

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

**EXTRAORDINARY
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Held on

Wednesday 31 October 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 31ST OCTOBER 2007

THE LORD MAYOR: Can I welcome everyone to an Extraordinary Meeting of Leeds City Council on 31st October 2007. The first reminder, as you saw me doing switching off my telephone, can you make sure your telephones are switched off because the fee to the Lord Mayor's Charity still remains at £50 and that is actually very good value for money if your phone should ring. Thank you.

Could I open the meeting and call upon Councillor Harris to propose the motion, please?

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Yes, Lord Mayor, if I might say a few words about the three previous Members of Council who today we are nominating to become Aldermen of the city. Political incorrectness dictates that, even though the order paper is in this way, I still put ladies first, so if I may I want to say a few words about Christine Thomas.

It is, by coincidence, as today is my last day in full Council as Leader of Council, that I should be proposing Christine Thomas to become Alderman. The fact is that, as many of you I am sure would have thought it would have been far better, but I would not be here if not for Christine. That is the fact. It was Christine who I defeated in 1984.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Shame!

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Listen, let me tell you, Les, there are many nights when I lie there and I think shame too, actually!

It was Christine who I defeated in 1984 and she spoke that night with wonderful magnanimity in defeat and I remember her words and her kindness to me and wishing me luck in my new career and I have not forgotten that kindness and so I am very pleased indeed that after all these years - it is almost 24 years now - in a few minutes she will have the distinction and recognition for the years on Council by becoming an Alderman.

If I return to the order now on the order paper, Stephen Cooksey. Again it is some coincidence that today, in my last meeting, I am proposing Stephen also. Stephen and I agreed that I have not seen him since before I went into hospital in April 1989 when I was Stephen's deputy then in the then Liberal SDP Alliance Group. It gives me particular pleasure now again, after so many years, to be proposing Stephen to become an Alderman of the city.

Stephen was a County Councillor for West Yorkshire from 1973 and then came on to Leeds City Council in 1980 and left to pursue his career elsewhere in 1989 and, I suppose it would be fair to say, left the then group in somewhat of a lurch and I know there are again many of you would say it has never recovered from that lurch but, you never know, in a few days' time it might take a turn for the better.

Again, Stephen's contribution as a member of this Council and as Leader of our group then was considerable and, indeed, held, for our part, things together at a time when we had this melding of two somewhat fractious political parties - people say nothing changes - but he did a sterling job there and this, of course, is an overdue honour.

Finally, Brian Walker. Brian has just said to me with that wonderful, impish, wry smile on his face, that I appear to have perked up considerably since he last saw me. (*Laughter*) He and I, when I was then just Leader of the Lib Dem Group, occasionally Leader of the Opposition and he was always Leader of Council, we used to talk to each other and console each other on the problems of leadership. I have to say - and I will say it publicly now and I am sure that this is something with which the entire Council will concur - it is shameful in the extreme, it seems to me, that for all Brian's service to his party and to the city and to the Council, that for all the all-party attempts that we have made for him to receive a national honour this has not been forthcoming. It is a dreadful thing (*hear, hear*) and I know it is perhaps small consolation but I hope nevertheless a welcome consolation to him that we honour him today by making him an Alderman of this city in recognition of everything he did for Leeds.

With those words, Lord Mayor, I propose that Stephen Cooksey, Christine Mary Thomas and Brian Walker be admitted as Honorary Aldermen of the City of Leeds. Thank you. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I did not think I would be sat at this side of the table talking about the three Councillors. I am one of the Councillors that remember all three, so that must make me a little bit older than most of the others.

Those were the days, they keep telling us. You will, of course, miss my voice shouting at the Liberals and Tories, but I was at that side then, but it will not be long before we are back over there doing it, so you can come and watch.

Anyone who does public services deserves some kind of recognition and the recognition that we are giving them today, in my opinion, is what we can give them. I do agree that there should be more to give people that's done long and hard service for Council should be given better opportunities than what they are.

I will speak about my friend Brian Walker - and he is still my friend after all the years that we argued together because you thought he was arguing just with the Liberals and Tories but he was not, he was arguing with me most of the time as well.

Brian came on the Council in 1978 and he stopped on the Council until 2003. He was Deputy Leader for four years, he was Leader for seven years, he was Secretary of the Labour Group for eight years, he was Chairman of Planning for eight years, he was Labour Group Chair for seven years and he is still working for this Council - without pay, I might add, because I asked him - and he is working for the Holbeck Urban Village Partnership and he is still doing a great deal for this city.

It needs to be said that Brian was one that tried to get Supertram, along with me, and we went down to see John Reid. All the way down he kept saying to me - because he knows I am mild mannered and everything - he said to me, "Whatever you do, do not shout at John Reid." "Right you are, Brian, I will not shout."

We went down and after about ten minutes into the meeting when it seemed positive that John Reid wanted telling something, I thought I had better not say nowt because I have promised Brian, and within five minutes I was separating them and they were nearly fighting! I, being a quiet lad, said, "You should not be shouting at one another" and I had to separate them. That was part of his dedication and he came out and he was swearing so we went and had a few gins with - what do they call him, Loveday Hardman or something - he owns half of Leeds and it was us that paid for the beer if you remember, Brian! (*Laughter*)

It gives me pleasure today to say hello to Brian and to Sheila, who is round here somewhere, and to get this medal, when you get this medal. You can borrow that honour that they gave me because they gave me one instead of you, as far as I can see. You have done far more than I did. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. On behalf of the Conservative Group I am delighted to support the three nominations before us today. As Councillor Lyons was speaking I could not help thinking what a pity it was that he was not one of the people we were going to make an honorary Alderman! (*Laughter*) As they say, my Lord Mayor, every dog has its day.

However, back to the main event. I am delighted to support the three nominations. Christine was a senior member of the Conservative Group when the new Metropolitan Area was formed, Chairman of the then Environmental Health Committee. Some of us, Bernard, remember those days with some fondness, do we not? Then Shadow Chair of the then Leisure Services Committee and, after coming off the Council, continued with charity work, particularly with the St John's Ambulance Brigade where, of course, she was the Commissioner.

I am delighted to see Christine back here again. I am afraid from her point of view she can look at a few faces that were here then and we all look quite a lot older. I have to say, Christine, you look splendid. (*Applause*)

It is also, I have to say, nice to see Peter here as well. I am delighted that you accepted our request for nomination to be an Honorary Alderman.

As for the other two gentlemen, of course we were the three party leaders at one stage and so often we had discussions as party leaders do. I have to say that I think - and they do not get the chance on this occasion not tell me I am wrong - we always got on in a very civilised and sensible manner - not always apparent in the Chamber, of course, but I think we could always, as party leaders, exchange views sometimes on fairly important subjects and we knew we could do that in a way that would remain private and confidential, as it had to be.

That is something I suppose as politics change that changes as well. I do regret that. I think that on many occasions it was very useful to work together very closely and we often did that, particularly, I think, about matters which really were of importance to the city of Leeds, no matter what your party politics were.

I am delighted to see Stephen back here. I have not seen him for many years. I am delighted also to support the fact that he too will be an Honorary Alderman of the City of Leeds. Good to see Margaret as well, also a former Councillor here, of course, many years ago.

Brian and I, I think it is fair to say that, Sheila and yourself and myself and Amanda are friends and have been for a long time and I do want to echo the comments that Councillor Harris has made. I suppose as well, after you have been Leader yourself, you realise what a hard job it is, and I am not talking in a political way about that, I am just talking about the responsibility of being, I suppose, in charge of the city of Leeds. Brian did that job for seven years. I have to say he too, Marks, looks a great deal healthier than he did in the last year or so of his leadership on Leeds City Council and he also smiles a lot more than he did then and I am certain he smiles a lot more than we do now.

Again, I am absolutely delighted to support the nomination of Brian Walker as an Honorary Alderman of the City of Leeds. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, in welcoming the new Honorary Aldermen on behalf of the Morley Borough Independents, I would like to say that they may have noticed changes in the political landscape since serving in this Chamber. The ante-chamber revolving door propelled Brian Walker out on the day that it let me in in 2003, and Steve Cooksey and Christine Thomas had left some time before. Even so, I do remember leafleting for Steve Cooksey in my Liberal Democrat days. One evening was remarkable for an appearance by Concorde, which scraped the chimney tops of Horsforth before landing at Leeds-Bradford Airport at the end of a private charter and, despite that expensive form of intimidation by the Tory candidate, Steve won by 350 votes! *(Laughter)*

My Lord Mayor, may I give Morley's welcome to all three nominees to the ranks of Honorary Aldermen of Leeds City Council. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As always we are last on these occasions and you have more or less run out of things to say, but first of all, on behalf of my group can I offer my congratulations and support to the three people who have been nominated.

Two of them were here long before I got on the Council, but Brian was Leader of Council when I got elected and while I sat over *there* somewhere in reprobates' corner, as we used to call it, I got stick off him quite a few times. I have got to say that a nicer person I have yet to meet. He dealt with us very, very well. His door was always open when he was Leader and we got on very, very well.

In fact, I think the best discussion - I would suggest that we should have Council meetings (and Brian will probably agree with me) on the front at Bridlington, because do you remember the day, we had had a Council meeting the week before and Ann and myself had gone on our holidays and we came round the corner and who do I bump into but Brian and his wife. I will tell you, if we could have made all those decisions while we were stood there, there would have been nowt wrong with Leeds at all!

I feel really happy to be supporting this motion and well done the three of you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I therefore put it to the vote, ladies and gentlemen, that Stephen Cooksey, Christine Mary Thomas and Brian Walker be admitted as Honorary Aldermen of the City of Leeds. All those in favour? I think it is fair to say that is unanimous. Well done, everyone.

Could I now invite Stephen, Christine and Brian to join me and the Chief Executive in the well and, as former politicians, this might seem very strange for you to be down there.

*The Honorary Aldermen, Lord Mayor and Chief Executive
moved to the well of the Chamber.*

*Honorary Aldermen Stephen Cooksey, Christine Mary Thomas
and Brian Walker signed the Roll of Honorary Aldermen.*

*The Lord Mayor and Chief Executive
signed the Roll of Honorary Aldermen.*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much, everyone.

(The extraordinary meeting was closed)

