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Dear Councillor

COUNCIL MEETING – 7th DECEMBER 2011

At the above meeting, the thirty minutes of Question Time expired with questions 12 to 23 unanswered. Council Procedure Rule 11.6 requires that each Member of Council is sent responses to such questions.

Q12 Councillor J Lewis to Neil McLean - To what extent does Neil McLean believe economic growth in the region will be based on improved connectivity, and how does he see the city region partnership working to deliver that?

A Connectivity of all types is absolutely crucial to the future prosperity of the city and city region economies and an area that the partnership through the LEP and the Leaders Board is and will continue to prioritise. That connectivity in transport terms is essential both within and external to the city region. The current Secretary of State for Transport has publicly stated that the Government wishes to talk to LEP areas or groups of LEPs about the prospect for taking on greater control of transport connectivity and the City Region Leaders Board is actively looking at possibilities. Technological connectivity is also a key economic driver and we are currently developing a city region digital infrastructure strategy which will set out a broad investment framework for the next 10-20 years to support economic growth.

Q13 Councillor Marjoram to the Executive Member (Environmental Services) – Could the Executive Board Member for Environmental Services explain what proportion of global CO₂ emissions are caused by Leeds City Council and provide details on how much Council CO₂ reduction schemes are costing?

A Although the Council makes a very small contribution to global emissions (0.00046%) there is a moral imperative to take action; it is not good enough for this Council to acknowledge that climate change is a pressing problem then leave the responsibility to solve it to others. Additionally, our consultation for the Leeds Climate Change Strategy showed clearly that organisations and people in the city expect the city to take a clear lead, which they will then follow.

For those not convinced by a moral argument, there are clear financial arguments. Our total energy bill is c£21.3m and rising as global fuel prices rise. We therefore have established a number of internal investment programmes with c£2m of capital finance that all pay back initial investments in less than 7 years. We are also launching a free home insulation scheme in early 2012 costing us less than £1m and attracting over £5m of private sector investment and saving our residents around £2m in energy bills each and every year.

It is very hard to be clear on total costs and benefits of carbon reduction activities as many of our major investments are now being designed with carbon in mind; carbon reduction designed in at the outset just means a marginal additional cost with long-term savings. For example, the arena and many schools are being built to energy standards above building regulations and transport proposals such as NGT will cut both congestion and carbon.

Finally, research by the University of Leeds suggests that by 2022 Leeds City Region could cut its 1990 levels of carbon emissions by 35% by exploiting the profitable opportunities and by 40% at no net cost.

- Every £1 billion of investment in low carbon options would generate £220 million of energy cost savings, paying back, on commercial terms, in just over four years.
- Every £1 billion of investment would also create at least 1,000 new jobs and wider economic benefits of a further £50 million a year.
- Such investments would also protect competitiveness, improve energy security, reduce fuel poverty and improve public health.

Q14 Councillor Matthews to Neil McLean - In future years, do you envisage a 'State of the City Region' meeting being the most appropriate venue for the sort of discussions that we are having today, and if so, how far away do you think we are from holding one?

A We held a city region economic summit in September of this year, which in part was to reflect upon the state of the city region economy and set out our objectives for the future. This is an important part of a good communication strategy and we intend to hold similar events in 2012 and 2013 to both review the state of the city region, and to keep reviewing our objectives and programmes in an ever changing and demanding environment.

The city region partnership has for some time undertaken a detailed economic analysis and that information underpins our discussions and decision making.

Q15 Councillor Gabriel to Neil McLean - How does Neil McLean see the work of the City Region linking with the our work as a Council to push forward regeneration projects and increase job opportunities for local people?

A The LEP has recently launched an economic plan which sets a strategic framework for facilitating economic and job growth and a move to a more low carbon economy. We will be promoting the development of a number of key growth clusters which will provide jobs for local people, and our Employment and Skills Board is working on initiatives aimed at improving skills and boosting employment and productivity in these growth sectors.

Earlier this year, the LEP took the decision to recommend the Aire Valley Leeds to be approved in the first round of Enterprise Zones and this regeneration activity is projected to create over 9,000 jobs in the longer term.

We intend that economic regeneration will help facilitate the physical regeneration that is needed across the city region.

Q16 Councillor E Taylor to Joanne Pollard - What benefits does Joanne Pollard see in attracting the Green Investment Bank to the city and what can we do to make the case for this?

A The benefits of attracting the GIB to the city fall into two areas:-

- Benefits to the UK economy and the environment from the success of the GIB.
- Benefits to the LCR from the location of the GIB.

The GIB is important for the success of the UK economy. It will enable investment in low-carbon projects that will help us to achieve the UK's legal requirement of generating 15% of its energy from renewable sources by 2020. Doing so will also enable the UK to encourage the development of new industries to support the low-carbon sector, thereby delivering growth for the economy. So the success of the GIB is important for the UK economy, and siting it in the location that has the right expertise and the right assets will aid that success. We believe that, with its access to the UK's second-largest financial centre and its expertise from the universities and organisations like CO2Sense, LCR is the right location.

LCR will also benefit directly. It already has many companies that have developed low-carbon products and services, and investment from the GIB will help these and other new companies to grow. With the local expertise from CO2Sense and others, the right ingredients are already there: easy access to finance from the GIB will catalyse these initiatives and encourage growth. This will lead to LCR developing a hub of green industries. With the market for low-carbon environmental goods and services set to enjoy growth, this will help the LCR economy.

Q17 Councillor Marjoram to Leader of Council - Given the need to reduce journey times and peak hour congestion on the City's roads, would the leader of Council provide an update on the Bike to Work scheme and confirm when contracts with independent bike shops will be in place?

A Bikes to Work promotes the cycling agenda by using a tax-efficient salary sacrifice scheme. But advantages to employees have been eroded by HRMC tax changes and the Council has had to take stock here. Early this year a procurement exercise was started to re-tender the bikes to work contract. In parallel, a review of opportunities to extend other tax efficient benefits for staff was undertaken. Rather than re-tender Bikes to Work alone, a preferred option is packaging this with other contracts, eg child care vouchers. It is also intended to include staff discount/loyalty schemes which could benefit many local businesses as well as staff.

Currently work is underway to start this procurement exercise which should still be in place for 2012. Whilst a single contract will be in place, the option to allow local cycle businesses to be sub-contracted under an overall framework will be considered in the specification. Meanwhile the Council is still offering a bike loan scheme whereby bikes can be purchased from (local) providers of choice.

Q18 Councillor Downes to Gary Williamson - How important do you feel high speed rail is to the Leeds economy and what can we do better to win the argument for hearts and minds of the public on this issue?

A High Speed Rail coming to Leeds has the potential to transform the city's economy coming, as it could do, after a decade or so of relatively low levels of investment and development due to the economic downturn. It will help underline the city's reputation as a key business centre in the UK and act as a spur for new investment and expansion.

For existing business improved connectivity with major regional, national and international markets should offer increased opportunities for new business. In particular better access to Heathrow will enable improved access to long haul

destinations as well as providing quicker journey times to the Leeds City Region for overseas businesses and tourists.

However it will be important to ensure that HS2 has a beneficial impact on as much of the city region as possible and therefore it is vital that investment continues in local transport networks to ensure quick and easy access to HSR in Leeds.

And it is this continued essential investment in local transport priorities that should be clearly seen as being joined up with plans to bring HS2 to Leeds. Linking the two, plus the fact that HS2 is not just a fast train but an economic investment, will hopefully ensure that the city's citizens understand and support the rationale for HS2 and Leeds

Leeds and the wider region have done a good job to date in making the case for the HS2 – but we need to engage with all sections of the community to continue to support that effort in an ongoing process given the first HS2 train is not timetabled to arrive until early 2030's.

Q19 Councillor Hanley to CS Money - What benefits does CS Money see for the city as a result of continued funding for PCSOs and how will this support neighbourhood policing?

A Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) form an integral part within the local Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), providing a regular visibility and public reassurance role, their value cannot be over estimated. The Council provides 30% of the funding to support 170 PCSOs across the city, with a further 150 officers receiving funding via the Police Authority, the Home Office, and other partner contributions, for example NHS Leeds. PCSOs have a specific focus on tackling local priority issues and supporting the wider locality working arrangements. In addition, they are actively involved in efforts to reduce serious acquisitive crime, and linking in to our efforts to tackle Anti Social Behaviour. Their value is, in part, reflected by the increasing confidence level reported by the public of Leeds in relation to the police and local Council dealing effectively with crime and ASB within their area.

Q20 Councillor Dowson to Ian Cameron - Can Ian Cameron offer his thoughts on the links between poor health and child poverty?

A The links between child poverty and poor health go in both directions. There is evidence that income has a direct impact on parenting and children's health and wellbeing. Importantly for Leeds with an estimated 31,000 children aged under 16 living in poverty, this relation is a graded one. In other words, not confined to those on the very lowest incomes.

But, poor health also has an impact on child poverty – disabled parents and parents with mental health problems, amongst other groups, have reduced employment opportunities or are not able to continue in work, resulting in less income, which in turn impacts on the life chances of children.

Sir Michael Marmot in his influential 2010 government review on health inequalities explicitly states that “giving every child the best start in life is crucial to reduce health inequalities across the life course.... Later interventions, although important, are considerably less effective where good early foundations are lacking.”

The Leeds Child Poverty Strategy 2011-13 aims to tackle the detrimental effect of poverty on children's progression and wellbeing. The strategy recognises that the impacts go right through into adulthood – in turn affecting the subsequent generation. Rightly, this strategy is cross-cutting – covering education, health, family support, employment and skills, income and debt. The challenge is also to counter the effects of the economic downturn.

Q21 Councillor Hamilton to Neil McLean - If we held a "state of the city" meeting in five years' time, could you give us three key achievements you would hope to report at that meeting?

A Pre-recession levels of employment, education, skills and investment levels comparable to other high performing city regions and the Green Investment Bank in the city region anchoring an internationally recognised centre of 'green' manufacturing and investment.

Q22 Councillor Driver to Gary Williamson - What does Katherine Fitzsimmons see as the key challenges currently facing the Third Sector in Leeds and how can the Council help the Third Sector overcome them?

A Third Sector organisations in Leeds share the same political and economic situation as public services, the private sector and individuals in the city- and the overarching challenge is the need to adapt and change to respond both to the changing context and the changing needs.

I'm interested in the way the question is phrased because I don't see challenges simply as being obstacles to be overcome but rather as particular circumstances that can either help organisations and individuals grow better together or drive them apart.

Issues for organisations in the sector include increasing need, which looks set to grow, diminishing capacity due to local authority funding being cut and other sources of funding being limited due to low interest rates and the need to plan for and implement change at the same time as keeping services in place to support some of the most vulnerable people in the city. If the Council were able to limit its cuts to the sector to 0% I am sure that would be of great assistance!

One of the challenges for the sector, as I believe it will be for other parts of the city, is how to hold to its value base in these times of change.

I am grateful for the tone of the question which demonstrates the Council's ongoing desire to work with the sector - but one of the challenges is the relationship between the Council and the sector. Is it relationship of equals or a dependency relationship?

Because the Council partially funds many organisations in the city, there can be a paymaster relationship and the feeling that he who pays the piper calls the tune... and at the level of service delivery that may be appropriate. But the sector has a greater contribution to make than simply service delivery. The Council has a significant role in working with us to develop appropriate ways of enabling that contribution.

I have been involved with the Leeds Initiative for quite a long time now, and my image of the partnership has been that of a three legged stool - private, public and third sector - but the legs were not even - the local authority leg was by far the longest. I think the challenge for all of us is to create a three legged stool with legs of equal length so that the city has stable support from all those who care about its well being.

Q23 Councillor Macniven to Gary Williamson - To what extent does Nigel Foster believe partnership working with the private sector can boost the number of apprenticeships and training opportunities within the city?

A Leeds Chamber believes that the private sector has a great deal to offer to boost the number of apprenticeships.

We have been working hard with our member companies, the Council and other key stakeholders, such as the National Apprenticeship service and the colleges, to encourage organisations, young people and their parents that the apprenticeship route is a good route for all.

We started by practicing what we preach and employing our own apprentices at the Chamber – which has been a great success.

We believe that partnership working is the way to create more opportunities for young people.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Tomkinson
Principal Governance Officer