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Dear Councillor

COUNCIL MEETING – 14th SEPTEMBER 2011

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 11 to 26 unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

Q11 Councillor G Hyde to the Executive Member (Environmental Services) – Would the Executive Board Member for Environmental Services care to comment on the recent opening of the Revive Leeds reuse Shop in Seacroft?

A The reuse shop, which opened recently, is a key part of the redevelopment of the East Leeds centre on Limewood Road, Seacroft and is the first of its kind in Leeds. The new facilities provide a range of benefits:

Firstly, the facility is run by Revive Leeds – a community interest company made up of three local charities; Emmaus, SLATE and St. Jude's - and demonstrates the value of true partnership working between the City Council and the Community Voluntary Sector.

Secondly, the new facility makes it as easy as possible for people to recycle and help us towards achieving our target of recycling more than half of the city's waste by 2020.

And thirdly, recycling is also about prolonging the life of unwanted but usable and useful goods. The new shop enables this by selling on good-quality household items, saving them from landfill and furthering their lives.

Q12 Councillor Rafique to the Executive Member (Development and the Economy) – Could the Executive Member for Development & Economy update Council on the development of the Enterprise Zone in the Aire Valley?

A The Council is working with Government for the formal approval of the Leeds City Region Enterprise Zone in Aire Valley Leeds. Government is still working up the detailed requirements with the Council to submit a business case for approval this autumn so that

the Zone can start from April 2012. As well as the incentives already announced, the Council is looking to promote a strong employment access offer linked to the Enterprise Zone operated by Employment Leeds to assist disadvantaged groups access the new jobs.

When operational, the Zone will have a catalytic effect for the Aire Valley Leeds and the wider city region. Able to deliver some 3,610 jobs by 2015 which provides £170m increase in economic output across the city region. A joint marketing proposal for the Enterprise Zone is being developed with the landowners involved in the Enterprise Zone and it is hoped, with the assistance of the LEP, that this will enable the national and international promotion of the Zone, Leeds and the region. A jointly funded marketing budget would enable events, local signage, press coverage and public relations support for the Zone.

- Q13 Councillor Lamb to the Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Housing and Regeneration) – Will the Executive Board Member for Environment & Neighbourhoods provide details on how many jobs have been created through the £500,000 jobs and skills initiative announced in the Budget for 2011/12?

- A Increasing Employment and Skills opportunities, particularly for our young people, is a key priority for the administration. There is a tremendous amount of good work being done in this area at present.

In 2010/11, over 850 adults achieved accredited qualifications across a range of vocational areas; 390 adults were supported to access full-time education and over 1,600 people were supported into employment. In the first quarter of 2011/12 alone, 863 learners have achieved qualifications and 567 people have been supported into employment, which is a huge increase.

The Council's own apprenticeship scheme, Work4Leeds, has to date supported 541 apprenticeships, 170 of which have been new positions. 16-18 year olds have filled 165 of the places.

The Leeds Apprenticeship Challenge aimed to sign up employers to 100 apprenticeships in 100 days between February and May. We smashed this target, with 162 businesses offering over 300 new apprenticeship vacancies. The number of people starting apprenticeships in the city has also increased massively this year, thanks in part to the work that Employment Leeds is doing with the city's employers.

The number of apprenticeship starts in Leeds between August 2010 and 2011 was 3,357, an 83% increase on the previous year. The number of 16-18 year olds starting apprenticeships increased significantly by 48% from 763 in January 2010 to 1,131 in January 2011 supported by the work of Children's Services. However, the participation rate for 16-18 year olds (9.3%) remains well below the regional rate (14.1%), so there is clearly more to do.

That's why we're looking to expand our offer with the Retail Academy and Apprenticeship Training Association, which would make it easier for Small and Medium Enterprises to take on apprenticeships.

- Q14 Councillor Matthews to the Executive Member (Leisure) – Could Cllr Ogilvie update Council on progress towards establishing a gay quarter in Leeds City Centre?

- A The Gay community in Leeds have formed an executive committee in order to request that Leeds City Council officially recognise the Leeds Gay Quarter.

The Head of City Centre Management is meeting with the Chair (Ms Carmody) and members of the committee, on Friday, 16th September to explore the feasibility of recognising and promoting the Leeds Gay Quarter which is located on and around Lower Briggate and Call Lane. Other cities recognise and promote their gay quarters in a number of ways – through signage, maps, promotional material and other means.

Q15 Councillor Mitchell to the Executive Member (Leisure) – Would the Executive Board Member for Leisure care to comment on the newly created Leeds Inspire Grants?

A Leeds Inspired Grants will be available to support a wide range of cultural activity taking place across the city. It will enable cultural organisations in the city to develop work around a set theme which encourages the people of Leeds to get involved. As the name suggests, the idea is to Inspire people and be inspired by the city. The theme in the first year is the cultural Olympiad and will ensure a strong cultural programme, a chance for arts organisations to raise their profile and enable more people to find things to do.

Q16 Councillor Walshaw to the Executive Member (Environmental Services) – Would the Executive Board Member for Environmental Services, please update Members on how the Council's Solar Photovoltaic Panels initiative is progressing?

A The scheme is progressing well. Legal and financial agreements between all parties should be in place within the next 2 weeks. This will allow detailed survey and installation works to commence in earnest.

Just over 2,500 properties have been approved by the DNO (Distribution Network Operator – CE Electric – owners of the 'grid') for installation to date, subject to detailed survey and tenant sign-up. LCC and partners are working closely with the DNO to continue to identify further properties for inclusion in the scheme by prioritising those areas with the most suitable electrical networks.

It is currently estimated that, for the next 25 years, the scheme will deliver:-

- generation of almost 2MWh (Mega Watt hours) p.a. of clean, green electricity for each property installed;
- savings to tenants of c£126 p.a. on their electricity bills;
- carbon savings of just over 1 tonne p.a. for each property installed; and
- an index-linked income to LCC and the ALMOs/BITMO of at least £375k p.a.

Information events have been held in over 20 locations across the city so far, with further events being planned for later this month. The response from tenants has been overwhelmingly positive.

Q17 Councillor Robinson to the Leader of Council – Will the Leader of Council tell me how much money the Council has spent since 2010 on the production of 'lifestyle questionnaires' that ask intrusive questions on personal matters that have nothing to do with the Council?

A The Council does not produce separate 'lifestyle surveys' but instead delivers a range of consultations designed to help our services understand how satisfied residents are, how we can improve our services and what it is like to live in Leeds.

We may ask appropriate questions in those consultations to gather information on the demography of our service users. These questions are chosen with care to avoid

intrusion. Providing such information is voluntary and an explanation is available to residents as to why we may be asking these questions. We ask these questions in order to help us understand whether different groups of residents have different experiences of service delivery or different needs, and to help us target resources and services to those in most need. Having this understanding help us meet our legal duties under the Equalities Act 2010.

Q18 Councillor Pryke to the Executive Member (Leisure) – Would the Executive Board Member for Leisure please give attendance figures for the last ten years at Opera in the Park, Party in the Park and Classical Fantasia, including this year's figures, and explain why this information for previous years has not been made available since my first request three months ago?

A Councillor Pryke was given a response to his email. Unfortunately there was a delay as much of the information he requested wasn't available until the end of last week. There are parts of his request – not included here – that are still outstanding.

We do not have data on the number of people in attendance at Opera, Party or Classical before 2011. As a free event we only know how many tickets we distribute. However, actual attendance would vary. In 2011 7,022 people attended Opera, 57,000 – 60,000 attended Party and 2,640 attended Classical Fantasia.

Q19 Councillor Gabriel to the Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Housing and Regeneration) – Does the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods & Housing agree that Area Committee Wellbeing funding plays a crucial role in helping communities deliver on their priorities?

A Area Committees play an important role in the delivery and co-ordination of local services. Through area delivery plans and – in the near future – area business plans, the city's Area Committees establish local priorities that lead to sustainable improvements in neighbourhoods and communities. These plans aim to improve the quality of life across the city by strengthening the role of local elected Members in making decisions which impact upon the areas they represent and by engaging local citizens about the issues that matter to them the most.

A recent review of the major benefits and added value of the Area Committees' Capital Well Being Funding showed that in the 6 years between 2004 and 2010/11 some £6.7m of funding delivered 605 projects across the city and leveraged £13.9m of additional funding into local work. A locally-prioritised and targeted capital spend of some £20m!

The effective use of well being funding by Area Committees is a powerful reminder of the strengths of a judicious, timely, and targeted use of locally delegated budgets to make a difference to local communities.

Q20 Councillor Groves to the Executive Member (Neighbourhoods, Housing and Regeneration) – Can the Executive Member for Environment, Neighbourhoods and Regeneration please update Council on support provided to third sector organisations by the Leeds Transition Fund?

A I am very pleased to confirm that fourteen projects will be supported with the Leeds Transition Fund. Project investment is likely to be in the region of £127k. Individual projects will receive up to £10k.

Projects supported include those who could evidence that they had experienced a loss in funding, provide frontline services and had ideas about how they will be able to transform their organisation to be more sustainable in the future. They include:-

Behind Closed Doors – a charity that provides emotional and practical support and information to people experiencing domestic violence. They provide a helpline and 1:1 outreach support in partnership with other organisations. The Transition fund will enable them to review their business model and organisational structure. This will include the development of a Community Interest Company which will enable them to trade and raise income.

St Luke's Community and Regeneration Enterprises – a charity based in Beeston that works with children and families. Transition Fund will help the organisation to develop a social enterprise and trading arm including a retail venture.

Chapeltown Young People's 10-2 Club – work with young people aged 11 to 16 to provide youth work and educational activities. Funds will enable the organisation to merge with another organisation(s).

Burley Lodge Centre – a community organisation providing a range of services for children, young people, adults and families including welfare advice, play and youth work. Transition Fund will help them to develop a business model for a mobile play project to make it sustainable without public funds.

The Market Place – city centre charity providing support for young people aged 13-25 around mental health, substance misuse, sexual health and crisis support. Transition Fund will help the group to relocate, to develop income generation and partnership working.

Transition Fund project activity will begin this month. All funds will be spent by March 2012.

A short evaluation report for the Transition Fund will be produced post-March 2012 highlighting the outcomes, successes and learning points for the organisations supported.

Q21 Councillor Robinson to the Executive Member (Development and the Economy) – Will the Executive Board Member for City Development tell us what preparations have been made since last years heavy snowfall and winter weather for highways to remain open, to ensure school attendance and maintain local services this year?

A Preparations for the coming winter are well under way. The primary cause for concern over the last three winters has been the limited availability of salt during the actual winter season. The strategy we have always had in Leeds is one of self reliance based on stocking as much salt as possible. This year we have filled all our available storage areas with rock salt and now hold a stock of 25,000 tonnes.

For reference in the winter of 2009/10, which was the worst recorded winter of recent times, we used 23,000 tonnes.

All our salt stores have also been covered in order to keep the salt relatively dry, this enables us to use it at a lower rate of spread, ie, it allows us to use less salt, which, in turn, saves us money and helps to preserve our stocks as long as possible.

The Winter Service Plan

Each year we revise and refine our Winter Service Plan and this work is still on going, this includes looking at the following items:-

- Comparing our plan against the current best practice recommendations.
- Preparation of Duty rotas for drivers, supervisory and managerial staff.
- Checking/ establishing contact details with neighbouring authorities and contractors.
- Checking/ establishing cross boundary arrangements.
- Establishing circulation lists for forecast information.

The completed plan will be posted on the Council's internet site by mid-October.

Action on Footways

Following the difficulties we have had over the last couple of years relating to snow and ice on footways we have ordered six small snow blowers for use on footways. These are expected to be delivered in September. Clearly six small machines will not be able to deal with the 3,500 miles of footway in Leeds, but they are much more efficient than an operative with a shovel.

Work is also taking place to look at the footway gritting in the city centre, specifically looking at trying to ensure a safe interconnecting walking route is provided between the Bus Station, Train Station, Leeds General Infirmary and the Universities.

Parish Councils and Self Help

Harewood Parish Council has already expressed a desire to try and assist the City Council during snow conditions. Establishing a process that will allow this to happen will take place over the next month.

One of the keys to reducing the impact of the snow is to encourage people to help themselves. At the moment people are in fear of litigation and we hope to provide more information to help reduce their fears and make them feel more comfortable about helping themselves and their neighbours.

Q22 Councillor R Pryke to the Leader of Council – Would the Leader of Council please list those organisations which will receive a funding increase, or the same level of funding as last year, from the Council?

A It is assumed that the reference to “organisations” in the question covers the Third Sector, rather than commercial or other public sector organisations.

An analysis shows that 71 organisations are receiving the same level of funding as last year and four have received an increase. A detailed schedule itemising the organisations and funding involved can be provided directly to Councillor Pryke, if required. In addition, the Council has funded a scheme to help Third Sector bodies dealing with the financial challenges that they are currently facing. Leeds Community Foundation will manage the fund of £140k in partnership with the Council and all Third Sector bodies have been able to apply for grants.

Q23 Councillor G Latty to the Executive Member (Development and the Economy) – Will the Executive Board Member for City Development explain what plans he has to develop proposals that will assist communities in Leeds in the setting up of Neighbourhood Forums?

A As part of the City Council's existing governance arrangements and through locality co-ordinators, there are already mechanisms in place for communities to establish Neighbourhood Forums. At a national level, the Localism Bill is currently being considered by Parliament. The Bill includes a wide range of proposals and measures, including new arrangements to prepare Neighbourhood Plans, supported by Neighbourhood Forums. A number of amendments to the Bill have been proposed and the as a consequence, the final details are yet to be confirmed. Once these details have been clarified, the City Council will need to give further consideration of these requirements and implications.

Q24 Councillor Pryke to the Leader of Council) – Could the Leader of Council outline what discussions he has had with Arcadia about their planned closure of the Burtons complex on Hudson Road, its demolition and replacement with 696 housing units, and the consequent significant loss of jobs in the local economy?

A As part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) exercise, published by the Council in 2009, a proposal for land at Hudson road including land held by Arcadia was submitted which included proposals for 696 dwellings

The SHLAA exercise was conducted by the Council to establish the potential scale of land coming forward in the future to meet housing needs across the city. As a major stakeholder in the city, Arcadia were consulted on this work in 2008. Their advisors at the time made a non-binding submission based on the development capacity of the site at Hudson Road, which suggested that if Arcadia's operation ceased on this site then it could be re-developed to support a number of dwellings.

There has been no indication or submission from either Arcadia or their agents since this work was undertaken that there is an intention to close the site and neither officers nor members have been party to any further discussions. However, in light of any proposals the Council will continue to offer dialogue with the parties to ensure appropriate future impacts from the use of the site are effectively managed.

Q25 Councillor Lobley to the Executive Member (Resources and Corporate Functions) – What changes have been made to date in the Council's business practices in order to realise savings promised for when the new technology goes live?

A As reported to Members of Central and Corporate Scrutiny Panel in January 2011, the financial savings arising from this investment in a new content management system will only accrue when the new site is operational in June 2012.

For the time being we have to continue to support the existing content management system which supports the website. We also have to support and resource approximately 84 other sites.

As soon as the new site becomes operational, we will start to realise the benefits which are estimated at being approximately £1.8M per annum for the next 5 years (as stated in Table 9.1 of the business case approved by Exec Board in January 2011).

Q26 Councillor Townsley to the Leader of Council – Could the Leader of Council advise me what are the costs of running the group offices, compared to the former style with a central 'support office'? Could he also ask officers to investigate what savings could be made?

A The budgeted costs of running the group offices in 2011/12 are £1,332k. This comprises £1,224k for staffing and £108k for other running expenditure. The split of this £1,332k budget between the major political groups is as follows :-

- Labour £655k (55 Members)
- Liberal Democrats £270k (16 Members)
- Conservative £318k (21 Members)
- Greens £23k (2 Members)
- Morley Independents £56k (5 Members)

Plus Other general costs £10k.

Unfortunately, the previous style of running a central support office was last undertaken over a decade ago so comparable cost details are not available.

As part of the budget process I have asked officers to review this area of spending in line with the Council's overall budget strategy. Staffing costs represent 92% of this budget and therefore ideas for savings would mainly centre around staffing restructures and loss of posts.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Tomkinson
Principal Governance Officer