

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

**EXTRAORDINARY
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Held on

Wednesday, 18th November 2009

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL, LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(Councillor J Elliott)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING
OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18th NOVEMBER 2009

THE LORD MAYOR: We will now begin the Extraordinary Meeting. Can I ask, please, that all mobile phones and other electrical equipment in the Council Chamber be switched off for this Council session.

I call upon Councillor Richard Brett.

EXECUTIVE ARRANGEMENTS

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not going to say anything that will extend this Extraordinary Meeting. I simply want to move this in terms of the Notice.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, Members will be expected to accept these new Executive arrangements, nodding them through with little or no comment. In doing so they would be making the best of a bad job by taking the least undemocratic of choices forced on them by Central Government.

We should recognise that the changes, small as they appear to be, are deeply undemocratic and are part of a process which is gathering more power into the hands of fewer elected members.

At a meeting last week I remarked, I hoped facetiously, that Local Government might as well be abolished throughout the Leeds City Region – Andrew Carter might be put in charge of everything. *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: No change there, then. He is now!

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: Of course, it would not work like that. There are not enough hours in a day for power to be wielded properly or wisely when it is confined to too few hands. More and more real power and decision making will fall to bureaucracy, which is answerable to hardly anyone.

From the 1835 Municipal Corporation Act onwards many measures were taken to broaden the types and numbers of Councillors and to extend the franchise. We now have the broadest franchise ever – ten year olds and cats and dogs may soon have the vote, but that would be of little use if there was hardly anyone to vote for directly who is in real power.

Democracy can be a sham as it was in Eastern Europe until 1939 when solemn elections were held year after year when people, if they dared, were invited to cross out the names of candidates they did not want from meticulously prepared lists of Communists, without it making much difference to anything.

These new Executive arrangements may not seem to be much different from those now in place but they are a further small tightening of a screw which has already gone too far in the wrong direction.

If power is spread widely and thinly it is likely to be used wisely, fairly and productively; more people are allowed to devote their time and talents to public

service for the benefit of everyone. Exclusive Cabinets, indirectly elected Regional Boards and authorities and directly elected executive Mayors are in their own ways fundamentally undemocratic and should not be supported. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. (*hear, hear*) (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Leadley. We go back to Councillor Brett now to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR BRETT: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I had no warning of what Councillor Leadley was going to say but I think many in this Chamber, from the applause and the nods, would agree with the main thrust of what he was saying. I know there is certainly agreement among most of us that an elected Mayor is not the right way forward and I will simply say, Lord Mayor, in my view there are three reasons why that is a bad idea – it is Doncaster, Doncaster and Doncaster.

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to call on the vote on the motion please. (*A vote was taken*) That is PASSED.

We have now finished the Extraordinary Meeting.

(The meeting closed at 1.40 pm)