kendall, could you help and speak up, please, as Members are having difficulty.

COUNCILLOR KENDALL: Yes - which is part of the plans being discussed and I have talked to residents and staff there. I understand that to vulnerable people change must seem like a threat. In a world where they are already disadvantaged they need their own secure world around them, wherever that may be. I am watching the progress and discussions very carefully and I have confidence that everyone's view, most particularly those of the staff and residents and the parents and carers' action group, will be properly taken into consideration at all stages.

I am on the side of the best decision for the residents of Terry Yorath House so we will all watch this space. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BALE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I refer to Minute 28 on page 16 and I am sure all Members of Council will welcome the allocation of £1.04m from the Department of Health to enhance the physical environment at care homes providing nursing or personal care for older people.

I understand that all care homes are invited to submit bids. A selection process resulted in the allocation of £700,000 across 56 separate independent sector homes and £327,000 to fund improvements in 16 local authority homes. All that money will be spent by March 2008.

I think this rather refutes Councillor Coupar's suggestion that the administration is unable to manage the expenditure of funds coming from central government. It is a highly welcome allocation of funds giving the increasing inter-dependence of the NHS and the local authority in the support of older residents. Increasing life expectancy, shorter stays in hospital, clearly increase the demands on social services and must be matched by continuing allocations of that kind.

It costs me nothing as a Conservative to acknowledge that allocation of funds from a Labour government. What I would hope is that we could, on matters such as the care of the vulnerable elderly, find common cause in this Council Chamber and that colleagues on the Labour benches would recognise and acknowledge that our fight is with central government in terms of the inadequacy of the money coming from government and the growing gap between needs and expenditure.

It is rather like the case that Councillor Jarosz referred to earlier. I sympathise with her son and others trying to find affordable housing. The reality is that average earnings have increased by 20% in real terms in ten years; average house prices by 200% in the last ten years in real terms. Those are the figures. That is the growing affordability gap there. The affordability gap we referred to here is the affordability gap in terms of caring for older people in our community.

Your fight is with your government not with us. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARRAND: Thank you. I will be brief because we have made some progress I know. The next speeches are all by Labour Councillors.

Thanks to the Labour Members opposite and their continuing interest in the future of Terry Yorath. I thought we had heard the first speech before – it seemed very similar to the one we had last time. I have to say on the subject of causing unnecessary distress to people in Terry Yorath, I would rather have my conscience than yours. (*Hear, hear*)

Suzi, we will have a detailed briefing for you. A series of sensible questions and we will brief you and answer all the questions you put to us. Thank you very much indeed.

The question of capital investment in social services properties. I have a list here of where we are going to put all this money and if any Ward Members wish to write to us and tell us they would rather not have it, tell us. We are going to invest heavily. Tens of thousands of pounds in Gipton and Harehills, Temple Newsam, Hyde Park and Woodhouse, Kirkstall, Garforth and Swillington, Beeston, Rothwell, Guiseley and Rawdon, Morley South – does anyone want to say, “No thank you, we do not want the money?” – Horsforth, Pudsey, Armley. Do Armley Members say they do not want the money? Wetherby, Calverley and Farsley, Morley South again, Otley and Yeadon, Farnley and Wortley - do you want to refuse the money? Killingbeck and Seacroft twice and Otley and Yeadon again.

There is an enormous investment of capital money and if people do not want it in their Wards let me know and we will divert it to other Wards . If Ward Members turn it down we will put it to other places but I do not think we will get many letters along those lines.

Finally, so we can get another section of the report in, I would just like to report some good news again – some more good news. This morning we found out we have got £800,000 for Leeds from the Big Lottery fund. That is going to be split evenly between social services Older and Active project, which is going to train local people across the city to help people in distress across the city – not government money, not city Council money but the Big Lottery fund and we are very grateful, and a further £400,000 to the West Leeds Healthy Living Project to encourage healthy eating. That is another vote of confidence in recognition of the professionalism of Leeds City Council social services.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Why did it take three months to answer the deputation then?

(b) Overview and Scrutiny Committee

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we move now to Overview and Scrutiny committee and call on Councillor Minkin.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not actually expecting Councillor Grahame to respond to this because I know she agrees with me, but to ask Mark Harris to address this, please, in his final reply. Actually I do not know why he does not agree with it, given his comments earlier at this meeting.

What I am referring to is the request the Keith Wakefield wrote on behalf of the Labour Group that any two members of OSC can request a call-in of a decision recognising that we are all, of whichever party, responsible and thoughtful people, profoundly interested in the health of the democratic process and also that a Morley Independent is now a fully paid-up member – I understand he is a fully paid-up member – of the Exec Board.

Councillor Harris replied that:

“The Morley Borough Independents are not part of the administration, they have no place in Cabinet and are an entirely independent party who, for their own reasons, voted as they did at the Council AGM. I do not believe that comprises their independence with regard to scrutiny call in. I am

therefore not minded to reconsider the decision that has recently been made.”

Our view is that it is actually not good enough. We are always being told that appearances of probity are as important as actual behaviour and I do not think I can be alone in assuming that the Morley Independents are not quite as independent as they used to be. Let us just make it simple and let us have any two Members of OSC capable of calling in decisions. It will not mean that you are overloaded but it will mean that you really have a much more transparent and democratic process in this Council. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Grahame to sum up.

COUNCILLOR GRAHAME: I will just say that we do intend to put this to the committee and the Morley Independents say that Councillor Harris says they are not part of the administration but they are on the Executive and they are the ones who have signed the call-ins over the year from July 2nd, so we are putting it to the committee to look at. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Council, it has now reached 4.45. Council Procedure Rule 4 comes into play. Could I call Councillor Harris to reply?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Yes, I will deal with the last point first. As my colleague has quite rightly pointed out, you have got one voting and one non-voting Member on Executive Board. Does that mean that you should refer yourselves to Scrutiny to question the probity of your own Members on Exec Board? It is frankly pathetic. The Morley Independents are the second largest opposition party and are not part of the administration. Their position has been recognised by offering them a place on Exec Board when one became free because the Greens left the administration and that is the way in which we dealt with it. We could have taken the extra place for ourselves but we did not. I suppose we could have given it to you – I am sure you would not have complained. It would not have altered what the Morley Borough Independents are, which is an independent group that vote as they see fit on any issue.

The arrangements for call-in were agreed by Keith Wakefield and he did not seem to think there was anything particularly untoward until he thought that perhaps the MBIs were part of the administration. They are not. In any event this has been discussed by Whips and the Whips have agreed to see how the process goes and if there is a serious problem of the Labour Group being able to call things in because of this, and if when you look at that it stands Scrutiny that for some reason you cannot get the support of the MBIs, then the Whips have agreed to bring this into the process and, indeed, we will.

I perhaps more so than a lot of my colleagues am absolutely adamant that I will not interfere in Scrutiny. It was clear over the Wharfemeadows Action Group and pressure was brought to bear on me not to let things go to Scrutiny, not to take things. My view is always the same. I will not interfere with Scrutiny. I only ever attend if I am invited to give evidence. After that it is quite right that Scrutiny must do what it thinks fit and I am not going to be labelled as a gerrymanderer and that is that.

A long time ago, it seems to me – and I have lost my bit of paper – we started what became a theme for this afternoon which was blaming this administration for the Labour government’s activities.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Holding to account, Mark. You have come here to answer for your actions.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: All right. All right, Jimmy boy. Let us play semantics. Holding us to account for the actions of the Labour government, if that makes you feel better, fine. It does not alter the fact that we are grappling with decisions made by your government.

Let us deal with Supporting People. That is your government's policy. It is your money that was given to your administration. You put in place the process and yes, it is quite right it is a serious problem, it is a serious budgetary problem and in fairness to Les Carter, he has resisted pressure from other outside bodies to do something about it. What are we supposed to do about it, quite honestly?

Let us just remember what your amendment to the budget was. Your amendment, which Keith Wakefield referred to, asked for an extra £2m combined across social services. OK, let us suppose that had been carried and let us suppose we used it to try and redress the problems of Supporting People. We would have still been left with millions of pounds of cuts to vulnerable people. We do not want to do it. We are not the ones who want to take the money away. It is the Labour government that wants us to take the money away and the people of Leeds should know that full well, that it is your party that want the money taken away.

Then we had the discussion on Academies. For Heaven's sake, Academies are not our policy. We have not gone running down to Whitehall screaming, "Give us Academies".

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Richard has.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Excuse me, he went down to London because Lord Adonis asked him to come down to discuss it. Adonis has been up here twice or three times running round the city trying to convince people that we must have Academies and it would be wrong and negligent not for us to listen and not for us to see what is on offer because at the end of the day if the sum total on offer is greater than what we have got now, we ought to look at it if it were to provide something better for the education of the children of this city and that is the only basis on which we will do it.

For Heaven's sake, to haul us over the coals because we are talking to your Ministers about your policy is frankly absurd.

Councillor Jarosz. I sat for five minutes wondering where she was going because I could not actually believe where she ended up going. She ended up playing hell about a situation created by your General Secretary again. We are not responsible for the cost of housing. We are not responsible for housing inflation. We are not responsible for market forces. We have to try and deal with it. It is central government.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: What are you responsible for?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: I will tell you. We are certainly responsible for the extra £50m that we put into social services since we came to power. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Government funding.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: We are certainly responsible for the extra £80m we put into road repairs since we came into power. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Government funding.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: We are certainly responsible for unlocking the mess over the Swarcliffe PFI bid and getting that instigated. *(Applause)* We certainly are responsible for the single largest housing area regeneration scheme in Britain if not in Europe through EASEL. We are responsible for negotiating that too. *(Applause)*

As I said the first day I stood up as Leader of Council, where we make mistakes, where I am responsible for something I will admit it and there have been many times I have come into this Chamber and I have admitted that I have made an error or if we have done things which perhaps could have been done better. I have said it openly about Wharfemeadows, perhaps to John Procter's vexation, but I said it quite openly that the matter could have been dealt with better and it was not, so I will take responsibility, as I said last time. Andrew and I will take joint responsibility as joint Leaders for this administration but we will not be responsible for the way in which the Labour government put us under budgetary pressure...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You should lobby your MPs.

COUNCILLOR HARRIS... and forces us to do things which are completely, totally unpalatable. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Could we, Council, have a vote on receiving the Minutes? Those in favour? Those against? Then that is CARRIED.

Thank you, Council. It is now six minutes to five with the clock there. I am going to break now. We have 20 minutes tea break in the Banqueting Hall. Can I invite those residents in the gallery to join us? Thank you, Council.

(Short adjournment)

ITEM 8 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – RESPONSES TO FLOODING INCIDENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we move on to agenda item 8 which is the first White Paper motion, and call Councillor Lyons. Will every member taking their seats pay due respect to the speaker.

COUNCILLOR M LYONS: I though everyone respected me in this Chamber, Lord Mayor. I am rising to move this White Paper. On Monday 25 June, as you will all remember, there was severe flooding right across Leeds – Allerton, Ringwood, Wortley, Kippax, and our city centre were all badly flooded. Two area of Halton was flooded again – not the first time, not the second time but three times. This is the third time in as many years that this area has flooded – not just in the gardens, three feet in people's houses so this is what I am coming to with the White Paper because nothing else seems to work. People have been devastated yet again.

Anyone in this Chamber or anyone in Leeds knows there must be a problem that if every time it rains people think they are going to get flooded and on Dunhills they do. There is a problem and yet we have not solved that particular problem. Why have we not solved it? Their lives are turned upside down. We have had about 60 houses this time – it was 75 I think. It ranged from 75 down to about 65 that has been affected.

Even if it is only one house – I think in Wortley it was 16 houses but if it is only in one house in one area it is bad enough for that person to have it once but to have it in an area and have it time after time we as Councillors should be looking at what we can do about it.

The people in that particular area cannot live in their houses if they have been flooded. It is not because of damp and inconvenience, it is because the sewage system comes into the beck and comes in with the water and it is all contaminated, everything has to go. Within hours the contamination comes out in mould form and it is very, very dangerous. You cannot leave any personal things or owt there, they cannot be left in there. You have to shift everything out.

Somebody said this afternoon in here that they have done very well because we have got skips on and got stuff moved. Of course they did but everyone came to move stuff out of skips – the fridges, freezers, television sets, all sorts. Some said it was kids from Halton Moor but I do not think it was, I think it was other people that came across - some call them travellers, some call them a lot of other names – and move stuff.

Taking into account there were 60 houses with nobody living in, we have had a good relationship with the police to keep watch on the place and it is a good job we have else we would have looting there as well. We have not now, they are just emptying the skips for us.

What happens is you get flooded so you move out and take parrot and whatever with you and they put you down in Fearnville for the time being and then the City Council has finished with you, as it were, and you are put into wherever your insurance will put you. They are living in caravans, they are living on relatives' floors, they are living all over the place. Some of them just cannot afford the excess on the insurance so they cannot afford to go into hotels or hostels or anywhere else so they are sleeping upstairs in contaminated buildings.

This is actually are we sat down in this Chamber and we know this is the third time so we have taken into account the first flood when it came in 2004, they said it only happens every 130 years, so 130 years later – that was next year – it flooded again. Those people have just got back into their houses, bought new carpets, everything. I walked round with them because I know quite a lot of them, I used to live there. They were so proud that they had got back in, at long last got back in and bought all new carpets, pictures, everything. They had lost all their personal possessions that were not in the bedrooms. They lost all them but they are so proud they have got back in and bought all the stuff. Within months it happened again and all the stuff that they had bought again were all chucked into these skips and they had to start again, they had to go back into hotels or whatever.

Then what happened is insurance and everything else has come into that. These people, the disruption that they suffer is unbelievable. There are schools, the kids at schools where if they move in with relatives they are the other side of the city. If they work they are worried that every time it rains can they leave work to go and see if the house is flooded? The anxiety that they have is now telling the GPs that I talk to tell me that the amount of people that is coming from that area with different things – not just stress, with different things – is getting worse and worse. After the third time the people have said enough is enough without getting flooded constantly. That is tragic just getting flooded but to know that they cannot go on holiday or cannot go to work, that they are going to get flooded again because I heard Councillor Carter say that it will happen again. I believe that it will happen again and it will not only be Dunhills that it happens again.

We have really got to know what we are doing. When you have been round – and I was there when flooding broke through and it was coming across. We did not get a flood warning, we got a the high levels and we went round and we watched the beck burst its banks and to see firemen carrying old ladies out of houses in this day and age, I thought the fireman were crying but it might have been water that

splashed on his face because this cat had escaped and he thought I am going to higher ground and the cat had escaped and the old lady was in panic. It took ages but this neighbour, it went to neighbour's because it must go there for something to eat and she said, "I'll look after it." Everybody else was working their socks off. It broke its banks and who knew about it? The only people who knew about it were the people who were getting flooded. This is how daft it was. I was there and at my age I cannot be carrying either young ladies or old ladies out of houses.

We go on. You imagine situations, we have got people just cannot sell their houses whether they have been flooded or they have not. They say it is Dunhills – that's it. They cannot sell their houses. What is happening? There is an old lady wants to go to into sheltered housing – she cannot sell to move on. I have a couple that has split up, wants to share the property, they cannot move on. An old lady has died – what do the relatives do because we have got people going round knocking at doors, "Do you want to sell you house and we will give you a fair price for it" and they will be charging before we have finished with the prices they are going to give for the houses. It is absolutely ludicrous the situation that we are going through.

They say to me, what about flood defences? If you sell your houses, we will buy your houses if you can prove to us that flood defences are in operation and nobody can because we have not done it. I say "we" collectively, anyone of any responsibility has not done it.

The insurance premiums – we all know insurance companies love to take money off you. They do not like for one moment to start paying out. What do you think - these are normal people living in semi-detached houses where people have got one or two working in the family. They are right glad they have been able to buy a house and survive in a pretty nice area. The insurance premiums have gone through the roof. Not only have the premiums gone through the roof, Lord Mayor and the excess on them are £10,000. £10,000 they are telling me for houses. Is that wrong? I have not been ten minutes, have I? They cannot afford the policy.

What is this administration thinking about? Flooding causes people in the city all this concern. I have spoken at length about what has happening to the people and what do we get from our administration? We get two lines on what is happening on flooding. It is a shame. You ought to be ashamed. You have got two lines on the Executive Committee when all this is happening. That is true, it can be proved. I do not tell lies. There are other things I do – I do not tell lies. It seems you are more concerned with putting the blame somewhere else than looking after the people. As far as I am concerned I am not bothered where you are going to put the blame at all. I think every one of us as Councillors in this room should be looking and saying what are we here for if we are in a situation where we cannot look after the people of an area.

THE LORD MAYOR: Wind it up.

COUNCILLOR M LYONS: I am winding up, Lord Mayor. I am on the last sentence now. As far as I am concerned, every one of us came into politics to look after people and we are not doing it. Collectively we are not doing it and we should be. *(Applause)*

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

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Obviously two debates on this very serious matter one after the other and I will try and keep the issues as separate as possible.

First of all, we have amended this White Paper because a number of the things that Councillor Lyons is suggesting are already under way. I really do take exception to his comments that we are doing nothing and two lines on the Executive Board paper. That is simply a travesty of the truth, Michael.

We had at the Executive Board a comprehensive review - Councillor Wakefield and Councillor Blake were there – including a film of the devastation across the city. It was the first item on the agenda and was taken extremely seriously by all of us. For you to make those last remarks that you made are completely out of order and show – I am sorry Michael, what you said just was not correct. To say two lines on the Executive Board paper is a travesty of the truth and you should admit it. Your members sat there and they heard the discussion, they participated in the discussion and they saw a detailed – a detailed – exposition of what happened from our main drainage engineer and from the emergency planning officer, so what you said is just not correct.

We suffered across this country the heaviest rainfall that people have seen for very many years. The result was there for everyone to see. As I have said before in this Chamber, it underlines the fact that for years all of us collectively have lived on the legacy of a wonderful drainage system that was put in place not by our grandfathers but by our great grandfathers and we have gone on building and building and building on it and the Prime Minister is urging us to do more now and so when we get heavy rainfall of extraordinary sorts – which I do not think, incidentally, are extraordinary any more – we are going to see incidences of severe flooding.

Actually, I am as distressed as you about the state that people have found themselves in, particularly those who have now experienced it on three separate occasions. I cannot stand here, Michael, and you cannot, and promise them that we can cure it. I will tell you why we cannot promise them that, because on Friday I met with the Chief Executive of the Environment agency and we had a very good meeting, but the bottom line as ever is they have not got enough money. Their budgets have been curtailed, the Leeds Flood Defence Scheme has been phased back, or rather put on hold - and I will come back to that in a moment. All that they have funding for on Wyke Beck and Farnley is to complete the feasibility study. When I asked if Leeds could have some of the pilot scheme money that other Authorities have had for not exactly a flood alleviation scheme but a flood resilience scheme, we were told, "Sorry, all that money has gone." Let us understand exactly where we are because we are talking about engineering projects that will cost millions of pounds.

What can we do? We know that our emergency planning people responded extremely well to the incidents and I take my hat off to them. I went up to Fearnville that evening. There were staff from the Local Authority turning up to volunteer – just turning up saying, "What can we do to help?" Absolutely marvellous, first rate. By all accounts from the residents I have spoken to from the Dunhills, they were extremely pleased with the way in which the Council's emergency planning department responded and the services that were available, although devastated at the fact that they were back in the position they had been in previously.

What we decided to do is to give support and guidance and it must continue at a much higher level and a more thorough level to all those affected by flooding. Officers are meeting urgently to learn the lessons, because there are always lessons to learn. We need to look particularly on whether the existing service provision is adequate, given the changing climate situation, for both the existing and the anticipated increases in demand. We need to meet with partner agencies and the good news on that is that we have agreed with the environment agency that

ourselves, them, Yorkshire Water and other interested agencies, of which there will be a number, will meet on a regular basis to move forward on a range of areas but the big question we will come back to at the end will be where is the money going to come from?

We are doing all those things. Additionally, I said and Councillor Harris has agreed and I hope that you will all agree that if the money is not available for this flood resilience scheme from the usual sources, the environment agency, then we should pay for it. I have given a commitment – and I hope Council will agree to that – that we will put in place a flood resilience scheme like the pilots that have been put in place round the country in the most badly affected areas, which includes the Dunhills.

I underline again, it is a flood resilience package. It will not stop the flooding. We have to have the Wyke Beck scheme drawn up immediately and move to a point where we know how much it will cost and then we have to go to the government and say, “You have got to pay up.” It is as simple as that, Michael. There is no other way.

We have said as well that the money that the government will give us is £100,000. Come on. £14m for this package for the whole of the country. I do not think Hull, with all the damage there has been there, with £1.2m, is sufficient. Sheffield at £600,000 – have you been to Sheffield? £600,000 – it is an insult. To say to Leeds you have £100,000 – come on, surely we can all agree that that is just not acceptable.

This is one of the richest countries in the world. I do not believe that if this disaster - and that a disaster is what it is – had occurred in London there would not have been a much faster response from the government and, I will tell you what, one hell of a sight more money on the table than £14m.

This government spends £332m a year on press officers. £332m every year. They have got more press officers, Councillor Wakefield, than the top 100 quoted companies in the FTSE index. That is what this government have got and they turn round and say to the northern cities, “£14m and we will not release all that at once either.” It is simply not acceptable.

I hope when your constituents – and they will complain quite rightly – say, “What is this for compensation?” you tell them where the compensation has come from. I promise you this and I have already written to the Chief Legal Officer, as I did immediately after the flooding, I have asked the Chief Legal Officer to look carefully at what else we can do to supplement what we have so far got from the government to help further, because it is the least we can do.

We shall move forward with the flood resilience measures and then we shall work with all the other agencies. Actually I felt a bit sorry for the Environment Agency because it is only a matter of months ago that they had these cuts imposed upon them which meant that they shelved the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme which, when it is finalised in terms of total cost, it will be about £100m. I am pleased to say they have agreed subject to confirmation, but in view of the comments about people never knowing what is going on I will tell you precisely what was said in a private meeting.

They are prepared, subject to confirmation, to put on one side half a million pounds for the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme to be put back on the programme and brought up to design stage, but they made it very clear that when it has reached that stage they have no money to implement it and we will have to go to the

government – your government, any government – and say to them, “We do expect you to put proper investment into the Environment Agency.”

This government was warned, Councillor Lyons, a number of months ago when they made the cuts, they were warned and they were told, “What do we do if there is flooding in the big cities?” Now we know. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR W HYDE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In seconding the amendment I want to say first of all that I agree with everything that Councillor Carter has just said. That will come as a complete surprise to people!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Most of all to me.

COUNCILLOR W HYDE: It appears, Lord Mayor, that Councillor Lyons and I were given different figures some three years ago but since we are only talking about a difference of some £50 or £60m, I do not think it is very important.

The fact of the matter is that when Wyke Beck flooded in 2005, Ward Councillors were advised that this was an exceptional occurrence and that it would not happen again, I was told, Mick for 180 years.

Lord Mayor, when the Wyke Beck flooded in 2006 we were told that it was another exceptional occurrence and that it would not happen again for another 120 years. As we have heard earlier, so far the Environment Agency together with Yorkshire Water and the City Council and other agencies have spent around £1m, just over £1m, on clearance and improvement measures in the Wyke Beck, so that some folk might have been surprised, not least those who told us that it was as many 100 years' occurrence, that on Monday 25th June this year, the beck burst its banks with thousands of gallons of water cascading into houses on the Dunhill estate. Again, as we all know, 70 properties were flooded, the emergency overnight accommodation was provided at Fearnville Leisure Centre for those in need.

On Saturday 30th June there was another alert and I am told that the water level in the beck rose to within two inches of the top of the beck again that afternoon. At last, Lord Mayor, I can tell you that our advisers have acknowledged that the forecasts were wrong. I understand that the once in so many hundred years claims were based on meteorological office records of rainfall between 1939 and 1973, for some reason. Certainly no allowance seems to have been made for climate change or the effects of upstream building development.

So where do we go from here? I think I would suggest that we first of all be realistic and acknowledge, as Councillor Carter has already said, that the Wyke Beck water course through the Dunhills will be unable to cope with the increased flow which we really must anticipate on a frequent basis from now on.

Secondly I think we must insist that the Environment Agency deepens and where possible widens the beck, because one of the major problems is that it closes up, it funnels in and when you get the heavy rainfall the present depth and width of the beck are inadequate, and that that work is undertaken as speedily as possible.

We also need to provide temporary stand-by defence measures until it is possible to get a permanent solution. I think we need to investigate upstream dispersal with a view to reducing flash flood impacts and we all need to lobby our MPs to ensure that the Environment Agency is adequately funded by the government to provide a solution that will stand the test of time.

In conclusion, Lord Mayor, I would just like to place on record on behalf of my constituents in the Dunhills a vote of thanks to the emergency services and the agencies who responded so swiftly to the disaster. It has been said earlier and it well worth repeating, I think. Having said that, I have to say I find it very hard to understand how people who have suffered such disruption in their lives can find a kind word for anyone but everyone I spoke to expressed gratitude for the help that they had received. They also very strongly made a plea that the Council, the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water act swiftly to make sure that it never happens again. We must do everything within our collective powers, I suggest, Lord Mayor, to respond positively to this plea. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, you may remember that in the 2005/06 municipal year I chaired the Flooding Scrutiny Commission which carried out some of the work which Councillor Lyons mentioned. It was followed up by Development Scrutiny Board in 2006/07. Reports to both enquiries show that the City Council's Water Asset Management Working Group was active and reasonably well funded and well prepared to cope with the City Council's legal responsibilities for natural drainage which are, in fact, far fewer than might be imagined.

On the Friday after the most recent floods I went to the Dunhill estate in the Wyke Beck Valley and met some of the folk who had gone to the Flooding Commission meetings. What was remarkable was the way that the householders had organised themselves and helped each other to clear up. After only four days many of the signs of flooding had been swept away; unlike in Hull and many parts of South Yorkshire, the flood waters had gone almost as quickly as they had appeared. Outside help from emergency services, including those of the city Council, have been prompt and well appreciated.

One thing which I did notice from fresh strand lines left by the Wyke Beck as that flooding had been due in part to water backing up behind road bridges. Commission members had had their attention drawn to a bridge under Dunhill Rise and one beneath Selby Road, but from the strand lines which I saw it looked as if the real problem had begun at a smallish brick arch which carried Cahill Drive over Wyke Beck near Corpus Christie Primary School. That bottleneck might be taken away to be replaced by a flat steel girder bridge which would allow a much better flow, though its effects downstream would have to be calculated and modelled very carefully.

As a highway work a new bridge could be built by the City Council but, as I said earlier, overall the city's powers and responsibilities in water course management are far fewer than might be expected. Even when Wyke Beck was adopted by the Environment Agency, the agency assumed only discretionary powers. Legal liability still rests with adjoining land owners, including householders, which cannot be sensible.

I did keep all the Flooding Scrutiny Commission papers and I have added to them since in the belief that this is a topic which would have to be looked at again so if there was to be another enquiry it would have a base to build on.

At Development Plan Panel on 12th June, I drew attention to a large purple splotch in the middle of a map which showed future housing in a high risk flooding zone in the lower part of the Wyke Beck catchment. Councillor Latty had questioned the same site at Development Plan some months earlier.

My remarks, which officers greeted without enthusiasm, made the point that in Leeds we do have a choice – housing can retreat on to higher ground. It was then argued that because there was housing on the flood plain already, more should be allowed and that regeneration might falter without the greater added (*inaudible*) given

by housing. That was Tuesday. On Thursday it rained extremely heavily all day, the ground became soaked through, people were flooded out at the Dunhill estate and elsewhere on the Monday ten days after that.

We do need to get a grip on this. Firstly, we need reliable and up-to-date flood risk maps. Those showing the Leeds part of the Aire Valley published by the Environment Agency do look a bit historic or geological. They seem to show what the natural flood plain would have been like if Leeds had not been built, the Aire had not been interfered with, the Aire and Calder Navigation and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal had not been built. Once we have a reliable map we must take courage and make appropriate land allocations. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: The next speaker will be making her maiden speech so I would appreciate it if due deference is taken. I call upon Councillor Langdale.

COUNCILLOR LANGDALE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The recent floods have been a disaster for many people across Leeds. Flooding is a serious problem and we all know it is likely to happen again. Action needs to be taken and no matter what this administration says, I believe that this City Council has a role to play in taking that action. My ward, Temple Newsam, was one of the worst hit areas in the city. People living alongside the Wyke Beck were subject to floods for the third time in three years.

While I welcome the report from the Water Assessment Management Group, the Council's response to lessons learned from the flooding in 2004/05, I have to ask what part of the lesson did you miss to allow the flooding which once again left devastation?

People's frustrations are boiling over. Many people are asking how can this keep happening? Why is not anything being done? I have to say I agree with them. This report has not and will not protect the residents of the Dunhills.

Clearly flooding is a national problem. That is not to say that we are powerless to act on a local level. I know there have been efforts to clear the debris from the Wyke Beck but the simple fact is that homes on its banks are flooded yet again. It is therefore obvious that clean-ups have not gone far enough.

Even if this Council is not responsible for the whole of the beck, surely more could be done to help this community. Residents work very hard in maintaining the beck that flows through their gardens and have been heavily involved in the clean-ups. Where there is a risk of flooding the Council has taken some measures to be prepared and while these measures have shown some good improvements, they leave much to be desired.

Lord Mayor, it was local residents that first raised concerns about the water level in the Wyke Beck five days before the torrent ravaged their homes. In the chaos residents trying to access sandbags as a matter of urgency were passed from department to department as the waters continued to rise. Sandbags were eventually delivered to homes without informing residents and without letting people know what to do with them. Shortly after the chaos came communication overkill, as the Environmental Agency van drove around the Dunhills with a loud speaker announcing to people who were up to their knees in water that their homes may be at risk of flooding.

It had been left to a 70-year old resident with a heart condition to lay the first sandbags on 20th June. It was not until the 25th that help arrived. By this time

standing alone the residents had lost the battle and the foul torrent surged through their homes.

I would like to ask this administration what kind of emergency planning relies on a pensioner to build flood defences? Unless we get the message across to all the people affected that sandbags are on their way that the call centres are open for business and that officers are on hand to help, then the job is only half done.

I believe that the Council has a role to play as an advocate for local people. We have been elected to represent people and we should serve them well. It is the responsibility of this administration to make the case to central government and the insurance companies and the responsible developers. It is up to us to make sure we are doing everything we can to help people get their lives back to normal as quickly as possible. Standing back and saying it is not our fault, or it is nothing to do with us, helps no-one and it is hardly an adequate response when people are looking to the Council for help and support.

As Councillor Lyons mentioned earlier, the excess on insurance has gone up massively. One family now facing a £10,000 excess are a retired couple who are also no longer able to get contents cover for their home. We are all aware that it is only a matter of time before this happens again, leaving some families in financial ruin. This administration needs to take responsibility and action now. This is your chance to do your job and do it well. You must stand up for the people of Leeds and offer them the help and support they need and deserve. Lord Mayor, I support the White paper. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR PARKER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Supporting Councillor Lyons' White paper. I have been asked to speak about the flooding issues brought on ourselves at Allerton Bywater. Streets are flooded in the Kippax district in the last couple of weeks that have never had water in them in their lives. I have lived close to this area for 70 years – I am giving my age away – but never have these streets flooded. I would like to thank the police and emergency planning, the main drainage people, highways department. We seem to have missed that one in our thanks this evening. The thousands of sandbags that they filled and delivered and through the torrential rain on that Sunday and Monday, they were delivering them at late as half-past ten into Allerton Bywater, so I think they deserve thanks.

If I talk about Allerton Bywater as a young kid going down to school at Castleford, I remember it being flooded in the 1950s, which made us unable to get to school, so I certainly remember a time in the 1960s when I desperately needed to get to Castleford. At that time I was Treasurer of the local Colliery Union and there was a Colliery Committee and I could not get out to the bank in Castleford to pay the committee members the ten bob that we got paid for attending the committee meeting. I actually borrowed the money off the landlord and paid him back later.

Flooding in Allerton has been going on in excess of 50 years to my knowledge, but there is a solution to the one at Allerton Bywater through St Aidan's. After the site was flooded – I forget the year – it needed new planning permission to divert the canal and as a consequence – and I think Councillor Lyons would probably be chairing the panel at that time – negotiated very cleverly a dowry for that incident and there is £1m – I should think now it is closer to £3m – stuck in a bank that we have not yet tapped into.

Also a very clever condition that is implemented, that at the conclusion the river was diverted, the water was pumped away, there were several millions tons of coal, they were extracted, landscaping was done. Completion of the landscaping, there should be this flood defence scheme which allows the water to flood into St

Aidan's and has to be put in place by the opencast. I think the deal was negotiated with British Coal Opencast Section, then Budge mining took over and I think the last ones to get it were UK Coal.

I know in your amendment, Andrew, you talk about the speed of meetings between the Authority and the Environmental Agency. I am told that there is not that great enthusiasm to get this implementation of this flood scheme. Officers tell me it will stand 7m cubic metres of water, which is some water and I think – I did have a go on the computer and it is round one-and-a-half billion gallons standing on the St Aidan's site. The river levels drop and then it will be fed back in at the appropriate level and it would stop the flooding in Allerton Bywater. More than likely it would save the flooding in Otley and Roundhay in Leeds. I think it would have an impact on Methley.

Could I ask, Councillor Carter, maybe through the Chief Executive, that something be done to alert UK Coal Environmental Agency that this needs to be done as quickly as possible. It will come again. I hope it is not an annual event. If that could be done, if that would assist us certainly it will solve the problem for residents in Allerton. Let us get this done. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR A HARRISON: Lord Mayor, I would like to begin by addressing my colleagues who worked so hard to help those across the city who suffered in the floods.

I know from experience in my own Ward that Council officers worked round the clock filling sandbags, fighting the flood waters and finding alternative accommodation for those who needed it. However, in many instances their hard work was let down by a lack of co-ordination from the centre. Although there were plenty of people willing to help those who were suffering, in many cases it was difficult for those who needed assistance to access the help on offer. It is clear that lessons will need to be learned from this.

Lord Mayor, while the flooding in Leeds is not the responsibility of the Council alone, anyone who has had a call from a desperate resident in their Ward over the last few weeks will recognise that the Council is often the first port of call for people in this sort of crisis. As a result we need to work hard to make sure that we fulfil the people's expectations and have a structure in place to respond rapidly and efficiently to an emergency.

Clearly the present system does not work. In the first place the fact that so many people contacted their local Councillors about the problems they were having is a testament to the fact that they did not know who to get in touch with and which Council department. So much for the famous Contact Centre. Most of the people who called me or called the Labour Group office had straightforward queries which could easily have been dealt with by Contact Centre staff but they had no idea how to get in touch. They certainly did not know the number.

I have even recently heard it suggested that a dedicated flood line is to be set up, which sounds good in principle but if the Council do not manage the publicity for their own call centre number, what chance has a special hot line number have? Even those people who did know who to call had the usual difficulties in getting through. When faced with a wait of ten minutes or more, understandably they gave up. Is this really the way to treat people who are panicking about their safety and their homes and their families?

I have also heard that Council officers on the ground dealing with the floods did not have a dedicated contact number to ring and had to go through the call centre

in order to request sandbags and wait in the queue to speak to someone, pressing option 1 and then pressing option 2. This is clearly ridiculous.

There are also serious failings when it comes to providing information to members. For example, who in this Chamber can honestly say they knew exactly who to contact when they received the first call from residents who are being flooded out or just wanted some advice on how to protect their home? I know I did not; neither did my colleague, Councillor Mick Lyons, whose Ward suffered some of the worst flooding in the city. In fact if it had not been for the efforts of Councillor Mark Dobson, who spent a considerable amount of time ringing round the planning team, neither of us would have known who to get in touch with.

Surely one of our first steps in this situation like this should be to provide Councillors in the affected areas the contact to speak about problems in their Wards. In reality, the best Councillor Dobson was offered was the public 0845 number.

Lord Mayor, in much of the same way staff in the Labour Group office were not given any advice on how to deal with enquiries from frantic members of the public. Luckily they were resourceful enough to work out what action to take themselves. However, surely if there was proper leadership there would have been a (*inaudible*) in this case.

In an emergency situation Council officers and members should not be left scrambling around for someone to contact. They should certainly be given more direct means to get to those who can administer to the general public.

This is not the first time this has happened. I know in my own Ward the people of Garforth have been the victims of flooding all too often in recent years. Things should really running much more smoothly now given the fact that this administration has the experience of how to respond in a crisis. We owe it to the people of Leeds to ensure that the problems which have been encountered this time around are not repeated and the next time there is a similar situation in Leeds, everyone is far better equipped to deal with it. Thank you. (*Applause*).

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This group believes the issue of the floods and, more importantly how we respond to them, represents exactly why we seek election to this Chamber. We must offer the people of this city who were so dreadfully affected by these events leadership, support, guidance and, most importantly, a future commitment that we as a Council will be proactive in showing we do everything within our power to stop this happening again and support people where and when they are effective. That is what our White Paper represents.

The measures we are putting forward are worthy of the support of every elected Member here today. That is why I was disappointed to read the comments of Councillor Carter in the Yorkshire Evening Post on 5th July, who chose to use this devastating situation to engage in the usual, somewhat predictable round of finger-pointing and government bashing.

I spent the weekend, as did others, helping a friend of mine and his wife, David and Julie Richardson at West Garforth, move out of their home for the second time in two years. This was because 18 inches of flood water had entered their home and he will be away from his home in Garforth for many months.

Unsurprisingly, he was asking me as his representative for the kind of help and guidance that our White Paper outlines. Equally unsurprisingly, David and Julie and the four children were completely unimpressed with the noises emanating from the administration and their attempts at another round of the blame game.

The idea promoted by this administration that Leeds' flooding problems stem from cuts in the Environment Agency budgets on the flood defence scheme is a simplistic one and it bears absolutely no relation to the events in West Garforth.

Garforth floods. It is as simple as that, and we must accept as a Council that this, be it due to global warming or natural cyclical change, is the new reality. So whilst I congratulate the Council's workforce on the superb job they carried out on containment on the day in question, I ask if the reaction to events is enough when a proactive solution is readily available to us.

I would like to suggest as a starting point this Council considers an urgent meeting with experts such as Professor Richard Ashley of the Pennine Water Research Group. I had a lengthy conversation with Professor Ashley last week, and he is a world-renowned expert on flooding and flood defence. He advocates simple, affordable and effective flood prevention measures that are well within the remit and power of this Authority to deliver right now.

The measures I am talking about include designated wetland areas in recreational parks, the use of waterbus, ponds in residential gardens that we can offer grants for if people are in need, measures such as soakaways and swales by the side of affected roads. Such measures as a swale, which is a simple ditch dug in the side of the road, would have stopped the water coming into the Ward so rapidly and making the Ward of Garforth and Swillington grind to a complete standstill on the afternoon of 25th June when residents were unable to either enter or leave the town at the height of the floods.

This Council is already a partner in a survey on flooding, along with DEFRA, Yorkshire Water and the Pennine Water Research Group, who are already using many of the methods I have outlined to great effect elsewhere in the United Kingdom. I think we as a Council must accelerate the process in Leeds and initiate Professor Ashley's advice where and when we are able. Again, I believe this Council should, as a matter of urgency, seek out these techniques to see how they are working in practice.

Yes, of course the government and MPs have a rolling process. I welcome the financial support provided by the government and I was pleased to see Hilary Benn visiting residents of the Dunhill estate at Councillor Lyons' request to witness first hand the effects of flood water on residents. However, there are residents who will ultimately turn to us to ensure their homes are safeguarded in the future and frankly, as a Council, we must not let them down.

However if, as a Council, we fail to act on our White Paper and squander the lessons that the latest floods have taught us and do not deliver on these safeguards – and to be frank as the administration failed my Ward after the floods in 2005 – I believe it will be nothing less than a betrayal of all the people we have been elected to represent. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR SHEL BROOKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. There are other comments I am going to make in the later White Paper, but really it is a question of the points I am going to make here about some of the issues which we are facing for the first time in some of the villages in my Ward and not least Collingham, which ended up under six feet of water.

There are lessons learned, as there are in any situation and it is painful to say that some flood defences which were put in place in Collingham had been tampered with by people. The Environment Agency did a survey the year before and said you

must put these back, and lo and behold it did not happen, water poured in through some of these areas. However, that is not to say that the flood defences which were in place could not be improved – I will come on to that later.

Certainly I will just take this moment to praise the action of the officers who were involved. When I got down there and we could see the situation as it was I found officers to be nothing but helpful. If we are talking about up to 30 to 40 houses completely destroyed, under three and four feet of water, yet I have not met one resident who has complained about the service they received from the Council and from the emergency services and I think the officers involved deserve high praise for that.

I have been visiting a lot of these affected villages. The problem is, as many of you know, my Ward is absolutely huge and I think I had five or six villages on that day badly affected by flooding and the question is which one do you pick? I went to the worst area. Of course, now moving round the villages and talking to Parish Councillors and people like that, there is a lot of discussion taking place. Many people are starting to accept the fact that things are changing – the climate is changing and this is the way that we are moving forward. There are some things in place which we are trying to come together as communities to keep moving, keep helping. When there are becks, etc, it actually falls under the home owner to make sure the maintenance of those becks is maintained, make sure that the water can flow freely through there. A lot of people are actually aware of that or, as we understand people do lead busy lives, it may fall to the back of their mind to make sure that they have still got that free flowing water there.

One of the things that we are trying to bring in place is to actually work with the communities and make sure that at the Parish Council levels they have some working groups who actually will do the surveys on a regular basis and speak to the home owners if things do need to be done.

One of the other things which has been suggested and I understand represents rather a large problem is stockpiling of sandbags. Not just obviously for the space which sandbags take up, etc, but apparently – and I stand to be corrected, this is what I have heard – once a sandbag has been used in a flooding situation it actually has to be disposed of. They have to get rid of the sand and it has to be refilled. There is absolutely no point in trying to stockpile them. I have heard of things called pollen(?) sandbags which are actually much more compact and will actually expand in the water and they could be stockpiled and that is something we perhaps need to have a look at.

It really all comes down to the question of finance and we are struggling to cope with what are massive changes and, as I say, in the White Paper coming on I will talk a little bit more about where I think some of those problems will lie.

Certainly I support the amendment Councillor Carter has put in because we really do, at the end of the day, need extra funding and extra resources of quite a significant level to be able to do this and try and prevent what is becoming the inevitable rather than the unusual. Thank you, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR KENDALL: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Fortunately for Roundhay I certainly was not contacted by any residents and I feel that we were blessed, if that is the right word. If it had happened I would have looked first at the card I have with emergency numbers on which I always carry with me and if I could not find it I would have looked at page 94 of my Council diary. If a resident had rung me I would have had the emergency numbers to hand straightaway.

What I would like to do is pay tribute to what the social care staff did in their way. We have heard in this Chamber how staff rallied round. The manned two centres, they turned up to help without a thought of pay out of hours and they worked amazingly and this has been said already, they were thanked by the people who had lost their homes a second and third time. It just shows the goodness in people. I know we have got a terrific task to try and overcome the possibility of this happening again – I do not think we can, we can only take precautions. I think that I wish well to everyone who has to make that attempt to get the proper funding. Thank you.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Briefly, the Environment Agency needs to get the money back that it has actually had cut and central government need to adopt the same enthusiastic approach to flooding as it does to education and as it does to other particular issues. The fact of the matter is one per cent of the education budget on this matter would by and large resolve a lot of the problems that we actually face if significant money comes into it. We are in a position where as a Local Authority we will do our best but we do need to be in a situation where central government has to accept the inevitability and the seriousness of the position and we also have to get our heads round the problems that we face in terms of the demands for affordable housing that has been raised this afternoon and the inevitable impact that has on development and the inevitable impact that has in terms of drainage problems that we face. We need some significant investment. We are not in a position where we can do anything more than do the bits round the edges. We need to have the same enthusiasm that the government has in the NHS and education with resolving some of these flooding issues. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is nearly 40 years since (*inaudible*) property in Old Wortley, back in 1968 it was, a common event and something that happened every couple of years or so because of the style and composition where the well was built and subsequently as part of work on upgrading the ring road a raised bank was put in place. To be honest this has saved Old Wortley from major flooding many times since and it is likely the events of June 15th and June 25th would have been far, far worse without it. The fact is year by year the situation has become worse. With the effects of climate change a number of flooding events have increased and the area flooded has become greater.

For some time locally we have been saying that the River Twist – because that is the real name of Wortley Bank – will have its ultimate revenge and on June 25th it did. The waters were up to waist height in some properties on Branch Road and the ring road. By all accounts something like a tidal wave came down the Farnley Valley and hit Branch Road demolishing walls and flooding houses up to three feet deep in seconds.

One lady rang for sandbags and I have got to say I had no reports of people having problems contacting officers and certainly me and my colleagues did not have any problems. One lady rang for sandbags because water was lapping at her doorstep. By the time she got through – and I am not saying she was waiting long, she was only waiting maybe a minute or two – the water had come up to her waist and she was advised to evacuate upstairs for her own safety.

I have got to say that seeing the devastation caused in my ward, my heart goes out to those residents in East Leeds that Mick was on about earlier on who have suffered this kind of thing on a number of occasions.

While we have to thank all the services involved, I believe in a world where we are likely to get more events like these, we need to do more and we need more

joined-up services. It is also clear that we need answers, particularly the incidents that happened in my ward.

One - why was there a tidal wave? Two – did Yorkshire Water open the sluice gates on the compensation reservoir? This is what my constituents think happened but our officers say no and Yorkshire Water say no. We need to identify those areas that are likely to be affected so that we can better inform and help those residents.

Moving on to my pet subject at the moment which is the Kirkdales Estate which I asked some questions on earlier on, while we are not talking about property being flooded up to waist height, we are mostly talking about temporary rivers washing soil away from gardens and occasionally entering property. We need to address the lesser issues like this. The fact is they tend to happen on a fairly regular basis throughout what you might call the rainy season and they are usually avoidable. We need to give more support to such residents as they need to know whose responsibility it is. If it is the residents' responsibility, how can they solve it? If it is to do with draining schemes as part of a development that the Council officers will take action and not prevaricate.

While I have sympathy with Councillor Lyons' White Paper, bearing in mind the number of agencies involved, the fact that the setting up of the taskforce and some certain actions that the administration has done in the meantime, we are mindful to support the amendment but, as I say, there needs to be some answers and I trust the administration will deal with that. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Speaking this far down the debate there is a lot that has been said that perhaps I would want to say so I will take a slightly different tack. I am very lucky that whilst I live within sight of the River Wharfe, which floods on a very regular basis, on June 25th it does not come as far as my house but it did flood all the roads through my village out so there was no way out and I had a very important meeting to go to in Otley, so I got my bike out and I cycled to where the roads were out. I waded through, got to the other side and carried on cycling.

As I did so I went past an area where there is an old auction mart at Otley where there is a planning application in to build within the flood plain and to me this is totally ridiculous that plans should be put in application. I certainly will be objecting to it.

From what Councillor Carter said earlier about all the development, how ridiculous to build on a flood plain. We are only asking for trouble if we accept this.

To go on a bit further, we have talked a lot about the impact on housing and that is absolutely devastating and that is what this debate is, but I just wanted to take you to public transport, because public transport also was affected – flooded roads, flooded railway lines. I am pleased to say that Metro's main focus during recent flooding has been to ensure that passengers had access to accurate and up to date travel information. We undertook regular liaison and we updated our website to incorporate the latest information. More than twice as many people as usual made use of Metro's website. We increased our staffing levels in Metroline in order to answer the increased volume of calls and we employed staff to support Northern Rail staff providing information and customer assistance at Leeds Station.

Leeds station is another area of concern with the dark arches underneath and we are looking with the rail operators, Railtrack, etc, to consider that and consider

whether things need to be done there to make sure that we do not get flooded out at the station.

We promoted the availability of bus services between Bradford Interchange and the rail stations and as many passengers were advised to travel to Bradford and then down Wharfedale and use the Calderdale services to and from Leeds. Our website proved its worth delivering almost seven times the usual amount of content on Monday 25th June. The peak was between 2.00 and 3.00 when over 17,000 requests for web pages alone were made to the website. The week before the number had peaked at just 2,500, so I think it gives an idea of how desperate people were to try to get information and we were able to provide that.

On one night the site had a level of visitors usually seen during a normal day and taking the day as a whole 129,000 pages of pdf files were delivered. The previous Monday, a typical day, 50,000. Most of the requests were for the flood disruption page, updated 20 times each day during the flood and it was delivered almost 20,000 times on Monday alone. Across the four days we had 47,000 times.

Over the following day the hits to the website were still well above average, demonstrating the faith that passengers throughout West Yorkshire have in the accuracy and usefulness of the information we are producing. The feedback from site users had very positive effects and also local news organisations such as the BBC referred listeners and viewers and website users to our site. Basically that was all about keeping people informed.

Just on Councillor Kendall's comments, the information is available to us as Councillors how to get in touch with the Council and I have actually taken those numbers and put them into my mobile phone so that they are even easier to have in your phone and I would suggest that all Councillors do that if you have mobile phones, so that you have got the numbers on you should residents contact you and then you can point them in the right direction. The residents will have been told where the information is. The thing is they put it to one side and will not have it automatically to hand. We should be there to have that.

Finally, just to go back to Metro, we are going to be conducting a post-mortem with bus and rail companies to discuss developing more robust contingency plans and information strategies for use in future. Thank you, Lord Mayor (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR TAYLOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think also like many of the people who have already spoken, I will be saying something similar but I can focus my mind on what happened in 2004 in Gipton when the Wyke Beck came over for the first time I think in many, many years. It resulted in the closure of the local primary school, St Nicholas's. It also I think was a contributory factor to the death of an elderly lady resident who was so distraught at having her home flooded again within a fortnight, she had to go into hospital and within a fortnight she was dead. I say, I think perhaps the flooding was a contributory factor to that.

Again, there was flooding in Wyke Beck the following year and as Councillor Hyde has already told us, I along with many and, I am sure, Mick, along with yourself, were all assured that this was something that would never happen again, certainly not in our lifetimes, but we know all too well that it did. In June of this year when it happened again, fortunately the higher reaches of the Wyke Beck had been cleaned and it had been done in a very positive way. I remember after the first incident the MP George Mudie along with the local councillors, we all got together and we put forward plans and suggestions about tidying up the beck. Some of us were very proactive in getting our wellies on and joining some local residents in doing it. I think

that probably that had a positive effect on the immediate area. It might have had a detrimental effect on the people further down the beck.

When the flooding took place last month, again we were very fortunate because once again the majority of people on the Wyke Beck Valley Road missed out being flooded and I want to pay particular tribute, I think, to the staff at Gipton Housing Office. They came out and worked absolutely magnificently on that day. They prevented the water getting into the lifts shafts of the multi-storey flats on Wyke Beck Valley road. Had they not been there and the water had entered into those lift shafts, it does not bear thinking about how many elderly people would have been trapped as a result. I think I would want to pay particular thanks to them for the work that they have done.

It is not all over, is it, because yesterday within ten minutes Wyke Beck Valley Road again was flooded and also property in Harehills was flooded, so it is clearly something that we have to address.

I am not quite sure, Mick, whether it is right to do what you have said in your paper by calling for an inquiry. I think calling for an inquiry so often means delay, delay, delay and we do not really address the problem in the immediate and it can take so long for those inquiries to take place that we can be caught on the hop.

I think as well at the end of the day we are dealing here, I am sure, with cause and effect. We are dealing with the effect of heavy rain but we are not really dealing with the cause of all of that and I think we need to look back and we need to realise that this is not just a local problem, it is not just a national problem for people living in Doncaster or Sheffield, and it is not just an international problem for people who find themselves flooded in Bangladesh. It is a global problem and if we do not seriously look at global warming and the effects that that is having on the whole of the world, then we are going to be in this position not just once but twice, three, four times in the near future. We have to get down to the cause of it all and it is our attitude to global warming and how positively we think about that. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: My Lord Mayor, I would like to start by welcoming this debate generated by the White paper in the name of Councillor Lyons. The distress and suffering I think for those of us not closely involved is unimaginable. We have heard today very forcibly that the distress for many will continue for a long time to come and I am sure all of us in this Chamber will want to work together to help those involved right now with the immediate problems but, more importantly, to do everything we can to prevent such events happening again.

We must give full praise to all the officers from all the departments and emergency services who worked tirelessly through the crisis and, Councillor Taylor, I have to say the reason that I am supporting Councillor Lyons's White Paper is because he actually very clearly states that he would like an inquiry into the whole situation. I think this should be urgent and immediate. We need to learn all we can of the lessons from the experience on the ground so that we can improve our response in the future.

Sadly we know that heavy rain is likely to be more frequent as time goes on. I think one of the important lessons is that we must not separate planning and the planning system from the whole issue of people and our communities and we must help those who have got a problem now whilst at the same time putting measures in place to alleviate the situation in the future.

Most of all, we can do this by bringing together all the expertise and relevant partners and by that I do not just mean the statutory agencies. I think that the

voluntary and community groups have got a tremendous amount to offer. Just look at the work that Eye on the Aire achieved in its existence, which led to regular meetings of the Environment Agency, Yorkshire Water and British Waterways – we have not talked a lot about British Waterways today. I have to say that the situation would have been a lot worse without the work that they have done because they did focus on the becks at the time.

We also need to bring in tenants' groups as well as local members to help with enforcement. We are still getting too much dumping in our water courses. We have to stop that.

Communication was inadequate. It was woefully inadequate and added greatly to the distress of those involved. At Exec Board we saw video footage from all the CCTV cameras round the city only to learn that the planning and emergency unit did not have access to the live footage coming from those cameras. They could have used those to see where the problems were happening and to intervene at an earlier stage.

Lord Mayor, as well as flood water residents and businesses have had to cope with raw sewage and contaminants such as oil and chemicals coming into their homes and premises. The health and safety aspects of this are appalling. The truth is we are dealing in many cases with a Victorian system that cannot cope and needs major investment and I cannot say enough that Yorkshire Water has a major part to play in working with us to invest heavily in the improvements needed to the infrastructure.

We have seen planning guidance for development near water courses being updated. This was done in January this year. PPS 25 was introduced. This gives the Environment Agency a much greater role. It would be absurd to suggest that we have to cease all development in this city. For example, we have to provide decent, affordable homes. What we need to do through our planning process is to ensure that all applications are treated with the same rigor, be they in areas at risk of flooding or indeed anywhere in our boundaries. We need to enforce sustainable drainage principles on all developments, demanding permeable surfaces to replace hard standing and I suggest we need a radical, creative and progressive planning policy to make sure that development on brownfield land, which we have had enormous success with in this city, not only regenerates our communities but also reduces the risk of flooding. We have enough hard standing already.

Leeds needs to be part of the national debate. We need to engage in the debate about hard standing in gardens and we need to sort out the tangle of legal powers and duties which has greatly added to the problems.

We need to be constructive and positive, putting Leeds at the heart of the solution instead of hiding in a culture of blame. Councillor Carter suggested a pause on development at Executive Board and I think from his tone today he has changed his view on that. We cannot close Leeds for business. Let us move forward to bring benefits to all of the residents of Leeds to help those already affected and to make sure that we do everything in our power to stop these disasters occurring again. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, actually I shall be as brief as my predecessor. First of all, I would say there is one thing on which we are all apparently agreed and that is that what has happened should not recur over and over again. Steps have to be taken to make sure that it does not happen. There is, of course, the view of two of my colleagues over there who say we must go and press the government to give us more money. I go along with that very happily and join

with any pressure that can be put on government to make resources available to redress sometimes the north/south imbalance that occurs in resources.

Quite frankly, we can duck the issue entirely by doing that because we could do something now. Just think what £8m or £9m would do now if we get it into those simple things that my colleague referred to. Councillor Carter may say where are we going to get that money from? Let me suggest the Leeds Bradford Airport. *(Applause)* If you have got a better means of using that money than dealing with the flooding which affects people right across the constituency, you will fail and if my colleague over there who still wishes to hear his master's voice, even though they seem to have shifted a little, you could do that, Andrew, and they are creeping up behind you saying, "Yes, we will go with you on balance." It may be my colleagues over there have great independence of thought.

There is a source of money we could use, directly, immediately, to take some of these actions that my colleague talked about which would alleviate the system but would not be the major, big system which would require government support.

The second point I would make is an attack, basically, on the way that your group – whatever your group means – is dealing with these matters. What you are doing now is putting an amendment which at one stage, in my life on the Council, long before I sat in that chair or any other chair, it was this, that they did not allow an amendment that allowed you to get rid of all the words after the first two and then make a completely different resolution.

If we did it it was wrong then and it is wrong now. *(Laughter)* I will say this, it will be wrong in two or three minutes if we get to another resolution later on. I do not agree with it because I think standards are slipping. I have seen those standards when Councillor Harker refuses to answer a simple question three times and he then gives a speech on a totally different matter; that to me is neither clever nor brilliant or point-scoring. It is just, in fact, a poor way of going on and not the kind of standard of behaviour we would expect.

COUNCILLOR FELDMAN: You did that yourself umpteen times.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: No, I would not. It would be beneath me. First of all I would have had the answer to the question and I would give it in a way that would even have afforded me the support you are denying me now.

Councillor Hamilton, another example of the threat that you are posing to the decent standard of behaviour. Councillor Hamilton said that if we got a special Council meeting what would he do? He would immediately use 'next business' to prevent any discussion. That is a direct threat. It is disgraceful. It is poor standards.

In this case the amendment which you are moving calls for what? It calls for a number of things, but listen, in English language the verb, when you were kids you were told is the 'doing' word. These are the doing words in the Conservatives – recognise the speed of something; recognise the speed of something else; congratulates – that is the essence of their amendment. If you look at it, you look at what does it say. It says we are going to recognise more speed, recognise something else, we are going to note something else. What we want is action. What the resolution calls for is action and that is why you are putting in this resolution as an amendment.

The same thing applies to the later resolution that comes up later on in the agenda where in fact I am calling for payment by landlords for the waste they create, but they do not. Oh no, they do not even recognise something, note something,

acknowledge and encourage but they will not say whether they will charge the landlords for their waste, they will not charge for the contamination and this is the way they in fact avoid their responsibilities. The responsibilities are clear. Do something about this flooding now and follow Mike's lead with a resolution that calls for action and not for words. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR S HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, many of my colleagues have already spoken about the terrible flooding that affected many people in our city. As I am sure you are aware, residents in our city suffered more flooding last night and just this morning I visited in my Ward members who live in Newton Road, Newton Park Drive and the areas around there who were flooded yesterday. I have to ask what have the Council done since the flooding in June to help people who might be at risk?

Nothing, it seems to me. Nothing that is except blame the government, blame the Environment Agency and say it is not the Council's fault. As many of my colleagues have already said, that has helped no-one right now. It certainly has not helped these residents who were flooded yesterday. What these residents needed was more sandbags. I rang today asking urgently for more sandbags to be delivered and was informed the residents need to go to B&Q to purchase their own sandbags. That to me was absolutely disgusting. I had to demand that they go out ASAP because it started to rain as I was speaking. The residents are extremely upset that last month they got a few sandbags, two per house which were not enough. What the residents need and constituents and Members need to inform them, they need more advice about how to use them and more information about who to contact when flooding occurs. What they need now is the information about how to clean up, advice on making insurance claims and support of their Council in these distressing and difficult times.

People look for support from their Council and they need the help and support of the Council now. This should have been your priority. I move. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I realise that time is marching on so I will try and be brief. As well as expressing the usual appreciation as everybody else to public servants in the period of the flood, perhaps we also ought to send our sympathies and support to those authorities that have had tragically far worse floods than us. We all live in the same community of local government and perhaps that is something we could do.

Like many people, once you have visited people and seen the distress you almost feel that party politics are not what they want at the time. They do not want to hear, frankly, the kind of exchanges that some of us have got engaged in. For once I agree with Eric Pickles, who was a leader of Bradford for those people who do not remember and who is now the Shadow Environmental Secretary for the Tory Party. What he said last week was, this is not a time for blame, this is a time for action and to mobilise support.

Frankly when I read the first White Paper by Andrew Carter I was profoundly disappointed because I am pretty sure that if we really wanted to act as a Chamber together we could have dealt with a different White Paper that actually put action for local people as well as lobbying the government as well. I really think that could have been done.

I said it at Executive Board and I will say it now. If this is a question – and it has already been said by some colleagues – of lobbying government, we are more than prepared to do it on this side and in fact the process of lobbying will already start

on Friday when myself and the two other party leaders will go down to see Hilary Benn and the Environment Agency to start that process.

I know government will say that we doubled the money from £300m to £600m plus putting £200m extra. I know they will say that they altered the Belwin formula to make sure it is 100%. I know they will say that there is £14m extra but frankly if that is not enough for this city then we must say so just as loudly as any other party here.

I really think this debate should have been about what we could do. I am not going to speak on the next White Paper because I think we are all united about lobbying, but I was disappointed to see, for instance, in our amendment, Councillor Lyons's inquiry request deleted. I think it is sensible. It does not slow anything up. We have always got lessons to learn and we should have actually gone for that. There were other initiatives in that White Paper and that amendment that Councillor Lyons put forward and I remember it, Councillor Carter put what I thought was a completely knocking White Paper. I wondered why we cannot have a better amendment today. Was it because of Councillor Lyons's White Paper offered real, practical, concrete support for people who needed it?

I just want to say there are about five things I think we could do and I think some of them are being done but I just want to firm up on our view.

The first thing I think we could do is build on the work that Councillor Leadley did in his Scrutiny Board, particularly that point about the co-ordination of different agencies. When you visit somebody, the last thing they want to hear is, "Sorry, it is not the Council's fault so it is nothing to do with us. The repairing owner means the environmental agency or Yorkshire Water." They do not want to hear that. They want to know that we are all working together in their interests and that is clearly the message I have got.

The second thing I think we could do – and it has been done in Hull, it has been done in Sheffield, it was done in Carlisle and Boscastle and I know elsewhere – is that we could seriously look at Council Tax relief. I think that is a proposal that is sensible and is being looked at and I would hope that we could all support that for those people who have experienced the kind of distress that they have.

The third thing – and a number of people have said this – as elected members dealing with floods, none of us have received any information about financial advice to those people and we have heard quite a few stories about that. I think we could actually go round to people who are looking for support because of the excesses of £10,000 and start giving them advice about where they can apply. The government does have a hardship fund and we can also add, I think, to our own - which has already been mentioned - fund here and either by using what has been suggested by Councillor Atha, the airport funds, or start to raise money ourselves using the Community Foundation or indeed the Lord Mayor's office so that we could actually give people who really need that financial help and some of them are bordering on nervous breakdowns because of the stress. We could really show true leadership from the whole of this Council to offer those people who deserve our support, our guidance and our leadership. I move, my Lord Mayor. (Applause)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thanks very much, Lord Mayor. I will have to be quick because I missed half of it out last time.

I do not know what in Heaven's name they put an amendment down for but really what the people out there could tell every one of us that if you are a Councillor, an MP, work for the Environmental Agency or whatever, it is them they look to to do the work and the first line of call is in this Council and we did not do it. We did not do

it this time for them. That is why I want an inquiry, to see how we could improve in the future.

You know, Alan, it will not hold things up because we are moving along as it is. What I want to know is why did I and Jackie have to call meetings of the residents because they did not know what to do? Why weren't the Council and Council officers explaining things? I am not a solicitor, I am an engine driver who happens to be a Councillor. We could have put all those things into operation and we did not. There was no defence whatsoever. When people got hit with the floods, they should have had next week somebody in that estate going round and saying "How can we help you with the different problems, the insurance problems, where you are living, whatever you are doing?"

I find it very, very difficult when we were on the scene when it broke its banks and I had to inform our office that it had broken its banks, to get people down. It was only then that we got loads and loads of sandbags etc put down, but by then people were up to their waists in water. We need an inquiry to get over all this.

What I am saying to you is, I am not playing politics; I am arguing for people out there. We were in front of over 100 people that were on to us saying we do not care, you are the councillors, you sort it out.

All the money that we spent because it was Council land the other side of the A64 of the Wyke Beck. We spent all the money there. There was about £50,000 spent over three years clearing the worst rubble out and that alleviated some of the floods but what I want to do and you have not accepted it in your amendment, is set up a fund for these people next day. Across in Doncaster, etc, they had a fund set up with businesses that are waiting and I cannot get a bank account and open it up for people. There are people willing to put money in. We are the Council. We should set it up. I know that there is £100,000 given by the government. I know it should be a lot more money. I know that the Council is going to put some money into getting it right, so why do you mess around with an amendment?

What we have got to do – and I will tell you on behalf of the Labour Group that we will support any party that is going for more money for flood defences in Leeds. We will support you and I have already told Hilary Benn etc. I told him and everybody else has told him, I think, that we want more cash. Why do we have to play politics with them?

I will tell you something, Andrew, and I have known you a long, long while. Let us start helping people. You know when the IRA blew Manchester up, everybody moved in to help. We should as Councillors, every one of you as Councillors wherever you come from, say if there is one section of this city that is getting hit, we should band together, all parties band together and if it is our government or my government that I knocked on doors to get in, I need to be arguing with them, with you, to say that we want more money.

We will all be with you. I said so in my White Paper, so what have you left out? What have you put in? You have put all kinds of things in your amendment. You say that it was very fast. Three-and-a-half years. It is like the snail racing the tortoise. Three-and-a-half years. That is how long we have been waiting.

As far as we are concerned, I am asking you as Councillors, whatever party, support the White Paper that I have put down. We will work with you. We will play no tricks whatsoever. What we want is cash, we want cash from whoever we can get it – Environmental Agency, anybody else that we can get it off we want it off.

As far as we are concerned, we would say that the lessons that we should have learned over the last three-and-a-half years we have not solved them. You have just heard they are ringing up for sandbags and saying, "Go to B&Q". All this is true. We should be alert and up to what we are doing. Andrew, it is as simple as that. You cannot tell people out there they are not worried. They know Mick Lyons, they have known Mick Lyons all his life across there. They are not worried - they know I am a Councillor and a Councillor is there to do work and that is what we have got to do – all of us have got to do work and not play about. Tell Hilary Benn or Gordon Brown or anybody else, "We want cash" because our people are suffering. If our people are suffering I am not going to allow it and I am going to tell them. I will tell them with you but you mess about with an amendment to do it. You could have said to me, "Mick, will you come with us?" and I will say, "Yes."

All these people here are not playing politics. We want to help and they will argue with our government – our government – for this to get done. If we do not, we will still argue and say we want that money.

What we have got to do – and Andrew was right – get all this work done but then you have got to pay for it. If we are going to stick a bid in and we happen to have been flooded three times then I think we are pretty near the top, Andrew, for getting this money. It will not happen this year it will not happen next year. We have got to do something and we have got to do something now. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Move to the vote. Voting for the amendment in the name of Councillor Andrew Carter. All those in favour? Against? I think that is CARRIED so that becomes the substantive motion.

All those in favour of the substantive motion? That then is CARRIED. Thank you, Council.

ITEM 9 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – ENVIRONMENT AGENCY FUNDING TO REDUCE FLOODING

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I move us to White Paper Motion 9, Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Let us get a couple of things straight. Councillor Wakefield is always at his most interesting when he is being sanctimonious, as he was a few moments ago. This White paper does not say any word of criticism of the government except to ask them to reinstate the cuts in the Environmental Agency budget. I do not quite frankly, Members of Council, know how else to phrase a request to a government to reinstate the cuts than to say they did it in the first place. If Councillor Wakefield can think of a better way, I have no doubt he will advise us.

Let me say this to you – you are nodding. People have short memories – very short memories – and governments have the shortest memories of everybody. Within a matter of a very short space of time if there is no more flooding this issue will be off the front pages. The residents of the Dunhills may be no better off and we shall face the same problems again.

I was interested as always in what Councillor Dobson has to say. He is now an expert on climate change as well as flooding. If I were you, Councillor Wakefield, I would be watching yourself. It is not only Peter Gruen you need to look out for! (*Laughter*)

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Peter is coming back to us.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: He is coming back to us? That will be the subject of a vote in the group, I think.

My Lord Mayor, if I may continue. The simple fact is that we have had the highest level of rainfall in the month of June since records began. What cause the flooding, Councillor Langdale? Rain caused the flooding. Thankfully because two years ago we put into our budget, this administration, £1.1m to try and do something about flooding, we had taken some steps such as the regular cleaning of Wyke Beck that had, I think, some beneficial effect, but nothing would have coped with what we experienced.

You say we have done nothing and that is again a complete travesty. In double quick time we have met the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, we set up a task group with all interested parties – Yorkshire Water, the Environment Agency, ourselves and others – to bring forward hopefully the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme to design stage so that we can then know what it costs and actually start engaging with the government in a very positive way about something that we actually know what it will cost. The same organisations have been talking together about bringing the Wyke Beck Scheme forward to design stage but it is not yet there.

Nobody said in the paper or anywhere else that if this money had not been cut it would not have stopped the flooding. I was very careful not to say that. The flooding would have happened anyway. What I am saying is, and what you really have to understand, is if the government do not put this investment back into the Environment Agency, if we do not get the capital investment for these schemes, then this flooding, Mick, is here not for the short term but for the medium term and for the long term. You know as well as I do the lesson of working with governments of any political colour is that when there is a problem like this you go at it hammer and tongs because, as I said a few moments ago, they have got very short memories.

If we do not achieve some reinstatement into these budgets in the very short term, I am afraid to tell you that your constituents, my constituents, his constituents, all our constituents are going to be suffering from the problems of climate change and heavy rainfall and the unusual levels of rainfall that cause extensive flooding.

Judith Blake. Actually, for once I agree with almost everything she said except that she said I called for a pause on developing, which I did nothing of the sort. What I said was that house building at the levels now being requested by the Prime Minister would mean, in my view, building on areas of land which were wholly unsuitable and which would add to the flood risk and I do believe that is the case and I believe everybody in this Chamber believes that is the case.

Mr Brown's agendas of reducing funding for the Environment Agency to combat flooding and cramming more and more houses on more and more land do not match up. It is as simple as that. The two do not work together.

What we are going to do is, we are looking to the planning system at how we can make sure where particularly office and commercial developments take place near the river that we can perhaps get flood defences built in at the design stage into those construction projects. It is something we have discussed at length with the Environment Agency. They made it very plain the paucity of money, they made it very plain how difficult it was going to be to get our schemes off the ground and asked for as much assistance as we could give them. One of those mechanisms of help was through the planning system. We have mentioned it over and over again in here this afternoon, I do not think anyone disagrees that we have to use the planning

system as best we are able to try and improve flood defences and certainly to make sure that we get sustainable drainage schemes.

I just get the impression sometimes that you certainly your Leader – and I see he has vacated the Chamber (he is over there) – will do anything rather than grasp the difficult nettle of saying the government did actually cut this funding, it is going to have to put it back in and a lot more besides. We may as well all say it together, otherwise anything that we do will be a sticking plaster. That is the problem.

Again, we immediately, when we were told the amount of money we would get for the hardship fund, that is all going into the hardship fund, we said quite clearly we will work with any other agencies and indeed looking at topping it up ourselves. Everybody appreciates the distress these people have done through.

I said to Baroness Young when she said there was no money to help us do anything, by the way, in the short term at Wyke Beck, I said, "I am sorry, Baroness Young, that cannot be. These people have been flooded three times. We cannot leave it alone. We have to do something so do not come lecturing me about us in this administration saying we will do nothing because we are doing something and if you had not been, Councillor Lyons, so particular about the criticism – and there was criticism in the first part of your speech and you deliberately I think – because you have not apologised yet – misconstrued what happened at the Executive Board, you deliberately and your colleagues have sought to criticise and make political capital out of a desperate situation. You know what we are doing, you have been briefed, I know you have been briefed and we will continue to brief you because we intend to do whatever is within our power to improve the situation for not just your constituents but the constituents throughout the city who were affected by this flooding.

At the end of the day you cannot hide away from it – the Environment Agency's capital funding was reduced, the Leeds schemes were put on the back burner and they have got to be reinstated. It is as simple as that. They have got to be reinstated or we shall be back in this Chamber year in, year out, debating more and more flooding and more and more affected citizens. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor, I would like to second the White Paper moved by Councillor Carter and reserve the right to speak

THE LORD MAYOR: Now, Council, because it is turned 7.00, we go immediately to the vote. All those in favour of Councillor Carter's White Paper? That is obviously CARRIED.

ITEM 10 - WHITE PAPER MOTION – USE OF TRADITIONAL NAPPIES

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I turn us to page 14, White Paper 10. Councillor Anne Blackburn to formally move.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: I move formally.

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL: I formally second, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR MINKIN: I formally move the amendment.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Formally second.

THE LORD MAYOR: In that case we move to the vote. The amendment in the name of Councillor Minkin. All those in favour? That then becomes the

substantive. All those in favour of the substantive? That is CARRIED. Thank you, Council.

ITEM 11 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – CONDITIONS OF STREETS IN STUDENT
LET AREAS

THE LORD MAYOR: We move on to White Paper 11, Councillor Atha.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Formally, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Formally seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: The amendment in the name of Councillor Smith.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: Moved, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR MONAGHAN: Seconded, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: We quickly move to the amendment in the name of Councillor Smith? All those in favour? Those against? That is CARRIED. That becomes the substantive. All those in favour of the substantive? Those against? That is obviously CARRIED.

Council, it as states in today's agenda that the next meeting has been postponed, I suspect many of you will be at least having the day off. The really good news is your Lord Mayor gets this Sunday off!

Can I wish you a very safe journey home and a pleasant holiday. Thank you, Council.

(The meeting closed at 7.05 p.m.)