

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday, 24th February 2010

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(Councillor J Elliott)

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24th FEBRUARY 2010

THE LORD MAYOR: We have a very busy afternoon and I ask, please, that all mobile telephones and other electrical equipment in the Council Chamber be switched off when the Council is in session and therefore no tweeting allowed.

I have three announcements to make. I regret to announce the death on 4 February of Mrs Pat Wilkinson, the wife of Councillor Gerald Wilkinson and former Deputy Lady Mayoress in 2008/09. I attended Mrs Wilkinson's funeral on 11th February at Rudding Park. I would now ask all present to stand in silent tribute.

(Silent tribute)

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to advise members that the total amount collected for the Haiti Disaster Fund at the Council meeting on 20 January amounted to £184.50.

Finally, I am delighted to congratulate Leeds Carnegie Ladies on winning the FA Tesco Women's Premier League Cup. *(Applause)*

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 20th JANUARY 2010

THE LORD MAYOR: We come now to number one on the agenda. I call on Councillor Sue Bentley.

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move the Minutes to be received.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to call for a vote, please. *(A vote was taken)* This is CARRIED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Item number two on the agenda. I would like to announce that a list of written declarations submitted by members is on display in the ante-room, on deposit in public galleries and has been circulated to each member's place in the Chamber. I would like now to invite any further individual declarations or corrections to those notified on the list, if there are any.

COUNCILLOR DUNN: Lord Mayor, I am registered as living at the wrong address. I am registered living at 14 Middleton Park Road but it is 14 Middleton Park Mount.

COUNCILLOR GETTINGS: Lord Mayor, I apologise for not doing this earlier. I registered at Springfield House, 1 Church Street, Gildersome.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: My name is Lyons, by the way.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Lyons. Thank you for reminding me.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Unless somebody has moved my furniture I live at 12, Mayfield Road. *(laughter)* I cannot guarantee because I have not been home for a few days.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It has been incinerated, Mick! *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR LYONS: They could have moved my furniture but they ain't going to move me from this seat.

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It appears that you need to know my address, which I know that you personally do but it is number 2, The Temperance Hall, Morley.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Any more?

COUNCILLOR LOBLEY: Lord Mayor, on Item 4 I am at 211 not 221 Oakwood Lane. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I have a show of hands, please, to confirm that everyone has read the list and agreed its contents insofar as they are related to their own interests? Show of hands? This is PASSED.

ITEM 3 - COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: I will hand you over now to the Chief Executive.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Yes, I do have a communication on this occasion, Lord Mayor. It is to report that following a by-election held on 18 February, Gerry Harper was elected to the office of Councillor for the Hyde Park and Woodhouse Ward and, as has already been observed, is taking his seat in the Chamber.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I welcome you to the Council Chamber, Gerry Harper, and congratulations.

COUNCILLOR HARPER: Can I just say a quick word?

THE LORD MAYOR: No, I think not at this moment. No, not at this moment, sorry.

ITEM 4 – BUDGET

THE LORD MAYOR: Item number 4 on the agenda, we are on to the Budget. We now move to page 11. I call on Councillor Richard Brett.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you Lord Mayor. In moving the budget today I want to start by thanking the large number of officers who have contributed to ensuring that this budget will work for the people of Leeds. As well as Alan Gay and Doug Meeson, Helen Mylan who co-ordinate this, we have Dave McDermott in Children's, Ed Mylan in Development, Steve Hulme in Adults and Mark Forbes in Environments and Neighbourhoods.

Alan, I would like you to pass on our thanks to all those involved in helping senior Councillors put what has been a very difficult budget together.

Before moving on into the details of our budget, I would like to share my concerns regarding the recent news about unemployment rates in our country. There is no need to remind anyone here that Leeds has suffered greatly from the recession. We have seen developments stall, businesses collapse and people's livelihoods ruined.

This year has not brought much relief to the Council either. Latest Government figures reveal that Leeds unemployment soared to the highest level in more than 13 years. Ministerial warnings that the numbers will continue to rise do little to raise our spirits.

Yorkshire's rate of those claiming Job Seeker's Allowance is 9.1% and that is one of the highest levels in the UK. We have suffered one of the biggest increases over the last twelve months and I would like to ask the Employment Minister, Jim Knight, if you acknowledge that it is Yorkshire that has been hit most by the recession, why are you not doing more to help us? If you recognise that Leeds is struggling, why have you given us the lowest grant settlement ever?

We are all aware that we are not getting a fair share of funds and on this point I think even Keith agrees with me; there is no logic here. We are the ones who are suffering most but we are given less than everyone else.

Let us not be misled with the Government's claim that this is only because of a recent economic crisis. I believe – and on this side we believe – we have been short-changed for years.

The rise in unemployment puts a strain on Council services. People are seriously affected by the recession and they rely on us to provide stability and security in these difficult times. I want to assure everyone here that this Council will continue to do all it can to help those who are suffering in difficult times.

It used to be the case, Lord Mayor, that administrations had some flexibility in our budget. If we wanted to put a little bit more into one area, you had the resources to do that. Now I believe we have no freedom over the budget at all and Keith's amendment actually illustrates that, because all he is doing is tinkering.

Why are we in this position? It is clearly Gordon Brown's fault. (*Applause*) It is not right to say that the Government were not warned of problems that were brewing.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Just like yourselves, then.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Many commentators and politicians had tried to raise the issues of debt and the nation's finances. It is as though the Government simply stuck its head in the sand. From the heckling some of you do not believe me. Listen to this excerpt from Hansard, now, just over six years old, where Vince Cable, at the time Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats, asked the then Chancellor Gordon Brown, in November 2003, the following question:

"The growth of the British economy is sustained by consumer spending pinned against record levels of personal debt, which is secured, if at all, against house prices that the Bank of England describes as well above equilibrium level. What action will the Chancellor take on the problem of consumer debt?"

Mr Bean replied:

“We have been right about the prospects for growth in the British economy and the honourable gentleman has been wrong.”

I do not think there are many here today, even on the other side of the Chamber, who will still think that Gordon Brown continues to be right.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Did anybody get that?

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Resources are so tight in the current climate that simply keeping our front line services going is in itself a major challenge. That is what we have tried to do – maintain front line services to the people of Leeds and I believe we have succeeded in that aim. Because of our stretched resources there are few surprises in this budget; no rabbits being pulled out of hats, relatively few startling headlines. I make no apology for that, Lord Mayor. At one stage I thought we might have to make headlines for the wrong reasons, by closing some buildings or ceasing services. We have not had to do that because there have been a whole series of creative, inventive and wide-ranging efficiencies, so I put it to you that the absence of big ticket cuts in today's circumstances is a triumph in itself.

The Council's income comes from three sources – Government grant, fees and charges and Council tax. This is the last year, as many will know, of a three-year grant settlement which gives us a 1.8% increase which translates into £5.4m in cash terms. Compare that to the core city average of 2.2% and to Labour controlled Nottingham's 3.1% and you will once again see that the Government have not been generous to us.

Keith recently described the Government's treatment of Leeds as “disappointing”. I do not think that word even comes close to describing just how bad a hand we have repeatedly been dealt by his Government. Not only have we witnessed the lowest grant settlement figure ever, we have also had to bear the withdrawal of the last tranche of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. The next financial year sees our replacement NRF money run dry and the Government in principle would therefore have you believe that all our problems over worklessness have been solved. We in Leeds certainly know that is not the case.

The current financial year has seen a continuing decrease in income from planning fees and parking charges. The latest Financial Health Report estimates that external income sources, including planning and building fees, are down by almost £4m. It is obvious that city development has been particularly hit by the downturn in the economy and the stalling of many development projects. We have recognised that the economy is not recovering as quickly as we would have hoped and, as a result, we have reduced our income expectations in City Development by a huge £3.5m next year. We are estimating for the new budget that income in this area will not decrease further but this is, of course, determined by whether the recession grows deeper, flatlines or we recover. Of course, this is not an area where Leeds City Council has any significant levers of control over what happens. Our fees, therefore, are generally going up in line with inflation.

The third area of income is Council tax. Many Leeds residents have been struggling with their finances during 2009. Investment income is very low and many pensioners will struggle to pay even modest Council tax increases. Government sources have indicated that a notional capping level of around 3% is going to be applied and we have budgeted for 2.5% as an increase. This increase is the lowest increase in Leeds for 15 years, but let me go further and put our Council tax increase in context.

Out of 36 Metropolitan Authorities, Leeds is currently 31st – fifth from lowest. Out of eight core cities, Leeds is currently seventh lowest in its charging. Our Council tax is around £200 a year less at Band D compared with Labour Nottingham.

We have decided to mainstream some of the key activities previously funded by Neighbourhood Renewal Funds. Despite losing Central Government support, there are still many of these schemes and projects we are going to continue by further increasing efficiencies. Of about 60 posts previously funded by Neighbourhood Renewal and the Safer Stronger Communities Fund, 40 of these will be mainstreamed in this budget.

In 2007/08 around £24m was dependent on one-off sources. In this budget that figure has dropped to £13m. With this budget we have maintained Council services even when Whitehall has made it more difficult by removing some of the means for doing just that.

At this point I would like once again to highlight the amazing abilities of our small Treasury Management Team, some of whom are present. They have done a wonderful job rescheduling our debt portfolio. It is the savings that they produce that enable us to avoid the excessive use of reserves. Earlier this money Keith mentioned reserves in the Executive Board. It is something he has done before, it is no doubt something we will hear again today. What we do on our side is listen to our experts. They have advised us that £12m is the minimum that we need to keep in our reserves and that is what we plan to maintain. We are not budgeting to use any reserves this year and yet we will have a safe buffer should the unforeseen happen.

The total staff employed by Leeds City Council has reduced in recent years. Over the past six years there have been around 1,200 fewer now in the Council's budget. There is an estimated loss of around 300 posts during the next financial year and none of these changes have been sudden or catastrophic. These post reductions are possible with effective management, better use of technology and a review of the processes that are involved. The key point is that taking out these jobs will not affect front line delivery of services.

Before going on to introduce the Revenue Budget I would like briefly to mention something on the Council's capital programme because over the next five years we are seeking to deliver over £870m-worth of investment. That is quite an amount. It serves as a testament to our belief on this side that Leeds can weather the difficult financial storm and we are committed to improve our city for all to enjoy. Our capital programme now makes provision for the delivery of the Leeds Arena. This is the single largest project ever undertaken by the Council. We have already seen a great deal of progress on the site, with the former Brunswick Terrace building bulldozed and our partners continuing to draw up plans. It is this administration that is now delivering what Leeds' residents in this area have been calling for for years.

It is not all about the Arena, though. We are continuing with our refurbishment of the City Varieties. Northern Ballet and Phoenix Dance will soon be enjoying new facilities thanks to Council support. We continue to upgrade our city centre streets, replacing worn out and misleading signage and installing some quite impressive street furniture.

New leisure centres in Armley and Morley will be opening in April and June. Members will be pleased to hear that we will continue to provide £40,000 per ward under the Ward Based Initiative Scheme. There have been some wonderful investments over the previous year, with schools, community groups and voluntary organisations all benefiting throughout the city.

Our capital programme allows us to improve communities in every part of the city. There is not a single ward that does not benefit from considerable investment and I am pleased to present it to Council and will leave Councillor Andrew Carter to say more a bit later.

One of the most difficult aspects of our budget is that some of the services we provide are demand-led. The needs of an ageing population cannot be controlled by the Civic Hall. In recent years there have been significant changes in the way we deliver services for vulnerable adults and that process needs to continue. This is not political code for cuts. In 2003/04 Labour in the previous administration spent £119m on adult social services, forming 28% of the Council's revenue spend. This year's budget sees a cash increase of £4.3m, meaning our Council spend will be over £200m on adult social care – over one third of the total Council revenue budget. I think whatever our differences we can all agree the demographic pressures on the joy of older people living longer and wanting to stay in their home and needing more support means these increases are essential.

The budget shows we plan clear increases in direct payments to vulnerable adults, training and development of staff and publicity and promotion of our services. All of this we believe leads to improvements, not cuts. Let us all say it to them again, because this is the mantra we want to get across to them. It means improvements, not cuts.

A key part of our plans is to increase the amount of home care provided and avoid the necessity of residential care placements. We are expanding telecare service to provide a greater range and level of equipment. This will also reduce domiciliary care costs. The mobile response service will expand. Once again, these changes produce improvements, not cuts.

That is the detail. The short term for future for adult social care is difficult enough. Medium term prospects are worse than ever, and not just for Leeds. I think it is right that I point out that since this administration took over, as I have already said, the Council's revenue spend on social care for adults has risen from 28% to 35% of the total, but we know that on current trends this will need to increase further. There are more people needing our services every year and the standards they expect are more expensive.

We here today will not accept what our parents accepted, and our children will be even more demanding. Fifty years too late we are trying to give a reasonable standard of living to people with learning disabilities. It is only 20 years ago that we thought Meanwood Park was the best we could do.

This is not a problem that Leeds or Local Government in general can solve on its own. There has been the beginning of a national debate about the subject in the last six months or so and some rather unsatisfactory party political points from various sides in recent weeks. Right now the reality is, society is not ready to face up to the costs of looking after older people. Budget increases by Local Authorities of 3, 4 or 5% are not the answer. They are all we can afford but they are the least we can do and in my view adult social care is the largest financial pressure facing Britain today and something must be done at national level to help Councils cope with the ever-growing demands and I hope that will form a part of the general election debate.

Moving on to Children's Services, again children's social care, the demand is difficult to predict and sudden increases in unmet needs can place real strains on our budgets. Following the recent Ofsted inspection an extra huge £6.2m has been put into Children and Young People's Social Care as we recognise the importance and need of focusing on safeguarding.

Our budget continues to support a relatively high number of looked-after children and to support improvements in working practices, an additional £1.65m has been included to fund social care field work and the recruitment of additional staff. I would particularly like to thank Councillor Bill Hyde for the recent work of the Children's Services Scrutiny Board, for the work they have done in highlighting the increased demand for services and the need to transfer more resources into this area. That was very helpful.

It is vital that we find and train more people to foster our vulnerable children and young people. Therefore, an additional £2.1m is to be added to fostering services with a doubling of the recruitment and training budget from £60,000 to £120,000 a year.

In 2010/11 we will see the third and final phase of our Children's Centre Programme with the number of Children's Centres growing to 58, with 30 in key areas of deprivation.

Once again, all of this adds up to improvements, not cuts.

We will, despite rumours to the contrary, maintain the use of both Herd Farm and Lineham Farm for needy youngsters. A review will take place and we will be asking primary schools who are in receipt of earmarked money to make a contribution towards the costs of using Lineham Farm. As recently reported in the Yorkshire Evening Post, Leeds Schools will be handed £2.5m to support out of school activities and we believe it is right that schools help the Council with Lineham Farm costs. No child will be charged. No child will be turned away.

Provision has been made in our central contingency to make sure these promises will be kept and that the wonderful service these two centres provide will continue.

In City Development we have made provision for £250,000 to be spent supporting the England World Cup bid for 2018. For those who think this is a large sum, bear in mind the benefits of Leeds hosting the World Cup. They are estimated to be £20m, with an expected 100,000 visitors coming to Leeds.

There is £150,000 extra to promote a business support scheme for small business tenants. I am sure you would all agree this is a badly needed investment to help Leeds out of the recession. Once again, we are delivering improvements, not cuts.

This Council is committed to providing an effective winter service permitting the safe movement of traffic and pedestrians throughout the city. The efficiently managed service keeps delays to a minimum. That is why this financial year our roads have been gritted over 80 times, twice as many times as four years ago. This amounts to 100,000 miles of roads gritted around Leeds using 21,000 tonnes of salt. We understand that we need to make it as easy as possible for people to move around in adverse weather. That is why we also provide nearly 1,000 grit bins located across the city and have responded to hundreds of requests to have them refilled. We are continuing talks with our West Yorkshire neighbours and Central Government about the possibility of a shared grit store. This is something we will continue to press for, allowing the authorities to provide a more strategically linked service.

Sadly, nationalising the salt provision has led us to a position where in the last few days we have been unable to grit even all our main roads.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I cannot see any difference up our end.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: The headlines for Environment and Neighbourhoods are around more recycling and community safety. In Environmental Services the productivity gains from the resolution of last year's strike, which will be over £2m in a full year, will be used to provide many more green and brown bins. The combined recycling/composting rate should increase to 41% by the end of March 2011 – 14% six years ago when we took over.

We will encourage schemes which increase the re-use of furniture and other items. Once again, this adds up to improvements, not cuts.

In Neighbourhoods and Housing the Council continues to support 170 PCSOs throughout every ward in the city and we will upgrade some CCTV networks with a contribution of £192,000. Crime has dropped by around 40% since this administration took over in 2004 - (*Interruption*) you laugh, it is a fact - in part due to our improved working with local partners.

Most grants to voluntary organisations will be at the same level as last year and earlier this year we launched the Leeds Year of Volunteering. Even in the short time that this has been running we have seen an amazing level of interest and that is why we will continue to support the project with our contribution increasing to £100,000 next year. The extra funding will allow us to extend the scheme and hopefully encourage even greater levels of participation. Leeds Ahead are heavily involved in the Year of Volunteering and the Audit Commission are featuring them as an exemplar green flag in their presentations around the country on Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Council house rents will go up by 3.1%. We have little choice. If we tried to put them up by less, we would have to pay the difference to the Government. If we put them up by more, the extra money would again have to go to the Government. So much for local choice. (*hear, hear*) Time and time again we are given money by the Government but then told how and where to spend it.

That is not the only news on the housing front, however, 2010/11 marks the continuation of many great schemes throughout the city. Work will continue to secure around £190m-worth of PFI housing schemes in Little London, Beeston Hill and Holbeck. There is already a great deal to witness – the demolition of Carlton Towers in Little London has already started and, once completed, these works will see 125 new Council homes and 853 homes refurbished. The area will see new shops, a housing office and community centre built. The contract we have signed will see these properties maintained for years to come.

Exec Board has recently approved plans for 700 new homes at ten different sites throughout the city. The new homes are specifically designed to support independent living, providing older people the security and support they need and those less able bodied the mean of getting around. These are purpose built, two or three bedroom properties, built around existing neighbourhoods, helping people lead more active and independent lives.

We have aspirations for this city. We are not casting aspersions on how many senior regeneration officers there are. We want not to rest on our laurels; we want to drive regeneration forward. That is why we will continue to develop the West Leeds Gateway, the Leeds Bradford Corridor Schemes. The schemes have the possibility of radically changing the fabric of our city. Over the next ten to 15 years

we can see thousands of new homes built and thousands of jobs generated and new transportation schemes linking our city in a greener, more responsible way.

In my own portfolio we have been able to achieve a greater reduction than we had earlier planned. Two years ago I talked about back office services reducing by 2% a year for five years. We had planned a 10% reduction in back office costs over five years, but this year the Central & Corporate portfolio faces a budget reduction of almost £2m. The two new Joint Service Centres in Chapeltown and Harehills will be opened with all the costs contained within existing budgets.

The Council's newspaper is being reviewed. A new look partnership publication is scheduled to be launched next financial year with editorial input and resources from the police and the NHS. We also hope to include the fire and rescue service, the Environment Agency and a number of other public sector organisations.

These plans may lead to a change of format but residents will still receive a regular publication from the Council and its partners. The changes have allowed us to cut the cost of About Leeds by £80,000 next year and in the following year we would expect to see those savings increase to £100,000.

Another vital project the Council is supporting is the delivery of the Leeds City Region Pilot Programme. Our contribution to the scheme will double in 2010/11 to £200,000. Devolving more powers and responsibilities from national to regional level will bring decision making closer to city communities and to their needs. For us it means greater control over how and where money should be spent.

We have not budgeted for a staff pay increase. This means that Members will not be provided an increase in allowances either. I think it is important that we set an example to our workforce. Perhaps if our Parliamentarians had acted in a similar manner they could have saved themselves considerable embarrassment.

The issue of staff pay is very important. We value our workforce and recognise the considerable efforts they make. However, we cannot afford a pay award this year. Any pay increase would mean losing further jobs and making it more difficult to maintain the services that are much needed.

The easy thing in any budget is to produce pieces of paper that balance. The Labour amendment shows how easy it is to make things look good on paper. Serious reductions in advertising and publicity have already taken place. Keith's plan to save an extra £800,000 would cripple major events and savage our sources of income in sport and other areas. Cutting external legal advice – only undertaken when departments ask for it and need it – would be, in my view, a hugely risky venture. Reducing the use of consultants is easy to say but in many cases we are buying expertise that we do not have in house in order to save ourselves money. I believe Keith's amendment is dishonest. He should admit he is spending more money. He should have suggested a Council tax increase of 3.1% to pay for his pipedreams.

It is much harder to stick to a budget in recession, as we have found out this year. In a recession your income goes down because there are all sorts of reasons I have already touched on and there is less natural staff movement, so it is much more difficult to save money if you want to by not filling vacancies. Sticking to this budget will be no easy task at all and that is where the efficiencies come in.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: We will manage it.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I thought I should spend some time explaining, in case anyone thinks that £22.1m-worth of efficiencies hides cuts.

What are these efficiencies? Some are easy to understand. Not employing as many temporary staff – most directorates are planning to do just that. Savings in procurements are a major part of this picture. We are looking at the way we purchase in all areas and some big savings are being identified. Some of these are working with partners through the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership.

The Authority has already started investigating many of the options for efficiencies that will help us through the next few very difficult years. As many Members will be aware, the Delivering Efficient Corporate and Transactional Services Programme – known for short at DECATS – working in partnership with the Local Government Association, is already well under way. The programme has examined each area of the Council looking at different ways we go about our business. Officers and elected Members will soon be looking at the outcomes of these investigations with a view to making significant back office savings. These savings will come about through streamlining processes and adopting best practices throughout the Council; once again, demonstrating improvements, not cuts.

Another course of action recently approved by the Executive Board is Changing the Workplace Business Case. This project is re-evaluating our use of premises throughout the city centre, seeking to rationalise departments and services where we can into a single building. Not only does the scheme have the possibility of providing efficiencies totalling £87m over a 25 year period, but it will also help us to improve customer services and access. This is the kind of innovative thinking that is going to help secure Leeds's future in the years to come.

In summary, this has been a very tough budget; a budget with very little flexibility but a budget characterised by improvement and not cuts. We are providing excellent value for money for the people of Leeds with a 2.5% Council tax. Lord Mayor, I commend this budget to Council. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Brett. Could I just bring you back, Councillor Brett, because we need to seek leave of Council for the beginning. Could you look on your green paper please and look back? Under Procedural Rule 14.10.

THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE (Corporate Governance): If I perhaps can just clarify, it is because the budget papers when they were circulated related to, "The Fire Authority was due to issue its budget". However, they now have finalised their budget so we just need Councillor Brett to seek to leave of Council to alter the words in the way they are set out there.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Brett, would you do that? Could I have the consent of Council, please? A show of hands. Thank you.

I now call on Councillor Andrew Carter to second.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I formally second and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I now call on Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. For one horrible moment then when you said we have to look at procedure I thought we were going to have to listen to Councillor Brett's speech all again. Thank God it was only technical!

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I was just as worried about telling it all again!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I come to bring peace and harmony and hopefully after this speech there will be a huge consensus in our amendment.

Firstly, in the traditional manner, can I start by thanking all the officers of the departments for their help, particularly Alan Gay, Doug Meeson and Helen Mylan whose advice and support, as usual, is indispensable in our amendment. I have to say that I understand Alan has taken up some serious running and, frankly, after a budget like this I am not surprised! There must be a few people chasing him around.

Whilst I am thanking people, can I on behalf of the Labour Group also thank all Council employees for their tremendous commitment (*hear, hear*) to providing public services to the young, old and vulnerable during one of the worst winters that we have ever experienced in this city. They are still doing it now and I have to say that is a public service ethos we should treasure and respect.

Finally in my introductory comments, I want to compliment the YEP's coverage of the serious issues facing the budget by deciding to follow the paper's quote of the year with the Labour Group's nomination for quote of the decade. The clear winner is Councillor Richard Brett who, at a time when we were faced with a recession that no-one has seen since the thirties, when the people of Leeds were worried about their jobs, mortgages and families, in responding to a question in Total Politics about the top priority he was still to achieve, he said, "We still do not have an open-top bus tour in Leeds." (*laughter*) Can you imagine, especially in this weather, if we had only have had that there would have been no recession.

Now I want to turn to the serious business of this administration's budget proposal which not only reflects a crisis in our budget but now quite clearly points to an increasing loss of confidence by the people of Leeds in this administration's ability to run the city fairly and competently. This was clearly demonstrated by last week's by-election result with an outstanding victory for Councillor Gerry Harper. (*Applause*) I would like to welcome him back to the Councillor and, indeed, welcome Linda Rhodes-Clayton as well. (*Applause*)

It is quite clear, people no longer want to hear "It is the Government's fault" or somebody else's fault – they want straightforward accountability, fairness and confidence. They know we have a public sector squeeze, they recognise the damaging loss of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, which we opposed as well, but they know many of the reasons for the draconian cuts in vital services and the loss of hundreds of jobs in this budget are mainly due to the incompetence and failures of this coalition. (*hear, hear*) As a result, this budget offers no reassurance we will offer support and shelter to the most vulnerable members of our city when they most need it – now and during this recovery.

Let me deal with the settlement that Councillor Brett and no doubt Councillor Carter will mention. Yes, I will repeat it again, the settlement of 1.8% is disappointing, especially with the challenges we face. Let me be clear, this Labour Group has and will always put the interests of Leeds first and we will always be prepared to lobby for more money from any Government but when, as usual, we hear Councillor Carter and Councillor Brett criticise our Labour Government for the so-called worst ever settlement we will always remind him that under our Labour Government Leeds has seen an increase of £33m through the Formula Grant since 2006/07. This represents an average increase of 2.4% year on year. Compare this to a 7% real reduction in the last four years of a Conservative Government which led to a -0.5 settlement in Leeds in the 1990s. No-one should ever forget the

devastating impact that had on our children, the elderly and vulnerable in our city.
(hear, hear)

What Councillors Carter and Brett always conveniently forget – and they have done it today – is the area grant worth over £70m this year which includes money for our 58 child care centres which, frankly, have been mainly funded by this Labour Government and not by this administration. Furthermore, just last week Leeds received £2.5m from the Government for extended schools. Never does this administration acknowledge the additional money given to this city by this Labour Government – indeed, like today they even try to claim it is theirs. We should all be proud of this Labour Government's commitment to improve health, education and welfare services which has resulted in the greatest transformation of our public services on record in this city. This includes an increase of over 4% in pupil support through the Dedicated School Grant for Leeds this year.

In terms of education spend alone we now spend £5,300 per head on each pupil compared to the last year of a Tory Government when it was £2, 175. That is real commitment, even when the public sector funds are tight.

Let us not forget either that we have spent £1.5b investing in Council homes, schools, care centres for the disabled and elderly through our capital programme – unprecedented in our lifetime. Our capital programme has been a testimony to the Labour Government's commitment to Leeds so yes, we may have criticisms, yes, we know there are serious economic challenges but, frankly, I would rather trust a Labour Government with our public services than an Osborne-Cameron Conservative Party that is already promising massive public cuts to our expenditure which will not only damage our economic recovery but also risk the loss of police, PCSOs, winter aid grants for our elderly and grants to our young people to carry on education. In fact, if there is a Tory Government Local Authorities can expect further cuts and loss of control on many public services.

The risk list gets longer as Dave remains firmly committed to swingeing public sector cuts. All this at risk for the sake of a pat on the back from the richest people in this country for easing their inheritance tax.

This administration's budget is a risk to the future of our services to the elderly and young, particularly the vulnerable. Again, despite our warnings, we find ourselves with only £12m in reserves. This is too low in view of the massive overspend this Council faces in Children's and Adult Services. Yet again this year we are using millions of one-off funding, such as Capitalisation and Section 278 money, despite being over £40m short on the capital programme. Last year Councillor Carter promised he would virtually eliminate the dependence on one-off funding, yet here we are again, £10m which would need nearly a 4% increase in Council tax to cover it.

Of course Labour have used one-offs in the past but none on this scale and we are creating massive holes in our Revenue budget for years to come which only can mean further cuts or massive increases in our Council tax.

By contrast, there is now more in schools reserves, over £19m, than is available to support the whole of the Council's spending which is £1.8b gross. £12m in our reserves? It is a very dangerous strategy.

People ask, who is to blame for this chaos and crisis? You could believe Clegg, who recently said in Leeds that although the party shares power with the Tories in the city, it remains a dominating influence. Indeed, so it shows. You could

believe Alec Shelbrooke's leaflet who said, "Tories will run the country like they run the city". That is a very rich thing. (*Interruption*)

The truth is, as John Bale has said in the past, coalitions lead to weak leadership and there is no consistent or competent leadership of this Council. You are right, John.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Honest John.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Let me list some of the failures of this administration. Firstly, consultants. We accept there is a role for consultants but you are obsessed with them. You have spent over £6m on them across the Council this year – far too high. As Tom Murray said at January's Council, "Children's Services has spent £11m on consultants since 2004 yet it is in special measures with 30 vacancies to fill and relieve our workers from unacceptably huge workloads and pressures that they face." In the same service you paid out almost £350,000 in total compensation to the four senior officers who left the Children's Services when it got into difficulties. You wasted £2.17m on case work software that has been proven to be totally ineffective. Despite our warnings, you have spent millions on management structures in Children's Services and in Education Leeds that has wasteful duplication.

Let us not forget either the massive cost of employing another consultant to bail us out of this mess at over £1,000 a day plus expenses.

COUNCILLOR: How much?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Do not forget he said improvement and not cuts. Don't try that. Further more, £355,000 has gone on salary payments to staff who have been suspended for unacceptably long periods on full pay while we await the outcome of investigations. Imagine what this budget could have been and should have been if only they had not wasted all those millions. The money could have been used to keep the much-needed day centres open, reverse fairer charges, provide front line social workers to protect our vulnerable children, help our voluntary sector whose grants have been frozen and give more support and training for our unemployed. We could have stopped the cuts of over £1m to vital community services such as tackling crime, cleansing, anti-graffiti teams and enforcement. It is not good enough to say it is all down to the Government like we have heard today. Why are we cutting bulky waste collections again? This is not the time to hack away at vital community services which support the quality of life of our communities. All these cuts could have been and should have been avoided.

Let me tell you now where we feel the real savings can be made. Firstly, cutting press and media would save £800,000 a year. How many more times do we have to see airbrushed photos of our Leader and Councillor Procter in glossy publications? I agree with Sue Bentley on the cost of too many magazines. You are right, Sue.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: You are right, Sue.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We welcome the proposal to cut the cost of the Civic Newspaper by sharing with other partners, but we still believe it is too expensive for playing propaganda. Likewise, we think the quarter of a million pounds this administration spends on International Relations Unit is far too high. For the last six years we have been telling you to cut spin, consultants, duplication and your failure to do so has led you to cutting the wrong services at the wrong time.

It proves that you cannot make tough decisions to address duplication, wastefulness and the inefficiency of departmental structures. Although it looks like rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic, we actually do welcome your late conversion to efficiencies on buildings in the city centres with the caveat of this – it must not disadvantage our citizens' abilities to access public services. Indeed, we have been calling for a review over the last six years.

We also welcome the review of Children's Services and Education Leeds – again, something we have been calling for for that last four to five years but you still will not make the bold decision and merge the two services fully. Yet again, our amendment proposes to end the arrangements with Education Leeds and rationalise the structure within Children's Services which would save millions on top of the back office merger savings you propose. It is unfortunate that it took a highly critical Ofsted report for you to take notice.

Our savings would go towards apprenticeships and training, something else you have not dealt with completely or adequately in your term of office because in our city we still have one of the highest levels of young people not in education, employment or training in the country, yet this is a city that has a strong, robust and diverse economy which makes it worse. By inaction we are condemning these young people to a life of poverty and a lack of hope.

Last week we received an email from an officer saying that they did not believe that training was a core function of this Council. That is the difference between you and us. We believe there is a moral duty as well as a big political duty to look after the unemployed.

Our amendment this year reinforces our strong belief that we should not be turning our back on people who need our help to get the training, skills and qualifications to get work. We cannot afford to continue with a scenario here where the delivery of training contracts is fragmented in five departments. If large Tory Councils in the south have been able to set up training departments to deal with this recession, why not a major city like Leeds? It is a scandal, the way that we have just turned our backs on those people, so our first pledge would be to maintain last year's commitment to provide 500 apprenticeships for young people which would help to tackle the NEETs group and high levels of youth unemployment in our city.

In terms of your promise to provide 250 apprenticeships, you have clearly misled people by massaging your figures and re-badging 133 existing trainees as apprenticeships. Some of that may be welcome but it is totally misleading in terms of new apprenticeships for people from the inner city.

Secondly, given that Total Place is now an aspiration which is here to stay, we have to start talking to our partners like the NHS, universities, Home and Community Agency and so on who, like us, are spending millions of pounds over the next five years in their building programme. Surely we should be using procurement together to find a way of ensuring we give opportunities to local people.

The two initiatives above can be funded by a combination of the Future Jobs Fund from which the Council has already obtained £1.7 and a small proportion of our School Balances which, as I said before, are now standing at £17m, rising to over £19m with the extended schools balance.

We acknowledge that some schools have started to provide training opportunities but not enough. It is time to say to schools with large balances that, while we understand you need to keep reserves, huge balances are totally unacceptable when there are young people desperate to get on the job ladder.

The other message is this if – and I say if – there is a Conservative Government, it will take this money away from you, so use it or lose it if we have an election disaster.

Our third strand involves making sure we are not denying opportunities for our officers to remain with the Council under a more flexible One Council culture. Legal Services led the way with this last year and this kind of initiative is urgently needed across the Council. For example, we know there are some excellent officers in regeneration but we also know that some of our vital regeneration projects are grinding to a halt and EASEL is fighting for its life still. It is time to focus on people in our priority areas. We would redeploy some of these regeneration staff, supporting them where necessary, to work in a new centralised Jobs and Skills service or local services which desperately need co-ordination and integration to bring more localised accountability. For example, Area Committees which we believe need more power and purpose for their role.

However, what we find totally unacceptable is an average wage of over £70,000 for senior management in that service and a ratio of one manager to three workers. It is appalling. This is not about a lack of ambition, criticising or sacking officers. This is about making sure that regeneration is a people-led activity and not just bricks and mortar. This is vital because unfortunately this year the administration have finally destroyed the training department which reached out to communities like Burmantofts with the highest levels of NEETs and the highest levels of unemployment, and you have now dismantled most of Roseville by neglecting to provide direction and leadership. To quote the Ofsted report last August, “Leadership and management are inadequate.” In fact, Roseville scored “inadequate” in every single inspection category – a tragic stain on this administration.

Despite Councillor Blackburn’s warnings, despite all our efforts we have now seen the gradual decline of one of the best supported employment schemes for the disabled which gave structure, purpose and dignity to disabled people. Worse than that, we have lost nearly £1m-worth of contract to train disabled people because they failed to achieve the outcomes set.

That is why we welcome the news that some of the Roseville staff are being deployed into some departments of the Council, although again with the caveat that there will always be some for whom this is not an appropriate solution, but losing the contract demonstrates how hard the job market is and we would do more for this group by looking to step up our commitment to people with disabilities while at the same time committing ourselves to significantly extending the Council’s fuel poverty work.

Our proposals for a city-wide warm zone would mean that we would carry out insulation work across the city much faster while providing full supported, on the job training alongside the able-bodied workforce. This would apply to all tenures of housing but particularly addressing fuel poverty and decency standards in private homes – for example Leeds’s 19,500 back-to-back properties, most of which are below decency standards for warmth.

We would pay for this by postponing plans to introduce a new Leeds Guide, frankly, tackling fuel poverty and climate change along with the needs of disabled people, are much greater priorities especially when money is so tight.

As we know, one of the most important issues affecting the health of our elderly is fuel poverty and they risk losing the winter fuel allowance if there is a Tory Government. (*hear, hear*) Unfortunately our elderly are about to experience...

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: That is a lie. Where is your proof?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Unfortunately our elderly are about to experience many serious setbacks since this administration came to power. It began with fairer charges and the broken promises of this administration to reverse and stop further charges. It continues with the closure of vital centres, continued reduction in privatisation of services and, of course, a huge increase on charges for services last year despite the pleas of the elderly and vulnerable not to do this because they simply could not afford it.

Indeed, far from listening they dealt the elderly and vulnerable a further blow by increasing the price of a hot main meal by 17% to £3.50 a day. This is a proposal we would do away with immediately because it just adds further stress to people we should value and respect.

We would also reverse the closure of Holbeck and Bramley Lawn Day Centres which provide so much comfort and support (*applause*) to those people who live in some of the most deprived and isolated conditions. Because the Social Services budget is in crisis, we acknowledge we could not bring back all the home helps, day centres and non-charging regime but we would ensure that Neighbourhood Networks had more money to carry on some of their excellent work without feeling overstretched, under valued and under funded.

Indeed, all our voluntary sector partners this year have been extremely hard hit by this budget and been asked to accept a zero increase. What bitter irony in the year of the volunteer. Some major arts organisations have had a 5% cut in their grants.

You know, grants and subscriptions are a token of our recognition to the work of external groups, even though they may say things against us. We would reinstate the Coalfield Community subscriptions because the coalfields have and still do bring millions of pounds to places like Leeds. They are part of our history and our culture; to simply ignore them, switch off their contribution, smacks of Thatcherism again.

I am delighted that Councillor Pryke has single-handedly convinced the administration to back down on removing the subscription to the Nuclear Free Zone. I always thought he had great charm and charisma (*laughter*) – he has always kept it well hidden, though! (*laughter*)

In relation to managing our assets, I want to talk about valuing our best assets, which are our staff. Each year they have had to experience more efficiency savings - £23m last year, £22 this year – and yet they remain fully committed to delivering public services to the people of Leeds. They deserve and need recognition, appreciation and support.

Unfortunately this year not only have we seen an aggressive attack on low paid staff, we are now seeing proposals to weaken the protection of staff against redundancy. We are losing over 1,000 jobs through last year's budget and this year's budget and you must be destroying the moral of many staff across Leeds City Council by making it easier to get rid of them.

We do not believe reduction in staff will not affect front line services, especially when we know we are losing staff in anti-graffiti teams, cleansing, burglary prevention, Children and Adult Services. Surely that will affect our people in our community. These are staff that are actually essential to the quality of our life and to show our recognition and appreciation, we reject your proposal of a zero wage

increase and instead we would give 1% pay increases to all our low paid staff up to spinal column point 13, which is currently £18,355. This would take us nearer to our ambition to be a fair wage city, like Councils in Oxford or Manchester. We would not see low paid workers punished for the greed of top bankers who have nearly destroyed this country's economy by their reckless investments.

In conclusion, while the Labour Group would have liked to do more, especially for the elderly, the environment, the young, it recognises this budget and this administration is in serious crisis, with massive holes in the budget for Children's Services and Adult Social Care, but we would not let the crisis in the budget cause us to take wrong-headed action such as cutting bulky waste collections or closing wastes stations, and would make sure our vital environmental and cleansing services are not completely destroyed. We would not hide behind the excuse that it is not our core business to help the unemployed or disabled, and we can do this and still keep the rate of increasing Council tax as 2.5%.

To demonstrate our commitment to the elderly, as well as stopping the 17% increase in the cost of meals, as well as offering more support for their community needs, we would pledge once again to freeze Council tax increases for everyone over 80 and we will give free leisure access to the over 65s because we believe encouraging a health lifestyle is better to avoid hospital.

The amendment shows that if you have the competence, commitment and compassion you can do more for the environment. You can help young people without hope, you can do more to protect and give dignity to our elderly and vulnerable and you can show your staff that you value them, and I urge anyone who shares those values and wants to see a change in this administration to vote for our amendment. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. I now call on Councillor Richard Lewis to second.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. I now call on Councillor Ann Blackburn to move a second amendment.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. First of all I would like to make the normal...

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I stop you there, Councillor Blackburn? Could everybody please just settle down to listen to what Councillor Blackburn has to say? Thank you.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: I will try again. Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would also like to do the customary thanks to Alan Gay and his team and other people that have come to us and helped us to put our amendment together.

I think we are all in agreement with one thing here today and that is that this is probably the worst budget settlement in history during a major recession and with the pressures that we have with the ageing population and our social care budget and, of course, our problems with the Children's Services, some of which have been self-induced.

I will make a few comments about what has already been mentioned by Councillor Brett and Councillor Wakefield. We too have a concern about the bulky waste service. We like the idea of people being able to have their furniture or

whatever it is re-used but it seems as if it has not really been sorted out how this is going to work yet. It seems as if you do have some decent furniture, we need to get in touch with the call centre, or so it seems because it still has not been sorted, and they will give you a number to ring a charity but again, we do not seem to know exactly what charities they are. Some signed up and it may be that others will not. Again, very unclear. Then, as I said, people will have to ring up the charities themselves. We are concerned, will the charities be able to deliver? I appreciate they might be keen but I know the last time I rang a charity up, they do rely on volunteers and so they would need more money to go to these charities so that they could provide this service. Again, I have gone into this and again it is very sketchy at the moment so I think that is something that, while I like the idea of it, I think until I know that there is more money there and it is going to work I have got to say that I am not over confident about it. Also, it does worry me that if it does not work, of course, it could lead to more people dumping their furniture and whatever, something I am sure that all of us would not want to happen.

As far as consultancy fees go, yes, I agree with Keith, we do spend too much on consultancy fees. Certainly whilst we may need some we certainly seem to be spending far too much on them and, of course, that does include the new Director of Children's Services.

I like the idea of more training. Who would not say yes, we would like 500 new apprenticeships. The Green Party is always in favour of having apprenticeships and we know there are not many around now anywhere, not just in Leeds.

Giving the Area Committees more power, again, that is something, of course, we would like to see happen and again you mention Warm Zone but I will go on to what our things are later on.

Again, I will say a thank you to Ralph Pryke there – perhaps you have never heard me say thank you to Ralph before and I do not know if you ever will again but anyone on this one I would say thank you because, again, he has kept the membership of the Nuclear Free Zone Membership ongoing which is something I understand was not going to be the case.

As far as the administration goes I would say that the £40,000 per ward initiative is something that we think is a good thing because it means we can all do more in our wards and personally I am pleased that they are doing something with the refurbishment of the City Varieties because it is long overdue.

There is lots of other things but I do not intend to go on about everything that has been said. I will go back to the more important parts now of my speech and that is that in our view the serious circumstances we find ourselves in, we have to prioritise spending and helping vulnerable groups. We, the Green Group, therefore, are proposing to help families with children who are at the start of their lives in education by introducing a 25% subsidy on school meals, meaning that there should be a greater take-up of the meals which we would hope would result in more children getting a nutritional lunch.

At the other end of the life spectrum we are proposing to help the very elderly, people 85 and over in receipt of social care, by offering free home care, day care and meals. On top of this we are proposing the introduction of a Home Energy Efficiency Scheme, somewhat similar to the one operating in Kirklees, which I believe most of the Members know about. We are proposing to borrow £1m of capital to fund this scheme.

Finally, as I said previously, our budget amendment is about protecting those that are vulnerable and on fixed income. To that end we are proposing to freeze Council tax for pensioner households over 65. To pay for our proposals we propose a further 5% increase in charges, not including social service charges and certain leisure charges. We are proposing to make savings of £233,000 by the introduction across the board of the Green Group's own allowance scheme, drawn up some years ago by Claire Nash and David Blackburn, which would reduce the Members' basic allowance to something like 91.5% of what it is now and reduce special responsibility allowances to something like 72.25% of what they are now. Before anyone says anything – because I expected a load of boos and “Go away” and a load of hassle or whatever going on there, I will say that, of course, I am not asking for something that the Green Group do not already do because members of the Green Group here have had to sign up to this scheme for some years, so if we can do it other people can and we do believe that in times when we know there are lots of people out there unemployed they look to us Councillors to take a lead. We have been taking a lead with this for a long time and I now ask for the rest of Members in this room to do the same.

We further propose to double Councillor Members' parking charges – another one I am sure I will be hugely popular for – and cut food at Council teas. I am sorry, Lord Mayor, I know you like them but I am afraid they will have to go – which will bring in a total of £22,000 and we would raise £118,000 on savings on the Civic Newspaper, £350,000 on transport costs and £440,000 on energy costs, not only saving money but saving on pollution and we would make £300,000 on consultancy costs.

As we said, this is a budget which concentrates on doing our duty to the elderly and the young and those on fixed incomes and clearly on that there are losers other than elected Members, of course. Bearing in mind that we believe that some of the strain needs to be taken by those fortunate enough to still be in work, to that end we are proposing an additional 0.4% on Council tax. Our budget amendment is about fairness, looking after or supporting those who are in the most difficult situations. We therefore call on Council to support our amendment. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blackburn. I now call on Councillor Parnham to second.

COUNCILLOR PARNHAM: Lord Mayor, I formally second and reserve the right to speak. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: In that case we go on to comments and I call on Councillor Robert Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: You know it is a treat! Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I firstly thank the officers of the Finance Section for their helpful briefing and to underline the fact that the Treasury Collection Teams have done an excellent job and have enabled the Council to keep Council tax rises as low as possible through their fine efforts.

The Morley Borough Independents believe that presenting our own budget is nothing more than indulging in political pantomime.

COUNCILLOR: Oh not it is not.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Oh yes it is! I know he is behind me! It wastes officers' time which would be better spent on other things and it is a pale charade that

often offers small adjustments around the edges to the main budget to promote a political point that is rarely valid and often offers less than convincing choices.

The settlement Leeds City Council receives from Central Government is a disgrace and has been a disgrace for many years. The settlement formula is a corrupted process that bears little resemblance to the challenge our communities face and has, under subsequent Governments, been used as a gerrymandering tool. Under a Conservative Central Government we had the outrageous formula that suggested the well-heeled and Conservative controlled boroughs of Wandsworth and Westminster suffered significant problems and their settlements were at higher levels than they deserved. Under a Labour Government the formula offers greater resources to Labour controlled Councils, such as Manchester and Nottingham, under an equally corrupt process. While not denying the problems both these cities face, their settlements over the last three years have been substantially more generous than ours and it is clearly the case that the challenges Leeds faces, especially in some of its more deprived communities, are as great as anywhere you will find within the country.

We need to abandon the present formula, which is not fit for purpose, and come up with a new way of assessing Central Government financial support which is independent of any Government's ability to stuff cash into the pockets of its political buddies.

The settlement is even worse when you consider the additional burdens Central Government imposes along with the almost obscene thievery that is the Unified Business Rate. We could have kept the Council tax rise to 1% if we had not had to find the additional expense of paying Central Government's imposed landfill tax that adds a further £1.5m burden on already hard pressed taxpayers. Where this money goes no-one knows but little if any finds its way back to Leeds.

The business rate redistribution is the nearest you can get to legalised larceny, with cash hard earned in Leeds being redistributed to other Council areas which have not made a similar investment as Leeds City Council has in developing thriving cities from town centres. Even the Business Expansion Funding, where some of the benefits of economic growth were returning to the city, have been choked off to nothing more than a mere trickle. It is not so much a double whammy the city endures but a treble and a quadruple one. Cash flows out of the city and to Central Government and we get less than our fair share. This is unacceptable and the business rate needs to be returned to Council control.

We look at the settlements across other West Yorkshire Councils and see that Leeds is again at the bottom of the table, with the average increase across West Yorkshire of 2.7% while Leeds is offered 1.8%. Indeed, the next worst-performing Council is Calderdale with three year settlements of 4.2%, 3.2% and 2.8%, compared to Leeds's 2.7%, 2.1% and 1.8% over the same period.

Again, while accepting Halifax has its problems, they are nothing compared to those challenges Leeds faces. (*hear, hear*) Further cash is spirited away as Government grants are withdrawn leaving more of our communities under additional stress.

The proposed budget is a fair one. Indeed, even the amendments accept the main backbone behind its proposals. We are pleased to see the increase in Children's Services which we hope will focus on increasing the number of social workers on the front line, delivering on the pledge to protect all these children.

We also note we are spending more than the Government recommends in this sensitive area. We are pleased with the proposals to increase finance in Adult Services and to refocus efforts to make services relevant to older and disabled residents. We note that there is substantial pressure for savings from central services and that front line services are to be protected. This is the right decision to take in light of the difficult financial situation we are facing and will continue to face.

We would have liked to see bigger increases in street cleansing and parks budgets but understand the difficulties we face because of poor Central Government financial support. We have an almost invisible range of choices in these difficult financial times.

We welcome a capital budget which will bring additional funds into Morley to regenerate Morley Bottoms and to offer financial support for affordable housing schemes at three different locations across Morley.

The Arena proposal for Leeds is a good news story for the region and additional finance to support highways improvement is also warmly welcomed.

The capital budget is a fair proposal with something for all wards during exceptionally difficult financial times.

I could comment on the amendments to the budget proposal but that would be indulging in a political pantomime which, although fun and exceptionally entertaining, would offer little to the main debate which is about the poor treatment Leeds gets from Central Government of both persuasions. It is a distraction. There is little point debating the issue of how to divide up a cake when the cake is too small to sustain the communities we represent. That is the main issue.

The final point I would make is that the budget offers no pay rise to our workers. We need to show solidarity with that decision and pledge clearly and unequivocally not to take any pay rises ourselves until we can offer our staff one. We need to show genuine political leadership at a time when we are preaching pay restraint to others. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to support Councillor Wakefield's budget amendment. Let me start by saying on this side of the Chamber we are proud of our long-standing commitment to protecting vulnerable adults in Leeds. Let me also say we are extremely proud of this Council's hard-working, dedicated staff who do some absolutely fantastic work on behalf of vulnerable people in our city.

I do not think anyone in this room is in any doubt that delivering quality services to vulnerable adults is always going to be a challenge. However, where the current administration shies from dealing with these challenges properly we commit ourselves to facing it head on. We are not afraid to make difficult decisions. We are not afraid to tackle the tough issues the city faces. We are also not afraid to stand by our beliefs in quality public services. Sadly on the administration I fear for the future of adult social care. I have particular concerns over the continued privatisation of home care services. It is clear from cases we deal with week in, week out, that some private care providers are not delivering a quality high service. People have a right to expect this. This is simply not good enough. We want people put at the centre of it, not cash at the heart of these services. Until private companies ensure services are comparable to our own in-house provision, we are not happy to continue to increase outsourcing of care.

As you know on these Benches we believe in choice. This is why we fought you every step of the way as you tried to close day centres in our city. If people want to attend a day centre, if they believe attending a day centre is in their best interest, then we want them to have that choice.

We are proposing, as Councillor Wakefield said, to keep open two centres – Bramley and Holbeck. We also want to help vulnerable adults cope with the current economic situation so we propose freezing charges on hot meals but we want to go further than that. We also propose freezing Council taxes for the over eighties.

A belief in the Council's duty to support vulnerable adults is close to the hearts of our members and there is no doubt in my mind that the Council has a role to play in providing opportunities for supported employment. It is about time the Council put aspiration and ambition at the centre of plans for supported employment in Leeds. You have allowed Roseville to decline and in the current state Ofsted has recognised that there are now serious flaws in the business as it stands. Not one employee in the laundry at Roseville has said they want to stay in the laundry to continue working – not one. What does that tell us about supported employment in Leeds?

For many years we have thrown our full support behind Roseville Enterprise and there is no doubt that Roseville has created a strong foundation on which we can build the range of supported employment in Leeds, but the time has certainly come to modernise the existing model. We want to take the positive outcomes that Roseville delivers in terms of building confidence, increasing self-esteem and providing security. However, we also want to increase aspiration and the range of skills people can develop within that model.

The city has an opportunity to lead by example. The Labour Group wants to see supported business in Leeds enabling people with learning disabilities to work within inclusive environments. The sad truth at the moment is that this Council is just not doing enough to make that a reality.

So what are the options? There are clearly many options for us to consider. For example, I want to explore supported employment in Council-owned facilities, potentially a Council-supported commercial café which would double as a training unit for people with learning disabilities who have an interest in catering. A similar model could be used to establish plant nurseries with individuals who have an interest in gardening. What a fantastic opportunity to link up with educational establishments which already provide catering courses for people with learning difficulties. This talent is there. Let us give that talent room to grow in an inclusive business environment. This is achievable. We are looking at proven models for delivering success for people with learning difficulties. My fear, unfortunately, is that on that side of the Chamber there is simply a lack of political will to make this happen.

We also want people with disabilities to be able to benefit from additional training opportunities that are to be provided through apprenticeships, as outlined by Councillor Wakefield.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am afraid the red light is on now, Councillor McKenna. I will have to stop you there.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking to support the amendment moved in the name of Councillor Wakefield and particularly picking up the theme of opportunity, especially for young people.

Many of you will have seen in the Yorkshire Evening Post recently the article highlighting that so many young people in our city are without jobs, education or training and particularly the quote from Councillor Carter describing that as a human tragedy. Fine words, as always, but we have to ask, where is the action? How wrong is it that in times like these we should turn our backs on those who need our help more than ever before?

Labour is not prepared to stand by or let others find a solution and we believe that it is our duty to provide opportunities not just in the wider world of work but right here in the Council, the largest employer in the city.

We believe that we should be the ones to deliver and to lead by example, developing more and more opportunities with our partners across the public sector as the concept of Total Place becomes a reality. Let me give you an idea of the size of the problem.

In our worse five wards in the Index of Deprivation, the number of benefit claimants rose by 2.5% in the year from November 2008. The situation is this – as a result of this administration's failures with reference to 16 to 18 year olds in Leeds, 8.1% are classed as not in employment, education or training. This is 4.4% worse than the national average, putting Leeds at the bottom of the league table.

This is 1,911 young people who have not even reached 18 and are already struggling. For example Gipton, Harehills, City and Hunslet and Middleton Park Wards together have 300 NEETs between the age of 16 and 18 and face a problem which we believe must be tackled now, not left as you propose to allow many more problems to develop in future across the whole city.

This Council has received £4.7m from the Government's Future Jobs Fund, but out of this the only scheme it actually owns is the Work for Leeds Scheme, which has a target of creating 250 apprenticeships in the Council. Three-quarters of the funding has been commissioned. What a missed opportunity to build our in-house capacity, build on our reputation for excellence that you have allowed to fragment and become a shadow of its former self.

So, a target of 250 apprenticeships. Councillor Wakefield has highlighted that the truth is out of the 164 claimed, only 31 real places have been offered to those in need. We would not only want to make sure that each and every one of those 250 places went to people without jobs – we would also create an extra 250 apprenticeships for 16 to 17 years old and, I have to say, building on existing examples of best practice working with schools and education partners, using money from the multi-million pounds of school balance that exist in this city to provide places in schools across the city working in auxiliary and other support roles. In this way we will ensure that our young people get meaningful on the job training with real skills that can help them out of the spiral of unemployment, poverty and hopelessness.

We have heard that you do not consider this a priority. As Councillor Wakefield says, it is shocking to hear that this is not regarded as the Council's core business in providing training. If that was not bad enough, it is clear that you have already given little thought as to how to deliver training properly with the result that you had to actually pay back funding to the Government received to get disabled people into the workplace because you could not find them real jobs.

Let us look at how we do this by recreating the Centralised Training Unit, as Councillor Wakefield says look at existing staff and using their expertise, looking at our procurement, making sure that jobs for our local people are included in any construction or development that takes place in this city; and I welcome the commitment to reducing fuel poverty but also to creating 40 supported places for adults with disabilities through that work.

Lord Mayor, I support the amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield and this is why. We believe in taking actions to address our problems, not just shaking our heads at the tragedy of it all. We are committed to opening our doors as responsible employers to give those who need it a chance to get on the ladder. Let me repeat, we believe training should be a core function of this Council.

I look forward to the Labour Group running this Council again, to Councillor Wakefield implementing his budget. Above all, to support families, provide training and to lead this city out of the shambles that you have left behind. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blake. I must say I am aware when the red light has come on, I do not need any reminding and I will let whoever is speaking speak just a short while after that. Do be aware of that.

I am now calling on Councillor Peter Gruen, please, to comment.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Thank you, Councillor. Can I begin by paying tribute to Councillor Blackburn for her amendment? I think there are some very good ideas in that amendment.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Vote, then.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: You will have to wait and see. I think there are some very good ideas and, in fact, her performance was in stark contrast to the typical performance from Councillor Brett. I think his lengthy contribution demonstrated amply why his administration is incompetent, makes inappropriate cuts and has huge swingeing increases in other areas. There is a total lack of planning, a total lack of succession planning. We have had a Deputy Chief Executive who has gone, a Chief Executive who is going, a Director of Children's Services who has gone a month before she said she would go, another director who is on her way out as well and we have got a Leader of the Council who does not know whether he is coming or going. Actually, he is going.

Therefore, Lord Mayor, poor service in planning. We have now more children in our schools not gaining their first, second or third preference at primary and secondary level. At secondary level a mere 85% get one of their first three choices, the lowest amongst any authority in the city. We have 1,000 plus pupils and parents scuttling around this city going to appeals to try and get into one of our schools and we have, whilst no directors left, we are going to employ a new temporary director on a salary of £350,000 per year plus expenses.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: How much?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: £350,000 a year plus expenses. That is £1,000 a day. Why do we have to pay that? Because of the shambles the service has got into and we need someone, apparently, to rescue the service.

The West Leeds SILC is another example of poor planning. Councillor Taggart has spoken about this before. It was well-known for some considerable time that they have to leave their current building – nothing was done. Moor End Mental

Health Facility appears set to close. Day centres, as my colleague Councillor McKenna mentioned. You wanted to close five – or was it six? Any offers on six? Certainly six day centres. We rescued at least some of those, as did the vulnerable and elderly people. You are the only Authority in the region who actually probably welcomed that we had to have a bin strike to give poorly and low paid people a decent wage. No other Local Authority in the region had to succumb to a bin strike of twelve weeks. They settled professionally and amicably without any bin strike.

COUNCILLOR: (*inaudible*) pay for it.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Absolutely right.

I think you have spent £280,000 in the last year alone on external training venues. I believe Education Leeds has spent alone £292,000 on external conference training meeting venues. It is a total inappropriate use of resources. I know, Andrew, you cannot wait to talk to me about the Cross Gates gates. I will accept that. This is massive amount of money being spent.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Gruengates.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: You have spent £11m on consultants. You put consultants at the heart of your thinking instead of residents and staff who work jolly hard to provide services for residents. You outsource more than you possibly can do professionally and efficiently.

The charges you impose are now phenomenally high. Let us talk about the charges in terms of burying people. A colossal increase. Let us talk about the leisure centres that you are closing in deprived areas of the city. Let us talk about the increases in landfill charges as a result of un-recycled waste from the refuse strike. Let us talk about your failure to reach 250 apprenticeships which you said you would. Let us talk about the failure to tackle unemployment in young people that my colleagues have already mentioned. Let us talk about £262k on an automated telephone system for Council contact centre. What benefits have you derived from that? Let us talk about the wasted £40k on branding for Contact Leeds, just to scrap it. Let us talk about the cutting of a £25k grant to Relate. Everything you have done has been to offend ordinary hard-working, decent people in this city.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am afraid your time is up now, Councillor Gruen.
(*Applause*)

Thank you. I now would like to call on Councillor Andrew Carter who wishes to take up his right to speak.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, it is always useful to follow Labour's Achilles – or should I say Labour's Achilles' heel. Before I go on to my general comments on the budget, let us just deal with Councillor Gruen, shall we?

Councillor Gruen, members of the Council, is the Chair of – I will try and avoid mentioning the Cross Gates but I will probably struggle – let me just mention Aire Valley Homes. Councillor Gruen is the Chair of Aire Valley Homes. He has just presided over an £11.5m overspend on capital. Councillor Gruen, do not lecture anybody in this administration about how to look after public finances, because you have singularly failed.

Secondly, my Lord Mayor, Councillor Gruen, on a relatively minor matter but it paints a picture of Councillor Gruen, has just sent a letter indicating that the Members

of the Labour Group will not attend lunchtime seminars any more because we have decided we will not provide lunches. *(laughter)*

Councillor Gruen also is well-known to us all, of course, for wanting to reinstate the Members' lounge – thank you, Councillor Hanley, for nodding, and Councillor Nash. I am delighted you have admitted your party wants to reintroduce the £50,000 subsidy for feeding Members.

Councillor Wakefield, if you were a Leader you would disown Gruen's gravy train now and, by the way, I am sorry about the comments you made about the Acting Director of Children's Social Care, Children's Services, and I do realise that you have already worked out that the salary you have grossly exaggerated because of the time frame you have used, nevertheless it would purchase you two sets of gates in Cross Gates. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: That is good value then.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Now, my Lord Mayor, having got that out of the way – you may well hang your head down, Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I was going to sleep.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: As you will see, my Lord Mayor, Councillor Gruen is some Achilles; some heel.

My Lord Mayor, can I now thank the officers of all the departments for the work they have done in preparing the budget? It has been said by previous speakers and there is no doubt whatever that this year has been a very, very difficult year for preparing a budget of any sort and I accept that it is also a difficult year for Opposition parties to prepare alternative budgets, but Councillor Brett began by talking about the bad deal that the city has got from Whitehall and I make no apology for adding some further comments to that.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: He did not say it when the Tories were in.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: What concerns me – and I intend to follow this up with a mechanism I am increasingly using – is that we know we have the worst settlement in anyone's memory and we know that the Labour Group keep telling us how much they agree with us that that is a bad settlement. I am going to put in a Freedom of Information Request tomorrow and I am going to ask the appropriate Government Ministers in writing to produce to me the letters from the Members of Parliament for this city and the leadership of the Labour Group that show they have made representations to try and get this city a better deal. I shall also be asking them for the dates of meetings that Members opposite might have had with Government Ministers to plead the Leeds case and I shall also ask about meetings that Members of Parliament might have had to plead the Leeds case. You can rest assured, Members of Council, that when that information is to hand I shall make you aware of it. A little later today I will be talking about Freedom of Information Requests again.

The backdrop to this budget, whether you like it or not, is that we have had the worst Revenue Support Grant settlement ever from the Government.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No, it is not true.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It is true, Councillor Wakefield. You add all sorts of other figures in to come up with your particular brand of voodoo economics which we have had ample demonstration of today already.

We got a 1.8% settlement compared with the national average of 2.6% and a core city average of 2.2%, and a West Yorkshire average of 2.7%, so the Government have given us this year an extra £5.4m against an increase last year of £6.2m.

Had we received even the average for the West Yorkshire Authorities, we would have received a further £2.6m. That would have been enough to reduce our Council tax increase to 1.5% and still give us an extra £600,000 to invest in additional services; or it could have allowed us the whole £2.6m to spend in additional services and actually that would have met a lot of the things that Councillor Ann Blackburn has been suggesting.

It cannot be right that a resident of Liverpool receives from the Government through Revenue Grant to the Local Authority almost double what a resident of Leeds receives.

Let me just refer to the graphs that I have been provided with by the Director of Resources. A resident of Liverpool gets £750 per head per year going up from Central Government; a resident of Manchester gets £730; of Birmingham £665; of Newcastle £633; of Nottingham £603; of Sheffield £531; and Leeds £403 per head of population.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Shame.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: If you get nearer home, Bradford receives £534 per head of population; Wakefield £431; Calderdale £405; Leeds £403.

Leeds is recognised as a major city- we are a major city. We are the second largest city in England and we have some of the most deprived areas in our city of anywhere in the country and yet the financial discrepancy between our city and the ones I have highlighted is intolerable and wholly unfair.

Add to this the fact that according to the Government's extremely dodgy statistics Leeds no longer qualifies for what was the Neighbourhood Renewal Funding. It is now Working Neighbourhoods Funding. The Council has lost £14.9m in NRF funding, £3.5m of it this year. Add to that the Government's landfill tax for this coming year which has gone up by a further £6,000 to £8.6m, and that is a tax on the people of this city levied on them through us but by the Government in Whitehall. Add to that the fact that we have mainstream funded £1.65m-worth of former NRF duties, in fact we began our budget process £400,000 worse off than we were last year. That is the backdrop to this budget; that is the starting point to this budget.

Notwithstanding that, we are finding extra funding of £6.2m to fund Children and Young People's Social Care. We know, and we have had numerous debates on the issue, quite rightly, in this Chamber that a lot of work needs to be done. That is why we have identified such a large amount of money because every penny of it will be required.

Initially the other area of significant pressure for the Council, as has been highlighted, is Adult Social Care and that is why we are providing another £4.3m there as well.

Let me just say to the Labour Party that it is all right, Councillor McKenna, you talking about how we provide our services, but your Government and the next Government of whatever political persuasion will require us to continue modernising our service provision and you know what that means and I know what that means, and if we do not do it, two things will happen. First of all, the Government's inspection service will begin again to criticise the way we provide Adult Social Care and, secondly, the costs of our provision will spiral completely out of control, and I will return to that a little later, and cause for this Local Authority, under whoever is in charge, a nightmare scenario, but it will be a worse nightmare for the people for whom we are supposed to be providing the service.

We are also providing £1.4m to improve the city's waste strategy, rising to £2.1m the following year. Quite frankly, Members of Council, that money would not have been available had we not gone through the pain of the refuse collectors' strike. I am sorry that your paymasters in the union, who were on the front row there have now gone, but the message to them is extremely clear, that we expect the unions to live up to the deal they have done with this Authority and deliver the route-rationalisation and modernisation agenda that many other Local Authorities have already gone through and that you could have introduced in 2004 but, as we all know, you capitulated a few hours into the industrial action.

Because of the action that we took our recycling target how is, I think, 41% for 2010 and 2011, which will make us one of the most successful of all major Local Authorities in recycling. That is not only good because it helps the environment; it is good because it keeps down the punitive landfill taxes inflicted on this Authority by your Government.

I also, I think, should remind Members opposite that in 2001/02 the Council tax increase proposed by the party opposite was 6.5% and in 2003/04 – not the last year they set a budget but the last year they set a Council tax – it actually was 7.9% and that was at a time when they were receiving much larger levels of Revenue Support Grant settlement. The message is very clear – you know, you are the party of poorer services but you are the party of higher taxation as well. *(Applause)*

This budget has not been put together without difficulty and I will be the first to admit that and my colleagues on the front bench here and Executive Board Members have all had to work extremely hard with their senior officers to deliver this budget presentation that we are giving today, and it will be even harder to make sure that we deliver the actual budget, but it has to be delivered because, as I am sure the Director of Resources has informed all the Party Leaders, this year is as nothing compared to what is coming, and to be frank with you, Councillor Wakefield, it is coming whoever wins the General Election. We know what your Government is already saying to the Civil Service in areas like highways and transportation – cuts of 20%. Not five, not six – 20%. Your Government are doing that now.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Your party has done it in Birmingham.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: So we have had to look for savings without affecting frontline services. We have had to mainstream some of the areas previously funded by NRF – and I have touched on that already – and we will be reducing staff, but this is entirely on a voluntary and sensible basis. Some Authorities under the political control of all three major parties, actually, have announced significant reductions in the staffing, making blanket offers across the whole of their organisations resulting in a wave of protests and there is one just down the road from here that happens to be under Labour control where I understand a massive demonstration is taking place - if not as we speak, very shortly.

We have a scheme in place here where staff have the option of taking voluntary severance or early retirement, but only where there is a robust business case. This has helped us to achieve budget efficiencies without the need for blanket redundancies. We have had a five year financial plan which has matched our resources with our priorities and we have had a two per cent per annum saving target for all support services. This has not been easy to achieve but, because we have been able to plan properly, we have managed without the need for the draconian cuts that some Local Authorities are now threatening their staff with.

Over the past three years we have delivered £58m-worth of efficiency savings. We have reduced overhead costs through investing in technology and reviewing our services in innovative ways - for example, the establishment of the contact centre, which has been a great success, and the Business Support Centre, and we have managed our debt prudently. Here again, I would like to give my thanks to the officers in Treasury Management for the work there.

If we were paying interest on our debt at the same rate as some other comparable Local Authorities, our revenue costs would be £10m a year more, or 5% on the Council tax, or £10m-worth of cuts – take your choice. We have not relied too heavily on one-off reserves, whatever Councillor Wakefield says and in point of fact, as he is well aware, in the past two years we have halved to 2.4% of the budget what we regard as one-off revenue payments. I regard that as pretty good progress against a problem that we all admitted existed.

We have also improved our staff productivity levels and the rate of sickness has steadily reduced over the past four to five years. We know in that respect much more needs to be done.

That brings me on to the amendments that have been tabled. I have to say that when I got these two amendments, I looked in great detail at this one and I thought, my goodness, at last some leadership from Labour, at last they are stepping up to the plate, at last they are really going to get their heads above the parapet and give an alternative strategy. When I got to the bottom of the amendment I read the name of Ann Blackburn!

COUNCILLOR ATHA: It shows you can read, anyway.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: At least Councillor Blackburn has very bravely, some may say, outlined a clearly different strategy – a clearly different strategy. Some might say she is the Joan of Arc of the Council Chamber. You do realise, of course, she came to a very environmentally unfriendly end, but at least you were prepared to spell out in some detail what you were going to do.

Then I saw this other amendment and I thought there must be a few then because it is a very brief amendment here in the name of Councillor Wakefield. Now, when Councillor Wakefield got up to speak and berated the administration at such length, you would have thought, if you were somebody who was not accustomed to coming in here, that this lot over here thought that the whole budget was a shambles, drastically wrong, wholly incompetent and inept. In fact, Councillor Wakefield's amendment accounts for 0.0049 of the gross budget, so that must mean he thinks that 99 point-whatever is all right, because that is what the Leader of the Opposition has put to this Council – an alteration in the gross budget of 0.0049%.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No, I can explain that.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: So much for Leadership; so much for vision; so much for strategy. There is none.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: What about training?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I listened with care to Councillor Wakefield's wish list and I am not going to make my normal comments about I know how difficult it is for Oppositions to prepare a budget, because quite frankly what we heard from Councillor Wakefield could have been concocted in half an hour on the back of a fag packet. Actually, for the staff of this Authority it is a budget of despair and redundancy, because Keith Wakefield cannot have it both ways - on the one hand, to pretend to be protecting employees and on the other that make proposals for immediate reductions in staff, because that is what he has been doing. If he wants to introduce his budget from 1 April, then he has to take steps now to reduce staff.

Councillor Wakefield pretends that he knows a lot about employment matters, so he must know what the redundancy procedure entails, and it does not just entail---

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I did not say redundancy. Never mentioned.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It does not just entail the odd one or two poor souls being singled out and given their P60s. It involves a long and protracted process where hundreds if not thousands of staff are put in fear of losing their jobs.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: So when Councillor Wakefield stands up and has the cheek to congratulate our staff, remember this, the people who work for this city, that with his congratulations letter comes a P60.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: That is not true.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: That is not true and you know it.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: So when he is kowtowing to his paymasters, who I have already said have gone, perhaps he had better make sure they understand what his proposals mean. I promise you this, Keith, if you do not tell them, we will.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I have already seen them.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: The collapse in morale that procedure would entail would be devastating for this city.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I do not know what he is talking about.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It would be appalling for people who have worked for us for so long to be put in that position and what I outlined a few moments ago was the procedure we have gone through as an administration to make sure that that did not have to happen.

Then, perhaps worst of all is the attack on the officers in regeneration. Let me just tell you about that.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: What, you would like the 70,000 between workers?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: The claims he has made about pay are quite simply wrong. The figures quoted by him actually fund a whole range of senior posts, including those who manage the ten Areas Committees, the Jobs and Skills Service,

the Signpost Family Intervention Project, the Council's external funding programmes and key planning and policy responsibilities. They also include a post which has been jointly funded by Leeds and Bradford Councils. The 23 posts cited by Councillor Wakefield have, in any event, been reduced to 20. In 2004 when Labour were last in power there were at least 26 posts, including a Director, looking after these areas of work, so do not come here lecturing us about things that you did and did not seek to streamline that we have. The real cost to the Council taxpayer of Leeds, 20 posts that he has mentioned, is £1.2m thanks to this administration's efficiency and success in winning extra cash for Leeds.

Labour have inflated the value of these salaries to staff by 10% by including the Council's employer National Insurance contribution and that goes straight back into the public purse. It is a disgrace that you should so denigrate our Regeneration staff.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: No I did not.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thanks to their – I am sorry, you did.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Yes you did.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You know it.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thanks to their efforts, listen to this, of our Regeneration Staff, we have got programmes worth £500m matched by private sector cash to fund schemes across the city over the next six years. These include £170m for Beeston Hill, Holbeck and Little London, £70m for the regeneration of affordable homes across the city, it also deals with the Lifetime Homes, the homes that we are building to help people live in the community with learning difficulties, it supports the work on the Leeds-Bradford corridor - and we know that is of no importance to you, Councillor Wakefield - and in the Aire Valley.

This hardly adds up to profligate ways. It is an excellent deal for the Council taxpayers and this city.

Then we come to the old chestnut of consultancy. Let me tell you how much is spent on consultancy if you take out the specialist services we procure for the capital programme and for PFI schemes. £600,000. What was the equivalent figure using the exact comparison when you were in power? It was £1.6m, nearly three times as much as we are paying.

If you want to reduce consultancy, then stand up in this Council or put in your leaflets which of those schemes, those capital schemes, you propose to ditch, because without those specialist services we cannot do them. We do not employ in-house specialisms like that any more. Some may say more the pity but it went years and years and year ago and we have to bring in those specialist services for the Arena, for the PFI schemes, for the housing schemes, for the children's centres – for everything that we build. Incidentally, all those schemes, the builders are required to pay apprentices and appoint apprentices to conduct training and as we roll out our affordable housing programme and the Arena project, that more than ever will make sure local jobs are created, training jobs, Keith - training jobs, jobs for life, jobs in construction, apprenticeships that, quite frankly, you are putting in jeopardy.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: They won't go to local.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: So which of the capital schemes would you drop? Be honest, which would you drop, because you are going to cut the people

out who provide the specialist services, so tell us which schemes are going to go. I am afraid your days of a free lunch are over in more ways than one. Tell the people of Leeds what you intend to do. You would damage the PFI programme, you would damage the schools programme, you will stall regeneration, you would bring compulsory redundancies and it is a classic example of Councillor Wakefield's voodoo economics yet again.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We did not do it to Hyde Park.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Never forget – and I address this to the colleagues here – never forget that five years ago we inherited a £64m backlog in highway maintenance, a £18m black hole in social services, a backlog on property maintenance that ran into millions and millions of pounds and the services were breaking down. That is what we inherited. You all know it. Actually you know it too, David, because you saw the figures as well and I am sure the Morley Borough Independents understand it even if this crew do not.

Despite these difficulties we are putting significant amounts of money into Adult Social Care, Children's Social Services, a proper strategy for dealing with waste disposal and they have no strategy for dealing with waste disposal, a proper programme for highways maintenance, extra money over and above what the Government may or may not be going to give us for schools. We have put together a robust budget which will be difficult to implement but we accept the challenges, we take onboard the challenges and we will meet the challenges.

My Lord Mayor, what is proposed over here is a recipe for despair, redundancy for our staff, no vision, no strategy, no leadership, no hope. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Carter. I now call upon Councillor Richard Lewis, who would like to take up his right to speak.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I feel that the budget speeches from the administration have been very much a game of two halves. We had the very downbeat approach of Richard Brett and then we had Andrew, doing his usual stuff where he is happiest, with the personal invective but very low on actual real content.

There we were, the voodoo economics. It is the voodoo statistics of Andrew Carter. We stand by our figures about settlements. All you did was to go off into some smokescreen about comparisons with other cities. We say and we will stick by our figures that we have had worse settlements many times before under your Government and, I am sure, if we were to end up with your Government again we will have far worse figures than we had this year and you know it and you admitted it yourself.

Let us get back to Richard. He starts off with this huge concern about unemployment and it is all Gordon's fault and it is all Gordon's Ministers' fault. Fair enough, you have got a problem, you are concerned about unemployment – why are you not going to do something about it then? Why have we got training in our budget? Because we are concerned. Training goes with getting people back into employment and you just ignore it. All you do is wring your hands and say, "Oh, it is terrible isn't it? Unemployment. Blame Gordon." Just not good enough. People rely on us, you said. If people rely on you they are going to wait a long time, aren't they? (*hear, hear*)

Right, as I say, training is a key part of our amendment. You trumpeted all the way through your speech your capital programme. Isn't it wonderful – leisure

centres, schools, housing PFI. Andrew did as well, did he not, picked up on those. Lifetime homes, children's centres, even Playbuilder. What have they all got in common? Labour Government funding and you certainly will not get that from your lot if you take control after the General Election. All Labour Government.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: That is because he's bankrupted the country.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: That training and those apprenticeships that you were talking about, Andrew, come through those schemes, those Government schemes. Let us have less of your hypocrisy.

If Richard is right and he is not resting on his laurels, I wonder whose laurels he is resting on because certainly all he was saying, all he was praising was about what the Government has done and he needs to be brave enough to admit it.

Just about Children's Services. Richard talks about the increasing demand for Children's Services. Up to a point that is true but I went back and we have all got memories, I went back to Andrew Carter's speech from 2005 on the budget where he said he put Social Services and Children's Service and Adult Services on a firm basis and foundation for the future. Let us have a look at that firm foundation and basis because it ain't there, is it? If it were there we would not be putting in the money we are putting in this year and you know it.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Overspent by millions.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Why? Why wouldn't we?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Work it out for yourself. If you had not made such a mess of the structure the whole set up would not be in such a bloody mess as it is now.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Let us get on to Andrew, talking as usual about---

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Afraid of losing your job, Richard?

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: No I am not worried, Andrew, at all. I think you should be worried. You should be worried and you should look over there. Look over there – Gerry Harper. I would be worried if I were you lot. You should all think about the result that we had. *(Applause)*

What we got from you as always, Andrew, attack on Peter Gruen, personal attack. We know it, it is all you ever do. Then we got all this nonsense about we would be making people redundant. Again, I think the staff of this Council will look at your record and it was not us who attacked the wages of the binworkers and the rest of the staff only a few months ago. People have got longer memories and they remember that and that was one factor you should have been out in that election because that is what people were saying on the doorstep. Who got us into that mess with the bins?

Just one little comment about Councillor Finnigan, and I just cannot resist it. He was talking about we need a formula independent of any Government's ability to stuff cash into the pockets of its political buddies. Robert, who gets 18 grand as a member of the Exec Board? Where does it come from? From you lot to support you. Come on, shame on you. I am more than happy *(interruption)* and we are prepared to do the job of putting an amendment forward. *(Interruption)* More than happy.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: You get the same amount as I do. You are a hypocrite.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: We play a role, Robert. What do you do? All you ever do is back this lot up. Lord Mayor, I am happy to second our budget amendment. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Lewis. When we have calmed down I will call on Councillor Alison Lowe to comment.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: How do I follow that one then? I am speaking in support of Councillor Keith Wakefield's amendment so the Labour Group's budget amendment seeks, amongst other things, to demonstrate our commitment to our workforce, giving particular attention to the lowest paid workers in this Council. We are concerned, however, that this administration does not share our view of our workforce as our most valuable asset and this has been evidenced time and again by the administration over the last year.

My figures were that we lost a thousand jobs last year and in the plans for this year but Councillor Brett kindly told us that we had actually lost 1,600 staff in the last twelve months and he said that this is not catastrophic. I think that is a shameful thing to say, especially to those staff who have lost their jobs. It is catastrophic to them and to their families and you ought to apologise for that comment.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: They did not lose them, they were not sacked.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: We lost 650 full-time equivalents.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: English grammar.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Maybe you would like to go under the same terms as those 650 staff went last year. We would all like to see that happen, I am sure.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: He is going in May anyway.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Thank God. So, £650 went last year, another 350 are planned for this year and when we talked about looking at the Regeneration staff we were, of course, talking about redeployment, not redundancies.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He knows that.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Obviously you can talk about what happened six years ago when we were in a completely different economic environment. We are now in the environment that we are in and having one manager to three staff is not acceptable under today's environment and I think you should look again at that issue.

As if the situation that we are facing in the Council is not bad enough, this administration, having agreed a nine-month redundancy notice period only last year, you are now trying to overturn that agreement and reduce the period to just three months. Why agree one thing last year if you never intended to uphold that agreement? Can you not keep your word, or did you not do your maths properly in the first place so that is why you are having to renege on an agreement that you made.

You are trying to cut the pay of mental health support workers by thousands of pounds whilst also creating a management structure which robs staff – mainly women, I might add – of any chance of advancement. This staff is about creating

opportunity but not if you work for Leeds City Council, it appears. Did you learn nothing from the bin strike? There again, some of our lowest paid workers were forced into industrial action and lost eleven weeks' pay during their fight to keep a living wage. That was not just money lost from our workers, our staff; it was also money lost, stolen some may say, from the Leeds economy. Local businesses and local high streets all suffered as a result of this administration's failure to deliver a solution, even though you knew that that solution was coming months and months and months, years in fact, before it actually was needed.

There are too many examples of this administration's total disregard for workers in this Council. Day centre staff not consulted about closures despite what you say, social workers overworked and then facing condemnation because of the inadequate leadership of the Children's Directorate. It was not their fault that we got a terrible Ofsted - it was yours. You condemn them to allegations of incompetence when actually we know where those allegations, those facts, should fit and it is with the Members opposite.

As a consequence of that failure to lead, children were put at risk and others, hundreds of others, were at risk of harm. Now you are seeking to close city centre offices via a workplace change programme which does not fully take into account the health and wellbeing of staff. Though we welcome proposals to reduce the number of city centre offices, this must be subject to proper consultation with staff and trade unions, not something that you have a great track record in.

We pledge to make a 1% pay increase to staff earning spinal column point 13 or less. That would make a huge difference to all our lowest paid workers. We pledge to continue to lobby for a fair wage in this Council. We pledge to keep the redundancy notice period to at least six months and we pledge to have timely, full and thorough negotiations with staff and trade unions on matters which impact on jobs, on the welfare of the workforce and which take account of their views. Finally, we promise to put the interest of the people of Leeds at the centre of all our decision making so that their needs and wellbeing come first, not last as they do under this current administration. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I now call on Councillor David Blackburn to comment.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. You have no need to worry, I am not going to be a long time but first of all and seriously, I want to speak here in a non-partisan way. Roseville has come up and I have got to say I welcome the Labour Group's support and what they want to do with training for the disabled, but let us keep politics out of this because the fact is Roseville Advisory Group is five Members - one from each party - and first under Don Wilson's Chair and then under my Chair, what we have tried to do is, we have tried to keep it non-political because we all in principle support that.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Well said, David.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: The problem with Roseville dates well before this administration. We are all at fault for where we have got, we are all at fault for that result there and what we have got to do, we have got to do something about it and I welcome Keith's comments and other comments regarding that matter of support, because we have to do something about it but I do not believe it is helped by bringing party politics into it. It is something that this Council should be doing as a total.

I am going to be partisan now. I am going to say I feel a bit upset. Previous Green Party budgets that I have put, when we have come with the thorny subjects of

cutting Members' allowances, which we seem to often propose, I have been and shouted at and our new Leader down here you seem to have treated very well, so I have got to say I am upset!

Anyway, I think the greatest truth of today came from Councillor Finnigan down there when he talked about the cake is not big enough and that is the truth and everybody I have talked to privately has said the same thing. They might not have done in the Chamber but privately they have said the same thing. What we are doing with any of these budget amendments, we are tinkering round the edges.

Our budget amendment seeks to do certain things which are fully priced out and we have thought of ways that they can be funded. What I will say is the Labour Group while in their amendment there is lots there that we support, we are not satisfied with how it is funded. What I would call on the Labour Group, if they want to do some of the things we want to do, support our motion. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blackburn. I now call on Councillor Richard Brett to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do not intend to take my full time because we could get into detail very quickly. I suspect, Councillor Lowe, the difference in the figures is whether you include Education Leeds – 1600 staff to reinstate at only £10,000 per annum, and that is not a salary that we would be happy with, is £16m a year. We need to be in the real world.

I want to reinforce what Andrew has already said, that actually this is a tinkering budget from Keith at the edges. He has taken a relatively small amount, a million and a half, out of a £2b spend. If that is the small amount that he disagrees with us, it is not far off margin of error stuff. I could spend a long time going into the detail about why the places that he thinks you could get money are impossible but I just want to refer, before I sit down, to Lord Mandelson, who apparently has said today, "We won't tolerate further job losses." He has actually talked about Leeds but as far as I can see as reported in the press release in front of me, he has not said anything about any extra money.

Despite my remarks earlier I would be delighted – and I know on our side we would be delighted – to have some extra money, even if it was one-off money. We would certainly look at any extra way of improving the lot of the people of Leeds.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Vote for our amendment.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: If there is a choice and it is the Government's choice between giving Councils money which is permanent funding in grants and one-off grants, we would obviously prefer the former, but nobody I think should suggest that we are not in favour of taking money from whatever source and I accept some of the things that have been said on the other side, because clearly a lot of the money that comes to Leeds comes from Government and we are not disunited, it would appear, about many of the ways in which it is spent, whether it is schools or housing, so with those few remarks, Lord Mayor, I would like to say that on our side we are happy with the budget that we have got and I would urge all Members to support it. Thank you.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor Brett. We now come to the vote.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Can we have a recorded vote for the amendment of Councillor Wakefield.

THE LORD MAYOR: A recorded vote.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Seconded.

*(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment
in the name of Councillor Wakefield)*

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: You lost the debate; why shouldn't you lose the vote? *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: You missed lots of the debate, Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You lost the main one, the vote. You lost the vote out there, Les, the by-election, never mind in here.

THE LORD MAYOR: The vote is concluded now and can I inform you that those present were 97, "Yes" 43; abstentions 3, "No" 51. This amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield is LOST.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Well done, Linda, you voted the right way.

THE LORD MAYOR: We will now take the vote on the second amendment in the name of Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Recorded vote, please.

*(A recorded vote was taken on the amendment
in the name of Councillor A Blackburn)*

THE LORD MAYOR: The result is there were 71 people present, for 3; abstentions 1; and those against were 50. The amendment in the name of Councillor Ann Blackburn is LOST.

We now come to the substantive motion, which is the original motion put forward by Councillor Richard Brett. Voting now on the original motion. Are we wanting a show of hands?

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: Recorded vote, please.

(A recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion)

THE LORD MAYOR: People present, the numbers were 55, "Yes" 50; abstentions 3 and "No" 1, so therefore the original motion put by Councillor Richard Brett is won. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: We carry on now with the agenda and we need to move back to page 2 and we shall be carrying on until 4.45 ready for wind-up. Back to page 2, please.

ITEM 5 – REPORTS

(a)

THE LORD MAYOR: I am now calling on Councillor Sue Bentley on item number 5 on the agenda (a).

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move in terms of the Notice.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for a vote, please. Show of hands. All in favour? This is PASSED.

(b)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Bentley again, (b).

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: I move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for the vote, a show of hands please. This is PASSED.

(c)

THE LORD MAYOR: I am coming now to call for Councillor J L Carter.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: I move, my Lord Mayor, in terms of the Notice.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I have been informed that I need to have a show of hands for, against, any abstentions? This is PASSED.

ITEM 6 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

THE LORD MAYOR: Item number 6 on the agenda, I call on Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Move in terms of the Notice, my Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for the vote on matters listed as (a) in the green paper. Could I have a vote on that? *(A vote was taken)* This is CARRIED.

Moving now we are calling for the vote on (b) on page 4 at the top. *(A vote was taken)* This is PASSED.

I will call now for a vote on the matter listed as (c) just below (b). *(A vote was taken)* This is PASSED.

ITEM 7 – MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: I have Item 7 now, and call upon Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I move, my Lord Mayor, in terms of the Notice.

COUNCILLOR BENTLEY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: We are moving on now to comments on the Minutes and I call on Councillor Hamilton, please.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor, I would like to comment on page 67 Minute 194 and in particular I would like to comment on the issue of the Kirkstall Road Waste Transfer Site.

This was referred to at the last Council meeting where, of course, Labour over the last few months have made great play of this issue claiming that we were going to have this waste transfer site in Kirkstall when it was made clear that no final decision had been made and that position was made clear over several months and yet Labour continued to claim this was a done deal. That sort of scaremongering really I think is completely unacceptable on an issue of this nature.

I think it is fairly clear now that the Labour Party, that their fox has been shot on this. I think they were hoping this would be running right until the election when, in fact, a decision has been made now that we do not need one of these waste transfer sites and therefore there is nothing for them to campaign on that particular issue. If they do, it is completely unacceptable.

Of course, the particular concern that I had was in relation to the Labour PPC for Leeds West, Rachel Reeves.

COUNCILLOR: Who?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Rachel Reeves. I will say it several times because I think the Evening Post might well be interested in this.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: The one who stabbed Alison in the back.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Rachel Reeves, of course, the Labour PPC for Leeds West and also a governor at the local primary school and it is clear from a number of press cuttings and from activities at our Area Committee that she sought to use her position on that governing body to make political points.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: No, to protect the children from the smell and the flies.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: To exploit governing bodies and to exploit primary schools and exploit kids for political purposes and that is exactly what she did.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Just an honest person.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Exploited children, Bernard.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: In fact, Bernard, you might want to listen to this because Education Leeds in fact is so concerned about this particular issue and the fact that governing bodies can be exploited in this way against their wishes and without their permission, that they are now issuing firm instructions to all governing bodies and all schools that it is completely inappropriate for governing bodies to have

any links with political parties, so the instance that I described last time, the website, the link from a governing body, the link from a PTA to a political party website is inappropriate and should no longer happen.

Indeed, I understand that Chris Edwards himself is meeting Rachel Reeves tomorrow morning to make it clear that this sort of behaviour is unacceptable. I am pleased to say that---

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Is that a fact? Is that a fact?

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Yes, it is. Yes, it is.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Mr Edwards is behind you and we will need to know.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: It is a fact.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: The issue is of some significance.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: It is fact. I think this has all finished up quite well, the thing is not going ahead, which I think suits a lot of people and it sounds to me like the PPC and other people who will seek to do this in future will think twice because it is absolutely inappropriate.

Lord Mayor, we will continue as an administration to improve and enhance the way that we deal with our waste in this city. We have a very good record over the last few years – in fact I notice that when we took control recycling was at 14%. Who was the Executive Board member responsible then? Was it Gerry Harper? Gerry Harper, I think. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Mr 14%.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Lord Mayor, it was indeed Gerry Harper and, just to say the rate was 14% and now it is 30% and rising – a huge improvement compared with the bad old days of Labour control. Lord Mayor, we will continue to push forward as positive strategy on recycling that will see recycling increase throughout the city but we will do so, Lord Mayor, by telling the truth about these issues and not peddling lies, Mick, not peddling lies and innuendos.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I will be speaking in a minute.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: I look forward to that.

COUNCILLOR: See you on Monday at the meeting.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: We will do so by telling the truth, not peddling lies, smears and innuendos like the party opposite. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on the same Minute, page 67 Minute 194 in relation to the residual waste treatment PFI project. Speaking to draw Members of Council attention to an extensive report and a series of quotations in the Yorkshire Post newspaper on 16 February.

The content of the report, which was related on page 1 and page 4, relates to the views of the Minister for the Environment, the Member of Parliament for part of the East Leeds area and I think those comments should be more widely known, not

only amongst Members of Council but amongst residents of the city, particularly those residents in the eastern part of the city.

Mr Benn was giving his official views as the Government Minister in charge of Waste Disposal and the article went on at some length about the process and about the challenges we all face in dealing with waste. Mr Benn acknowledged – and I quote now on the third column of page 1 in his article – that more waste plants would indeed be required. He gave his backing to new technologies and, more controversially, to a wave of new waste incinerators.

Lord Mayor, I am sorry to use that dirty word here because it is usually just the prerogative of Councillor Lyons but Councillor Lyons's own Minister has used that word so I think we can acknowledge it is now in the public arena and that we may all comment on it.

On page 4, for those people who were interested in reading one of the details of what Mr Benn had to say, he explained that another key pillar of Government is to shift away from landfill and to have an increased reliance on large waste incinerators – not little ones on a trolley, large ones – which would generate – there is an upside to it – these incinerators that Mr Benn is in favour of, and presumably the rest of the Labour Government, these incinerators would generate useful heat and electricity known as energy from waste. I think that is a phrase we have heard before in this Chamber.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: That has shot the Labour Party's proposal.

COUNCILLOR SMITH: They have asked for more education and training. They are getting it now! *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: In the sixth column mention was made of incinerators being controversial but here Mr Benn was able to calm all our fears and I hope put Councillor Lyons's mind at rest because Mr Benn went on to say that emissions on such incinerators were very "strict" and he would happily live next door to one.

Again, Councillor Lyons and I were at the meeting with Holton Moor residents last night and I am sure that their concern, which we both shared...

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Residents...

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: The residents from Osmanthorpe and Holton Moor were equally concerned, as are all three local Councillors, about any downside, any bad effects of their energy from waste plans, but we have got the Minister's assurance there that there is no problem and I only hope he is right.

As far as the Council's involvement, Councillor Lyons and some of the Labour leaflets in recent times, going back to the by-election last April, some of the leaflets that were issued last March and more recently...

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Did you get that one today?

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: ...have highlighted the problems of waste disposal and the use of these waste residual plants but over the last year myself and other colleagues have been pleased to see the increased consultation, the contact with residents by post, at meetings, at briefings. A lot of the issues have been addressed. There are still some concerns – planning, disposal of the ash, transport and so on – but they have all been taken on board and the presentation that both

Councillor Lyons and I attended last night with local residents did address, the officers were able to address some of those problems and indicate that concerns are being taken on board, and in East Leeds we will be able to take advantage of the new road links, particularly the East Leeds link road...

COUNCILLOR GRAHAME: Tell them that in East Leeds.

COUNCILLOR SCHOFIELD: ...which will take lorries away from residential areas, a link road that was only progressed thanks to the work of this Council after the Government had let us down for many years in not progressing that scheme and also the process through consultation by which the sites have been narrowed down to two, one of which, hopefully, will be the one that causes least concern because it will be the furthest away from the residents of not particularly Temple Newsam ward alone but people in the rest of East Leeds and the residents of Burmantofts ward, where the two final sites are actually located.

Councillor Andrew Carter gave a pledge some years ago that any waste disposal plant would not be in Temple Newsam ward and that pledge has been kept. Thank you. (*Applause*).

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I have stood up in this Chamber at every meeting and they have laughed and carried on and said - you have told me I will not use the word "lies" because you might it against me, but you have not told me the truth. What you said when I mentioned incinerators, "We do not prefer incinerators, it is not going to be an incinerator." Look at the verbatim going back. Why do you think I stood up at every meeting, so that we are quite clear that when I stood up today that you would have listened to what I have said.

What I was arguing about – if you cannot hear I will speak a bit louder, Les – if the people of the area – and what are we talking about here? We are talking about an incinerator that has been planned for over a year to burn the waste of all Leeds and some other cities because you have admitted...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Rubbish.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You have admitted to a percentage coming from other cities. Richard Brett said it in this Council Chamber, we will be burning other people's rubbish, so we will carry on. What we are talking about now is when he says he has kept his promise it would not be in the Temple Newsam ward. Do you know how close it is? Two hundred yards from the nearest house in Temple Newsam ward. How far is it to the nearest house in Burmantofts ward? A quarter of a mile. Do not come a load of codswallop – I am not going to swear because (*inaudible*) will not allow it and the Lord Mayor certainly would not.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You will be up in front of Standards.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You told me meeting after meeting after meeting there was not going to be an incinerator. You did not know how to spell the word. It was going to be all kinds of things. It was not going to be stuff that you threw in a fire that comes up from out of chimney. That was not going to be. What you did say was that there were 2,000 sites and, lo and behold, it got to four of them and where do you think four of them were? Within a quarter of a mile of a residential area in Temple Newsam ward, all the four, without any consultation whatsoever of where those sites should be.

I remember when they took over they said "consultation, consultation, consultation". They did not say at the end of it, "We will not do consultation", which

they have not. David Schofield talks about going to meetings and getting what we want. We have been to meeting after meeting after meeting with the people and what happens? Somebody comes and tells you what has either happened or going to happen. No planning officers at the meeting, no highways officers at the meeting, nobody from the chemical industries to tell you what burn it is that is going to come out of the chimney. None of the fears of the people of East Leeds whatsoever has been addressed. What we are getting now, we are getting more and more from the seats opposite of saying oh, we are all right, we will talk about Hilary Benn. I will ask the question, do you agree with Hilary Benn?

COUNCILLOR: Yes.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: You agree with Hilary Benn?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Do you? Do you?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Will Councillor Hyde and Councillor Schofield and the rest of the Burmantofts and Richmond Hill Councillors say that they agree with an incinerator where it is going to be. I want you at this meeting (*interruption*). No, listen, I have listened to you with all your codswallop all afternoon. I am telling you now, I am challenging the Members from Burmantofts, Richmond Hill and Temple Newsam to come out and say do you agree with the incinerator at either of those two sites. You can hang your heads and you can talk a load of nonsense but what you have got to do when you talk about my leaflet is I tell the truth on mine (*interruption*) so let's go.

We are deafened with silence from them but don't you worry, I will let the people know of East Leeds what the Councillors are saying. You should grin, Councillor Brett, because the people of Burmantofts have been asking me what you think about the matter and I am asking you now, tell them. Tell them that you are going to put it – yes, you as well, you put it there. I do not think it should be there. I do not think it should be 200 yards from a house anywhere in the country, never mind anywhere in Temple Newsome, so bear in mind – bear in mind – when you are all laughing and kidding all the way through the year what it has come up with. I told you what it was going to be and I will tell you where it is going to finish up, and it is going to finish up as an incinerator and you will lose seats in May because of this because you are not prepared to listen to me or the people of East Leeds. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on Minute 194 on page 67, which is the residual waste treatment plant.

I have to say, I welcome Councillor Schofield's conversion – and it is a late conversion but a welcome one – to consultation. It is just a shame he and his administration did not consult before, did not consult any earlier than at a stage where we have got only two options – both of them incinerators and both of them less than 500 yards apart in the Aire Valley. I do not call that consultation; I call it imposing an incinerator on people in East Leeds without asking a single question, without asking people what they want, without doing it.

It has been quite clear that this administration has been absolutely hell bent on building an incinerator in East Leeds for the last four years. They have not been interested in listening to anybody, not been interested. Martin, I listened to you carefully and quietly earlier. Show me a bit of respect that I showed you.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Earn it.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Going back to November 2006, just to illustrate this administration's determination to push through an incinerator at all costs, former Councillor David Morton – I think we can say who was widely respected on all sides of this Council Chamber – former Councillor Morton said on his blog in November 2006, "The Liberal Democrat led administration of Leeds City Council successfully pushed through its plans for an incinerator." This goes to show you have never been interested in listening to anybody, whether it is parties in this Council Chamber or the people of East Leeds who you are imposing this incinerator on.

Councillor David Blackburn wisely – wisely – spotted in May 2007 that your policy was nothing but an incinerator, so how come that nobody else in this administration has been prepared to admit until now that what you are trying to build is an incinerator in East Leeds?

Councillor Brett, Councillor Schofield nicely dropped him in it because he has admitted that it is going to be dumped in your ward. Councillor Brett, you said on 31 October 2007, "I am not voting for an incinerator". Quite how you square that pledge with your vote on Executive Board for this paper I do not know but we will leave that up to the people of Burmantofts and Richmond Hill to decide whether you kept your pledge not to build an incinerator or whether you have just voted to build one in this ward.

Also, as the paper refers to the refuse collection service, I am going to turn to some more broken promises from this administration. People in Rothwell will soon be benefiting from a food waste pilot service which will see their weekly black bin collection cut to a fortnightly collection. I do not know whether people will see that in Councillor Brett's mantra as improvement or a cut but they will certainly have their black bins collected less. I think that sits quite uncomfortably with Councillor Carter's statement that food waste will be additional to not instead of a weekly collection. He said that less than a year ago and I wonder why on earth he has changed his position since then and I wonder why on earth he has never come to this Council Chamber to explain his change of position.

Once again it just goes to demonstrate this administration says one thing and does another. We cannot get a straight answer from them.

On the bin strike, we have still not got a final figure for the cost of the bin strike. We have had two or three contradictory figures but we have still not had a final figures. We have still not had sight of the independent expert's report selectively quoted in the press but never revealed in full to anybody in this Council Chamber or the wider public.

This just goes to show that at the heart of this administration is a culture of secrecy, a culture of cover up and a culture of not telling people what is actually happening.

Looking to the future of the bin service, can we have a straight answer on whether they are going to privatise it? I notice that in the Yorkshire Post back in September the Chair of the Leeds West Liberal Democrats said, "The Council will conclude that competitive tendering for the refuse service is a desirable option." Is it still a desirable option? I have never heard of this Mick Taylor, Chair of Leeds West Liberal Democrats. I do not know if anybody else in this Councillor Chamber, Councillor Harper, has, but what has happened to the Lib Dems threat of privatisation of further threats of cuts in the services? Will we at last have some straight answers from this administration, Lord Mayor? *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I just want to say a few words about the actual Minute whereas everyone else has been talking about something completely different.

I start off by accusing Councillor Hamilton quite simply of being a sheer hypocrite in this matter. When we raised the problems that we saw about the waste transfer centre in Kirkstall, we were quite reasonable and moderate, simply saying we know there was a plague of flies before, we know there was noise, we know there was excessive traffic, we knew all the problems about the smells...

COUNCILLOR: Why did you build it then?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: They think it's funny, Bernard.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: ...and this we have put forward quite reasonably and – just wait a minute, let me deal with them because they are not very difficult to deal with, Mike, they are very simple souls. You accused us one in turn, four of you – and I am pleased to say that Ben did not get up and take his chance this time because he had the honesty to remain seated but when you talk about Rachel Reeves being involved, think of the hypocrisy of their group who put a woman up who was a Leader of the Council in somewhere down in Southend or Wiltshire, she was the actual Leader of that Council standing as a Labour (*sic*) activist in Kirkstall and you did nothing about it.

COUNCILLOR: Liberal.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: A Liberal, Lib Dem, sorry. The next year she did the same thing. She was not Leader of the Council down in Wiltshire because they had moved her because she was not any good but she was still a Councillor drawing presumably the Council expenses.

The third time she stood as a Labour (*sic*) activist she had moved north a bit – a Liberal Dem activist – Liberal, I am getting my correction from this side. To actually have a candidate who came forward like that, you attack Rachel Reeves for being as a governor defending the children in that school along with the Chairman of the governors, along with all the children, then in fact you are being dishonest.

The fact of the matter is you are determined to force this scheme, this transfer scheme, on Kirkstall, bringing all the rubbish from the north down below. That was your aim, that was what you were defending and the fact it has been withdrawn was not because of your good sense, because you have not any; it was because the people who are bidding to build these big incinerators said it was not cost effective – something we said years ago when we said take the rubbish straight there, do not bring it to Kirkstall and then disperse it.

They saw it. You did not because, in fact, you have been obtuse about the whole business but it is part of your incompetence.

Talking about the budget earlier, this is relevant to the whole issue. In March 2009 you wrote off £176,978. In May 2009 you wrote off £895,123. In May 2009 you wrote off £805,000. Again in May, £1.178m you wrote off. In June 2009 you wrote off £540,000. In June 2009, the same month, you wrote off £148,874. June 2009, £354,000. Again in that same month £483,000. These are all sums of money written off bit by bit. Bit by bit you sneak them out and no-one notices but there they are. I have got a report for each one of these. These are sums of money written off and authority being given to write them off. £21,000 written off in June. In December 2009 £155,000.

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Are you talking about rent arrears?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: If you have any doubts about that I will prove it. £228,000. £109,000 claimed on the four editions of the paper no-one reads. £100,000 on reconstruction of the Chelsea Flower Show. I could go on. These are examples of the incompetence which the Waste Transfer Centre was an example of.

I am glad it has gone but you will not be in any doubt that we shall be chasing this up locally with the people and if there is any attack on Rachel Reeves, that attack will be most strongly defended. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Who is Rachel Reeves? I have never heard of her.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Atha. I now call upon Councillor Gerry Harper. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARPER: Lord Mayor, I see there are a few new faces over here so I will just introduce myself. I am the Labour Councillor for Hyde Park. I am proud to be so.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Maiden speech.

COUNCILLOR HARPER: Regarding the recycling increased charges, I believe that more recycling sites are needed in the city, on top of the seven major sites which were opened in 2004 when Labour were in charge and I was the Executive Board Member. I remember rightly so at the time the Lib Dems actually complained and criticised the spend that we did on that and voted against that budget, so do not give me any lessons on increasing charges, increasing recycling.

COUNCILLOR HARKER: Mr 14%, this is.

COUNCILLOR HARPER: Not everybody in the city plays their part in dealing with their waste responsibly. There are many major problems in a number of wards in the city and the problems of littering were highlighted to me in the by-election in Hyde Park. Following the farcical bin strike which, in my view, was an all-out attack on our public service workers, the Hyde Park ward was left very badly affected and at times looked like a terrible rubbish tip. This must not be allowed to happen again.

Councillor Richard Lewis is absolutely right – you should be afraid, very afraid, because the people in this city and the people in Hyde Park were absolutely furious at this administration for their handling of this dispute. (*hear, hear*)

Then there is the illegal Woodhouse barbecuing, all the damage that has been caused on there with the park being left in a shocking state with disposable barbecues...

COUNCILLOR PRYKE: Relevance?

COUNCILLOR HARPER: ...and numbers of scorched earth being left, rubbish strewn everywhere, all because the Council will not enforce the by-laws which are there to do that job. Instead they do nothing – absolutely nothing.

Other authorities deal with these problems and enforce them but not this coalition. The Lib Dem candidate in the by-election said, "I will endeavour to clean up the area if elected." Who has been in control for the last six years? Why has it been left to get in such a state?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: She has been one of them.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: No, you are in charge, you get paid.

COUNCILLOR HARPER: We need action and we need action now to deal with these problems.

I intend, as the Hyde Park Ward Councillor, Labour Councillor, to do everything I can to resolve these problems and I hope that Council agrees with me that urgent action needs taking and needs taking now. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Harper. I now call on Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do not think anybody will be surprised – I should say page 67 again, Minute 194 – that I stand up today to say that we are talking about incinerators. The two bids that are left, both incinerators. Obviously as the Green Party Leader on this Council and, of course, Green Party activist, I cannot go along with having an incinerator in Leeds *(hear, hear)* or anywhere, really. I have heard from my colleagues in other parts of the country where similar procurement has been going on that at the end of the day they have come out with incinerators – despite what has happened they have come out with incinerators as well, so there tends to be a feeling in my party that there is some sort of conspiracy going on somewhere in the country as a whole. I do not know why, it just seems to be that there seem to be a lot of things going on and incinerators come out at the end of the day at the end of it.

We have got the bids obviously still ongoing but both of them, both incinerators. I must say, I am very disappointed because I had hoped that of the two that were left there would be an alternative technology in there, but there we are, obviously the two bids, incinerators. No way that we can agree with that. Totally against incineration, so regardless of what bid, if it is an incinerator the Green Party say no. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR MARJORAM: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Again, Lord Mayor, I was not intending to speak but I want to pick up on Councillor Hamilton's remarks about the Parliamentary candidate for Leeds West and I too raised the matter with Chris Edwards some weeks ago of the link to her political website via a school website.

I really think it is quite outrageous that she would employ children as a prop in her political campaign.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, what Minute?

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Same as you spoke on, Bernard.

COUNCILLOR MARJORAM: The same one, Councillor Atha, that you spoke on. For the avoidance of doubt it is page 67 Minute 194.

THE LORD MAYOR: Just one moment. Can I just stop you a minute? Can you just clarify which Minute you are speaking on?

COUNCILLOR MARJORAM: I am speaking on page 67 Minute 194 and shortly I will be referring to the Evanston Road Transfer Station. If Councillor Atha

had had the courtesy to let me finish my sentence, I would have said it in the same breath, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we just stop it, please? Will you just be quiet for a minute? We will start again. Will you please tell me what Minute and page you are speaking on and carry on after that? Thank you.

COUNCILLOR MARJORAM: My Lord Mayor, thank you. For the avoidance of doubt and for Councillor Atha, who is clearly not paying attention, it is the same Minute as him, page 67 Minute 194.

Before I turn to the siting of the Evanston Road Transfer Station, as it was proposed at the time, I was alighting briefly on the issue of Rachel Reeves employing children as a political prop. It is frankly shameful (*interruption*) that a Parliamentary candidate of any party in her capacity as a school governor would employ children in a protest with the sole intent of scaring people. Frankly the people of Leeds West, in particular the children of Kirkstall Valley Primary School, deserve an apology.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: From you. From you.

COUNCILLOR MARJORAM: With regard to the Evanston Road Transfer Station, Members, including some Members on the other side of the Chamber, will recall that at Scrutiny Board I also raised some concerns about the degree of consultation regarding the siting of the transfer station and I am very pleased that the developers have subsequently taking notice, my Lord Mayor. I am looking forward to the day when the residual waste treatment facility this city is functioning and operational because the people of this city should know that Labour's policy is to continue tipping it in the ground, poisoning our water courses (*interruption*) releasing methane gas, which is significantly more harmful than carbon dioxide and it is a disgrace.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: You do not know what you are talking about. It is not our policy at all.

COUNCILLOR MARJORAM: It comes as no surprise that the Members of a party that will take the country to war on a lie will lie about a waste treatment plant and the people of this city should know, as they come to election time, that scaremongering should not work and they should reject Labour at this election for the lies and scaremongering that they told on this and so many other issues. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I now call on Councillor Andrew Carter to exercise right of final reply.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Can I just begin by correcting a completely misleading statement? I think it came from Councillor Lewis, am I correct, but certainly somebody over there. I can tell you that this week there will be two bin collections in Rothwell and next week there will be three bin collections in Rothwell, so if you are going to make these sort of statements, please get them right.

Let us just deal, if I may with this issue of incineration. I have to say I cannot think really Councillor Ann Blackburn throwing in a conspiracy theory is very helpful at all. It really is, the argument about how we dispose of waste, residual waste, rubbish of all sorts is a very serious one for this country and for this city and to start to muddy the waters by suggesting there is some peculiar form of conspiracy going on, no doubt next we will have flying saucers coming down and removing the waste

in a UFO. I really do not think it helps to generate anything other than a lot of hot air, if I may say so.

I do just want to get on to this issue of Evanston Avenue. It was made extremely clear during the discussions we have had about the waste procurement process that Evanston Avenue was always something that we wanted to see out of the project and we were all extremely pleased when the business case stacked up to the extent – I am careful what I am saying here – that it was not necessary.

Can I just remind you, Councillor Atha, under whose Council control was the Evanston Avenue facility put in place? It was yours.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: If it was wrong then would it be wrong now then?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Why if you did not like it over 24 years in your control did you not close it? Let me go a stage further. It also is absolutely no use trying to defend the indefensible and I thought the use of young children from a school in that protest was frankly beyond the pale and also, you know, sometimes when you start to indulge in these rapier like thrusts, I am just reminded of what somebody said about another Labour politician. I really hope you are not dripping pure poison.

My Lord Mayor, the other final point is, Councillor Lyons, it is up to you and Councillor Lewis and Councillor Wakefield to say whether you agree with your Secretary of State, Hilary Benn, when he says, "I think the public's understanding of the health impact lags behind reality. I think we all have a responsibility to say, 'Look, this is another form of generating renewable energy in these circumstances.'" Do you agree with your Secretary of State, the Member of Parliament for the area concerned, who clearly is in support of energy from waste – in your language incineration? Yes or no? *(interruption)*

Furthermore, my Lord Mayor, do you agree with Gordon Brown's national policy of introducing compulsorily – compulsorily – no local debate, no decision made locally, fortnightly bin collections, because that is your party's policy nationally, Councillor Lewis. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you very much, Councillor Carter. We are moving to the vote. It is a vote on the motion to receive the minutes. *(A vote was taken)* This is CARRIED.

It is now time for tea. The people in the balcony are all welcome in the Banqueting Suite for tea.

(Council adjourned for a short time)

ITEM 8 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – PROTECTION OF GREENFIELD AND GREENBELT LAND AND PLAYING FIELDS IN LEEDS

THE LORD MAYOR: Fellow Councillors, we are going to begin this part of the meeting, we have only one White Paper and I would like to call on Councillor Andrew Carter, please.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I will be relatively brief in connection with this White Paper and can I say that I am very grateful that I think all Members of Council are going to be supporting this White Paper. Indeed, go would go so far as to say I have never been lobbied so much by Members of another

political party to actually table a White Paper as I have in connection with this. I wonder why, my Lord Mayor?

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Don't spoil it.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You may well say "Don't spoil it". Of course, we entirely understand why but it is a serious issue because over this past twelve years – and I have no doubt other people would like to dispute this but it is a fact that over this last twelve years – playing fields, informal and formal, have been lost at an ever-increasing rate despite, I have to say, Government denials and despite some extremely odd statistics which actually relate to formal, full-size playing pitches and handily disregard informal playing pitches, short-size pitches which are extremely useful in our local communities, and I will come back to that.

We also have the issue of garden grabbing and I was astonished, I have to say, that the Housing Minister, John Healey, put his completely misleading letter in the Yorkshire Post a week or so ago where he claimed that planning authorities already have the necessary power to stop garden grabbing. I am sorry, Mr Healey, that is wrong and, furthermore, I think you know it is wrong because it was in 2000 that his former boss in another life, the Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for the Department concerned, issued revised planning guidance which has resulted in Local Authorities not being able to, in many cases – not all, I accept, but in many cases – stopping development in gardens on sites that we would have otherwise described as backland. Up to the recession starting a hundred houses a day were built on such pieces of land.

If the Housing Minister is in ignorance of that then he should not be, and he should not be in the job he is supposed to be doing. If he knew it, then he should not write to the newspapers denying it; it is as simple as that. Needless to say, I shall be taking that matter up with him and, indeed, I have already done so.

Then there comes the issue of the housing numbers that were required on the City of Leeds. Members need to remember that Leeds was one of the good guys. We consistently over-delivered on the previous RSS target. You may say some of that was because of the over-development of flats in the centre of Leeds, and I remind the party opposite that started under their control and continued under ours and I think we all accept there has been an over-development of flats in the centre of Leeds, although the vacancy rate has been singularly distorted which has not been helpful to the city, particularly when it comes, again, from a Government Minister, Yvette Cooper.

Nevertheless, we over-delivered to some tune. I think our target was about 1,700 houses a year and we were delivering 2,200, 2,300 – one year it got up towards 3,000.

Then we had the RSS and the Government, despite our objections – and you will recall that there was all-party support for our objections – overruled all the local views and insisted that our target went up to almost 4,500. This coincided with the worst recession in living memory. It is a complete nonsense to have a target like that because it is not going to be achieved this year or within the next ten years. That is a fact of life and Mr Brown and his housing guru can wish as much as they want. The economics are perfectly straightforward – it is not going to happen, nor should it, because it involves the release of greenfield and green belt sites which I believe we should be passing on to future generations to enjoy.

We in the city of Leeds have identified site after site, brownfield land, that could be redeveloped. Let me remind you, some of those brownfield sites are in the

most deprived areas of the city crying out for regeneration. I am not going to go back over the debate we had on regeneration earlier but some of the people in the communities concerned, particularly in East Leeds, have been waiting a lifetime for regeneration under successive Labour, Conservative, Labour, Conservative Government – simply have not been delivered and yet, before this recession began there was a real opportunity they could.

The National Housebuilders are a very powerful lobby and they are lobbying as we speak, I suspect. They have certainly lobbied your Government because now these housebuilders who say they cannot afford to start building on sites are getting Government money to begin building on sites which enables them to use their reserves to landbank greenfield sites and they ain't going on to our regeneration sites.

Actually, the volume housebuilders are part of the problem; they are not part of the solution because their business model is broken. If they think they can go back to the days of building willy-nilly on greenfield sites and making margins of 20%-odd – and that is what they want to do, that is what they have said publicly, they will not build unless they can make 22% - sorry, those days are gone. All businesses are having to face reduced margins and different business models and the Government should not be bailing out the house building industry who are trying to continue with a broken business model. They have to work on lower margins, they have to accept regeneration as a necessary fact of life because that is what good businesses do in terms of working in a social environment as well as the environment where they can generate profits.

I have no problem with them making money, no problem at all, but I have great problems with them seeking to maintain a profit level that has gone. They have to get into the real world and understand that the economic landscape has changed and they have to improve the designs, they have to improve the facilities around the sites and they have to work with Local Authorities to help us regenerate the sites that we have there. We have got land in the EASEL sites, we have got land in the West Leeds corridor, we have got land – the eco settlement is a classic example. The eco settlement, your Government wanted to bully us into an eco town on greenfield site, build thousands of houses, no infrastructure, no promise of funding for infrastructure. How is that sustainable? Even the most sceptical environmentalist knows that if you stick houses in green fields miles from places of work, miles from an infrastructure, it cannot be sustainable and it cannot be good for the environment. Everybody has to accept that.

They called us every name under the sun when eleven Local Authorities, some led by Labour politicians, turned round and said to Caroline Flint, "Sorry, we are not doing it." She was very impolite about us but that is one of the things that you put up with in politics. She went; we did not. We got a new Minister who said, "Actually this idea of building on the brownfield sites to eco principles, we might talk to you about that." That is what we want. Talk to us – we will help deliver the houses that this country needs but we are not going to destroy the environment in the process.

That was a win. Actually, that was a win for the Government and a win for the Local Authorities because we think now we are going to get, under whatever Government, some substantial investment and help in making sure that in the Lower Aire Valley we get a sizable housing development built to eco standards.

Then, of course, we come back to the big issue – a string of sites, and you know where they are without me going through them all. There is one in Robin Hood, there is one in Farsley, there is one in Pudsey, there is one in Cross Gates,

there is one in Garforth, there is one in Adel – where the builders have gone to appeal and the appeals have been upheld by an inspectorate increasingly influenced, I have to say, by the Government and we are taking them to the High Court.

What we want is the support of the Members of Parliament and all Members of this Council to make the Government scrap the RSS figures. They will damage terminally our plans for regeneration and in many of our lifetimes in this Council Chamber we will not see redevelopment of some important brownfield sites that will bring massive benefits to the people who live there.

I am pleased it is all party but you have a lot to do because your party is not moving. It is all right because it is getting panic time, we are near the elections, “Oh my God, this could be a vote loser.” Let’s face it, there is a lot of that in this from over there. We have got to make sure this does not happen because it is regeneration that will suffer and it is the communities who have waited long enough for housing redevelopment on brownfield sites to happen that will suffer and all those will suffer because of the loss of greenfield sites that do not need to be built on. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Carter. I now call on Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR S GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor, I second and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. For comments I call on Councillor Beverley.

COUNCILLOR BEVERLEY: The Government’s Regional Spatial Strategy and the question of bulldozing vast areas of our countryside in order to build houses is an issue that has been discussed on a number of occasions in this Council Chamber. The figures involved in this so-called strategy - which includes building roughly three million new homes nationwide by 2020, getting on for 30,000 new homes in this region including nearly 5,000 here in Leeds - are truly shocking.

As the sole British National Party Councillor for this Authority, and therefore the only Councillor not bound by the confines of liberalism and political correctness, it falls to me to point out that the single biggest contributing factor to the need for more house building in the UK is mass immigration. The targets laid out in the Regional Spatial Strategy should therefore be viewed as a symptom of this underlying problem.

Evidence came to light recently that proved that the massive increase in immigration we have seen under this treacherous Labour Government was a deliberate policy undertaken for social as well as the oft-cited economic reasons. An article in the Evening Standard from last October revealed that Andrew Neather, a former speech writer for Tony Blair, Jack Straw and David Blunkett in the early 2000s, revealed that mass immigration, and I quote, “did not just happen. The deliberate policy of Ministers from late 2000 was to open up the UK to mass migration.”

He then described a Government policy document which he had helped to write in the year 2000. He said that the drafts were handed out in summer 2000 only with extreme reluctance. There was paranoia about it reaching the media. The drafts that he saw including a driving political purpose that mass immigration was the way that the Government was going to make the UK truly multi-cultural.

The report was censored and eventually published in 2001 by the Home Office Research Department as a rather obscure economic paper but the earlier unedited versions laid bare the Government's determination to do everything in its power to deceive the population and inflict as much immigration on to our people as it could get away with, regardless of the detrimental impact that this would have on the country and the pressure that it would put on our countryside.

It is right that we as a Council do everything we can to oppose building on greenfield sites and on the green belt. This is an issue that I have campaigned on since before I even became a Councillor and I will continue to do so. Only when looked at in its wider context – that is the growing size of the UK population, heading rapidly towards 70 million, a problem caused primarily by Labour's policy of mass immigration - can we really get to the heart of this issue and to a situation where we can implement the necessary solutions.

The first step in the right direction, of course, is to remove the Labour Party from office at the coming General Election and to ensure that this party of liars, traitors and war criminals never again forms a Government in this country.

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I now call on Councillor Leadley, please.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I do not know how I am going to follow that but I would say that I have Polish neighbours – we live at 181 and they live at 181A, and you might guess there is some confusion over the mail. If we have to exchange letters I think I would sooner have Poles for neighbours than Councillor Beverley any day. *(Applause)*

My Lord Mayor, there will be little surprise that I am speaking in support of this motion. In fact it may be assumed that the great majority of Members will find it generally acceptable – perhaps except Councillor Hanley who sometimes seems to believe that green land is wasted space where people graze sheep because they cannot think of anything better to do with it.

We should not lose sight of the fact that the RSS house building targets for Leeds were unrealistic even before the recession. What is even more ludicrous is to suggest that we should make up shortfalls by accelerating as 2026 approaches. That might mean building 50,000 houses ion 2026 of which 98% will be designated affordable to meet the RSS target of 30 to 40% of affordable dwellings. In a way planning inspectors cannot always be blamed for some of their arguable unsatisfactory appeal decisions. They are working in the context of RSS targets which have been officially adopted, however unrealistic or unachievable they may be. There is nothing new in this or in the apparent ability of Government departments to hear what is being said about.

In general, urban green space should be defended. At various times in the past 30 years both Conservative and Labour Governments have thought that it was a good idea to have Local Authorities raise capital receipts by selling playing fields. Both were short-sighted. Urban green space often is irreplaceable, its loss causes damage to townscapes as well as promoting idleness and obesity.

It is interesting that developers and their allies are anxious to defend current RSS house building targets and the opportunities for land speculation which arise from them whilst at the same time seeming to be able to see very clearly the lack of realism in affordable housing targets of 30 to 40%.

We must have binocular vision, yet Nelson's eye view is not good enough – no better than that of the academics who seem to have devised the RSS targets by

simplistically projecting forwards and upwards from the peak of a boom which would have slowed sooner or later, even if it had not ended in a crash.

My Lord Mayor, I ask everyone to support the motion. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to briefly comment on this White Paper, in particular paragraph 3 which refers to the Council's commitment to ensure that playing fields are protected and that we need more provided throughout the city.

Lord Mayor, I think this particular issue can often be characterised as something that is particularly important to the outer areas but not particularly important to the inner areas but nothing could be further from the truth.

In fact, the inner areas often come under greater pressure because the only green space the inner areas have are playing pitches which are already used by schools or by other organisations. These are sometimes the easily available land that requires little preparation and can just be built on and therefore there is the pressure to start building.

Lord Mayor, I think because we have had these unrealistic land prices that have built up over the last few years, the builders find themselves under pressure – wrongly I think but under pressure – to try and cram as much in as possible. We have these unrealistic expectations in terms of Government targets for the number of houses to be built; then that seems to me to contradict some of the underlying policies we have which are about protecting green space, protecting the playing pitches and so on and so I think we then end up in a bit of a mess and I think that is the situation we are in now.

In my own ward of Headingley and Hyde Park which adjoins it, we have I think the smallest amount of green space of any wards in the city. I think Harehills might be somewhere close but these are wards with very little green space, so what we have we want to protect. In the past I do not think this Council has done a particular good job of doing that – certainly land under its own ownership has been lost in previous years to developers, but I think we need to do all we can to stop that particular thing happening for the future.

Lord Mayor, I am not going to refer in detail to a live planning application but I would like to say that I have been heartened by the all-party nature of the comments in the press and at public meetings in relation to the Leeds Girls' High School site. We have had, I think, it has been very good to see that both the Headingley and Hyde Park Councillors who are in the neighbouring ward, Councillor Gruen had an interesting intervention in the Evening Post last week I thought which referred to that particular organisation. I think certainly as far as the Members of this side of the Chamber and, indeed, the whole Chamber is concerned, we need to do all we can to protect these playing pitches and so I think the very positive and unifying words coming from a number of sources across the political divide is very helpful.

Lord Mayor, we do need to do all we can, it seems to me, to protect green space, to preserve our heritage for future generations. That is not just an outer area issue, it is very much an inner area issue as well. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Lord Mayor, in my experience you seldom have people stop you in the street and say, "Wow, you have done something really good." The last time it happened to me was I was actually walking through one of our bits of disputed green belt, Post Hill, and I stopped by an ex-employee of the Council who

said, "I hear that you, the Council, all Councillors have agreed on your view of the RSS targets. That is fantastic, wonderful." I was taken aback, (a) that anybody ever took any notice of us but when I went up, it does work sometimes, when we do speak with one voice. I would hate it if we did it all the time, as you will understand, but sometimes it really works and we can punch above our weight when we do agree.

I think most of the views that Andrew has expressed in terms of what they now call the National Homebuilders' Federation, don't they, to be a bit more cuddly than house builders and their tendency to have huge landbanks which they sit on and then they still want to develop other sites which are easy to develop, I agree with him. There are plenty of your comments that I do not agree with – however, I admit that you have considerably changed the original draft of the White Paper to make it more palatable and I thank you for that and I think we can all agree on that.

We would also disagree about where your party will go in terms of planning because we are still awaiting the great pronouncements from Grant Shapps on what your policy is and as far as we know all it is about not having a Regional Strategy. You cannot leave a vacuum but I will not say any more at this moment, we have had a busy afternoon and I am happy to support this White Paper, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Lewis. I now call upon Councillor Golton, who will take up his right to speak

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I just thought it was an opportune moment to come in as a Liberal to talk about being "bound by liberalism". Since we are talking about housing, I have to say that being part of a liberal democracy I am quite proud that I belong to a country that allows people to choose where they live rather than being zoned according to ethnicity, as has happened in other countries who are less liberal. *(Applause)*

Being unable to choose where your home is and which community you live in is a human right and not political correctness, and I think it is why we are all concerned here as Councillors in terms of looking at the RSS, because Government targets and expectations are illiberal when they artificially impose a demand in an area which is not already there. It weakens local communities and stops them being able to shape their own futures by changing the balance in favour of developers and away from communities themselves – that is illiberal and that is something that we cannot come together today to support. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, thank you. I also just want to say a passing word regarding the contribution from Councillor Beverley. This is a resolution about housing and planning and I would say today we have been denied the opportunity to discuss and comment on what you have said because we are talking about housing and planning. If you want to talk about immigration, put down a White Paper, see if you get a seconder and we can discuss it, but do not introduce those remarks in a totally different debate.

In terms of this White Paper, the Labour Group welcomes the White Paper not necessarily for the reasons Andrew was trying to spell out at the beginning of his speech but because we have had some intense debates because there is a balance to be struck between inner wards and outer wards, between brownfield and greenfield, between playing fields and a need to provide new, decent homes for young families throughout the city.

If ever the target that we were set was realistic, then in present times we think the target should be suspended because it is plainly not realistic and to force us to

move towards that target means we see applications like we did last week on Plans East in Scholes and those of us who sat at Plans East – I am sure Plans West is the same at times – cannot feel but horrified that there are applicants who come forward, developers who come forward with schemes more borne out of greed than borne out of planning sensitivities towards the local community.

Andrew and others are right to say whether it is a PFI scheme, whether it is affordable housing, whether it is brownfield development, the days are gone when you can simply put on mass housing as happened back in the 1970s, I think, on Shadwell Lane. I have often used that example in the past. There are a number of housing estates along Shadwell Lane with no infrastructure, no community facilities, no green field, no contribution for anything and you are left 20 years later just with decaying houses. That is simply not on in today's age. We need to build and provide homes which will last more than a generation which actually allow people to live as well as be in their home.

The neighbourhoods matter and for all those reasons we want to give our Chief Planning Officer and our Planning Department the best possible opportunity to defend at appeal stage against planning inspectors, as has been said, who come into this city for half a day, who know nothing about this city whatsoever, its background, its ethnicity mix, its reasons for having housing here or not, the complexities of why planning panels come to decisions – they know nothing about that but they come in, they pontificate, they leave you with a problem and they go back again and that is not a fair system and it is not a fair democratic system, no matter which Government is ruling us from Westminster or no matter how many people are in Plns in Bristol where, of course, the Planning Inspectorate is based. There has to be a better, a more democratic, a more accountable way to make certain that these balances I talk about are properly provided for.

Finally, I come to the issue of playing fields and it is a matter for all of us in all our wards, and whether we are on the Executive Board or on a planning Panel or ward members, whichever role we actually have, it is important in a healthy, wellbeing agenda that we provide and we do not have policies on the one hand which differentiate and work against policies we have on the other hand. There has to be some integrated thinking about this and this White Paper I think goes a long way towards stating clearly, publicly, what our policy and our aspirations are. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, first of all can I offer the support of the Green Group on this motion. I think it is timely, I think it is necessary. The Regional Spatial Strategy, to be quite honest, is unsustainable. We cannot have a city – I was talking to a new officer two or three days ago who came from the South of England who was saying how nice it was to live here with all the green fields and you are no more than ten minutes away from the countryside and how different it was to where she lives. If we have to do what it requires us to do in the Regional Spatial Strategy, that will be lost and we will just become one great urban sprawl.

We do need houses, we do need affordable houses but what we need them is in the right place. It has got to be sustainable and there is more to life than just housing. There is a quality of life that we require and we have got it in most of this city, I would say, and we have got to keep it.

I would also like to associate myself with most of what has been said with the exception of one comment behind me, which I totally reject and, as I say, my group fully supports the motion. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR ANDREW: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Forgive me for being parochial for a moment but actually I attended the hearing on the Greenlea Close, which caused the action of the Council to go to High Court. What was disturbing at that meeting is that the whole focus of that hearing was purely on the RSS figures and, despite the robust attempts of our officers, it was clear that the Inspector was more keen to know whether or not we had a five year supply of land rather than the importance of that greenfield site. Sadly, the Inspector ignored the Panel, he ignored the officers and he ignored local Councillors and residents and he backed the figures of the RSS and allowed that application. This is despite the fact that within less than a mile of that site there are many sites that are still not complete. Silver Cross still has not been finished. High Royds is a third done when it should have been completed this year. The expected date for the completion of that site is now at the very earliest 2015 and residents who are living on there are being forced to live on a building site. Netherfield Road has all been demolished except for one row of houses. There is acres of unfinished land there.

That is the reality of the demand for the houses that are needed in the area at the moment, not the 4,200 figure, which is wholly unrealistic.

The tragedy of the loss of this site and others is that, of course, once it is gone it is gone and our area and our city is a green and pleasant city and we must do everything we can to protect it. If we allow these sites to go, then I fear that brownfield sites will be left abandoned and this does not even begin to address the problems that we are facing with our infrastructure, with a lack of investment into which has meant that places like mine are really suffering because of over development.

I welcome the High Court action and I hope that it will be successful and I am grateful for the political will across this Chamber that has made that happen. I would also say that actually I welcomed the outside legal advice that Keith wanted to scrap in his budget that actually gave us the confidence to go to the High Court.

I hope that this united approach will make the Government listen and realise that once and for all we really do need to scrap this pointless figure. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR LATTY: Lord Mayor, my colleague Councillor Andrew was being parochial; I am going to be parochial as well, I am afraid. You have to live in Aireborough for a minute or two. When I moved into my home in Rawdon nearly 32 years ago - that was what we called Aireborough in those days - there were 13 mills or factories, there was a grammar school and there was a mental hospital - again, that is what we called them in those days. There were green fields right round the ward. It was not long before some bright spark decided to try to join the Coppice Woods in Yeadon to Wills Gill in Guiseley which would have made a complete break in the chain around the ward. It did give me the first opportunity to campaign against over development in the wrong place - in this case green belt.

Today of those just four mill sites are left, the grammar school has gone, the hospital has gone, been given over to development and Stuart mentioned one or two of those by name, but at the moment you can still actually walk round the ward in green fields, even including the bit that we gave to Otley. If we do not stop soon with all this development, the building, then the green space is going to be, there are swathes of it around the ward, eyes are going to turn on to that and the gardens. We have the most wonderful estate, a single developer estate in Guiseley, Tranmere estate, the character of which is being changed totally by its gardens being filled up. It started with a pattern, the pattern has been broken and we are desperately trying to stop that happening. If we do not then the last vestige of individuality is going to

disappear and the townships which made up Aireborough are going to become suburbia and they are well on the way towards that.

All that development has taken place without any increase or space being given over to green space, play space or parks. In fact, there has been a slight reduction and neither, incidentally, has the infrastructure been expanded or improved in any way to cope with these eleven factory sites that have been developed – and believe you me, that is a lot of housing. We did say that there was some of it not finished yet in Stuart's speech but there is an awful lot that has been finished and it is an awful lot of houses, believe you me. However, if I have my way there is going to be another park in Guiseley, or at least a green space with some play space in it which I am working on hard at the moment.

Councillor Gruen mentioned health and wellbeing. Wellbeing is the buzz word nowadays, it comes into everything and really and truly a major factor in people's wellbeing, I would have thought, is being able to see a bit of space around you, somewhere where your kids can run about without a car coming round the corner, a bit of space to sit in the sun without a new house casting a shadow across your garden, perhaps even a bit of space where it is quiet – in this world it is a bit much to hope for, is that.

I am not saying that we should not have any more development. You cannot keep sticking your head in the sand. I would like to see no more in my ward but that is a wish that will never actually come about. What I do wish is that we make use of all the brownfield sites that we have got and, again, harking back to the last speaker, there are plenty of them about.

As an example, look at EASEL. That will produce a huge amount of housing without sticking a single foot into green belt and that is, to me, a pointer because there are lots of other EASELs all around Leeds to look at – EASELs not in name but in character. Before we start building on green belt and in the garden sites, then we should be looking at those.

I will just finish by saying I think that probably one of the few reasons I am standing here today talking to you is that local people do know that I have been opposing development. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Lord Mayor, it makes me a little bit queasy when we have these outbreaks of consensus but I will do my very best to carry on in the same spirit. We have had it quite a lot as some of the Members opposite will know in Health Scrutiny recently. I find myself agreeing far too often with Councillor Illingworth, something which we are both trying to get away from.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You will be expelled!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: White coats!

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I am not going to make any apologies for being parochial. There are many communities and there are not many of us that are not affected by the problems with the RSS. In Boston Spa the proposal at Church Fields would actually increase the size of Boston Spa by ten per cent, which would change its designation from a village to a town. It is the sort of things we are talking about, there is no thought for the infrastructure. We are quite fortunate that some of the communities I represent and live in, the sense of community comes from several things – from the fact that it is reasonably small, that people know one another and the role of the Parish Councils, small shops and things and (*interruption*) – who is tweeting?

Back to Church Fields. It would change the designation of a small community which is nice to live in in Boston Spa from a village to a town with no thought to the infrastructure that is needed. Where would the kids go to school? Our schools are oversubscribed in Boston Spa anyway and there is no thought given to these things.

The Regional Spatial Strategy is probably one of the worst things
(*interruption*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Whoever's that machine is, can you please stop it? It is coming from over *here*. Can we just check where the noise is coming from, please? Whoever's its machine is can you please make sure that machine is switched off?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Unplug Councillor Atha's machine!

COUNCILLOR LAMB: It is OK, Lord Mayor. It must have been a terribly important message for somebody. I have lost my thread completely. Oh yes, I was in Boston Spa, a very pleasant place to be.

One thing this Government is a world leader in is setting targets and this is one they have got completely wrong. By trying to build on greenfields in Boston Spa and places like it, you are denying the opportunity to regenerate communities that need it desperately and that is the real tragedy of this. It is not NIMBYism. We have had lots of developments in the Wetherby ward, in Wetherby itself, in Boston Spa, in Clifford and Bramham over the years, and nobody has complained about them, they are in the right place, but we are really denying this opportunity for communities that many of you represent to get the regeneration that they need. That is the main reason that this strategy needs to be scrapped so we can get the houses that we need in the places that we need them. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR HARRIS: Lord Mayor, I was not going to speak. There are those who say that if we politely and demurely turn away from the comments made by Councillor Beverley that somehow the world will correct itself and fascism will go away. For 26 years I have sat in this Chamber – that is the most sordid contribution I have had the misfortune to hear. (*Applause*)

To my core I know, history teaches me, that when you turn away from a fascist you give succour to a fascist and understand, Councillor Beverley, that were there 98 of you in this Chamber and I was the only one, I would never turn away from the sort of lies you are peddling. The issue of housing has nothing whatsoever to do with immigration – nothing. It is the same calamitous lie that was peddled in Nazi Germany, that was peddled in Bosnia, that was peddled in Rwanda. It is a lie.
(*Applause*)

It is only because you are fortunate enough to live in a liberal democracy – the very liberal democracy that you denigrate – that you are free to say those words and it is only (*applause*) because you live in a liberal democracy that you will walk home safely tonight having said those words, unlike my forebears who, if they had dared utter to comment against the majority in such circumstances, would not have made it home alive.

Remember, it is a privilege to live in a decent, tolerant, liberal democracy and there are no circumstances ever when I will allow you to get away with speaking like that with impunity. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Harris. I move on now and I call for Councillor Atha.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: I will be very brief too. I would say that I am sure that we all accord with the views expressed so forcefully and it is sad that you have to say those things in this Chamber at this time.

Going back to the White Paper, I want to refer to the paragraph that refers to its commitment to ensure that playing fields are protected. I think we have this great unanimity at the moment, I think we all believe what we are voting for – I hope we will vote for – but it is only effective if actions follow the words and so I would hope that we will all collectively agree that those three playing fields in Hyde Park Woodhouse, the Leeds Girls' High School, must be protected at whatever cost. If we do not believe that in an area where there is such deprivation, then we are not worth our time spending here passing resolutions like this which are good in intention but poor in effect. We have got to say that will be our commitment and we will vote accordingly.

If we are talking about protecting green space, we have to look again. I do not want to re-open wounds but we have got to look again at the Woodhouse Moor situation. The Woodhouse Moor situation faced us this summer with barbecues, we are not sure quite how they are going to be put down, how they are going to be operated. We do not know how the park itself is going to be policed. If you say you can have barbecues there you cannot have them anywhere else, that is only valid if you can police that everywhere else and we have not been able to do that.

This is what I am worried about. Councillor Hamilton is shaking his head as though he disagrees. If we are going to protect the green spaces, the Woodhouse Moor is one of the oldest green spaces in Leeds, the first public park. It must be protected and if that means looking at this again, if that means calling all the parties together to get reassurance about how it is going to be effective and protected, then in fact that is worthwhile doing.

Also a further point. In my own ward, Kirkstall, there are three green areas of land, one the playing pitches round the West Park Centre, one the Butcher Hill playing fields and one a small piece of land right in the middle of the estate. What the local community have said, can we get village green status for these three bits of land? All that means, for those not familiar with the Village Green Act, is basically it become part and parcel of the old-fashioned ancient common land and cannot be built on, cannot be developed unless you go through a very complicated procedure. We met the Chief Officer for Parks and Countryside and he decided on his own bat that really it was not suitable to accept the Council giving village green status to these three pieces of land. The Area Committee have voted in favour of it and the Area Committee involves two major parties, and so I would hope – and if I direct this particularly to Councillor Carter who, I have a feeling, if he gets his teeth into something he hangs on till he gets his own way. Would you look again at the village green status for these places and other who have been speaking earlier may well consider this as another way of protecting their green space. It is not a complicated business, we just have to get the Council to accept that that is the case and then that is a given. If not, we have got to go through a lengthy procedure which costs money and doubtless would involve people who we have been discussing earlier, consultants and so on. Not necessary – it is just a common sense procedure used elsewhere in the country for protecting swathes of land throughout the United Kingdom.

COUNCILLOR FOX: My Lord Mayor, I welcome the general unanimity that there is in this Chamber on this particular subject. Just picking up on Councillor Beverley, population increases or the demand for more houses is due to social, demographic and economic factors, and whilst demographic factors may include

immigration or net immigration or net emigration, that is only one factor. What we have seen are huge social changes. We have seen people leaving home earlier than used to be the case, we have seen, sadly, more families breaking up creating need for new houses and, happily, at the other end of the spectrum, we see people living longer. They are all factors that lead to the demand and the increase in the number of new households.

Putting that on one side, I would like to echo Councillor Andrew's comments about the five year housing supply. We have got two figures that we have to concentrate on. One is the RSS requirement which we have had much discussion about, but the other is this five year supply. There is all the difference in the world between a five year supply of plots with planning consent at the old figure of 1,930 – call it 2,000 and having a 10,000 supply of units, there is all the difference in the world between that and having 20,000 and more. The problem is that planning inspectors are very, very much driven by planning policy statements, planning policy guidance as was, and the guidance is that local planning authorities should have a five year supply, which I have always regarded as unfortunate and excessive but more than that, we are not allowed to take account of the windfall supply which this city has relied on very considerably, windfall being housing which we were not expecting. There might be the odd few sites coming up but they have made a very important contribution to the number of housing units, the dwellings, that the city has supplied over the years, so there are the two figures that we have to be concerned with.

Just coming back to the RSS figure, I have made the point before but at 4,000 a year, that means in ten years' time we will have had to create a new Parliamentary constituency. We have got eight MPs. We would have nine. In 20 years this city would increase by a quarter. It is absolutely inconceivable that we could cope with that, given the infrastructure and all the other problems associated with a massive increase in the size of the city.

My Lord Mayor, I welcome the all-party approach, I hope we can stick to it. To echo the Charge of the Light Brigade, I think everyone feels someone has blundered. The sad thing is there is nothing heroic about that blunder, it is an absolute tragedy if these figures remain and the hope is that surely whoever is the Government in three months' time or whatever it is, there will be a rapid reappraisal of those RSS figures because we sorely need it. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Lord Mayor, the biggest single factor in the housing market is actually the growth of single person households. If you look at the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, the last time I looked at the stats I think just over 50% of the electorate there are people living on their own. That is a big social change and, of course, relationships do not always last, people split up as Councillor Fox, said children leave home whereas historically they might have lived with mum and dad for many more years they now want a place of their own, and why shouldn't they have that?

This talk about mass immigration being the source of this is absolute rubbish and it is total lies. We should all of us, except for Councillor Beverley, I suspect, celebrate the fact we live in a multi-cultural city, a multi-racial city, a multi-religious city. We have got Jews and Christians and Muslims and Sikhs living and working side by side and in peace and that is something we should celebrate. That is something we should celebrate, that is something very precious because there are parts of the world where you could go to that would not necessarily be the case.

It is complete nonsense. Of course, Brits live all over the world. Even my own family, two of my daughters, one lives in Canada, one lives in India. What about

all the expatriate Brits who live in Spain and elsewhere? Does Councillor Beverley want them all brought back here because they are white? No, we live in a modern world. We live on this planet and we should all live together as brothers and sisters together irrespective of our political differences. We should celebrate what the Jews have done for Leeds. I am so glad that so many Ashkenazi Jews came to Leeds at the end of the 19th Century the beginning of the 20th Century and about the time of World War Two. Look what the Jews have done for Leeds. Look what the black and the Muslims and the Sikhs have done for Leeds and the Chinese (I am very much involved with them). All of that is fantastic and positive and marvellous and we should celebrate it and we should say we will have no time for the politics of hate. They do not belong, they dirty this Chamber those words. They are on the record. That is why these things need to be said. That is why Mark Harris was right because sometimes people say "Just ignore him, he is nuts." He is not nuts. Lots of people agree with him, sadly, but we need to confront these lies head on. There is no place for racism in our city and there is no place for fascism in our city and come May, my chum, you are out on your ear - good bye. Thank you. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR GRAYSHON: As you are aware, Councillor Beverley and I share the same ward. That is really all that we share - no view or anything else. However, Morley South has probably been the most overdeveloped ward in the Leeds Metropolitan District and I remember as a child when I used to ride my horse around Morley – it was quite a large horse – I had a horse and I used to go around Morley riding down paths and fields and things and I remember where Councillor Beverley's family home is on Glen Road was actually rhubarb fields. I recall his mother saying, in a conversation, that she had moved to Morley from York, so arguably Councillor Beverley could be an immigrant to Morley from York living on a greenfield site, but we are where we are and I think he has done very well to get people discussing immigration this afternoon.

I agree completely with Councillor Harris and Councillor Golton and Councillor Taggart. The situation is such that society has changed, people move home for different reasons, family breakups, all kinds of things. In Morley you will have heard Robert Finnigan mention this afternoon three schemes which are using brownfield sites or sites which things were built on before, so we have social housing in Morley bottoms on Corporation Street and, interestingly, on the Glen Estate which you will recall I mentioned earlier.

I attended a public meeting about the Glendale estate site and some of the local residents were up in arms about it. When we asked them why, because we felt that an affordable housing scheme for that area was a good thing, someone – and I will leave you to draw your own conclusions who "someone" is – had told them that it was a site for Polish people, for immigrants to live in, it was not affordable housing for people who needed affordable housing in Morley South Ward.

We have done all we can within our powers – that is Councillor Finnigan and I and Councillor Elliott – to ensure that those properties go to local families because we feel that that is important, but to say that immigration is the only cause of this problem is wrong, I am afraid. There are a number of factors and I would, as a Councillor for Morley South ward, like to distance myself as far as possible from the vile comments which Councillor Beverley has made this afternoon. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I will now call upon Councillor Carter to sum up.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I really do not want to see this debate further used for the wrong purposes but I will just say this, that most people in this Council Chamber are of a certain generation whose parents probably saw active service in

the last World War. They fought against national socialism, Nazi-ism, they fought against fascism, they fought against some unspeakable terrors, particularly if they were in the far east. I cannot but reflect on the fact that if it was not for their efforts – incidentally, many of the people who fought with our armies were of mixed race from the colonies. I do not recall the history books telling me they questioned the service they were giving to the United Kingdom and I think it is a great pity that a debate about regeneration and protection of the environment should be diverted into a discussion on something quite frankly very unpleasant. I am thankful for Councillor Harris's comments because I think he, more than anybody else, put it in perspective.

If I may now go back to the point of the debate. You cannot pay lip service to this. The Americans say if you are going to talk the talk, you have got to walk the walk and to be frank with you on the Labour benches you have not done that and I will tell you why in a moment.

What this is about is not about stopping the provision of much-needed housing, but providing housing is not easy. It is difficult, it needs innovation, it needs new thinking, it needs better quality, it means a lot of renovation of empty properties of which there are thousands around this country. When you regenerate a brownfield area - this is where there is no difference between the outer areas and the inner areas, when you regenerate an area of brownfield land in the inner city, as part of that planning consent you create green spaces that people can use, green spaces that do not exist there now. You know, that is what we should be striving to do.

The National Playing Fields Association have estimated that we have lost 18,000 play spaces over the last 15, 16 years. Never mind what the Government say about formal pitches – it is rubbish, quite frankly. I do not think anybody believes it. For once I agree with John Illingworth and it is a very rare occasion. I can hear the flapping of white coats round me next!

However, on this I do agree with him and we have got to do everything we can to make sure play spaces of all sorts, formal and informal, are created and replaced throughout this city. We have to scrap the RSS and, Richard, I will tell you very clearly what the Conservative policy is, very clearly. We are pledged to scrap the RSS and your party is not. We are not pledged to not require Local Authorities to deliver housing because they will be, but the difference is this – and we have offered this to your Government – scrap the targets and talk to us about what can be realistically delivered. Your Prime Minister is not that sort of a man and whilst your Ministers may be inclined to flexibility and respect for Local Government, he is wedded to unachievable targets.

My Lord Mayor, I told you I had done another Freedom of Information request. I sent a letter on 21st January of this year:

“ We have now considered your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 for copies of any correspondence on the issues surrounding this that may have been exchanged between the Secretary of State, the Housing Minister and Labour Councillors and Labour Members of Parliament. You also requested details of any meetings there have been on this issue with Ministers involving Leeds.”

This was about the planning appeal from the greenfield site upon which I specifically wrote to your Leader and to your Members of Parliament.

“The only Member of Parliament with any piece of correspondence in on a related but separate issue in 2008.”

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is not true.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It is not true? You can challenge the Freedom of Information response from the Department.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Can I speak?

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: No, you cannot speak. I do not give you permission, the Lord Mayor does. There it is, freedom of information.

Gentlemen, it is too late, my Lord Mayor, on a number of issues. One Milner Lane Leeds Road Robin Hood, Pudsey Road Swinhoe, Church Lane Adel, Grimes Dyke York Road, Church Fields Boston Spa, Bagley Lane Farsley, Queen Street, Woodhead, Allerton Bywater were already in the planning process or the appeals process or in the High Court..

What I would say to you is, if you mean what you say in this debate, do it.
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It has already been done.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Well take it up with them, Keith.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Carter. I am now going to take the vote on this.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Recorded vote, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Speak with forked tongue. You do not want us to get together, that is your bloody trouble.

(A recorded vote was taken)

THE LORD MAYOR: The result of the vote is those present 91, "Yes" 91. The motion is CARRIED.

Before I close this meeting, I would like to say that I made it quite clear at the beginning of the meeting that I wanted no tweeting whilst we were in this room and I have seen evidence of someone who has been tweeting during the last few minutes. Would that person like to own up and apologise to me?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Name names. Stuart Golton.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Lord Mayor, I am quite happy to own up to that, Lord Mayor and I would like to say with all due respect, when there are two people in the public gallery and nobody sat in the press gallery, when it comes to the way we communicate with the outside world I think we need to come into the modern world, Lord Mayor. I am quite happy to put my hand up and to have a respectful debate on the subject.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, but I would like to say that you were not the person *(laughter and applause)*. Well done to you!

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Lord Mayor, who was it?

THE LORD MAYOR: I am not saying. I want the person to own up who did it.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Go on, own up.

THE LORD MAYOR: It is all right, if the person does not own up I still know who did it and I shall deal with it later because I find it absolutely abhorrent when I have asked especially that we do not do it, absolutely ignoring what the Lord Mayor is requesting. Any other people owning up? I shall deal with it later then.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Can I ask what tweeting is? *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: That is what you do when you speak to us.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. That, then, is the end of the meeting but let me tell you, it is not the end of that tweeting business. I am really displeased.
(Applause)

(The meeting closed at 6.30 pm)