

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

Held on

Wednesday, 14th November 2012

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC HALL,
LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR
(COUNCILLOR A CASTLE)

VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 14th NOVEMBER 2012

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to the main Council meeting and may I again remind Members about phones, please.

I have a number of announcements. Following the RHS Britain in Bloom Awards 2012 I am sure you will all join me in congratulating Leeds In Bloom, who won gold in the Large City category; St George's Crypt, who were announced joint winners of the RHS Britain in Bloom Young People's Award; Kippax Leeds, who won Urban Community Gold and were a joint category winner; Pat Samy from Kippax who won a discretionary award as a Community Champion.

I would like to congratulate also Leeds Rhinos on winning the Super League Grand Final 2012. (*Applause*)

Could I also advise Members please to note that the State of the City Council meeting on 28 November will commence at 1.00pm.

Finally, I have agreed to the inclusion of late items in respect of the Leeds Award and propose that this be dealt with as Item 5(a) and the LDF Core Strategy, which will be dealt with at Item 9. Thank you.

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 12th SEPTEMBER 2012

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you. I move the Minutes, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) Thank you, that is CARRIED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Declarations of Interest. The list of written declarations submitted by Members is on display in the ante-room, on deposit in the public galleries and has been circulated to each Member's place in the Chamber. Are there any further individual declarations or corrections to those notified on the list?

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I apologise. My daughter is an allotment holder so it may be necessary for me to declare a personal interest, and I believe that the person delivering the first deputation is also known. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Any others? No. Please can Members by a show of hands confirm that they have read the list as amended and agreed its content insofar as it relates to their own interests? (*Show of hands*) Thank you.

ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS.

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 3, Communications. Chief Executive, please.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Council should note that Edward Timpson, MP, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families, has written in response to the resolution of Council at its September meeting regarding school sports and the Olympic legacy. The response has been circulated to all Members of Council.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you.

ITEM 4 - DEPUTATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 4, Deputations. Chief Executive again, please.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE. Thank you, Lord Mayor. There are four deputations: Leeds and District Gardeners' Federation regarding growing your own food in the Leeds and the cost to the Council of the allotment model; second, Leeds residents regarding payday loan companies and their effect on residents of Leeds; third, Leeds University Union, Leeds Trinity Students Union and Leeds Met. Students Union regarding the Council's support for the current and future students of Leeds in three areas – education, employment and empowerment; and fourth, Morley Town Council, regarding Quality Bus Contract.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the Deputations be received.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* Thank you.
CARRIED.

DEPUTATION ONE – LEEDS AND DISTRICT GARDENER'S FEDERATION.

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MR I WOOD: My Lord Mayor and Fellow Councillors, my name is Ian Wood, I am the Chair of the Leeds and District Gardeners' Federation, and this is Phil Gomersall, who is the Publicity Officer for the Federation.

Many thanks for this opportunity to speak to you today.

The Leeds and District Gardeners' Federation Executive Committee fully supports our delegation. At its meeting last Wednesday they made it clear that we had to say to you we are the voice of the self-managed allotment movement in Leeds, and we run about 65% of the allotment plots in the city.

The Federation welcomes the Feed Leeds initiative, which seeks to encourage residents of the city to grow their own food. We firmly believe, however, that no resources from allotments' section of the Parks and Countryside Department should be spent on the Feed Leeds initiative. We question whether people really want to grow vegetables and fruit in public parks, where they are vulnerable to vandalism, pollution and contamination, and whether they want to grow their radishes on roundabouts.

My own involvement with community gardening and communal food growing began in 1976. We could not make it work then and our subsequent experience suggests that it will not work now. On the other hand, the allotment movement began in the mid-19th Century and has been the proven model of local food production ever since.

Local food growers need the security and responsibility of growing their own food on a dedicated and safe allotment site where they are responsible for their own plots. When you have a community model of cultivation where many people are responsible for a plot then, in fact, nobody is responsible.

There are 1,500 people on allotment waiting lists in the city and yet there are still many City controlled allotment sites with derelict plots. Why would the Council support this new Community Gardening Initiative when current allotment plots lie derelict? Why are we not responding to this huge demand for allotment plots, this 1,500 people on the waiting list? Even the long promised post of Allotment Manager in the Parks and Countryside Department is apparently due to be lost to this new and unproved Community Gardening Initiative.

This is a reminder that not every new initiative that comes up the M1 from London is worth supporting. I ask you to support our allotments in Leeds, remembering that we were in the national vanguard developing the self-managed allotment movement nationally. Allotments, please, fully supported by the Council; not nut trees in public parks and radishes on roundabouts.

Thank you very much indeed. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for further consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) CARRIED. Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon.

DEPUTATION TWO – LEEDS RESIDENTS REGARDING PAYDAY LOANS

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MR R WARD: Thank you, my Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors. My name is Bob Ward. I would like to introduce Doreen ward and Rob Bumby. Doreen and Rob are two Members of the campaign which started in March of this year. Let me explain that I have lived in Leeds since 1969 but, as you can probably tell from my

accent, I was not born here, I come from was born in Northamptonshire, so I am one of the few people who can truthfully say I come from a load of old cobblers!

I have been supporting Northampton Town Football Club for all of those years since my middle teenage years and watching their fortunes (or should I say more often their misfortunes) on their website, and it began to irritate me earlier this year that every time I looked at the website there were advertisements for a well-known payday loans company, whose name I am not allowed to mention but I think perhaps you have all heard of it.

I started to contact some of my football friends, including Rob, Doreen and 25 or 30 other people all over the country, and we wrote a letter to the Guardian which had an amazing effect very, very quickly – it started a small tsunami of reaction in the press, on the radio, on Twitter, on Facebook and, as a result of that and continuing correspondence, the Football League, at the end of last season, decided to terminate the contract with this certain un-named payday loan company.

That followed in July with a resolution which was passed at the Football Supporters Federation Annual General Meeting in London, where a resolution was carried unanimously calling upon the footballing authorities in England and Wales to prohibit advertising by payday loans anywhere in football. That has not happened yet but we live in hopes. It took quite a long time to make a change to the smoking laws; it took a long time to change many other laws that we now take for granted.

Some clubs, as you will have noticed if you watch the television or look in the papers, still continue to advertise payday loan companies across the chests of their football shirts. One famous club which took part in the Matthews Cup Final in 1953, and another one up in Tyneside, recently have concluded contracts with this particular payday loan company. On those shirts, it is not just for adults, it is for juniors and, regrettably, even for babies. What sort of a society do we have when you can advertise payday loans on clothing for babies? What sort of message does it send?

The short-time and payday loans industry is a huge industry, it is about 200 companies, some operating online and others operating in thousands of High Street branches all across the land, with more or less no regulation at all. They charge interest rates, APRs, of 2000%, 3000%, even over 4000%. Compare that to Europe where allowable APRs are less than 20%. In this country Credit Unions charge around about —27%. In Leeds the Community Development Finance Institution is charging around 50%.

The problems with these short-term loans are getting worse and worse and worse. You can hardly open a newspaper or look at a television broadcast without seeing something of the effect these companies are having on our society. The best-known of these payday loan companies, the poster-child of the industry, if you like, in 2010 made 830,000 loans. In 2011, last year, they made two and a half million loans. On each of these loans, they made an average of £75 in interest and charges - administration charges, late payment charges and so on. £75 is a lot of money to a lot of families but compare that to the wages paid to Premiership and Championship footballers. If you are paying such a player and probably his agent out of those, it would take 250 new loans every week to pay that player's salary.

Yesterday on Radio 4's Today programme in the morning, an industry spokesman for the Consumer Finance Association, I think they are called, claimed that 45% of customers of payday loan companies are in the ABC1 demographic group. He did not break that down any further, so that 45% may have been 1% A,

2% B and 43% C1, but whatever we break that up, 55% of people taking out these loans are in the C2, D and E social categories.

One payday loan in three is taken out to pay off payday other loans. A third of payday loans are 'rolled over'.

THE LORD MAYOR: Your five minutes is up, I am afraid. Could you make your final point?

MR R WARD: I could, yes. What I would ask you to do is to continue the excellent work which you are doing already but to spread the message that such loans are dangerous whenever, wherever and however you can to your tenants, constituents, community groups, colleges, doctors' surgeries, schools in the city centre and in suburban centres, wherever you can and also take it up with your Members of Parliament on whichever side of the Chamber you sit. Take it up with your Members of Parliament.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am afraid I must ask you to finish.

MR R WARD: Thank you very much. Thank you all. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the item be referred to Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon.

MR R WARD: Thank you, my Lord Mayor, thank you all. *(Applause)*

DEPUTATION THREE – LEEDS UNIVERSITY UNION, LEEDS TRINITY STUDENTS UNION AND LEEDS METROPOLITAN STUDENTS UNION

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your Deputation.

MR D ALCORN: My Lord Mayor, fellow Councillors, the Members of my deputation are Anthony Haddley, Union Affairs officer for Leeds University Union, and myself, David Alcorn, President of Leeds Met Students Union. We are here representing the 100,000 students of Leeds from our four Students Unions and today we want to talk about the situation students in this city are in, in the face of the national policies implemented by the Coalition Government

Our education is under threat. Whether it is the cuts to the Educational Maintenance Allowance that have left college students with a greater financial burden when they enter further education, or the havoc the Government has wreaked with the Higher Education system, we, the students of Leeds, have grave concerns for the direction that we are being taken in.

This year, it is estimated that there are 2500 fewer undergraduate students in the city, according to Unipol Student Homes and Re'new Charity, with a large number of postgraduate students also missing this year. These are thousands of students who will not get to benefit from an education in Leeds; these are thousands of people who cannot contribute to our distinct culture and economy, and thousands who will not stay on to share their skills as graduates.

Just in case you are not convinced that this is a bad thing on these terms, we can boil it down to simple economics: 2500 fewer students in the city an estimated – and this is from a recent study from the University of Strathclyde Report – £2b less a year spent in this city and region. £2b. Students are far more than a money maker for Leeds, but the presence of students here really does have a wide impact.

In a deputation last March, our colleagues talked to you about the importance of access to higher education in the light of a new fees structure. We will not repeat that point; hopefully it is an obvious one by now. What we will say is that we need a better model for education, where you can access further and higher education regardless of age, financial background or any other barrier. We want to live in a city where mature students, part-time students and, yes, traditional undergraduates learn together with a benefit to the entire city.

This issue does not just end with a progressive vision for education. We are experiencing a time when youth unemployment is at some of the highest levels since the 1980s. Graduates are concerned about their job prospects in a highly competitive market, and are finding a shortage of graduate level jobs. School and college leavers are finding it equally difficult to get on to the career ladder. The skills and careers advice we get as students is all well and good, but when there are not jobs to apply to there is a much bigger problem than simply being prepared for the world of work.

So when we are frustrated and concerned about our future, do we as students feel empowered to change it? Some students have been put off by broken promises from the last election; some never engaged in politics in the first place because they see it as irrelevant to their day to day life, but many are still involved - many students are reaching out to try and change the world around them for the better.

The question we have for you is this, are students a group you reach out to? Do you see students as voters, as constituents, or are they just there and in the way of the other residents in the area? Are students more than just an economic consideration to the city? Are students valued as residents of Leeds? Depending on who you ask, that answer will definitely vary.

I have so far been speaking about large scale issues, national politics and students as a political entity, but what we are really here for today is to ask for your help on a more local level. You have heard our concerns, and we would like you to work with us to address them. At a time when finances are a huge burden for those of us wanting to study, we need a city that offers affordable accommodation, that encourages students to move here and experience everything we have to offer as a city. We need housing policies that do not demonise the housing choices we make. Instead, we need an understanding that affordable housing is one of the greatest enablers of our access to education.

It costs £72.40 a week to live in a Unipol code accredited shared house, and £116 per week to live in Sky Plaza student accommodation. Restricting the amount of shared housing available to students in Leeds is massively adding to the costs of education.

We need more reliable public transport that gives us a safe way home when studying late on campus, with fares that allow students travelling from outside of Leeds to study without the added financial burden.

We need your help when we reach out to inspire the next generation of learners. We want to work with you to share the amazing things that happen on our campuses with the rest of the city, whether that is Leeds Met Students Union's volunteering in the local community, helping elderly people learn IT skills, or Leeds University Union raising £23,000 for 27 local charities through their student-led Raise and Give Society.

Next week we will be going down to London with the NUS to demonstrate outside Parliament. A lot of the issues we have highlighted today are due to Government policy and that is where our voice needs to be strongest and loudest. If you share our concerns and see a partnership between students and the city becoming even stronger, come with us. Help us show that it is not just the Students' Unions who are concerned, but a united Leeds, telling the Government that something needs to change.

THE LORD MAYOR: Please can you make your final point, Mr Alcorn?

MR D ALCORN: You can come with us and hold a placard, you can tweet a message of support, but essentially what we are really after is that most of all the Council will publicly endorse the aims of the demo, that education is a good thing in and of itself for Leeds and for society as a whole, that students in this city should feel empowered to change the world around them and that students with degrees from outstanding institutions...

THE LORD MAYOR: I must ask you to finish now, Mr Alcorn, your five minutes is up.

MR D ALCORN: OK. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to the Executive Board for consideration.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED. Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon. *(Applause)*

DEPUTATION FOUR – MORLEY TOWN COUNCIL

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your Deputation.

COUNCILLOR J JACKSON: Thank you, madam Mayor, and thank you, fellow colleagues. Good afternoon, Lord Mayor and Councillors. The delegation from Morley Town Council today includes myself, Councillor Josie Jackson (ward Member for the Topcliffe ward), Karen Oakley, our Town Clerk, and Mr Andrew Paver, resident of Morley and some of the residents who actually live on the same area as Mr Paver lives.

We are attending today's Council meeting to ask for consideration for the support of Leeds City Council for a Quality Bus Contract which will accommodate the needs of residents along the Bruntcliffe Road, Britannia Road and Fountain Street corridors.

In the 1980s it was decided by the Government at that time to de-regulate the buses. The view of that Government was that this would increase competition, that prices would fall and that the number of routes would increase as different bus companies vied for passengers. The subsequent years have shown this not to be the case. Bus fares have increased and the number of bus operators has dropped. Many bus passengers believe they have little choice and that bus fares are neither reasonable nor competitive. The Integrated Transport Authority has limited powers to direct the bus companies to deliver routes that are socially necessary and can either offer subsidy to bus operators to cover unprofitable routes or the bus companies will refuse to offer socially required services. The bus companies will happily deliver more buses on routes that bring them larger profits and have made millions in profits from this approach since bus de-regulation was introduced.

The Bruntcliffe Road, Britannia Road and Fountain Street corridors have a large community of older and lower income residents, many without cars. They have little choice other than to walk to where the bus routes are, if they are physically able to, and to pay the prices demanded. This leaves many people without a bus service and leads to social isolation and other associated difficulties.

We believe it is reasonable for bus operators to take their social responsibility seriously. They should be using some of their profitable routes to cross-subsidise those routes which are socially necessary to improve community cohesion. Indeed this is what corporate responsibility is about. We know that the Integrated Transport Authority is considering Quality Bus Contracts which will impose social obligations on the bus operators. Campaigners in Morley have tried for many years to get bus operators to accept those obligations and provide a bus service that local residents need. We ask the City Council to support us with our request to bring some social justice to Morley bus passengers and to bring a Quality Bus Contract to the Bruntcliffe Road, Britannia Road and Fountain Street corridors. This will put people, not profits, first. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move that the matter be referred to the West Yorkshire Integrated Transport Authority for further consideration.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED
Thank you.

Thank you for attending and for what you have said. You will be kept informed of the consideration which your comments will receive. Good afternoon.

COUNCILLOR J JACKSON: Good afternoon, madam Mayor and Councillors. *(Applause)*

ITEM 5 – REPORT ON APPOINTMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5, report on Appointments. Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED
Thank you.

5(a) LEEDS AWARD

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5(a), the Leeds Award. Councillor Wakefield.

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

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* Thank you.
CARRIED

ITEM 6 – REPORT ON ATTENDANCE AT COUNCIL MEETINGS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 6, Report on attendance at Council meetings.
Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED
Thank you.

ITEM 7 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 7, Recommendations of the General Purposes
Committee. Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Move in terms of the Notice, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I know that on the morning of Councillor meetings all Members wake with a frisson of excitement at the prospect of yet another entertaining afternoon at Leeds City Council, and the Whips, to give them their due, have been working very hard to organise the meeting to make it even more entertaining and exciting than it is currently.

I would just like, however, to point out that there are just one or two little items that concern those Members of the Opposition who do not fall into the Group called Conservative in relation to the ability of that Group to bring forward items and, in particular, the reference in this particular document to White Paper resolutions. As you will see if you have read it – I know you all have read this document closely – it

appears to give a hereditary right to the Conservative Group to produce the first White Paper resolution at every Council meeting for ever.

I appreciate that as we will see this afternoon with Councillor Lamb they are most entertaining White Paper resolutions and I look forward to the discussion, as I look forward to the discussion of all the future ones, but I do think that in the case of democracy the old system that used to apply, which was basically first come, first served, better served the democratic process because it actually allowed, dare I say this, perhaps the Labour Party to get the first chance at a White Paper resolution.

I appreciate it if you do not want to do that, that is fine, but I think it is fair that everybody within this Council has an equal opportunity to bring forward resolutions to the Council. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In our attempts to make Council more entertaining I did not realise that we would be introducing a regular debate on Council Procedure Rules itself, led off by Councillor Colin Campbell.

I think Colin may have his rose-tinted spectacles on a little bit because there was never a first come, first served principle on White Papers under the old system. The first White Paper was reserved for the Opposition and the second White Paper was reserved for the administration, and then the third and fourth, which we normally ended up nodding through whilst people were rapidly putting their hats and coats on at the end of the meeting.

Again, I think we are in a position now where we have got a fairer distribution of White Papers, a position where every White Paper gets debated so there is none of this shall we get to it or shall we just be shoving through a matter without debate. We have got a position where it is much better managed. As Councillor Campbell says, we had eight meetings on the subject of changing the Council Procedure Rules and it seems you are bringing the matter into a ninth, but I think we had a general agreement around all the parties about taking this one forward and I think it has been welcomed by most people. With that I move the item.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED, thank you.

ITEM 8 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 8, Councillor Wakefield.

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

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: All those in favour? (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED, thank you.

ITEM 9 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 9, Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: I move as is set out in the Order Paper. I notice that I am allocated four minutes at this stage...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: You do not need to use them.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: ...and three minutes at the end, so seeing as there are a lot of people who are going to contribute, I would like to make just these short statements.

We shall listen very carefully to Councillor Campbell as to the reasons for his amendment, which are not spelled out actually in the written word, and then decide how we will vote.

The second point is that I recognise everyone in the Chamber accords the greatest importance to the Core Strategy because it affects all of us in every part of the city and therefore all the residents who we represent, and therefore I acknowledge everyone has a genuine interest and I thank you all for the participation through the site allocation meetings and I recognise, as officers have said to some of you, that the process will continue, perhaps not exactly in the same format but it has to continue because that is what it is all about.

The third point I want to make is that I hope everyone in this Chamber recognises that we cannot allow ourselves to be in a position where developers basically have a free hit every time we put something forward because we do not have a Core Strategy in place, we do not have site allocations in place and we cannot pray in aid that policy for the Council. There is a huge need in terms of time scale, I acknowledge wisdom as well, but in terms of time scale to move forward as swiftly as possible.

I will do my best to respond to comments at the end. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell to move an amendment.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think we all appreciate the importance to the Council and the City of Leeds of the LDF and I think certainly on this side, and the Members of the LDF Panel have expressed a willingness to do whatever they can to ensure that both the Core Strategy and the subsequent documents are dealt with expeditely(*sic*).

I would say, however, Lord Mayor, that one of the factors – and I appreciate Councillor Gruen's comments with regard to the meeting with ward Members on site allocations and I would thank him for that because I think it has been valuable. I would say that for all the Members round the Chamber, and in particular Members of the LDF Panel, the issue in relation to affordable housing, which is a feature of all our wards, it does not just apply to certain wards, is one that has exercised us most of all, and certainly the LDF Panel was very concerned that when the original document came forward, it was not, in our opinion, sufficiently robust in relation to affordable units. I give the example (and I will borrow it from Councillor Procter) in the original

document we had a situation whereby a developer could come forward with a plan for 14 houses in, say, the Wetherby ward, each of which would sell for £1m, and not have to make any contribution whatsoever to affordability, yet a developer who came forward with a block of flats, for 16 flats in Harehills, for example, would actually have to make provision for one of those to be an affordable unit.

We took the view on the LDF Panel quite clearly – and think that was an all party view – that everybody should make a contribution to the provision of the affordables.

On site we accepted that we would have a trigger mechanism, say 14, at which you would provide one on site; below that we said it is reasonable for a developer to come forward with a contribution into a pot and either as a combined effort make some units available somewhere else or, in fact, the Council could actually use that funding to invest in affordable units.

I have to be honest with you and say there was some reluctance among officers to accept that point of view and it did come back on a number of occasions to the LDF Panel in relation to this and the LDF Panel were consistent in the view that we should make a clear statement that all developments should make a contribution, and we did not agree with their view – and I think it is fairly clear from the documentation coming out from Government – that you should not simply say this should be associated with the Community Infrastructure Levy, because the document in front of you says, “This will be associated with Community Infrastructure Levy if it is below 14 units.” Above 14 units there is no reference to it.

We were quite clear to officers that we did not want to include the Community Infrastructure Levy because we felt that is a different pot of money for different things, but it is very important that we make a very clear statement as a Council about the need to provide affordable units within this city.

To take out that sentence does not delay the process in any way whatsoever. It simply makes it very, very clear that any housing developer who comes forward with a plan will have to make a contribution to help provide units that are affordable for people who live in the city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, may I second Councillor Campbell’s amendment and go on to comment.

Development Plan Panel worked long and hard for many months on Core Strategy. By and large officers were willing to accept constructive criticism and make amendments which should satisfy or head off some objections and save time at the public hearing. Even so, there was one area in which little progress was made, which was housing. Officers obstinately defended untenable positions with almost limitless tenacity.

We fought trench warfare from January until very recently to extend the Affordable Housing Policy. That change will require a contribution to affordable housing in cash or kind from builders of all new houses. Currently groups of fewer than 15 dwellings, including many of the most expensive, escape any contribution at

all. It is rare that £1m houses are built 15 or more at a time. Even so, officers would not concede with good grace and insisted on leaving in a link to Community Infrastructure Levy which defied common sense. The removal of that last blemish is the purpose of Councillor Campbell's amendment.

We never got far at all with population growth, Leeds Wide Housing Targets, the definition of the strange boundaries of the housing market character areas or the house building targets within them. There was no discussion of them before publication of the Core Strategy February draft and I formed an impression that they were talked out at DPP meetings in January by endless presentations of minor matters.

You sometimes think that there is a sub-plot just below the surface in which some see Leeds as being in a race to outgrow Birmingham in time for the 2031 census. They must be reminded that the vision for Leeds aims to make it the best city in the United Kingdom, not the biggest outside London. We need quality rather than quantity; we need to provide for the three-quarters of a million or so people who will be here in 2028 or 2031 and not those who will not be here.

Finally, there is a Procedure Rule oddity. Someone recently stumbled on regulations that require the Core Strategy to be scrutinised formally. DPP is an advisory body, not a Scrutiny Board, so Members of Scrutiny Board (Sustainable Economy and Culture) were called to a special meeting on 1 November to look at the Core Strategy. It is hard to see how they could have done a thorough job from a standing start in one hurried session, but they managed three small amendments which hardly was surprising when DPP was only partly successful after several months.

We will support Councillor Campbell's hard-fought amendment but not the overall substance of the Core Strategy as it stands. Thank you, Lord Mayor.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dawson.

COUNCILLOR DAWSON: My Lord Mayor, as Councillor Gruen said, the LDF Strategy is a difficult issue for everyone in this Council and especially for those who represent towns such as Morley. We could be faced with our towns being submerged into a vast urban sprawl. This could happen if the Green Belt and the distinctive open spaces are eroded and disappear. I want the Green Belt around Morley to be protected. I want the Green Belt corridor either side of Dewsbury Road, that separates Morley from Middleton, to remain intact. I want the green boundary around Tingley, Woodkirk and up to the Kirklees boundary to remain intact. I want the Green Belt along Rein Road and Howden Clough Road to be protected and to remain intact. I also want the PAS site Owlery Farm and Low Moor Farm to be included as green space and protected from development in the Core Strategy.

The big question is, how is this done? In my relatively short time on the Council I have been impressed by the cross-party support for protecting Green Belt and for encouraging development on brown field sites. Councillor Andrew Carter has shown courage and leadership in speaking out against his own Government, and I welcome his resolution earlier this year to protect PAS land from further development.

I also welcome Councillor John Procter's robust comments about unscrupulous developers and I know some of my colleagues – and I am looking at Mick now – may not like the praise but it is deserved.

Increasingly, to defend Morley Green Belt my experience leads me to believe it is important to work with parties across the political divide for the benefit of Morley, something the MBI Councillors seem reluctant to do. (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR: We don't believe you.

COUNCILLOR DAWSON: They are motivated completely by their own political self-interest. They put attacking Labour at the heart of what they do, not defending the interests of Morley.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Bye Neil, bye.

COUNCILLOR DAWSON: Here is an example. I objected to the proposal to build houses in the green space at Bruntcliffe Road back in April, and reiterated my comments again in September. My Morley South MBI Councillors did not object until October, three days before the Plans Panel meeting was due to meet – a political example of playing the man, not the ball, if ever there was one.

Even now I urge the MBI Councillors to work with other parties to get the best deal for Morley.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: They voted for the LDF.

COUNCILLOR DAWSON: The danger is we do not have a Core Strategy and the Green Belt around Morley is eroded as this Government decides to build extra houses in Green Belt land in places such as Morley. Any message to Eric Pickles and the Government has more weight and urgency when it carries all-party support. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Truswell.

COUNCILLOR TRUSWELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This is probably one of the most important documents this Council will ever agree – or is it? Given the contortions of our good friend Mr Pickles it is really difficult to know. We know how he slithered across the floor of George Osborne's office...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Like you slithered out of the House of Commons.

COUNCILLOR TRUSWELL: ...to offer up cuts far in excess of those that he was asked to deliver. Now, at the behest of developers, he is performing similar slithering with the planning process. Clearly in respect of the National Planning Policy Framework, he did not slither quite enough, so now we have got the pernicious Growth and Infrastructure Bill. With it he is making a bonfire of democratic local planning procedures and Section 106 agreements in respect of affordable housing.

Since arriving back on the Council I have heard a worrying mantra about Leeds being open for business. It worries me because it implies a subservience to banks, businesses and developers and we know where that can lead.

We are not simply Leeds City Council plc. Yes, we have a vital regeneration role to play; yes, we must strive to provide and protect jobs; yes, construction plays an important role, but we also have a vital role in promoting people's health and welfare and protecting their environment, and that is why we need a much more robust definition of "sustainability".

Real sustainability is about ensuring that we do not leave our communities, our city and our planet in a worse state than we found them. Surely development cannot be regarded as sustainable where there are too few school places. It cannot be regarded as sustainable where there are not enough GPs and dentists. It cannot be sustainable without real, rather than imagined, public transport to combat chronic congestion. It cannot be sustainable where there is a lack of recreation and play space.

On this issue – and I am hoping there is still time – we can afford to push the board out. Our LDF has to be tested by Planning Inspectors before we unleash it on an unsuspecting world. If our definition of "sustainability" is too sensible to comply with Government diktat, we will be told. If we strive too much to protect green space, we will be told. If we go too far in trying to protect our constituents' wellbeing, we will be told - but at least we will have tried.

I do not know about you, fellow Members of Council, but I want to tell my constituents and our children and their children that we did all we could to protect the world that they inherit from us. If we do not and if we cannot, then I fear that they will inflict a bitter and damning verdict on our failures. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, now we know why nobody misses Mr Truswell in the Houses of Parliament. So much for cross-party support.

My Lord Mayor, I am speaking on this item, I hope, in a spirit of support and I want to echo something which is very difficult for me that Councillor Gruen started off by saying as regards the importance of the Core Strategy, the LDF. If we do not have an adopted LDF it will be open season for developers in the City of Leeds, and however difficult it is to get to the point where we get an adopted LDF? We have to get there or the democratic powers that we have as a planning authority will be at the whim of developers whose only idea is to build houses as easily as possible wherever they can on green field sites. Please will someone tell them forcibly we do not accept the argument from them any more that they are doing it (a) to stimulate the economy, or (b) to regenerate sites. As is rightly pointed out in the Evening Post this last week, there are 21,000 outstanding residential housing applications within the boundaries of this city. My message to the building fraternity is, get on and build those which you have permission to do.

My Lord Mayor, I am concerned about a couple of areas. First of all, we know it is hard times in Council resources terms, but we must resource the Planning

Department sufficiently to bring forward a robust Local Development Plan and I am not sure we have grasped that particular nettle.

Secondly, we must explode the myth of the SHLAA. Incidentally, I do not want to go back to Mr Truswell particularly, but he was the MP who supported Regional Spatial Strategies which, incidentally, identified the same number of houses that have been identified now, and the SHLAA. The SHLAA was the creature of Gordon Brown and Kate Barker, his housing guru. They foisted off on all Planning Authorities this SHLAA, which is not a Statutory Instrument. Because some developer identifies a site in the SHLAA that he would like to develop it gives it no legal standing whatever. It merely means that it has been identified and might be considered or might not. Members of this Council, please do not encourage your constituents to believe it is any other than a wish list from developers, and that is what it is – a wish list, not a Statutory Instrument. Too many people are coming to me saying, “This SHLAA identifies this site for building.” Some Liberal Democrats might believe that is a *fait accompli*; most of us believe it is not a *fait accompli* and we must be sure of our ground there, but most of all we must have a robust LDF that we can all support. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wood.

COUNCILLOR COULSON: Point of order, Lord Mayor. Councillors addressing the Chamber should stand up when speaking. Could you ask Councillor Wood to stand up? *(interruption)*

THE LORD MAYOR: That was not very nice!

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Apologise.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: That is rich coming from the baldest, fattest, deafest Members in this Chamber! *(Laughter)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Please may we now let Councillor Wood speak.

COUNCILLOR COULSON: He told me to say it! *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR WOOD: My Lord Mayor, please reassure my friend, who I cannot see from here *(laughter)*...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: He is not worth seeing.

COUNCILLOR WOOD: Please reassure him that I am standing up and my fellow Councillors will be delighted to hear that, unlike Councillor Coulson, the length of my public speeches is directly proportionate to my physical stature. *(laughter)* Short - and sweet, sometimes.

I believe that the LDF Core Strategy is of crucial importance, not just to the city itself but it equally applies to all the towns, the villages and the Parishes in the Greater Leeds Area. Like my colleague Councillor Andrew Carter – and here I think that I speak for all 99 Councillors – I am concerned that our Core Strategy needs to be robust if we are to protect our city from urban sprawl via the greed of developers seeking more Green Belt sacrifice.

Fellow Councillors, we will never be forgiven if the citizens of Leeds are led to believe that through the lack of will and resources our Core Strategy results in officers being unable to defend the city against predatory landowners, builders and developers.

I am not convinced that this city needs 21,000 new homes. Who says so? Who is going to buy them? Who is going to fund them? How are they going to get these funds together?

However, assuming that we do need to build 21,000 new homes, we already have existing planning approvals for all of them. Many of these are on brown field sites which are not popular with the builders, who prefer to build on the green field sites as they are easier to develop, as well as being fortunately more profitable. Sadly, it seems that the developers are being supported by Government Planning Inspectors as well as, dare I say, the Secretary of State of the current Government and, I have to say, of the previous Government too. They continue to overrule our planning departments, our Plans Panels and the groundswell of local opinion.

Whatever happened to Localism? Fellow Councillors, we are being told that we are all in this together. Sorry, but I do not think so. I repeat that our Core Strategy must be robust and we must not always bow to be able to confirm. We must stand up for the protection of our Green Belt boundaries, or we will never be forgiven by future generations. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cohen.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor, and if I may assure Members of Council, I too am standing up! *(Laughter)*

The LDF Core Strategy is arguably one of the most important pieces of city-wide work to come out of the Council for some time. We know that without the Core Strategy in place and in place soon, the city will continue to lose appeals against decisions by our own planners. We know that without the Core Strategy in place, and in place soon, it can and will, as Councillor Carter has said, be open season for developers right across the city, but particularly in the outer areas – north, south, east and west.

We know all of this but because a key part of our strategy is to protect the city's position at appeals, to effectively provide the city's defence against inappropriate development, I am hugely concerned, and it is a concern I have raised before, that we have not sought the advice of the QC that would actually represent us at those appeals on the document as a whole; advice to ensure that in their supremely qualified opinion the document is legally as good as it can be, as watertight as it can be.

In our Scrutiny meeting Sustainable Economy and Culture, where I absolutely assure Members the matter was well and truly scrutinised, and anybody who knows Councillor Lyons will know that there is no Scrutiny Board he would be involved in where such a process would not be full and thorough – and I speak for myself and all Members of the Scrutiny Board, indeed, to that end – a number of issues were raised with the document itself, actually by Members opposite who I will not embarrass by

naming now. Think what a team of experienced property development lawyers would find with this document if we were, in the short time we had, able to find a number of issues with it.

I know I raised this point at the Scrutiny Board. I know Councillor Procter made this point at Exec, but I urge Council to take this final opportunity to ensure that the document genuinely achieves what it is supposed to.

From my personal experience of 14 years as a commercial lawyer, there is a world of difference between seeing a part of a document, which I know our QC has, to seeing the document as a whole. In the long run I submit to Council this will save us time, it will save considerable money and it will prevent appeals being lost in the future.

It also need not cause any real delay, because if we get the document to counsel, to our QC, tomorrow, in two weeks' time we are all sat here again and we could approve the strategy at that meeting as an additional item. We could, in short, do that rarest of things and get it right first time. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I say I am standing up and I know some of you wish I was not going to be, but I accept that.

Can I first of all start by actually supporting the process, the way that it has been done and also the opportunities that I have had and a number of my colleagues to regularly interact with everyone throughout the Chamber here and to try and get things correct. Unfortunately, there are still some questions that I would have but, because of the time constraints, I do accept that some of them might not be achieved, but I would like officers and Members to think how they could introduce some of those things.

As has already been said, there are a number of inconsistencies in the Core Strategy. If you are stupid enough, like me, to have actually read it, you will see that there are a lot of inconsistencies. It says one thing in one chapter and then does not say the same in another chapter and, knowing the developers like I know them, they will then pick on the version that suits them most of all and will then cause us problems.

I would ask Councillor Gruen to reconsider and try and do something about getting the definition of "sustainability". This was not a politician that suggested it to us, it was people who were training us, giving us training and saying that in their view it was a gap in our Core Strategy that we had not set out a clear definition of what we mean by "sustainable". This is not a party-political point, that was something that was said to us and given to us as advice in terms of what we got.

I also do think we need to set out clearly the criteria for a number of the tests that are in the Core Strategy. Again, if you read through it there are a number of tests that various developers have got to go through, but it does not tell you sometimes thoroughly what those tests are and how do residents understand what those tests are so that they can then argue against that development on grounds of it being unsustainable, or whatever.

Finally, I do think more needs to be clear as to what we are going to do about the lack of infrastructure that is in place before some of these developments go ahead. I still am not convinced that we have been tough enough in getting the infrastructure put in place before we actually try and deliver these houses. I think what will happen is that we will build the houses and then ten years later someone will say, “Oh, I wish we had got the infrastructure in” and, as was pointed out by Councillor Rachel Procter at the training session we are at, some of the developers do not build out all of their development so that they do not start having to pay to get some of this infrastructure put in place and we need to look at how we can get that done because they are opting out – they are trying to still get the profits but not put the investment back into the communities. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just in opening, I too share Councillor Cohen’s concerns and I would urge Councillor Gruen and Councillor Wakefield to look again to see if there is not an opportunity to refer this entire document to a QC on its journey. It will save an awful lot of time when we come to independent inspection, which this document will clearly have to go through.

We have heard a lot of warm words so far in terms of this process and this document. I do not like it. I do not like it one little bit quite frankly. I know many other people in this Council Chamber do not either, but we have no choice. We have absolutely no choice in this matter and that is the difficulty of all of us.

In relation to the numbers, do we need the numbers that are outlined in this document, the Scrutiny Board which I Chair, and I thank those who served on it last year in particular who came to grips with very difficult issues and scrutinised to the Nth degree the numbers and the requirements to see if there was any possible way in which we did not, as a city, have to deliver these housing numbers and very sadly, and unfortunately, our conclusion was that we had to and that is why you see the total sum of houses in particular as it still is because literally we could not find a way through it and a way out of it as a Scrutiny Board.

I find myself in the disturbing position of agreeing with part of what Councillor Truswell said in relation to are we a city that is...

COUNCILLOR TRUSWELL: Say that again?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: ... exactly, open for business, and, yes, I want the city to be open for business. However, I do not want the developers to trample all over everything that we do and I am very worried about the message that is being conveyed to developers.

There are a number of officers here today, senior officers, who have responsibility for this area. I hope they are noting that on this issue we are almost a united Council – almost a united Chamber. I hope they do take note on that and they approach developers with caution and in the best interests of the city.

Just finally I want to comment on the meetings that have taken place with ward Members in terms of site allocation. I hope officers also take note of what

Members are saying at those site allocation meetings. If Members are coming up with constructive proposals where development can take place and they are achieving the numbers, it is us, it is the elected Members who know their communities best and I sincerely hope that those views will be the ones that come out as a result of site allocation. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

Can I very briefly say that we too share the views of Councillor Campbell and his amendment.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Peter Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, thank you very much. What I feared has happened, we have had nine excellent contributions and I can only touch on each one in passing, but if anybody wants to follow that up further with me outside the meeting please do, because I do take seriously all the comments made by everyone.

I am proposing that we accept Councillor Campbell's amendment. I think in that, though, we will remove that particular reference but there is also a reference, I think, in policy H5 which we need to deal with at the same time, because there are two references still in the document. We will come back to it and discuss these matters further.

Councillor Leadley I pay tribute to in terms of his work on the Development Plans Panel. I cannot, then, understand how he can walk away from that hard work and take the position he does on some of the Morley issues, but that is again for another day.

I also want to thank the Scrutiny Board Chairs. I think nearly every Scrutiny Board has had an input into this. I know Councillor Illingworth on Health will want to come back further and I know Children's want to come further and Councillor Blake on Schools, and I also know Adult Social Care have particular issues in terms of how we define elderly housing and fit that in.

I hope Councillor Dawson's point about protection of PAS and Green Belt were aspirational and I think absolutely right, everybody in this Chamber will enter the discussions wanting to seek protection and we will have to see how all of that comes out because, I repeat, every part of the city will have to take part in this particular process and not look to other parts taking all the difficult decisions.

I will look again, I think Councillor Truswell, Councillor Procter, Councillor Anderson made the point about sustainability. It is defined in the document but if we can do more and if we can square the circle better, I think we should do so.

I want to reassure Andrew Carter that we have put resources into the process; if we need to do more we will do more and I can also say to him I understand exactly the point he is making about SHLAA and Councillor Procter and I and others are discussing these issues as we move forward.

Localism, Councillor Wood, well said, well done. We agree with you, even though Mr Pickles might not. Dan Cohen's advice on the QC, again, well made point, I will discuss it further with officers, see if there is any way that we can do more.

Councillor Anderson, again, sustainability and infrastructure proposals – absolutely crucial. I can totally reassure you that Councillor Wakefield, myself, Councillor Lewis, the Chief Executive, the Development Department, we are all on the same page as you are in terms of the importance of infrastructure. I am sorry if I have missed anybody out but come and see me later. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: May I call for the vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Campbell, please? (*A vote was taken*) CARRIED

The amendment now becomes the substantive motion. (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED. Thank you very much.

ITEM 10 – QUESTIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: We now come on to Item 10, Questions. Just to remind you all that the experiment we carried out last time whereby people did not have to read out their question was not a success, so we are going back to Plan A.

Councillor Wood.

COUNCILLOR WOOD: My Lord Mayor, I was going to say simply I ask Question 1 in terms of the notice. Would you like me to read it out?

THE LORD MAYOR: Yes, please.

COUNCILLOR WOOD: Given the importance of the Little London, Beeston Hill and Holbeck PFI Scheme and the numerous changes to the scope and the finances considered by the Executive Board over the last year, would the Executive Member care to comment on the finances and affordability of the scheme and indicate whether it is on course to be delivered on time and on budget?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, thank you very much and, Councillor Wood, thank you for the question.

I can reassure you that, in conjunction with the appropriate ward Members and the Member of Parliament, I am discussing the way forward on this particular project. This project was shovel ready in 2010 – shovel ready is a Government expression. We were ready to go out on site in 2010. It has been very disappointing to have had a number of delays, to have been caught up in the bankers' financial cycle and not to be on site yet.

I am going to resist temptation to day to make any promises. I just say we are closer or it is getting better, because until we have financial close and we know we are going to get on to site, that is when I shall be optimistic.

Thank you, we understand the importance and we are doing everything we possibly can to drive the project forward.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary, Councillor Wood?

COUNCILLOR WOOD: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. Would the Executive Board Member confirm that the time scales relating to this development, the PFI scheme, remain the same as those set out in the Executive Board Report of 18th July 2012 and that contracts have, in fact, been exchanged?

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: It is restating the same question a different way, and I am going to restate my answer in the same way. We are very determined that contracts will be exchanged and that we move forward and we are doing all we possibly can, both inside and outside of the Council, with all those people relevant to make that happen. Beyond that I am not going to make promises but I understand, as do the ward Members, as do all the senior officers involved in the project, the absolutely importance and priority we give to this particular PFI contract. We want to move it forward as quickly as we possibly can.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Could the Executive Board Member for Development and the Economy inform Council whether the West Park Centre is safe?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. A week last Friday I received a phone call from an officer requesting me to look at an email he had sent me about the condition of the West Park Centre. Upon having a discussion with the officer and reading the email it became very clear to me that I would be reckless of the welfare of the users of the centre to do other than to agree with the recommendation that it close immediately. I must say, I apologise to the Lord Mayor who got pulled into an issue where an event did take place the following day, it should not have done, it took place – I think an officer, with the best intentions, made a wrong decision – and it sent mixed messages to the community. I was very clear from, as I say, this conversation that the centre should not be open.

I visited a few days later in the company of a couple of other Members expecting to see, I suppose, some antiquated electrics and have somebody explain to me in a very technical way why the building id not come up to scratch. I have to say, and I do not know whether the Weetwood Members have been on a visit yet, I was absolutely shocked at the state of the electrics in that building. I have not seen the like of it in a Council establishment.

Just to give people a couple of examples, all the wiring on the lighting ring main certainly was vulcanised India rubber cabling which many Members who sat on the Housing Committee years ago with me will remember we took out of Council homes because we considered it dangerous about 20 years ago.

In terms of the fire safety, there was some very, very antiquated equipment that the electrical surveyor with us thought would not work if a fire had broken out and, given that there is no sprinkler system in the building and that there is emergency lighting in the main hall only, I think we would have been reduced, had there been a fire there, to somebody shouting down the corridors, “Fire, fire” while people tried desperately to find their way out of the building in darkness.

The condition of the switch gear in the cellar again caused me huge concerns. I do speak as a lay person but when you see standing water under switch gear, you just think “Bloody hell” and the surveyor did point out that a large amount of water had been pouring into that cellar the day before. He would not even allow us to stay in very long because of potential asbestos dangers.

All told, in my lay view the building is not safe for use by users, we have done the right thing in closing it and looking to see what the situation is with the building, quite how bad it is – as I say, I am not in a position to do other than to take a lay view and listen to the recommendations of officers, but I think it does raise huge concerns for me that there may be other buildings out there in the city that belong to us that are in a similar condition.

Obviously West Park has gone through a chequered history and it has not had the same use for all its 60 year life, but it looks to me as if most of the electrical equipment has not been renewed at all in that time and I just think that that building has been living on borrowed time and we have been very lucky that nothing did happen there. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary, Councillor Bentley?

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I thank Councillor Lewis for that very full answer and I appreciate any response from Councillor Lewis as I have been trying over the last week to get him to respond to several questions I have been emailing him and this is the first time I have had a response, so thank you very much, Councillor Lewis.

Thanks for that full explanation. I think the way that the centre was closed down and all the issues were raised will be subject to scrutiny at another time, but the real purpose of my question was to ask, is the future of the West Park Centre safe? Before he answers that, can I just remind him of something his colleague Councillor Bernard Atha said in the Yorkshire Evening Post in August 2010 when he said:

“We are honouring our pre-election promise to take West Park Centre off the ‘for sale’ list. This decision will come as an enormous relief to the hundreds of users as well as the local community groups. Their views have been listened to.”

Councillor Atha speaks with a lot of sincerity and he speaks on behalf of all the ward Members in the areas of Weetwood, Kirkstall, Headingley and Hyde Park and Woodhouse, and he is a great supporter and a great friend of West Park Centre.

Will Councillor Lewis continue to honour that commitment, ensure that the West Park Centre continues to be used as an educational and cultural centre for local community groups and for the city, and that local residents’ views will continue to be listened to. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I am sorry, I am still trying to find the question in there. I think the building certainly would not be safe for community groups were

Greg Mulholland to have his way and we have a university technical college there, because one thing that was clear then would be that every existing community user would have to vacate the place for his plans to come to fruition. I am sorry, I should not make nasty party-political points on something like this, should I?

I think we all have to be realistic. The cost of replacing the electrics alone in that building I expect to be at least £600,000. I expect that the cost of doing related asbestos works to access the electrics would probably be another six figure sum.

We have a building that requires a considerable amount of other work and it would be foolish to do just the electrics or just the asbestos. We have to look at the situation in the round and quite what the needs are of the building and what it will cost the Council because, as we are all too well aware, we have a hugely stretched capital programme which is, I think, is it £75m over programmes, so whatever we do with the West Park Centre has to fit in with the other priorities of the city and it would be unrealistic of me to pretend otherwise. We have to look at what is best for the city, what is best for the user groups and I am most concerned about many of those groups that we have had to move out at short notice and get into some kind of accommodation. We have to decide which of those users needs to be there, which are there just because it was convenient and which genuinely have to be in that part of the city as part of that big discussion. I am happy for us all to have that discussion when we know the cost of doing the work on the building and what the options are. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Towler.

COUNCILLOR TOWLER: Thank you. Does the Leader of the Council agree with Birmingham City Council that the scale of future financial challenges will change the landscape of local government [nationally]?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. When you get the Leader of the biggest Local Authority in England talking about savings of £600m in the next four years, you realise there is something very seriously going on. When you get the Leader of Liverpool talking about actually, having been the European City of Culture, having to stop doing culture, sport, leisure and so on, you realise the brutality of some of these cuts.

It is getting very much to the heart of why Local Government was set up. Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham were all set up in the 19th Century to deal with the urbanisation and industrialisation of our cities and in actual fact the average age life expectancy in those cities was 26. The provision of water, of education, of sewerage, of art, of sports centres, of parks, was actually to try and improve the health and wellbeing of our people.

Frankly, we are now hearing statements from many Authorities that are saying they can no longer afford to enlighten and to offer activities for working class people who cannot afford private sector.

Already many Councils in this country have walked away from some of that, they have stopped doing many of those services, and I think Leeds in the next few

months will have to take, like we have done with the LDF, a position that is actually taking it very serious about the future provision of services. I think we will start with the State of the City, how we combine with partners, we will follow it up with the budget but, quite frankly, there will be many Local Authorities, maybe smaller ones, that will not be existing in the next two and three years if the cuts that are projected are carried on.

Yes, there will be change in the landscape of Local Authorities but above all the impact of these cuts means that we will widen inequality, we will make it unaffordable for working people to get the provision and the services that local Government's *raison d'être* was all about in the 19th and 20th Century. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary, Councillor Towler?

COUNCILLOR TOWLER: No, thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Bearing in mind that the Wrap-Up Leeds scheme has now reached its end, could the Executive Member tell me how many properties have benefited from work under that scheme?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dobson.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As a starting point, David, the Wrap-Up scheme has got a slight extension inasmuch as we have got extra money now to carry is through to 7th December, so a slight extension there. In terms of the properties that have had work undertaken, it currently works out at 8,623 measures on 6,984 properties, and by "measures" that could be loft insulation, cavity wall and, indeed in many cases both.

We are hoping by the 7th December to complete a further 1,195 procedures and a further 1,168 still to be currently surveyed.

I would also just like to draw Council's attention to some of the potential savings for the Council as the starting position of the scheme, which was around carbon reduction. Estimated on those figures we will be saving 9,000 tonnes of carbon into the Leeds atmosphere per annum and in terms of savings for Leeds residents who have taken advantage of these schemes, around £300 per household, which will give savings to citizens who have taken up this opportunity of around £1m per annum. It has been a really, really well-worth-doing exercise.

I would also like to thank the Green Party for working in such close partnership with us on this and being quite challenging at times. Your original position was about the carbon; we had a commitment to tackling fuel poverty and we found a middle way to do both. I am pleased and delighted for the input that you have put in on that.

I think it shows from the Authority's perspective, certainly in terms of our commitment to the CO2 agenda, it must be symbiotically linked with fuel poverty and tackling that together, and I think some of the issues that might be expanded on later this afternoon Green Deal Go Early will demonstrate just that. We are doing the work

on CO₂ to reach our not unchallenging targets, let us be honest, 4% per annum, but we are doing it also looking at fuel poverty, which we believe is the right and proper thing to do, so thank you for your support and that to the Green Party and to all Members of Council, actually who have taken the time to push this out into their communities and promote it so admirably. I am very grateful to all Members. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary? No. Councillor Harington, please.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Does the Executive Member for Leisure and Skills share my enthusiasm and excitement about the potential of Leeds being able to play its part in a regional stage of the 2014 Tour de France, and does he agree that this will bring massive benefits to the city?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do share Councillor Harington's enthusiasm about the Tour de France. The outcome of our bid to bring the Tour de France is not due for a while but, I agree, it has potential to do a great deal for the city. It is the biggest annual event in the world and the Grand Départ is second only to the finish on the Champs Elysées in terms of viewing figures.

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Research suggests that the event brings many to the city from all over the world and these people are likely to stay in Leeds for a number of days, spending on accommodation, food and other secondary spend. It is worth noting that in 2007 when the Grand Départ took place in London and the London region, it is estimated £73-worth of economic benefits were generated for London and the wider region there, and over £3m spectators attended the event.

We are investigating a region-wide cultural festival to wrap around the event and, of course, a legacy around cycling is vital. Work is already under way to develop a region-wide approach which will maximise impact and minimise spend. It will focus on improving cycle routes, health and wellbeing and family fun.

I am sure everyone will agree securing the Tour de France will make a significant statement about our ambition for Leeds, our confidence going forward and our aspirations on the international stage. We will keep all Members informed about how the bid progresses. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wilkinson, please.

COUNCILLOR WILKINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Will the Executive Board Member for Children's Services please tell me why I was the only Opposition Group Member to be interviewed by the consultant engaged to look into the provision of Youth Services in Leeds?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just by way of background, with universal support from all Members of the Council it was felt that a review into Youth Services was a really necessary, important thing to go through. I

think it is fair to say there has been widespread dissatisfaction expressed from all parties in the Council and also we are facing significant and major funding cuts as a result.

As a result of that we put together a Principals' Paper to Executive Board and we set up a cross-party working group. I know that Scrutiny have done really important work by setting up a Youth Group to look in detail under their Scrutiny arrangements.

As this work was progressing it became clear that we had to address very seriously why previous reviews into the Youth Service in this Council from your side, from our side, have failed, and nothing has actually changed for many, many years. It was felt that to undo some of the blocks and the reasons why things have not progressed, we needed an independent assessor to go in and talk to the people who would not respond to Youth officers going out and talking to them because of their perceived vested interested – I am talking about young people themselves, the voluntary community sector, staff as well.

For that assessment to be done effectively it was felt that the best way that he could get a feeling of the scale of Leeds and the different diversity of the whole city was to go out to Area Committee Chairs, and so each Area Committee Chair was invited to go and have an interview on their own to talk about the issues in their area so that we could actually get a sense of how it could move forward.

I understand, as you say, that you took up that opportunity. For some reason, Councillor Wadsworth, who is the other Opposition Chair, did not take up that opportunity. I do not know the reason for that. Apparently the invitation was accepted and then it was declined and I have no idea why that opportunity was declined. I do know that he came, as most of the other Area Chairs did, to a meeting of all of the Area Chairs that the findings were put back to and he did not make any comment to me at the time of the feeling that he had been missed out, so I am at a loss to know exactly what the reason for that was.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR WILKINSON: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. I do have a supplementary. I agree that all reviews of all Council services should take place at some time or other but it would be interesting to know why the Shadow Executive Board Member was not consulted.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I think, as I have said, we have a cross-party working group that has met and put all of the ideas together. It is a difficult judgment call. There was no means at all to be exclusive and since the interim report came through we have had a meeting with the cross-party working group where we have had a robust exchange of view and as a result of that we have extended the amount of time so that we can have a really proper look and the Youth Sub-Group of the Scrutiny Board has met and they have had a very good discussion on the findings and actually said that the report presented value for money and that they were happy with the way that things were done.

It is a judgment call, how we actually maximise and use the resources that we have available to us to get the most exclusive response to a really, really important piece of work that we have to do as a Council.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Does the Leader of Council agree with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government's drive for transparency?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. The Council recognises the importance of transparency, particularly in dealing with public spending. Leeds City Council therefore voluntarily complies with the Government's Code of Practice for Local Authorities on data transparency. That means we publish a range of information including all payments over £500, senior employees' salaries, performance data, external inspection reports and democratic data such as committee minutes.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary, Councillor Golton?

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: I do, Lord Mayor. By way of supplementary, given the Council's exemplary record on transparency that the Leader of Council has just given us, does he therefore regret with me the mixed messages that Central Government is sending by the Cabinet Office providing £1.6m of taxpayers' money to be spent in the city through unelected and very – what is the word – vaguely unaccountable Community Panels as part of the Community First Process, and does he therefore regret that they have avoided taking this through the Council, but will he also commit to providing the structure whereby these Community Panels can voluntarily offer to report through the Council and achieve an accountability on a local level?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I think you have got the wrong portfolio but I am happy, because we have discussed this some time ago. As you know, it was passported straight through to community groups and bypassed the Local Authority. Anybody in this Council who is representing a community and sees money being parachuted in without any reference to them must feel very angry about it. I think it is offensive. One of the things I think we are getting to see, more than mixed messages, is an attempt to undermine the legitimate role of elected Members. We do stand for election, we are accountable, we do have to report. Everything we say in this Chamber is recorded so, like you, their decision making has no public accountability, there is no public account to the local people. I think it is a very regressive thing and a regrettable thing for this Government to do.

I hope that we can try to bring into play – because I think it is yours, Councillor Gruen, your portfolio?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Everything is his portfolio.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: All the good news goes to Peter Gruen, you know that! We will try and get some democratic handle. Some are better than others at working with local Members but if this is a taste of the future then we all need to oppose it.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Maqsood.

COUNCILLOR MAQSOOD : Can the Executive Member for Adult Social Care provide an update on work with private sector partners in the city to improve corporate social responsibility?

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Yeadon.

COUNCILLOR YEADON: Thank you. I find it slightly ironic that I, as a Labour Member, am going to talk about positive relationships between the third sector and the private sector in the week that several multinational private sector organisations appear on the front of newspapers for not paying their taxes, but at the same time in Leeds I think that we believe that for private sector organisations a minor issue is paying taxes but they must also invest in their local community if they want to continue to call Leeds their home.

In Adult Social Care we have been working hard to develop the relationships between third sector organisations and the private sector to be a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, a Neighbourhood Network in the west of the city, Armley Helping Hands, has successfully developed a long term relationship with Premier Farnell, a Leeds-based company that supplies, maintains and repairs electronic products. The company encourages its staff to take up four hours of paid time each month to volunteer with Armley Helping Hands. Some employees help with the assisted shopping service while others work on specific projects to provide help and support with their professional skills within the company, such as financial or IT advice. In return, Armley Helping Hands supports Farnell staff who themselves have caring responsibilities to navigate social care options, the organisation runs wellbeing sessions for Farnell staff – for example on ageing well, for staff coming up to retirement and the Neighbourhood Network provides Farnell staff with opportunities to work on projects or challenges as part of their leadership and training programmes.

The supermarket giant Asda, as part of its Community Life approach, is looking to help us with the development of the assisted technology hub which we are planning to provide telecare adaptations in the home and daily living equipment to help people remain independent in their own homes. We are seeking to draw on Asda's expertise in logistics, demand management and fleet usage as we develop what will ultimately be a supply and delivery business. There is additional potential into areas such as home shopping, driver training and access to the organisation's fleet vehicles.

Marks & Spencer's has just established its unique archive and historical collection in a purpose-built base in the city and has embarked on a project to take its collections into our care homes and day centres. People with dementia are benefiting from their reminiscing sessions that stimulate as well as amuse.

You may be aware that within the Commission for Local Government it looked specifically about the relationship between the public sector, third sector and

private sector and it is important that we move away from social corporate responsibility being a tokenistic day out for staff to paint a room at a community centre, and move towards a more meaningful, real, practical support for community based organisations which in the long term will term into a mutually beneficial relationship for the entire city.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary? No. Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Is the Executive Member for Leisure and Skills aware of any bogus event which was attached to the Morley Literature Festival and which may have involved the City Council's Library Service as an unwitting and innocent accomplice.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am not aware of a bogus event, as he describes it, but no doubt Councillor Finnigan will say otherwise in his supplementary.

I can take a moment, however, to congratulate the organisers of the Morley Literature Festival for what I understand was a really successful event with some high profile speakers, including Gavin Essler, Stuart Maconie, Tim Ewart and Polly Toynbee – another event in the city that helps to put Leeds on the national map.

THE LORD MAYOR: Do you have a supplementary?

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: I may have! By way of a supplementary, Lord Mayor, leaving aside Ed Balls' desperate desire to be associated with Morley Literature Festival – a festival he did not attend – would Councillor Ogilvie join with me to suggest that Morley folk should approach with caution similar bogus calls on cultural events which are more about promoting politicians than cultural excellence? Would he also agree with me that Morley folk should also treat with caution a band called Clog Iron, who are, according to the Daily Telegraph, playing a gig in a Town Hall in the suburbs of Leeds on 8th December featuring a bogus caller and guest drummer Ed Balls, MP.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: That is the first I have heard of that. *(Laughter)* Can I say about the event that Ed Balls attended, it was actually a nationwide initiative open to all MPs where they were encouraged to attend a reading event with children in their libraries, so I am pleased that Ed Balls took the opportunity as the democratically elected MP to attend that event.

As I understand it, 33 under fives attended this event, as well as 27 parents and carers. If I can just read a quote from one of the parents who said:

“Can I pass on my thanks to everyone who helped to arrange and run the event last Friday. My two daughters had a lovely time and I thought the organisation was brilliant. Trying to co-ordinate a roomful of over-enthusiastic toddlers is no mean feat and he handled it so well.

It was great to see so many people attend and I hope this event will be repeated in the future.”

That parent clearly did not think it was a bogus event. I think in reality this has got more to do with sour grapes from Councillor Finnigan. Ed Balls clearly had his photo in the press rather than Councillor Finnigan. *(interruption)*

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: I will get a you a ticket, Councillor Ogilvie.

COUNCILLOR OGILVIE: I think you just need to realise that is life, Councillor Finnigan, and just get over it. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: We have now concluded Question Time and written replies will be given to the remainder of the questions.

ITEM 11 - MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: For the benefit of the people in the public gallery, we have now moved on to page 12 of the green Order paper, Item 11 at the top of the page. Councillor Wakefield.

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

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: I second, Lord Mayor.

- (a) Executive Board
- (i) Resources and Corporate Functions

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, moving on to comments. Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wish to speak on Minute 86, page 116, and Minute 109 in the supplementary papers on financial health m monitoring.

This refers to a report showing the financial position of the Council at the half year and gives a projected overspend for the full year of £1.3m. In the context of the overall budget £1.3m overspend might not seem significant, although a lot of back slapping was going on when at £1.5m underspend was achieved last year.

However, in absolute terms £1.3m is a lot of money and if the overspend is still there at the end of the year it will impact on our reserves and next year’s services. It might, therefore, just be worthwhile looking at some of the reasons for the overspend in detail. When you look at the Directorate spend in detail it is mainly swings and roundabouts between the different departments, except what sticks out like a sore thumb is that the City Development Directorate accounts for £1.1m of the £1.3m projected overspend – 85% of the forecasted failure to achieve a balanced budget is in one department and whereas most other departments are stabilising or improving, City Development’s position worsened between months 5 and 6 to the tune of £163,000.

What is more, the projected overspend of over £1m in City Development assumes that budgeted savings between now and the end of the year will be achieved, something that there has been no evidence of in the first six months and which the Directorate itself admits there is significant risk of the planned savings not being achieved, leading to an even higher overspend in the event.

I ask myself how can one department be so out of kilter with the other departments in the Council which are on track to achieve their planned budgeted obligations. Perhaps it is something that the formidable Resources Scrutiny Board would enjoy getting to the bottom of. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Congreve.

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: Sorry, Lord Mayor, I must have been daydreaming.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Nothing new there!

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: Lord Mayor, I am commenting on page 116, minute 87, the Financial Monitoring Report. I would specifically like to focus on the difficulties caused for Local Authorities by the Government making last minute funding changes and cuts. In particular, I am referring to the decision to cut the Early Intervention Grant. This decision will leave Leeds with £7.1m pressure in the next financial year – money that I am sure everyone in this Chamber will agree we can ill afford to lose.

It is too early to comment on what specific impact the cut will have on services, but I would like to highlight just what the EIG was used for. In addition to children's centres the money was used to support educational psychologists, services for children with disabilities including short breaks, youth services and looked after children. As you can see, there are a raft of services where the impact of this cut is not yet known but they are all services that support some of our most vulnerable children and families.

My ward is among the most deprived in the city and as such there are a high number of children living in poverty. Any money that is used to support vulnerable children should, in my view, be protected as far as possible and it disappoints me that the Government appear to think it is perfectly acceptable to ride roughshod over these children and families.

Work funded by the EIG has made a significant difference to families from the positive impact of attendance improvement officers, increased support for families and the real support offered by our children's centres. I consider my ward very lucky in that we have superb children's centres and I have seen at first hand the outreach work, the relationships nurtured with families who to start with are extremely unwilling to engage. It would be a tragedy if any of this vital work was lost and would lead to further costs later on.

Early Intervention Initiatives have been shown to be extremely effective and I cannot understand why the Government would want to undermine the fantastic work that is taking place with some of our most vulnerable children and families.

It is about time the mixed messages from Government stopped. If they believe, as we do, that early intervention is the key to helping families, they need to start investing in it.

I am, however, reassured that we as an administration stand behind our commitment for the most vulnerable and we will continue to do so, regardless of what the Government chooses to do. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Groves.

COUNCILLOR GROVES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak to page 116, minute 87, on the Financial Monitoring Report. Lord Mayor, I make no apology for focusing on why it is vital that the economy of this city reflects the crucial role of women. Generations of women have fought for equality and better deals for future generations. The cuts are turning back time on women's equality.

It is no secret that the Coalition Government is hitting women and families especially hard. We should also bear in mind that the Government is not only cutting support to women and children but taking money out of the wider local economy. In Leeds alone we have an estimated 17,000 women unemployed. For our very young women who have not yet experienced work, employment is a distant hope and this is really sad. I certainly remember the powerful experience that my first wage packet brought to me.

There are now 1.12m women unemployed. This is the highest rate for 25 years. This is not surprising, given that the public sector is 65% women and Local Government 75% women. We know that both of these areas have taken and will continue to take a big hit. Women on our front line services in our region in local hospitals a few weeks ago went to the picket line because they face losing £1,500 up to £3,000 a year out of their salaries. There is no wonder that people that are working are having to go and seek help and support and food parcels while the bankers continue to take their bonuses. Is it right, bankers' bonuses versus food parcels? I certainly do not think so.

The Welfare Reform cuts in total is £14.9b; 74% of those are coming from women's pockets. Women have suffered one blow after another. Even women in our city who have aspired to be socially mobile will see their child benefit disappear. Some of these women calculated that child benefit as part of their household budget and that affects every woman in all the wards across our city. Limited child tax credits from 70% and not the previous 80% of all child care costs, cutting the help in the pregnancy grant, introducing the Early Intervention Grant that is worth 11% less than the grants it replaced.

I simply do not understand why the Coalition continues to impose policies that prevent people from being socially mobile. Cameron, Osborne and Clegg say that they understand the needs of working mothers – well, they certainly do not, otherwise they would not have a reduction in child tax credit and working tax credit.

THE LORD MAYOR: Please would you make your final point, Councillor Groves.

COUNCILLOR GROVES: I will, thank you. The cuts will affect twice as many women as men, it will undermine women's incomes and further increase the gap between men and women. This huge loss of jobs is not only a tragedy for women and their families, it is a catastrophic blow to the economy of our city and our country and that hurts us all. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Members MacNiven.

COUNCILLOR MacNIVEN: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on minute 87 on page 116 in relation to the Financial Health Strategy 2013-2017 and in particular the need for us to be aware of how our financial strategy might impact on people with disabilities, given the disproportionate effect welfare reform will have on that section of society.

Members I am sure will already be aware of the reforms to the Welfare Benefit system, which are due to be implemented across England next year. These modifications are the most significant since the system's creation 60 years ago.

A particularly noteworthy change is the introduction of Universal Credit, which will replace means tested benefits with a single monthly payment for working age people who are in or out of employment. The Government says it has two principal objectives: firstly, it aims to improve work incentives; and secondly, it has been designed to simplify the current complex welfare benefit system.

However, I would like to raise concerns about the negative effects of the reforms for certain people, in particular those living with disabilities who may suffer unfairly when the scheme is implemented.

It has been suggested that up to 450,000 disabled people could lose out under the new system. A joint report that was produced by the Children's Society and Disability Rights UK published the findings of an enquiry led by Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson. The investigation looked in depth at the possibly financial impact of the new welfare reforms on people with disabilities and their families. The report, which was published in July, suggested that the financial implications would be substantial for many people living with disabilities.

One of the most worrying potential implications of the new system is the reduced financial support which will be available to families with a disabled child through the disability element of child tax credit. Furthermore, there will be severe cuts to childcare support. This loss could be equivalent to £1,500 a year for many affected families. It is expected that this could negatively impact on around 100,000 disabled children nationally.

Closely linked to this is the fact that the Disability Living Allowance, which 3.2m people currently receive, is to be replaced by the Personal Independence Payment in 2013. There is due to be a 20% reduction in expenditure which could mean that approximately 500,000 fewer disabled people will be entitled to receive this type of support as eligibility criteria are tightened and claims are reassessed. Other people who could suffer after the new scheme is implemented are working disabled people who will no longer...

THE LORD MAYOR: Please will you make your final people, Councillor MacNiven?

COUNCILLOR MacNIVEN: Despite the supposed aims of Universal Credit around simplifying the welfare system, it is impossible to ignore the severe financial implications which the reforms could have for people living with disabilities and the devastating impact this would have on their lives. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Robinson.

COUNCILLOR M ROBINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak to minute 89 page 117 on Community Right to Challenge. This provides me with a great opportunity to speak with some experience from our ward on community asset transfers. Certainly looking towards Community Right to Challenge we have seen some great strides made by the Council but more can be done. It also provides me with a good opportunity to welcome the £10,000 of funding that the Outer North East Area Committee gave to Shadwell Library and I hope that Caird Bardon and Green Leeds will look favourably on funding bids put forward from the independent library.

For the Council to truly embrace the Community Right to Challenge we need to fully engage in this process and make it as easy and as clear as possible for communities to have all the information required and whilst Shadwell Library is a good example, another fine example has been in grass cutting services in this city. Far more community groups and parishes could conduct the schemes and assist the Council and also reduce costs to the taxpayer. This is not intended to neuter or to diminish any Council services but improve the service and make it far, far more responsive.

I would call on the Council administration to remove the obstructions, remove the bureaucracy and the Sir Humphreys from the process and trust in communities and their knowledge and their skills. Shadwell Library has gone on to prove that this can be done, it is a fine example. I would encourage people to visit the service at Shadwell Library once it comes into place in January and hopefully Shadwell Library will serve as a beacon for the rest of the city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Lord Mayor, I am old enough to look back and remember the 1930s and to know then what poverty was like. I remember as a kid being taken round by my parents and shown Tatters Market, a place in the market, bottom end of the market, where people went for a few pence to buy a pair of old trousers or an old coat from someone else. I actually saw people there picking up spectacles to see whether they would suit them because they could not afford to go to an optician. I actually saw the worst thing – people trying on false teeth, which is a most disgusting thing to think about but that was the level of the poverty. If you went round the city the kids were suffering from things like skeletal diseases of all kinds, scoliosis, ringworm, the whole range of diseases attributed to malnutrition and poor care.

I think the Government's cuts are not going to take us back to those evil times, the times I remember as a kid in a school just up the road, Blenheim School I went to,

a cupboard there. The worst kids, the poorest kids, had to go into the cupboard, take out a large jar of cod liver oil and a spoon, dip it in, in front of the whole class, take down the large spoonful of cod liver oil, lick the spoon clean because there was nowhere to wash it, put it back and it went back in there for the next day. This is all in front of the class.

That was the kind of poverty that existed in those days. Thank God I was not in that poverty struck position.

These changes the Government are imposing on us, with the help of the Liberal Party, to their shame, because so much social reform in this country has been done by the inspiration of Liberal leaders in the past, those cuts are coming and are going to have an enormous impact on people in our city. Nothing like as bad as the ones I have just been outlining but I will tell you, I never thought standing up today I would be knowing that in Leeds the Salvation Army are doing exactly what they were doing 30, 40 years ago to alleviate the poverty conditions.

I cannot believe that there are places now being set up in Leeds where people are giving food to feed the poor people in the area. Quite frankly it is scandalous, it is wrong. If the Lib Dems had any spirit – not you lot because you are a decent lot (*Laughter*) – I think you would agree with me, but it can only happen because your leaders are allowing it to happen. If they stood with Labour in the House these changes would not be imposed. The changes that are taking place to the welfare system are going to terribly damage people in the housing sector. It is quite wrong, it is immoral and we should fight it with all the means at our disposal.

We have one secret weapon. We are blessed in this Council with some officers of quite outstanding ability in this field. I have never known such care, such detail. I only mention one as a leader, Mr Carey. I could mention every other one because, quite frankly, the work they put in, the detail, the commitment is absolutely outstanding and it makes your heart fill because they are people who care.

We all should care and we all should be opposing this.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can you make your final point please, Councillor Atha?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Urry, and I believe this is Councillor Urry's maiden speech.

COUNCILLOR URRY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak on minute 110 of the extra pack regarding the Capital Programme half year update – not a worthy successor, I am afraid, to Councillor Atha.

In Leeds 4.5% of the population, over 25,000 people, are unemployed and, despite the excellent work of Children's Services, we are faced with youth unemployment well in excess of that of the other core cities.

Improved facilities and infrastructure to support the Leeds economy are therefore vital for our constituents. I am pleased, I am reassured that the Council

continues to seek to deliver a large and ambitious programme across the city driving local economies, creating jobs and providing and encouraging training and skills. One of the most ambitious projects from the Capital Programme, the Arena, will provide a massive cultural asset for the city, directly create jobs and investment and attract a million visitors a year drawing spend into Leeds as a whole. This can only be positive for our city.

The Arena has created or safeguarded 177 construction jobs for Leeds residents, it has safeguarded 58 existing apprenticeships, it has established 20 new apprenticeships for Leeds in the city region giving young people the opportunity to learn new skills and to begin to make their way in the world, and 60 businesses from Leeds have been contracted on to the scheme and another 51 from Yorkshire supporting local employment across the entire supply chain.

I think that the Arena shows that the Capital Programme has a strong role to play in creating a prosperous and sustainable economy. The State of the City Report which we discuss later this month, highlights one of the Council's priorities as being to create more jobs and support the sustainable growth of the Leeds economy. The Capital Programme is helping us to focus upon this priority.

The Capital Update also highlights the positive economic impact of the programme between 2011 and 2015 that capital expenditure will support almost 4,500 jobs in the economy and generate £172m in the city region. Leeds is a resilient city and I am sure we all agree that positive progress is being made to make it the best city in the UK. Alongside the City Deal, which provides a fantastic economic opportunity to invest in the city region's infrastructure, developments and improvements through the Capital Programme are vitally important to assist in meeting the economic challenges our city faces.

In these very challenging times our Capital Programme provides a channel through which we can ensure the continuous growth of Leeds and support of the Leeds economy. In remaining ambitious for our city we will help to enable people living in Leeds to fulfil their personal aspirations. This is ever more important in such difficult economic times. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Nagle.

COUNCILLOR NAGLE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on Minute 110 in relation to the update to Executive Board on the Capital Programme for 2012/2015.

It is very good news that the Executive Board has approved funding for the Capital Programme to rebuild the Fulfilling Lives Centre in Rothwell. It shows a real commitment to improving the lives of people with learning disabilities in Rothwell and the surrounding areas. The new facility will not just be in the traditional day centre type mode. It will instead provide a base to link up with local organisations so people who attend it can take part in personalised every day activities in their own Rothwell community. That could be through engaging in activities as varied as volunteering, sport, cookery, drama, art, dance, gardening and more. People will have a wide choice of activities to suit their own preferences. They will be with small groups of friends in local community bases without being bussed around the city to be left in the big impersonal centres of old.

The new centre will be designed to ensure it can help people with increasingly complex conditions and needs. The number of young people with such conditions is rising and, as they grow up, we will need appropriate specialist facilities to help them make the most of their lives. It is vitally important that the new facility in Rothwell takes account of these changing demographics.

It is also good to see that the costs of the new centre will in part be met by savings found elsewhere in the already completed areas of the Fulfilling Lives Capital Programme. I am pleased that Executive Board has given this commitment to the new facility as I am sure it will be of great benefit to the Rothwell community for many years to come and, more importantly, it will make a massive difference to the lives of many people with learning disabilities in the area. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lamb.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I know I am not alone in this Council in being increasingly concerned that a growing number of decisions are taken by officers in this Council away from the glare of elected Members and one in particular which actually relates to the West Park Centre is something which concerns me.

Lord Mayor, I think the last time we took a decision about this as a Council was in January 2009 in response to a White Paper put down by Councillor Illingworth and there was actually unanimous agreement by the Council about the future of the West Park Centre. We heard a question earlier about the future of the West Park Centre and to say the answer was not convincing is perhaps a bit of an understatement.

Lord Mayor, my view has not changed since January 2009. I suspect many Members around the Chamber have not changed their view since 2009 and, to the best of my knowledge, there has been no decision by elected Members in this place to change the decision of Council from January 2009.

In fact, as a rare occasion I would like to quote Councillor Blake because I think she summed up in the debate the views of many of us perfectly and I would agree with what she said then now, that referring to the West Park Centre she said:

“These community facilities that work in this way are like gold dust. I believe we should be helping to protect and enhance such provision, not selling it off against the wishes of the people who gave it to the city.”

I think that is spot on and I think most Members would agree with that. I would like to read out the resolution of Council from January 2009, that:

“This Council welcomes the commitment made by the administration to retain the green space around the West Park Centre and the constructive discussions taking place with the Weetwood ward Members to keep the facilities for youth and community on site at the West Park Centre. Council further notes that the West Park Centre has not been declared

surplus to requirements and is therefore not being marketed.”

Again, to the best of my knowledge that is the last time elected Members expressed a few on the West Park Centre.

You will probably be as astonished as I was, then, when I received an email approximately 24 hours ago which I am happy to share with any Member who wants to see it on behalf of the Director of Children’s Services in response to some questions I had asked about the West Park Centre which says:

“It has been intended for some time to rationalise usage”

(referring to the West Park Centre)

“and plan to vacate the building.”

I would really like to hear from the Leader of Council when he sums up when a decision was taken to reverse the view of elected Members of this Council and it became a policy to move to vacate the West Park Centre. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. For one thing I thought Councillor Richard Lewis gave a very honest assessment of where we are with the West Park Centre. He was an elected Member that made that decision last Friday. There is still a long way to go in terms of assessing the damage, the cost and the future options.

Let me just say, because I like Councillor Bentley, I used to like you until you became Mayor of Wetherby and I think it has changed you, Alan – when they quote 2009 as things not got to both Councillor Bentley and you, we just had a £90m saving exercise, a further £55m exercise this year and another hundred to come. I have got to say, Councillor Bentley, I think Richard would welcome a conversation with you because one of the reasons the Development Department is down is, one, there is no economic activity because we are in a recession, and the Development Department gets incomes from recession. Similarly, we sell our assets better when the economy is on the drive, but I will not go into that because I think that was a bit of nonsense, ignoring the economic context, the public expenditure and everything else. We live on a different planet now.

Let me go on to what I think are some very important issues raised. Firstly, in terms of Councillor Congreve’s comments, he is absolutely right, that decision to cut the grant nationally, which meant £8m to Leeds, really does threaten the future of one of the best things we have ever done as an administration, and I mean both administrations, and that is develop Sure Start in this city for vulnerable children and families. That is one of the proudest achievements we should give. Sadly, that is under threat. Similarly what is under threat is the person, the one who is fleeing domestic violence and actually gets help from this kind of grant to resettle, get proper medical and counselling support. The young man whose parents are ill who actually starts to fade away from school, gets down to 23% and actually with the use of this grant gets back into school and it now at 93%. Above all, respite for disabled people.

That is what it means and the decision was taken in the recess of Parliament without a proper debate and discussion.

I agree with Councillor Golton about transparency and accountability and it works both ways. Not Councillor Golton - as Councillor Atha said, he is a nice chap, but his Government actually implemented some of the most vicious cuts without even being accountable.

I want to come to Councillor MacNiven because we have spent ten, 15 years here trying to say to people we want to change the policy on looking after disabled people, we want them to be more independent, we want them to have more choice, we want them to have dignity, we want them to actually go round, and what are we actually seeing? The cuts that absolutely destroy that principle, that policy that actually we all believe in. It is getting extremely serious.

I take Councillor Atha's point, we are not in the 1930s yet but I defy anybody to deny that actually we are seeing more homeless, we are seeing more beggars and we are seeing more food parcels and we are seeing more pressures. If you do not believe me to go the Citizens' Advice Bureau, they are absolutely under siege with people queuing for advice because they cannot cope any more.

With Councillor Groves on women, I will tell you one thing, Councillor Groves, the women got it in America last week because they pushed Barack Obama through to win that election. The women in this country have got it already because they are points ahead, the Labour Party is points ahead by women voters. They get it because they see it, they feel it and they have to experience it. They will know which way they are voting in 2015. One of the big things I have about the Social Fund that we have just been given is that it runs out in 2015.

Yes, I worry about the income of the Council; yes, I worry about the income about ALMOs but I tell you what, I worry about the survival of the most vulnerable people in this city far more and it is time we started to get together and oppose any more cuts on the most vulnerable people in this city. (*Applause*)

(ii) Development and the Economy

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving on to Development and the Economy. Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor, speaking to minute 91 page 119 which refers to the proposed formation of a West Yorkshire Transport Fund.

What I really want to emphasise about the formation of this fund is actually, it might sound quite boring some of the things that come together to form a Transport Fund, but actually it is a mechanism and a means we get to pull together a lot of the things we have been talking about today and a lot of the things we talk about in terms of transport and to look at how we deliver an integrated and functioning and modern transport system.

I think sometimes it is all too easy to litigate the past and go back and say "If I was doing this job in 1986 I would have done this, not that" and things like that. What we actually need to do is look about what we do need to do to take things

forward. I know sometimes when you get stuck on the idea that transport is about a scheme, a line here, a station there and things like that – those are important but you have got to pull it together and look at delivering a whole.

I think, and again our deputation from Morley made the excellent point about buses this morning, about the need to improve bus services, how do we integrate that with the transport system, what can we do to get bus services improved? It may be whether we have the current system we have got, whether we go to Quality Contracts, even if we could turn back the clock, and unfortunately legally we cannot, and have Leeds City Transport, a Council owned bus service, the problems is the buses would still be out there stuck on the same roads, stuck in the same traffic. How do you deliver improvements to get buses moving? I think that is what the Transport Fund is about, it is covering the whole picture and it is giving us a comprehensive scheme and moving us away from the position where perhaps we have been stuck in the past or spent a huge amount of time, Councillors and officers, on trains going backwards on forwards to London trying to seek approval for this scheme or that scheme. Let us raise the money locally and let us make decisions locally. Let us get a network that is both integrated, pulls together and delivers for every community; also make sure we are actually able to deliver it and we are not stuck on the whims of certain Governments and certain Ministers and also actually test, is it value for money we are doing, is it the right thing for us, rather than having a transport funding scheme where we are looking shall we compare this scheme in Leeds with a dual carriageway in Ipswich and a new station in Coventry, which is a competition we have been involved with in the past.

Let us move on and let us do it on a West Yorkshire-wide basis. Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, I wish to refer to Minute 93 of the meeting of the Executive Board held on 17th October, which is to do with NGT, the proposed Leeds Trolley Bus system.

Trolley buses were superbly silent and smooth-running, some Members may remember them in Bradford or in Huddersfield when they all seemed to be giant six wheelers with streamlined paintwork to make them go faster. They failed because of the expense of erecting and maintaining their overhead wiring and that has not changed.

It is interesting that NGT seems to have few friends among those transport anoraks and others who write letters to the YEP and the Yorkshire Post – trams, trains, underground railways, overhead railways, probably Hovercraft and perhaps Sedan chairs, all have their supporters. George Mudie favours an underground – perhaps he means to return to this Chamber to build one.

Except for the Sedan chairs they all have one thing in common – they will be massively expensive to install and it is remarkable that Leeds City Council and Metro, both of which fundamentally have no spare cash and in the future are likely to have even less, have signed up to absorbing all the risk in a venture which, by their own reckoning, is still £20 short of the capital requirement and will need a perpetual annual revenue subsidy.

At our January meeting most Members seemed to have given up on NGT. There was a desire to get out of the tramlines that that policy had been stuck in for more than 20 years and take a fresh strategic look, beginning with an integrated circle of park and rides around the main built up area of the city. That was most encouraging. Unexpectedly, the Government approved NGT though setting terms which locally were high risk and more or less unaffordable. Public transport policy in West Yorkshire is in danger of getting back into the position that it was before with NGT taking the place of Supertram as a white elephant in the room. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Walshaw.

COUNCILLOR WALSHAW: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I too would like to speak on the same minute. I would also like to assure colleagues that I too am standing up as I speak.

Lord Mayor, colleagues, I must tell you that we are the most significant European city that does not have a rapid transit system, seriously, and I think our transport problems we can all see are holding us back as a city and as a wider city region. I have to say that, coming from a transport background, rapid transit fixed links have the best chance of getting drivers out of their cars and on to public transport during those crucial journeys to work in the morning and in the afternoon.

I look at NGT, I think, with perhaps less jaundiced eyes than Councillor Leadley and I think it is a real opportunity for the city. I think we must start with the fact that trolley bus is unhelpful. This is a tram without rails and it has the significant advantages that a tram can bring. It is fast, it is efficient, it is high capacity and two-thirds of its running will be segregated from other road users. As the team was outside earlier, I recommend all colleagues to have a look at the blue leaflet; it is quite interesting. Importantly for me as a school governor in Headingley, it has no diesel emissions, so that will help improve air quality for our children.

I think colleagues must also consider the public transport landscape we have to see by the time NGT becomes operational, should we go down this path. Hopefully there will be a Quality Bus Contract bus network in place – that is a publicly planned network for the public good. That will integrate and work with NGT rather than pointlessly competing with it. Also importantly we will have a smart card ticketing network like the Londoners benefit from with their Oyster system, that will allow passengers to move seamlessly between modes, including local rail. As Councillor Lewis pointed out, we are going to have a lot more transport decisions taken locally within West Yorkshire and I think that is all to the good.

However, we have to recognise that everyone should have some concerns with NGT and we have to be mindful of those as we go forward. I think funding is an issue and we have to get the funding right, and we can only do it if it is affordable for us as a city, and that is absolutely crucial. Thinking practically, I think we ought to think in terms of what will happen as we are building NGT, what will happen in terms of the destruction of our heritage environment in north-west Leeds, and I am really thinking about preserving as many mature trees as possible because they are important. Also, cycling. Cycling is so important in Leeds and we cannot swap one virtuous mode for another.

To sum up, I think it is important really that all north-west Councillors work hard, work with Metro and the City Council to make sure that NGT is the best NGT north-west Leeds can have and this is the start of a serious rapid transit network for West Yorkshire. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Sue Bentley.

COUNCILLOR S BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on minute 93, page 120, regarding NGT. I want to draw Council's attention to the plight of the trees that will be removed to allow NGT to be built in Weetwood.

As you are probably aware, the roundabout at Lawnswood is one of the loveliest of roundabouts on the outer ring road. Why is that? Because it does not matter which way you turn off the ring road at this junction, there is an avenue of beautiful trees on both sides of the dual carriageway which are in total contrast to the bleakness of the ring road. These trees are all part of the character not only of Lawnswood but Weetwood. The clue is in the second part of both names, the word "wood", which means loads of trees. We have plenty in our ward, I am pleased to say.

On that 700 yard stretch from both sides of the ring road, believe it or not, there are 73 mature trees. The problem is that in the very area where we have most of the trees in the central reservation, it just happens to be the route for the NGT. The powers that be want to fell all these trees in the central reservation to make way for the trolley bus. That is 42 magnificent, mature trees that have been there for donkey's years.

Not only will these trees be lost for ever to the area but no doubt they will be felling some of the mature trees on the verges. This will visually change the area dramatically and leave us with a concrete area with overhead wires replacing the tree branches.

This desecration will not only change the landscape but will also impact on the absorption of pollutants, the loss of habitat for wildlife, and also affect the general wellbeing of our community.

My colleagues and I believe that there is enough room in the dual carriageway for the trolley bus to travel on this road without interfering with the central reservation or removing the trees and we ask for your support to keep this leafy heart of our ward. Lord Mayor, as a former representative of Weetwood I hope we can count on your sympathy. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I speak on minute 93 page 120 as the previous three speakers have.

What I want to raise is similar to what the last two speakers has said. I make it quite clear, although I have gone with Councillor Carter and Councillor Wakefield and others to lobby to get funds on a number of occasion when I was Leader of the Green Group, I have always been very sceptical about the scheme as far as it was in

north-west Leeds and what damage it would do to trees that has just been mentioned and the cycle ways. I am still very doubtful about that. In fact, quite honestly, I would rather have it run through my ward, past Councillor Walshaw's house, and be highly delighted about that. *(Laughter)*

We have always had a concern. Back in July 2009 when we last discussed the NGT as a motion at Council I put a motion through, or an amendment through, that got the support of everybody that we needed a 21st Century transport system for all of us and that included rail and ordinary bus, and I am glad that Metro are trying to sort out the ordinary bus services, the appalling services that we have at the moment.

Clearly what we need to do is make sure that this route is right and I am very, very sceptical about it. The principles of the trolley bus I am very much in favour of but not that part of the route. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Robinson.

COUNCILLOR M ROBINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I want to speak on minute 94 page 121. I have had a missed question and the Leader of Council has ignored my point about ignoring bureaucracy and saving money, so let's see if we can have more luck with this point.

Looking at the consultation on Highways and how they relate to planning developments, there are sites all across this city where planning applications are coming in and the existing highway network is being used. One site in my ward has recently been built on and the road to this site is deteriorating severely.

Highways and ward Members suggested to the planners that these roads were going to deteriorate and actually that planners should include some cost to the developers within the planning application. This went forward for both the Highways officers and ward Members and was ignored.

I believe that if the existing road network is being used, the developers should bring the roads that they damage up to a suitable standard afterwards. This particular road in my ward, the conservative estimate from Highways officers has been a cost of £20,000 to the Council. If that occurred in every single ward in this city, it is £660,000. It would go a long way to either saving the care ring in this city to saving the Council and the taxpayer money, so I hope that Councillor Lewis will take on board my concerns, will look into this with officers and will take this forward. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Just to deal with the last point first, I am more than happy to have those discussions with yourself and see what is possible, and I do not know, is the answer.

To go back to the starting point, Tom Leadley was referring to the various letters of the people who are not friendly to NGT in the Evening Post. I think there is one kind of common thread to all those letters that let us just take that money that we have got in for NGT and spend it on something else, or let us just use it as Seed money for something else, let us build an underground system at a cost of roughly

£400m for a mile. The people who write those letters are in the lovely position of being able to sit at a word processor or a computer and happily type in these things without any kind of concern for the real world that we all have to live in, and I have to say perhaps that goes for George Mudie as well. *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: We will tell him.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: You won't tell him – please don't tell him! I know who I can trust! I do remember George having those discussions way back when about his possible underground system or his possible overhead monorail system. It is not the easiest place to build such a system and we are where we are in terms of having spent the past two decades talking about a particular system which we have gone through iteration after iteration, business case after business case over, and we are where we are.

I do think we often talk down NGT incredibly because, because we have heard it so many times, it is, oh well, it only goes there, it only goes into south Leeds and that is not very exciting, is it? The exciting bit about NGT is its potential for where it goes next. Does it go in the Enterprise Zone? Where do you extend it to from the north? You can really start talking about some kind of proper system for the city and it will not all be NGT, it will be other things like the park and ride scheme, schemes that we will be doing. It will be as part of an integrated transport system with a Quality Bus Contracts network that will really change the way public transport works in the city. To get back to James's point about the Transport Fund, one of the big things that is coming out of that, and most exciting to me, is the potential for doing red routes – red routes across the city and from the city into other cities, which could really speed up public transport at a relatively small cost.

NGT will be great because it will encourage people to use public transport but I do think we tend to talk it down and we must remember the huge regeneration potential that it brings particularly to south Leeds. We listen to people representing north Leeds who tell us that property values are already increasing going up Headingley Lane. They will also increase in the south of the city and that is all to the good.

There is a lot of positive things about NGT and I think we just need to stop in this Chamber and elsewhere always being so incredibly negative about it as a system. We are going to get it; the important thing is that we are moving ahead.

Sue, I listened to your bit about the trees but your colleagues were doing to do the same thing with the trees as is still in the plans, so that is nothing new. I think we should talk and I think we should...

COUNCILLOR S BENTLEY: *(inaudible)* arguing against it.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: I think we should look at every bit of the route to see how we can mitigate potential damage, what we can do to make it work better for local people. I do have a huge concern that we always end up – and this is how I feel about this Council as a whole – we always scratch the itching bits in north Leeds, we never scratch the itching bits in south Leeds and I ask myself, why is that? As ward Members you are quite right to raise those issues about those trees and about cycling.

There is a comment that Jim McKenna, and David has reminded me of it, about why don't we put the first routes out through west Leeds because nobody would complain there, and again I think that is about the truth of it. It is about seeing the potential for NGT rather than always seeing the negatives.

I think I have covered most of the points. If I can just get back to what James was saying about the Transport Fund. Again, this is a really exciting prospect for the city, working with other Local Authorities. It has not been too difficult to get a degree of consensus across West Yorkshire about coming up with a Transport fund. It will get quite difficult talking about the detail in future years but there are a lot of exciting schemes, schemes that we have not looked at previously that will bring real economic benefits to the economy of West Yorkshire, that will bring jobs and that is all to the good. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

(iii) Environment

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to the Environment minutes.
Councillor Harington.

COUNCILLOR HARINGTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. This is page 121 minute 95. The Government is in the process of launching its Green Deal Initiative and this has some very worthwhile aims, namely to do the necessary work on domestic and business properties to try and make them more energy efficient and cut down on carbon emissions.

The way it will work is this, if you are interested in having any work done on your property you can get it assessed and there will be a wide range of measures you can choose from, whether it be double glazing, some form of insulation, biomass boiler, whatever, and you will not have to pay any money up front, you pay through your bills, but at the heart of the scheme is what they call the Golden Rule, which means that you must be better off after you have had the measures so that the savings must outweigh the costs. It is hoped that 26 million properties will benefit from this.

Two issues. One, it has is taking a great deal longer than expected to arrange the finance and, secondly, it looks like the people who most need support because of their need to combat fuel poverty will miss out. Why is that? Because the cost to do the work on what are called the hard-to-treat properties because cavity insulation will not be possible, the cost will outweigh the benefits and so they will not qualify for the Green Deal scheme.

The Green Deal Go Early Scheme, which was referred to in this minute, is a way of trying to meet both of those two issues: one, because instead of waiting until the Green Deal is set up there can be some money spent right now instead of waiting about doing nothing; and, secondly, the money through grants can be made available to help the properties that are hardest to treat in the most deprived areas of the city, and that will be a mix of housing, Leeds Fed, ALMO and so on and some private.

There will also be some loans available for modern housing with non-standard cavity and that will be at zero interest. The reason for that is that at the moment, as you know, through the Wrap-Up Leeds scheme the insulation is being offered free and it is being felt that if you suddenly leap from that to a market rate loan, the take-up will be very poor, especially in the most deprived areas of the city. There will also

be through this scheme some show homes that will involve houses which are presently empty being done up and they will be able to show what measures are available.

The money available will only be enough to treat just over 300 properties, which is not much but at least it is a start and at least it will be an opportunity to test some of the aspects of the real Green Deal when it actually swings into action.

A lot of questions remain. Will people take up the offer of the loans? Will the people most in need of assistance actually get it? Will the carbon emissions that are expected to be cut actually be cut? Watch this space. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I just start by welcoming this initiative, I think it is a good start in terms of what we are doing and I am pleased that the Government is finally moving forward, because as has just been said, it has been taking too long.

As Chair of the Scrutiny Board looking into fuel poverty I agree with what Councillor Harington has just said in terms of this will start to address the fuel poverty issues and I think it is vitally important we as a Council at this stage cannot do anything about the price of fuel, although I am advised that Councillor Hardy and one or two others are going to try and do their best to try and rectify that particular point, but it is important that we get will insulated and energy efficient homes.

We need to make sure that we market it and sell it properly. As you have heard me say before, nobody knows what a tonne of carbon looks like but we keep trying to push this that we should be talking about the financial benefits that are going to come.

We also need to explain the costs involved so that people do not end up doing something that they do not want to do, and we also need to make sure that we do not allow any rogues to get in and go and knock on people's doors and try and convince them that they can charge them, because this is free of charge but I think there will be some people will go and knock on some vulnerable people's doors and say, "For £10, £15, £20, £30, £40, £50 I will do all of this free of charge for you." There is no need to do it, the Council will do it free of charge. We have got to watch that, particularly cold calling, we have got to watch out for that.

We also need to make sure that our friends in the Planning Department play their role in this as well and do not put a stop to it, and that they discuss clearly with ward Members first of all and a decision is made at as high a level as possible within the Planning Department as to how they are going to approach this, because they need to submit a planning application for a lot of this, it is going to slow the process up and particularly if they are to be turned down and then someone has to go to appeal to try and get them through. It will slow things up and it is the most vulnerable in society that are going to cause problems.

I am the first to admit that the planning system is not the problem that the Government think it is but on this occasion I am afraid to say I think the Planning department could be a big problem on the horizon unless we get it right and that, I am

afraid, is up to the administration to speak to the officers and try and smooth these things out. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

(b) Area Committees

(i) North West (Inner) Area Committee

THE LORD MAYOR: We have reached the hour of 4.10 which consideration of the Exec Board Minutes ends. For the benefit of people in the public gallery we have now moved to the bottom of page 13 and consideration of the Area Committee Minutes. Councillor Martin Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is Minute 14 on page 336. I just wanted to refer very briefly to the reference to the planning application for the former Leeds Girls' High School site. I was very pleased, I think those of us in the ward who have been involved in this and other ward Members as well were very pleased to see that the application for the Victoria Road site was withdrawn recently. I think planning officers put forward some very strong arguments as to why the application was unsuitable. I suspect the applicant realised that they were on a hiding to nothing in actually following through the application, so it was withdrawn. Clearly they will come back with a fresh scheme but for the moment we do have a bit of breathing space.

I think that breathing space does give us an opportunity to reflect on the nature of green space in our inner cities more widely, actually, and it seems to me that I had a meeting recently, as we all have done, to look at land allocation in our wards because the upside for Headingley ward is that there is very little land to develop, there is very little land left to develop but, of course, what that actually means is that there is very little green space there in the first place.

I think very often when we are talking about land allocation and where houses should be built in the city the debate is very much about the outer areas, about how all these areas of green space in the outer areas are under threat and how we need to protect them and all the rest of it, which I am sure we are all in support of protecting green space where we can and protecting certainly green belt and green field sites. Actually, it is the inner city wards that lack the green space in the first place and so where arguably the onus is on us to be even more stringent in trying to protect what we have.

Sometimes the debate is a little bit the wrong way round, so my view in terms of Headingley ward and in terms of the inner city more generally is that we should be doing all we can through the planning process, through what the Council can do and in other ways to ensure that we protect our green space.

In terms of this particular scheme I am pleased that there is a pause now, I am pleased that we can regroup through the Hyde Park Olympic Legacy Group that has been formed to look at potential for keeping this as green space. That is just one example of where we need to work much harder as a city to protect what we have particularly in our inner cities. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Illingworth.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to speak about the Health and Wellbeing Partnership, where I have been put on by the Area Committee as their representative. Put into practice at local level the public health policies are agreed through Scrutiny and also through Lisa Mulherin's Health and Wellbeing Board.

I am very much aware, Lord Mayor, of the health inequalities and the gap in life expectancy, and in life chances, between the inner city and the prosperous areas in north-west Leeds. There is a huge contrast between places outside the outer ring road and those bordering the inner ring road where deprivation is really severe.

I am sure the Health and Wellbeing Partnership will have regard to the recent guidance from NICE – the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence – and I have got a copy here directed at Local Authorities. There is guidance on physical activity, on alcohol, tobacco, all problems we have to deal with in the Local Authority sphere.

We also have a very good example that Councillor Mulherin drew to our attention last week, the Birmingham Be Active campaign which has massively increased participation among poor people in Birmingham basically by opening the sports centres for free. People could not afford to go there, that was the basic problem, and a huge improvement. That is a challenge for Leeds but nevertheless one which we ought to be following through.

There is a need to roughly double, Lord Mayor, the level of physical activity in the general population. Roughly double it in Leeds. Every form of physical activity counts – tea dances are every bit as important as ultra marathon running and everything in between. Research has shown that physical activity is more effective and considerably cheaper than the most expensive cardiovascular drugs – big effect on life expectancy and quality of life.

Lord Mayor, this brings me on to a piece of daftness that we have actually inherited from Councillor Carter. I am sorry he has left the Chamber but it was his decision originally and one that which I would really like to reverse. If we go along the NGT route which does, in fact, help to make recreational facilities in the outer areas more accessible for the inner city, it is a two-way street as far as we are concerned, if you go along the NGT route on the Otley Old Road, you will find three excellent top class playing fields sitting by the side of the road which you ought to be using. The present proposal is to turn those into a graveyard, Lord Mayor. I think it is daft.

Councillor Gruen, when you review the LDF you need to look at internal problems as well as external ones. We need to defend our playing pitches against developers but also against daft people in leisure services where the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, Lord Mayor. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Walker.

COUNCILLOR WALKER: Lord Mayor, I am commenting on page 338 minute 19, North West (Inner) Area Committee Minutes and specifically the issue on basic needs.

We are all aware that there is basic need pressure across the city as increasing birth rates and increasing numbers of families moving into Leeds are all looking for primary school places. As a Council we are working extremely hard to tackle this issue and various consultations are under way or are planned for school expansions.

Since 2009 there have been an additional 830 reception places created and another 120 are subject to consultation. One of these is Little London Primary within my own Area Committee and we know that if that expansion is successful it will make a tremendous difference to the pressures in that area. Not only that, but by increasing the numbers of children who will be able to attend their local school, it will have a knock-on effect on their health as more families gain access to schools within walking distance of their homes. Schools are fundamental in the battle to encourage healthy life style and walking or cycling to school is a very small step but one in the right direction.

As ward Members we are reminded of the problems that the city is facing as parents sometimes struggle to get their children into the schools that they want. School admissions can be a very stressful time for families and I am encouraged that we are tackling the issue but also recognise that it is not an easy task.

The problem of basic need has been exacerbated by the fact that changes in legislation have made it more difficult for the Local Authority to have a direct say in the best location of a new school. As local ward Members and school governors, I think we need to help by looking at our own patches and thinking about what solutions we can offer with our local knowledge to help try to ease the pressure. It is essential that we work together to tackle a problem that is city-wide. As Leeds continues to grow with increased housing development we need to ensure that social infrastructure, including schools, play areas and green spaces, is taken into consideration when planning permission is considered.

I am confident that we can address the basic need pressure but this will only happen if we view it as a Council-wide issue. We need all departments to work together and find innovative solutions to a situation that affects us all. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Akhtar.

COUNCILLOR AKHTAR: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. We have just heard from Councillor Illingworth there are many health challenges which we are currently facing as a city and it of vital importance that we take the necessary measures to tackle them.

Particular issue which needs to be considered, the problem of health inequality across the city. With public health responsibility coming to the Council we now have the real opportunity to tackle and address those issues. We need to do all we can to improve the facility such as the Holt Park Centre. These actions are very positive and should be continued and they contribute to encouraging more people to take part in sport and exercise, which in turn will help to reduce the health inequality across Leeds.

I would also like to refer back to the excellent contribution of Councillor Walker on the basic needs. As a city we should aim to provide the best for children

living here, it is crucial that we look at ways in which we can reduce the pressure on primary schools and create more places.

As explained by Councillor Walker, the work which is already under way to tackle this issue is very positive and it is now important that we continue this across the city.

Another key issue that I feel on this city is that it is necessary that we promote awareness of healthy living in schools, encourage children to participate more in exercise and sports in a bid to address this problem. The National Health Service is currently running the national Campaign for Life, a campaign which aims to improve the health of children. It is important that we endorse this and other related campaigns in Leeds in order to reduce childhood obesity in the city.

Coming back to the point Councillor Hamilton has just made with regards to the Victoria Road, which obviously those of us who are on the Plans West we declared an interest and I think it is important that obviously the elected Members for the Headingley ward need to take a positive role. Councillor Illingworth and myself have been campaigning and you have been saying for many, many years that open spaces are required in inner city wards and we have witnessed in inner city wards not only in Headingley and Hyde Park but also in Harehills and Beeston as well, that there are children who are suffering in the long term illness when they grow up with diseases such as heart diseases and high blood pressure and diabetes.

I fully support what he just said and I hope that this Council will promote the health and wellbeing of our young generation in the future years.

Just to finish on the point with regards to the planning application, I will leave that with the elected Members in Headingley and surely with Councillor Walker and Councillor Walshaw and yourself, we can come up with some sort of solution. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Townsley.

COUNCILLOR TOWNSLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. My comments are not that dissimilar to Councillor Walker's. I speak to minute 24, page 352. I have recently contacted the Schools Organisation Team for a briefing on primary school provision in Horsforth to ask them what has been done to accommodate new children coming into the area through new build housing.

Recently Horsforth Newlaithes Junior and Featherbank Infants schools were extended and made into full primary schools. This was to accommodate for when these children become of school age. The problem with this is the fact that we have had several large planning applications granted for housing which are either in or adjoining Horsforth. Clariant and Riverside Mill, 500 properties; Woodside Quarry 475 properties, Kirkstall Forge I believe is over 1,000, Kirklees Knoll Farsley 400. The vast majority of these dwellings are described as family homes, but where will these children who will be living in these houses go to school? All primary schools in and around these sites are full and the nearest high school, Horsforth, is also full to capacity.

At the above-mentioned meeting ward Members were asked to identify sites where new schools, even going down the route of free schools, could be built. This in itself is a difficult task but remember at this late state in the SHLAA exercise we are asked again to identify sites where new house building could take place. Already bursting at the seams in our schools, new housing sites with planning permission, an exercise to find more housing sites, we are heading for a disaster unless something is done now to accommodate these children,

I believe that building on the Clariant site could begin as soon as the New Year. We have no time to lose. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wadsworth.

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Can I thank Councillor Townsley for bringing this problem up. The report did come to the Area Committee and predominantly was about two expansions, one was in my ward, Tranmere Park, and the other was in Otley and Yeadon, which was Rufford Park. I think everybody agrees that there is a need for more primary places due to the amount of development that is taking place in the Outer North-West. It comes back to what we were talking about with the LDF, that we need to get things right and try and get them right first time, and we are not anywhere near doing that because at the moment we are approving development on development on development and not actually looking at primary school places.

Everybody knows that there is a need for more primary school places but when we start to enlarge schools it comes to the same old point. Last summer we had a debate in Councillor Townsley's ward about Rawdon St Peter's being extended. The public were absolutely against that proposal, mainly on the old things that comes up every time which was traffic – traffic both during the construction of the school and when pupils are coming. The debate really around Tranmere Park is exactly the same, it is around traffic and people just do not want more traffic. Rufford Park is a little bit different and I think there were positive comments about that, but they were not all positive. We just need to get things right first time.

It just comes back to our infrastructure. We look at infrastructure with the amount of traffic and I am disappointed really that Councillor Blake cannot talk about education because she has not responded to me when I have talked to her about the expansion of Tranmere Park but she did feel the need to actually consult me over Youth Services, which seems rather strange that she consults over some things but not over others. That is up to Councillor Blake – maybe she will take notes and respond back to both Councillor Townsley and myself.

With regard to the transport infrastructure in Outer North-West, Councillor Townsley has Horsforth roundabout in his ward which again needs to be got right before we have further development. That will not happen because we are going to build on the Clariant site which is just going to put more traffic on to it. Councillor Bentley raises a question which I totally support about NGT. We are getting, according to Councillor Walshaw, a state of the art transport system with a little blue leaflet which is wonderful but we are going to fell all the trees, so all my residents who travel over the Lawnswood roundabout will not see those trees any longer, so their quality of life will deteriorate. Maybe you think that the NGT is going to solve

all of that and they will all be on the NGT. We are not sure that the park and ride can cope.

It all comes back to the same thing – we need to get infrastructure in before we actually deal with the development and we do not do that. We have all had site selection meetings and every time I ask, “What are we doing about the infrastructure?” it is, “Oh, we will deal with that at the time.” It just does not seem to happen. We need to do it now before we approve development. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Urry.

COUNCILLOR URRY: Lord Mayor and Councillors, I would like to speak to Minute 27 on page 363 regarding health inequalities.

Unequal health is both a cause and a result of poverty, low productivity and poor education and it can affect opportunities for children for a lifetime. In 2009 the Commons Health Select Committee found that, while the health of all groups in England is improving, in recent years health inequalities between social classes have widened. The area of highest life expectancy in our city is Adel and Wharfedale, where life expectancy is over 84 years, but in City and Hunslet this falls to just 73 years. We cannot and should not tolerate this discrepancy.

Within North-East (Inner) wards, Chapel Allerton, Roundhay and Moor Town, life expectancy is six, five and three years lower than in the highest area respectively. That is why the things we are looking to take forward include reducing alcohol misuse, reducing infant mortality, reducing excess weight in ten to eleven year olds and reducing early deaths from cancer and cardiovascular disease, supporting mental health through psychological therapy and ensuring better access to GP services.

Also important are reductions in fuel poverty and reducing speed limits to make it safer for properly supervised children to play out. We must build on the Olympic and Paralympic legacy to increase opportunities for local people to improve their health and therefore their chances in life, to encourage a healthier lifestyles and ensuring provision of more facilities to improve life quality overall.

I commend the Council’s support for Alcohol Awareness week which runs from 19th to 25th of this month. I also commend the Warm Homes Healthy People Initiative, which built on Wrap-Up Leeds and which helps vulnerable individuals and families have energy efficiency improvements made to their homes. Public health will also look at fuel poverty as a priority when they move to the Local Authority next April.

This Council is working hard to address health concerns but it can always do more. Planning decisions need to require more green space and recreational areas. We should ensure an increased proportion of the budget is spent on encouraging healthy modes of transport and increased physical activity.

I ask that the Council keeps health inequalities at the top of its agenda to ensure there is an improvement in the quality of life in the city as a whole as we take on a greater public health role. Health inequalities are not going to go away and it is for us to address them. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: We have now got to half-past four, so may I call upon Councillor Wakefield to exercise the right of final reply.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Given I have summed up not too long ago I am obviously not going to take the full ten minutes, which will be some relief to most people here.

However, Councillor Wadsworth, I have just had whispered in my ear, there is an offer from Councillor Blake to come in and see her some time. *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I am not sure that is what I said!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Actually the discussion on children reminded me somewhat of our discussion at the last Executive Board and I am glad Councillor Procter has come back in because Councillor Procter supported our opposition, along with Councillor Golton, to the cuts in housing benefit to disabled people if they had an extra room. He also supported the opposition to foster parents being cut housing benefit because they had the extra room. I think rightly so we were a lot stronger and a lot more effective because all the parties got together and said this. The only one we did not actually make progress on was the issue of men under 35 who may have childcare arrangements not really being recognised properly in the housing benefit debate.

That is really, really important, I do not say that lightly, and I did welcome the support because why we were debating about children in the city and the demographic bulges, it made me think about the prospect that is looming large now of further benefit cuts and what we are faced with is actually Iain Duncan-Smith at the moment flying a kite and I think we are faced with yet another betrayal of vulnerable children on benefit. The proposal is simple. Anybody claiming, any woman claiming child benefit who is on JSA will have child benefit cut after two children.

We are going to see, I am sure, in some of the papers these large families who are having a great time, luxury life style, five star hotels and so on because we went through this before. Do you remember the capping of benefits to £26,000 because there were millions of people having a great time? I actually looked this up this week and in actual fact it was just one per cent of people who claimed benefits above £26,000. It saved less than £1b but think of the hysteria that it created in our communities about so-called benefit abuse.

I fear we are going to get a portrayal of women having babies because it is a great money earner and especially if you are unemployed. I fear we are going to get this £13.40, which I think is child the benefit – you will know, Lisa – amount you get, being used to actually cut further benefits from vulnerable people.

The total proposal of that is going to save no more than £400m, if they are serious about just targeting them. In actual fact, yet again the people who sign on with more than two children are no more than four per cent of people. I suspect that very soon we are going to get more than that proposal from IDS. We are going to get a proposal that women working, families working and claiming housing benefit or other, income support, will also be cut, the child benefit, on the third child, because there is no point doing it on that scale before.

That is deeply worrying because the city makes, and rightly, a claim to be a child friendly city, but if you look at the statistics that are building up nationally, we now have 3.7m children who are living in poverty and what is predicted is we will have 4.2m children who live in poverty. Surprise, surprise, not to some people who know the benefits system, two-thirds of those children belong to families who are working.

There is a massive challenge for us and I think again it is probably right that all parties should get together, have a look at this proposal and start the opposition now, otherwise we are going to see children in this city, not as bad as Councillor Atha said earlier but actually they will be struggling to have any future, to have the support, to have the home, the security and benefits that they need to live in this city in a safe and secure way.

I put that down as an idea that we could actually unite around given, as I said, we were affected before.

On the NGT, some of us have been following this debate for 20 years or more and Councillor Lyons used to go down to London on a regular basis and kept the East Coast Line going! He does not come back now.

I accept all the arguments and the trees and so on, but I say a couple of things. The NGT, we have been lobbying for 20 years, we got £160m. We have been waiting 20 years. We should welcome that because if you look at the statistics of public expenditure on transport, we will all be appalled. 84% of public expenditure on transport goes to London and the south-east. Yorkshire had Humberside get 4%. We should grab that money with both hands.

I think the real trick of this is to say that it is the start of the debate. When that route was devised 20 years ago the world was different. We did not have an Aire Valley which is a growth area for jobs. I think the debate in here – I am sorry folks, but I never thought we got strategic enough. It ought to be talking about, as Richard was saying, the links not only through West Leeds but to Bradford. We ought to be talking about links to the Aire Valley. We ought to be talking about raising, as we have done before, the billion pounds we need to get a proper public transport, because I take the argument entirely, you cannot talk about buildings and homes because a lot of parts of our city are gridlocked without proper transport.

I had to smile when I heard George Mudie's idea being commented on Today. Yes, we have to be ambitious. I am not sure at £400m a mile that underground through rock is the answer. I am sure that we would get two miles up the road and run out of money.

COUNCILLOR: Do you want some shovels?

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It reminded me of my last conversation with Alec Shelbrooke, the MP. George wants underground and he wants to build on stilts, overground.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Underground, overground...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I think we need a sense of reality. A billion pounds will start doing things more ambitious and, frankly, if we are to grow the city and if we are to get economic prosperity, if we are to provide homes then transport is the key to all those things. It is amazing economically. I accept the trees are a problem, I accept there are some issues but I think the debates in here ought to be how we can build on what we have got now and start getting into areas and unlocking areas of the growth so that we can do the jobs, homes and investment that this city needs.

I will move those Minutes, Lord Mayor, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: May I call for a vote on the motion to receive the Minutes? (*A vote was taken*) That is CARRIED. Thank you very much.

ITEM 12 – BACK BENCH COMMUNITY CONCERNS

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving on to the Back Bench Community Concerns. For the benefit of people in the public gallery, that is on page 16. I would like to get two in before the tea-break, please. Councillor Cleasby.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Council, I am aware that most Councillors are concerned over the SHLAA and that has been expressed today. I shall be speaking today about my concerns for my ward. However, the underlying concerns should be yours too.

In the SHLAA document, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, Practice Guidance, published by the Government, it states on page 6 paragraph 10:

“There are advantages in undertaking land availability assessment, particularly for housing, employment, retail and other build uses.”

We chose to do just housing and nothing else. It goes on to extol the virtues of a partnership approach. At paragraph 11 it states that:

“Partnerships should include key stakeholders such as housebuilders, social landlords, local property agents, local communities and other agencies.”

In one quote, as I said, employment retail and other uses, not just housing – in the other quote, local communities. Not existed in Leeds.

Whilst the SHLAA legislation has been in place and up to 27 March this year, Planning Policy Statement 1 was in place. It was drawn to my attention by a senior planning officer that I was tangling with because of his insistence and keenness to engage with developers. The piece of land was in green belt in a conservation area, not marked for housing but open space, so I was rather annoyed that he was talking with a developer for housing. He tried to defend by quoting half sentences etc as justification from the document I have just mentioned. I responded by quoting an entire page and I will shortcut that and only quote paragraph 43 today:

“Community involvement in planning should not be a reactive tick box

process. It should enable the local community to say what sort of place they want to live in at a stage when this can make a difference. Effectively community involvement requires an approach which tells communities about emerging policies and proposals in good time; enables communities to put forward ideas and suggestions and to participate in developing proposals and options. It is not sufficient to invite them simply to comment once these have been worked up. Consult on formal proposals; ensure that consultation takes place in locations that are widely accessible; provide and seek feedback.”

Council, I stated earlier that these two documents ran together until 27 March, when National Planning Policy Framework replaced PPS1. The new document, at paragraph 155, states:

“Early and meaningful engagement and collaboration with neighbourhoods, local organisations and businesses is essential. A wide selection of a community should be proactively engaged so that local plans, so far as possible, reflect a collective vision and a set of agreed priorities for the sustainable development of the area.”

Lord Mayor, the only Councillors involved in the SHLAA partnership, the Leeds SHLAA partnership, have been Councillors Anderson, Fox and Taggart and, recently, one lay person was added to the partnership, a former, I believe, Barwick Parish Councillor. This is clearly not the kind of community involvement the three documents I have quoted intended. It is clearly a feeble attempt to tick a box.

The Council’s website on the SHLAA states:

“The Leeds SHLAA Partnership is made up of representatives of the housing industry, the HCA, the property forum, CPRE, Renew, the community and Council officers.”

Now back to Horsforth. Councillor Taggart, when you respond would you explain why two adjacent Council owned farms on Scott Hall Lane in Horsforth were put into the SHLAA by the Council, namely Lingwall(?) Farm and North Ives farm; why they were added in secrecy and their ownership concealed from me and my community. If Railtrack earlier this year had not wished to purchase land near Horsforth station ward Members would still be unaware of the ownership. It is when we were consulted by Railtrack that the ownership became obvious to us.

Surely Council officers must have realised that including these farms would be the green light to developers, leading to the inclusion eventually of the Hunger Hills estate and Rawdon Billing estate and farms in my ward. This has caused enormous amounts of work, particularly in Lois Pickering, the officer who is receiving all the letters that are arriving.

Why have I and my community been excluded, contrary to planning guidance and advice from successive Governments in the SHLAA? Why are there no published minutes of the partnership meetings? What Council mechanism was used to set up the partnership? I think you will have difficulty, Councillor, finding those answers.

Council, the SHLAA has been a shoddy, demeaning exercise. Unfortunately our neighbourhoods and communities are going to suffer the consequences and it will be worse as developers take advantage of their years of preferential involvement in the SHLAA process. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Perhaps we could bring Councillor Cleasby back to planet earth, where the rest of us live. First of all, yes, it is true I chair the SHLAA and I am the only Member of Leeds City Council that is there. I am doing exactly the same job chairing the SHLAA as under the previous administration which Councillor Cleasby was actually a Member of. The form and structure of procedures are exactly the same. There are absolutely no secrets and I can give an absolute assurance to Council on that.

The SHLAA is just a list. Sometimes landowners, sometimes developers list something for the SHLAA. It does not mean it is going to be developed. The current SHLAA list is full of all kinds of nominations of land which I can say over my body will ever be developed. The SHLAA list does not mean the land gets developed. I repeat, just because it is on the SHLAA list does not mean it gets developed.

The real involvement we all have will be on site allocation and that work has already started at ward Member level. If you attended your ward meeting, and I suspect you have, Councillor Cleasby, you will have been told what SHLAA nominations are being made in your ward and you have had an opportunity yourself to put forward pieces of land for development. It is exactly what has happened in my ward with Ted, Caroline and all over the city, but it does not mean any of the land will actually be developed. People still have to put forward planning applications and we will go through city-wide very carefully about all the sites about whether they are suitable for development and if it is development, what sort of development. There is absolutely no secrecy at all. I am there and my two Conservative predecessors in the chair, I am assured by officers we behaved in exactly an exemplary manner throughout. For you to suggest that it is secret, it implies to some people it is probably for some kind of Liberal leaflet, I suspect, that there is something underhand. There is absolutely nothing underhand at all. We are open, it is honest, we have got nothing to hide and I look forward to the interesting work that we are going to do on site allocation and I will look very much forward to all the points of view that Members will be putting forward.

You have got sites in your ward you do not want to see developed. I fully understand that, you have got every right to fight for your patch, as has ever Councillor, but there is no secrecy and there is nothing being hidden by me, I can assure you. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now going on to the second community concern. Councillor Harland - I understand it is Councillor Harland's maiden speech.

COUNCILLOR HARLAND: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I would like to raise the serious concerns of local residents in the ward I represent, Kippax and Methley. These concerns relates to recurring flood events which have affected many people's homes and lives.

Flooding is a problem across the whole of my ward. During 2012 there have been a series of extreme rainfall events that have led to many floods. This has

affected numerous communities, including Allerton Bywater, Mickletown, Methley and Kippax.

My ward is unique in that the ward floods from two sources, the River Aire and the River Calder. This contrasts with the majority of the rest of the city which floods only from the River Aire. My ward is therefore very vulnerable to flooding. It is due to the widespread disturbance and distress caused to local residents by these events that we need to address this matter in the near future.

Let me give you some examples of the effect flooding on my ward's constituents. In June of this year a very upset local resident from Kippax contacted the local Councillors. Three feet of water had filled the field at the top of their garden. They were so afraid that their home would flood that they packed their belongings into boxes and have not unpacked them since because they are waiting for the next flood event to arrive. I am sure you would all agree that this is a very sad situation for any resident to have to put up with.

Over the weekend of 23rd/24th June, Main Street in Allerton Bywater flooded so much that water covered the entire road. Although the Council, the Fire Authority and Environment Agency worked together to deal with the flood, I believe more can be done to improve working relationships between these agencies.

Local residents need assuring that agencies are working to reduce the likelihood of such traumatic experiences happening again in the future. Barnsdale Road in Allerton Bywater has flooded on several occasions this year. Great disruption occurred in the local community as the road was completely closed. Ward Members are, however, aware that the Environment Agency does not believe there is a serious problem. Ward Members, the Parish Council and local residents do not agree and are continuing to raise their concerns.

Another locality at which there has continued to be concerns is Mickletown in Methley. In this area there are a number of older people's homes and doctors' surgeries, as well as key infrastructure such as electricity substations and telephone repeater stations. This means that there is the risk that even those not directly affected by flooding could have no means of telephone or internet communication.

These examples show that residents in my ward have had to deal with numerous troubles due to flooding. In addition there are ongoing and increasing costs to this Council due to the enactment of road closures and increased maintenance of highways as a direct consequence of flood damage.

These local concerns should not and cannot be ignored. I accept that there will always be a risk of flooding in some areas of the city. However, where there is reasonable action we can take to protect residents from the more severe consequences of flooding, we should do just that.

We cannot control the weather but we can do all we can to deal with the consequences of it. I welcome the forthcoming enquiry into flood risk management by the Scrutiny Board for Sustainability Economy and Culture due to take place in the spring. I note the funding which has been allocated to flood alleviation in the city centre and I agree that this is vital to protect properties and business in such a way. However, I also believe it is vitally important to protect those residents living in the

outer areas of the city. Surely it is better to take action to mitigate the risks posed to reduce the future impact of flooding in these areas as well.

I therefore encourage the Executive Member to ensure the correct decisions are made to enable the improvement of the working relationship between the Council, Yorkshire Water and the Environment Agency. Communication needs to be strong between all parties and the Council's flood management team needs to make sure that they provide the necessary support for this to happen.

It is crucial that all of us as elected Members work towards alleviating the potentially devastating risks presented by flooding to local communities outside of the city centre. Therefore, I ask the Executive Member to confirm that the major flooding concerns within the Kippax and Methley ward will remain a priority for lobbying and funding. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Illingworth.

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: Yes, Lord Mayor, thank you very much for that. It is possible that we might be able to help because we do flood in Kippax, we have regular floods but as it happens there is only one house in my electorate that is actually susceptible to flooding because all the housing is built on the valley sides and there is nothing, or virtually nothing, in the valley bottom. We are lucky. Flooding is our friend because it protects our green spaces. The fact that the land might flood keeps the developers away, which means we have got recreational land and allotments and playing spaces that we greatly value and love.

That land might actually serve a dual function. It can protect the city by being sacrificial land in major flood events and that is something which the city has not looked at and needs to look at more carefully when the Scrutiny enquiry takes place.

There is upstream land in Kirkstall, in Horsforth and up towards Apperley Bridge which could flood harmlessly and which could be part of an active flood protection scheme rather than the passive scheme which the Environment Agency previously looked at. In other words, you hold the flooding back till the last moment and when the city centre is about to go or when it is about to become a problem downstream, you flood the sacrificial land and it is all there to take the surplus water. It is something which the Environment Agency, to my amazement, has never looked at. They always look at letting the flood land fill up first so when you really need it, it is 90% full and you have wasted that capacity. We have not looked at active flooding defence schemes and we ought to because it could be very good value for our city and protect people downstream who have got a serious problem, Lord Mayor. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Richard Lewis.

COUNCILLOR R LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I thank Mary for her comments on Kippax and Methley. I think what I felt this year is it is almost every week that I have woken up on one day, listened to the news saying there is flooding somewhere and so where is the flooding taking place in Leeds this week? You are trapped between two rivers; I think we are trapped between crumbling infrastructure on one hand, climate change and changing weather patterns on the others, so we see frequent events and the wards that have been affected this year tend to be Rothwell,

Kippax and Methley, Garforth, your side of the city. We have had times when it has been Farnley and Wortley. I can remember getting it really bad down on the ring road. There are plenty of other places – the Dunhills always comes to mind as an estate that gets flooded.

There is a huge need for more investment in this area and it is not about do we spend money on the city centre flood alleviation or spend money in the outer areas. It is not a battle between us and other Local Authorities within Yorkshire, shall we protect agricultural land, shall we have coastal defences. It is about the lot. We have to spend, we have to invest in flood alleviation and coastal defence. There is no way round it. We have seen Local Authorities not far from us where they have had huge damage over the past year and a community I know well, Hebden Bridge, I have seen them suffer twice and I thought they were going to get it a third time. The impact on their local economy has been absolutely horrendous.

It is not just about the economy, it is that horrible stuff that comes into people's homes, that makes people's lives a misery, and we have to do absolutely everything we can to get it right. We have to make sure all the machinery that we operate and that Yorkshire Water operates is absolutely up to scratch, that we are as a Local Authority making sure our emergency planning processes are absolutely as they should be, and that we are just really on the ball, because I do not see things getting better over the coming few years.

As I say, it is an argument about national priorities, which brings me on to John's reference to the city centre and other parts of Leeds. There are a number of large cities that are threatened by floods, like Leeds, and it has been fascinating to go to the Yorkshire Flood and Coastal Defence Committee and have a Councillor from Bradford saying, "We are right behind you" I never hear that from Bradford so it is really quite nice for them to say how important it is that we protect Leeds city centre, but equally how important that Sheffield city centre is protected, and they are looking to the kind of thing that you are talking about where they have a kind of wash land as one of their main ways of defending the city. We have Hull that is always threatened. Derby, would you believe, equally is a city that needs massive expenditure.

Peter was talking about that latest phrase, shovel ready. We can have shovel ready schemes for flood defence. It is an area where I always think the Government should say this is money that we can spend, there can be no arguments about this kind of infrastructure spend. We are looking forward to going on in terms of the city centre, going ahead with the first phase of the flood alleviation scheme, the movable weir phase. We have got money from Regional Growth Fund although it is subject to due diligence. We have our own commitment of £10m and there is other funding that is coming in to the picture that means we can move forward with that first phase as a gesture of our faith and our commitment.

I believe, seeing the red light, absolutely everything that Mary and John have said is bang on. We must protect the city, we must protect its outer areas, it is a priority for us all. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I now propose to break for tea. People in the public gallery are welcome to join us in the Banquet Hall and I intend to start the second half of the meeting promptly at 5.20, so if you can make sure you are back by 5.20.

(Short adjournment)

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving on to the third Back Bench Community Concern. Could I remind Members that we have got the Police Crime Commissioner elections tomorrow so that we are currently in purdah. If any Members use this Back Bench Community Concern as an opportunity to promote one particular candidate or diminish the election prospects of any of the other candidates, then I shall request them to sit down immediately, so please can you bear that in mind.

Councillor Hardy.

COUNCILLOR: Sit down!

COUNCILLOR HARDY: I am not a candidate. Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, my concern relates solely to the police cuts to the residents of Farnley and Wortley and only that.

Across West Yorkshire robbery and theft from vehicles reduced by 9% in the last year. There were 120 fewer victims of serious violent crime. The amount of people who say that the police do an excellent or good job has increased.

I have seen the impact of these improvements upon my ward. Farnley and Wortley is not currently a high crime area. Serious incidents remain few and far between. It is an area where people feel safe and are satisfied with the police. Much of the work done to make Farnley and Wortley safe and secure comes from the hard working, dedicated police and Council professionals. They respond when my constituents are in danger, have been victims of crime or witnessed distressing events. I have been impressed by the devotion, commitment and professionalism of the police officers I have worked with as a Councillor. In particular I would like to praise the MPG Inspector Marc Adams and his predecessor, Richard Cawkwell, as well as Gill Hunter, Area Community Safety Co-ordinator. I support the ability of the police to concentrate on local priorities that matter to residents who live in the area.,

Due to Government cuts West Yorkshire Police is having to save £103m by 2015. We have been told 810 police officer posts will be lost between 2010 and 2015 of which an estimated 360 will be front line posts. There is a 14% cut in the number of officers. I have been told that this means a loss of 12.5 officer posts in North West Leeds Division, and that is just the start of the cuts.

Lower police numbers means fewer people able to support my constituents when they are distressed, violated, affected and vulnerable. It means that the police may be unable to concentrate on matters that affect people and worry local people.

My residents are worried about the impact of these cuts on them. They do not know if response times will increase. They do not know if there will be an effective deterrent for perpetrators. My residents are reassured by seeing police officers, Police Community Support Officers and Council enforcement staff in their community and worry that they will no longer see professionals unless there is an emergency. They worry that their community will suffer high crime and antisocial behaviour. I have absolutely no doubt that the police officer that will remain will continue to do a fantastic job. I acknowledge the incredible work done by the Police Community Support Officers. I fear that if they are spread too thinly and pulled in too many directions, they will be unable to cope.

People may have to wait longer to see an officer, may be left in a poor and vulnerable state and may as a result take longer to recover from their trauma. I know

from talking to my constituents the quicker and more appropriate response from the police, the safer and more comfortable they feel. I appreciate the police force is aiming to try to increase the proportion of officers on front line roles. However, the overall total number of officers in front line roles is expected to decrease by 360. Cutbacks to office workers will mean that central administrative functions could fall by the wayside, making life more hard for the front line staff who rely on this support.

I would like to know how the Council is responding to these changes; especially how it is using its partnership to try and help the police in dealing with these challenging circumstances. I raise the concern on behalf of Lord Mayor Councillors of Farnley and Wortley. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lowe.

COUNCILLOR LOWE: In supporting this Back Bench concern I would like to report to all Members that there was a meeting with Councillors Janette Walker, Caroline Gruen, myself and Barry Anderson last week to discuss the concern in North-West Leeds, and the police came to that meeting to talk about what their response was and what they will try to do to reassure the Councillors present. We have agreed that in twelve months' time we are going to be reviewing the impact of the loss of the twelve officers to the North West Division and if we are seriously concerned about that impact we will take that to Councillor Anderson's Scrutiny Board.

I also want to reassure Members that, as the Vice-Chair of the Police and Crime Panel, we will be holding whoever is the winning candidate tomorrow to account for the choices that the police are forced to make. We know that the police are not choosing to make the cuts, they are forced to fund them by the CSR. In any event, I want to reassure all Members that the Police and Crime Panel will serve its purpose in that it will hold the Police and Crime Commissioner to account. I know that Councillor Les Carter, our newly elected Police Authority Chairman will also support us in holding that person to account to make sure that our communities are safe. I know that West Leeds is particularly vulnerable in terms of burglary etc and we have been fighting for a long time and Safer Leeds, as the overarching body in Leeds that is working together with all the different partners, will also be wanting to hold that person to account and make sure that our citizens get what they deserve, what they pay their Council tax for and that they are all safe.

I do promise to be held to account by you in twelve months' time if it is not working in the North West Division and we definitely will be reporting back to those Councillors who raised their concerns. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen.

COUNCILLOR GRUEN: Thank you both of you for drawing this particular back bench concern, which actually I think is a concern right across the Chamber, to our attention and John being so clear in telling us how he feels about these issues. It is good to have that clarity from Farnley and Wortley.

I think if I carry on the theme that the Leader was talking about earlier on in terms of budgets, the police budget is reducing by £97m in four years. In the last two years as a result of that they have lost 639 police officer posts, so that is already an 11% cut. They are due to reduce by another 132 police officer posts.

The commitment they have given under the former Chief Constable was that they would sustain front line delivery as much as possible and they are delivering performance with fewer people than shown in their published totals.

Our concern, I think, is that we are not putting in a bunch of PCSOs which is draining our budget and making us have to make cuts elsewhere, if not community safety, and then see their effectiveness potentially reduced if police numbers elsewhere go down and there are shielding, in a way, behind the fantastic effort that this Council has put in in keeping the budgets up for PCSOs. That is a legitimate concern which the three Commanders in Leeds are aware of for Safer Leeds.

All three of those Commanders are committed to local service delivery and we will hold them to account, as Councillor Lowe says.

There have been a number of highly successful operations this year and I can tell you today that in the last twelve months burglary rates across the city have gone down by 32% which is a phenomenal achievement – a phenomenal achievement – by all concerned and we want to feel confident that we can come back here in another twelve months' time and say that we have sustained that effort, we have put the resources in as we did before and this was not just a fluke, we are cutting down burglaries and we are putting burglars behind bars and going to continue to do so.

Police, of course, are very closely involved, as you know, with the antisocial behaviour measures and we have increased that effort from one officer to four officers, for example, dealing with some of the key issues, so that 94% of calls are now answered within 15 seconds. That is a record that any private sector organisation would be proud to sustain. We are proud of that. We have got more CCTV mobile vans doing more on noise nuisance, we are doing more on community safety. I understand the concern. My colleagues and I in this administration will continue to work and press as hard as we can and community safety is one of our key priorities. Thank you for raising it. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Community Concern number 4, Councillor Leadley, please.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, this Community Concern arises from planning permissions granted in Morley to Persimmon Homes for 92 houses at Daisy Hill and to Barrett Homes for about 170 houses at Bruntcliffe Road, both agreed by Leeds Plans Panel South and West on 11 October. The concern is not so much about the outcomes as about the way in which those decisions were arrived at.

Any Plans Panel has a right to take a view of a planning application which might be different from ours in Morley, but it should be seen to have reached that view in a careful and measured way.

Leeds Plans Panel East decided on 6th September to refuse permission to Persimmon at Daisy Hill after discussions spread over several months and having a well-attended site visit. Officers were asked to come to the October Panel meeting with a written report setting out reasons for refusal. Most Members, regardless of party, were critical of the application and voted against it. There was much public interest, a lot of work had been put in over about a year by the Town Council Planning Committee, individual Councillors and many interested Members of the public.

Persimmon replied by going to appeal before a formal refusal notice could be issued because their notice had not been dealt with within 13 weeks, even though most of the delay was due to their fairly leisurely production of additional information. They also submitted a duplicate application, reviving a process known as twin tracking in which a developer has one copy of an application at appeal and at the same time negotiates with another copy under a different application number which is

not at appeal. Twin tracking was outlawed some years ago so it is not clear why Leeds accepted the second version, which we received in Morley on Saturday 29th September. When I rang on Monday 1st October to find out what was going on, I was told that the report recommending approval had been written already and was going to Plans Panel on 11th October.

The City Council decided on 12th September to re-draw the boundaries of the territories covered by its Plans Panels. Morley was moved to Plans Panel East to Plans Panel South and West. Only two Members from the old East Panel transferred to the new South and West and one of them could not attend when the new Daisy Hill application was discussed by the new Panel on 11th October, less than three weeks after it had been submitted.

A few days before the Panel meeting a blog attributed to the Chief Planning Officer appeared on the City Council website which warned Panel Members not to refuse the permission. This seemed to be quite unusual. Only four of the eleven Members of the new Panel visited the site and because of the slight risk posed by the outcome of the Richardson case some years ago I took care not to go to the Panel meeting, but there were plenty from Morley who did.

There was discussion at Panel which was mostly critical. Nonetheless the application was granted. Did those Members really understand what they were doing?

The National Planning Policy Framework has been criticised for its presumption in favour of sustainable development, as if that in itself opens the floodgates to uncontrolled speculative building. Since the modern planning system began in 1948, there has been a presumption in favour of development. It has always been up to objectors to prove their case. If anything, adding the word "sustainable" introduces an additional test which we were trying to apply in Morley.

Barrett's application at Bruntcliffe Road was different in that Plans Panel East had not reached a decision. A position statement, or a kind of progress report, had been presented to Plans East Members on 9th August when they visited the site with many Members of the public. On that day I substituted for Councillor Finnigan. Discussion of the position statement was quite critical so the applicants had to go away and alter their plans. The alterations contained more flaws which the Town Council Planning Committee pointed out so more work had to be done.

What happened next was that Barrett's Bruntcliffe Road application was rushed forward to be considered at the October meeting of the Leeds Plans Panel South and West, alongside Daisy Hill. It was clear that the officers' report had been put together in a hurry, it contained many gaps and errors which added to the errors in the application. The Town Council Planning Committee unravelled these at its meeting on 9th October and sent comments to Leeds in a letter hand delivered on 10th October. By way of example, many of the hectarages and boundaries quoted by the applicant were incorrect or unclear and the officers' report did not mention an off-site green space contribution of more than £244,000 which was due. Until we pointed that out the Case Officer had not noticed the omission.

Plans Panel South and West's best course of action would have been to have deferred the report to the next meeting for re-writing. There was no evidence that Panel Members generally had noticed the errors in the report and only four of them had visited the site. Even so, the application was voted through after a lengthy and complicated verbal update in which officers tried to explain the many errors and omissions. Again, we must ask, did Members really understand what they were voting for?

In summary, a lot of detailed work has been put in at Daisy Hill and Bruntcliffe Road over many months by Planning Officers, by the Town Council Planning Committee, by individual Councillors, by Members of the public and Members of the old Plans Panel East, all of which was swept aside in an afternoon by the new Plans Panel, some of whose Members may not have had much understanding of those applications.

It is that lack of quality in decision making which is most worrying. We may be going back to the 1960s and early 70s when huge poor quality housing and town centre redevelopment schemes were nodded through after being agreed by small inner circles of Councillors, developers and officers. We are still trying to repair the physical and social damage done then to towns and cities in the name of planning, so we do not want to see any more. Morley escaped fairly lightly in the 1960s and 70s, demolitions were not as extensive or indiscriminate as in some places, we have no high rise flats and we avoided the worst forms of low rise system building, so we do have standards to maintain. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Janet Harper.

COUNCILLOR J HARPER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think you really need to have some background on this application. As has already been said, the full application went to the former East Plans Panel and Members wanted to refuse. Consequently, it was deferred for officers to bring back reasons for refusal. It was identified as a Phase 2 housing site in the UDP. The applicant appealed on non-determination and submitted a duplicate application. The new Panel arrangements then came into force – and I am the unlucky one here who was landed with this one. However, the new Plans Panels did come into force and it did come to the Plans South West Panel, which I chair, and officers attached a copy of the report which had been to the former Plans East Panel for background information, so I think we had all the information then.

In the report to Plans South West Panel officers went through matters discussed at East and concluded there were no reasonable reasons for refusal. It complied with policy and was sustainable. Therefore, Council, I have to say that as officers are the paid professionals and are there to advise Members...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: What is the point of us being there then?

COUNCILLOR J HARPER: ...I believe the advice should be given due consideration. No-one is saying we have to follow it word for word. I would prefer it – I did not interrupt when you spoke; I would prefer it if you kept quiet.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: You are not the Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR J HARPER: Not likely to be either, thank you.

Councillor Leadley, I totally support the need to ensure high quality and well informed decision making at Plans Panel and I believe we strive to achieve this.

I am sorry, my Lord Mayor, I have lost the page now with that interruption. I do apologise.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: You are a bounder, John, a bounder.

COUNCILLOR J HARPER: We had a well-attended site visit that morning. Members discussed the application at Plans Panel for 40 minutes - clearly it was not

rushed - and they agreed to defer and delegate the agreed application to officers for completion of a 106 agreement and not to contest the appeal. Those are the facts, my Lord Mayor, thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move on to Community Concern number 5. Councillor Buckley.

COUNCILLOR BUCKLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I wonder if I could just bring to the attention of the Chamber the situation with the present health services and doctors' surgeries in Alwoodley and Moor Allerton and the fact that they are completely unconnected and scattered and difficult to access by many residents.

Approximately 12% of the ward centred on Moor Allerton is in the top 10% of the most deprived areas and has, for example, high rates of incidence of cancer and of heart disease and is classified as a priority neighbourhood. Indeed, the Aldersons, the Fir Trees, the Lingfields and the Cranmer Banks have no nearby medical facilities at all.

Why are these existing services so difficult to access and why do several thousand mainly poorer residents suffer because of this situation? Because the present three surgeries dealing with this area operate from former domestic houses and bungalows converted a long time ago, some of them half a century ago. Consequently, there is a lack of car parking, there is dangerous pedestrian access including having to cross busy main roads, and congested and cramped facilities. Indeed, one of the surgery buildings does not even meet the standards of the DDA Disability Act and suffers these disadvantages to such an extent that it has been rated the second worst in the whole of the city.

What I would like to see is a new, modern, integrated health and medical centre encompassing nursing and pharmacy facilities in a state of the art building fit for use in the 21st Century.

The good news is that there is an exciting project on standby to create exactly this and the scheme in hand is designed to the latest NHS guidance, it meets the NHS environmental and sustainable targets, it achieves a BREEAM excellence score and all the clinical accommodation is on one level. This is the point, time is short. The go-ahead for the scheme hinges on funding amounting to several hundred thousand pounds from the PCT. This has not only been agreed by the PCT but the scheme is an urgent priority of the PCT. After 31st March next year when the PCT ceases to exist to be replaced by the North Leeds Commissioning Group, this source of funding will not exist. The project must have begun and meaningful contractual invoices have been created by then in order to unlock these funds. Failure to meet this timetable would result in the funds being returned to the Department of Health.

Needless to say, bureaucratic problems and issues exist such as the valuation of the land, the exact ownership of the land, planning issues, highways concerns and so on. Officers are beaver away as we speak and, given the time these things can sometimes take, have undertaken to pull out all the stops to secure this dedicated new centre.

We should, and I am sure we do all agree in this Chamber, that the city has a paramount responsibility for ongoing improvements to public health. Moor Allerton, in particular, where the centre would be adjacent to, is a priority neighbourhood, almost 80% of the residents live in either Band A or Band B properties, up to 12% of the residents claim incapacity benefits and adult social care figures are very high.

The Moor Allerton Partnership has, as one of its key priorities, the promotion of healthy lifestyles. I am sure all Members present will agree with me and my Alwoodley colleagues who have worked so hard with me on this, including also neighbouring ward Councillors, in particular Moor Town and to a certain extent in Weetwood, that this badly needed project cannot be allowed to fail at this stage. This has been going on long enough.

We call upon all officers and all those concerned with this scheme to continue to act with dispatch and to continue to work as closely as possible with ward Councillors to do everything possible to prevent any avoidable and unnecessary delays and therefore make reality of this much needed centre. I think, as Churchill used to say, action this day, please. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cohen.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I have very little to add to that save to say that this something desperately needed within the Moor Allerton area and anything that can be done to bring this about as quickly as possible would be certainly welcomed by the residents of the area. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Mulherin.

COUNCILLOR MULHERIN: Thank you, very much, Lord Mayor. Can I thank also Councillor Buckley – was it your maiden speech? I am not sure if it was – no. It is asterisked on the Order Paper so I was just checking. Can I thank both Councillor Buckley and Councillor Cohen for bringing this to Council today. I think this is a very good example of the sort of issue that Back Bench Community Concerns are intended for, so I think it is a very good thing that you brought this to the attention of all the Council and the press today.

Can I assure you that I have been speaking to our officers and NHS colleagues about the progress that is being made and I believe you have been briefed by the same officers that I have been briefed by in the last week, so you are probably fairly well in the picture about where we are at this stage.

I totally agree with you that the existing three GP surgeries do need to be replaced and we have got examples in other parts of the city where we have got modern health centres that have been progressed in this way where GP surgeries have come together and merged on one site to provide far more acceptable modern facilities, the sort of health services that people in this day and age expect and deserve.

As a Council we are completely supportive of your ambitions locally and we will work with you to achieve them. Clearly, though, there are a number of practical issues that need to be worked through which you have referred to. Capital development of this scale which involves a number of different parties is never completely straightforward. A site has been identified and officers are working together from the Council side and from the NHS to make progress on that. I understand that you have met with both Asset Management and Planning officers this last week and also that with the developers for this proposed scheme who have, I understand, got precedent elsewhere in the city where they have already developed successful health centres.

I have had assurances from both our Council colleagues and NHS colleagues that everybody is doing everything possible to progress this development within the timescales for funding from the NHS. Bearing in mind, obviously, the significant upheaval that the NHS is going through and that that funding is going to disappear

with the existing Primary Care Trust, the NHS Leeds in April, and also that the officers who are working on that scheme on the NHS side are all having to apply for jobs at the moment, there are also significant challenges in that respect that have to be overcome, but the officers are giving me their assurances that they are working wholeheartedly to achieve the ambition that you are setting forward today.

Asset Management has established an indicative price for sale of the land with the developers and we hope that pre-application discussions will start with planning this week. I am keen to support local ward Members as the scheme develops so, again, I am happy to work with you as you move forward with this and if there are any issues going forward, please do come and seek my support. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Graham Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I would like to seek leave of Council to introduce a sixth Community Concern in the name of Councillor Wadsworth with a comment from myself if time permits.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: May I take a vote, please, on whether you are happy for a sixth Community Concern to be raised? (*A vote was taken*) Thank you very much, that is CARRIED. Councillor Wadsworth.

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: Thank you, Lord Mayor. My Back Bench concern in an ideal world would not need to come to Council but in recent weeks I have done a number of surgeries and the overwhelming concern around my local residents is development. They do not object to the principle of development but it is just around where that development is going to go and why we have to have more development.

The background to that is that in the past ten years Guiseley and Rawdon has had twelve mill sites developed and people feel that that was in a sense right because it was brown field site and they feel that they have taken sufficient. In the last 18 months there has been 1,010 approvals. On a background of 21,000 permissions in the city, which is six-and-a-half years' supply, when I tell people that we have to have more development because we do not have a five year land supply, that does not really wash with people.

Guiseley and Rawdon is unique in the sense for two reasons. The first reason, really, is that it boundaries on to Bradford and gets the direct impact of anything that Bradford does on its borders, such as in Esholt, such as in Baildon, and particularly Menston where there are 300 homes there to be built which will have an absolute direct impact on the services of Guiseley. It is really around the infrastructure, which I spoke about earlier, with regard to doctors, dentists, supermarkets and the road structure.

I move on to the road structure because the A65 is the only arterial route through Guiseley and Rawdon and I just recall what happened last weekend. There was some overnight resurfacing which was planned for Sunday evening and that was needed and it should have gone ahead, but what actually happened was that they put three way traffic lights on a major junction at four o'clock in the afternoon. That was just at the time when three retail parks were losing all their traffic. Clearly there needed to be something done about that and talked about and it should have happened later, but when I spoke to the contractor and asked where was anybody from Leeds City Council, the answer was, "There is nobody from Leeds City Council

here because it is Sunday.” Well, I was there on the Sunday so the question is why wasn’t anybody from Leeds City Council there on a Sunday?

You recall at the last Council meeting I brought a Back Bench concern about the A65 and Councillor Lewis gave me a very fair response, and from the verbatim his response was that work on the survey had been done and this had stopped but he had no problem with resurrecting it and he was more than happy to have whatever conversations were needed. You might well expect that since the last Council meeting a conversation would have been had but what has happened is that I have chased up Councillor Lewis three times and in all fairness to him I have had three replies saying that he is chasing up Highways, and I still have not had a conversation with Highways. In all fairness to Councillor Lewis I do think he is trying to do his best and he has actually been to me at tea-time and said the he is very fed up – he did not use those exact words but he is very fed up (*Laughter*) – with what is going on.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: We know the words he used!

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: I think we all know the words he used, Councillor Procter! He is very fed up about it but the point is that he should be in control of his officers and you elected over there are in control of the city, or should be in control of it, and if you are in control then something should be done about it and not just left. At the moment my residents feel let down because I have raised the issue, Councillor Lewis has chased it up but nothing has happened, which is why I feel the need to bring this Back Bench concern back in this form. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In addition to that I would like to concentrate on the A65 because that was the concern before. Since the last Council meeting two major stores have opened in Guiseley a TK Maxx and something else, Asda Living, and you would not believe the difference that has made. The A65 was bunged up before; now it is solid because those two seem to attract people like flies are attracted to the fly paper.

The other thing is that we have since then had our discussion about the housing allocations and we are going to allocate a huge number of houses in Guiseley and Rawdon, or at least we would like to allocate a huge number of houses in Guiseley and Rawdon, all of which, if they ever get built, will decant their occupiers on to the A65, so it might be a nightmare now but it is an absolute total nightmare in development and it is getting worse all the time.

We asked for a survey of the conditions on the A65; we have not had it. How on earth can we excuse not looking into this problem? The people in that part of the world vote for Councillors. They might not always vote for Conservative Councillors but whatever ones they have got have got to try to explain what is happening on the A65 that Leeds is doing sweet Fanny Adams about.

Once again, let us have this report on the A65 and a bit of action. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: I understand that although Councillor Taggart is down to respond it might be Councillor Richard Lewis, so will whoever has drawn the shorter straw please respond.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: I am briefed to speak. First of all, let us look at the positive side. Guiseley is a successful community. Developers want to develop there, people want to live there. You can go to the centre of Bradford, not far away, and there is a ruddy great hole and I think they are going to have a ruddy great hole for 20 years. There are whole swathes of Bradford where no-one wants to build anything whatsoever, so in that sense Guiseley and that part of Leeds is a success...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: So much for city region working. *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: ... story, so that is a positive. We can always be negative about life but it is on the good side.

However, it is true the A65 is a problem. It carries an awful lot of traffic and not just traffic from the Guiseley area but what happens in the Bradford Metropolitan District, which is to the north, west and south, also has an impact and that is understood.

There are problems on the A65 at the Horsforth ring road, there are problems all along – all along, all the way to Kirkstall. Despite the fact we have now got Quality Bus and that helps the lower end of Kirkstall Road the rest of the A65 is, no question about it, a difficulty.

I have only learned today, I had assumed you had had your meeting, Paul, and it is only today that I have learned that you have not had the meeting that you are going to have with officers from Highways, but certainly on the Development Plan, and talking to Highways Officers, they are very conscious of the fact that elected Members have a concern about the relationship between existing traffic, future traffic and development.

If we are talking about sustainable development, of course the word “sustainable” is not amplified, of course, in the NPPF but it is a relevant issue, is it not? If your local road network is already very full of traffic most of the time you are going to go everything you can to avoid piling even more traffic on to those.

We are on to it. I am assured this meeting or meetings will be taking place and those of us that are on the Development Plans Panel are acutely aware of the development pressures in your part of Leeds. It is a popular part of the city, people do want to go and live there, the supermarkets and other businesses do want to open but we have to get the infrastructure right.

I have no solution today but I am trying to say I am on your side. Thank you.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: You could have fooled me!

COUNCILLOR WADSWORTH: Point of clarification. Now Councillor Wadsworth is taking on the issue of arranging a meeting rather than Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR TAGGART: I am happy to help in any way I can.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: In other words nobody knows. Nobody knows.

ITEM 13 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – PRIVATE SERVICE COMPANIES.

THE LORD MAYOR: Right, we now move on to the White Papers. White Paper 13 in the name of Councillor Lamb. Councillor Lamb, please.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, moving this White Paper I want to make it absolutely clear that it is not my intention today to criticise any officer who works for this Council, has done any work or used to work for this Council. My criticism is reserved for the Council itself and the policies that it has operated and I want to bring to the attention of Council the fact that this Council has indeed been paying senior officers filling permanent posts for long periods of time via private companies. This means that the Council is not paying the correct National Insurance that it should be and it means that potentially those individuals can minimise their tax liabilities. As Councillor Wakefield quite rightly points out, and pointed out last time in response to a question, this is not a situation that is unique to Leeds City Council and, indeed, we know as it says in Councillor Wakefield's, there are some 2,400 public sector employees on salaries over £58,200 that are paid in this way. The reason, of course, we know this is because the current Government asked for that information to be sought so that they could do something about it.

Just to be very clear what we are talking about I want to use two specific examples, so that we are not confusing the issues. I have to be very careful about what I can say and I have sought advice from the City Solicitor to make sure that I keep on the right side of her and the Lord Mayor.

There are two ways that this can work. The first one is something we heard about earlier in the case of the review into the Youth Service, where the Council employed a consultant to do a very specific piece of work for a specific period of time for a specific cost. As it happens I did not agree with that piece of work, but there will be occasions now and in the future where the Council needs to take people on to provide expertise that it does not have in-house to do those specific pieces of work and it is not unreasonable in those circumstances that they would pay individuals through private companies.

The issue that we are talking about and the example I am going to use is between August 2010 and August 2012, which are the figures that I have available, and I believe it has continued for a period after that, we paid just over £150,000 to a company called Berry Brow Ltd to fill a senior post in Children's Services. It was the same person in the same post now going into their third year. If that is not a permanent position in the Council I do not know what is and that does not chime with what Councillor Wakefield reported to Councillor at the last meeting.

Lord Mayor, I think there is unanimous agreement amongst the Council, and I welcome the fact that the Council, having had this brought to their attention, have taken action to put a stop to it. I welcome the fact that nationally action is being taken and we are trying to deal with issues around the BBC, in national Government and all sorts of other organisations to put these practices to a stop.

I would hope actually that you might be able to support collectively the White Paper that I have put forward.

The reason that I am not able to support Councillor Wakefield's amendment, despite the fact that I agree with much of what is in it, the things that I would point out, and I recognise again the positive steps that have been taken to reduce and remove this practice but, of course, the only reason it has been reduced and removed is because I brought it to the attention of Council. If I had not it would not have been uncovered that it was going on and it would still be going on today.

To come on briefly (I may come back to it at the end) the issue and the proposal to clamp down on IR35 – for those people that know anything about it, we have been trying for ten years, the Inland Revenue, to clamp down on IR35. The

simple fact is that policy does not work. The proposed legislation around controlling persons would make the law very, very clear indeed that any income on this basis should be taxed at source with National Insurance applied and proper tax applied and that is what should happen in this case.

Lord Mayor, I move the White Paper. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I formally second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield to move an amendment.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am quite disappointed that Councillor Lamb has not taken our amendment, but let me start from where we were in September. In September Councillor Carter asked me what we were doing about people using tax vehicles within the Council and at that stage we had five. By the way, three of those had been there since 2007 and I know that practice existed and I am looking at the figures for the previous Education Leeds. Let us not go into history but let us deal with it in a straight way.

I made a commitment that we would work on this straightaway, which is what the Group asked me to do so at this stage, as it says in the amendment, we are down to four; by the end of November we will be down to zero and in the future if we are going to have interim specialists, we will either employ them on a temporary contract or we will go to a recognised agency. There will be no more practices like that.

I think that is a very clear statement, the work has been done, it has been addressed and that is the end. I was kind of thinking we are moving and making progress, why are we bringing it back? I thought, if for years we keep condemning, and rightly so, the hypocrisy of this Government telling us to do one thing and they do the opposite, when you look at the 2,400 Civil Servants, I thought, well, if we put our house in order pretty quick, and rightly so, why can we not pass comment on the Civil Servants putting their house in order pretty quick, because they have got 2,400 as the amendment suggests. Mr Alexander admitted that 1,400 had been appointed since May 2010 – 60% had been appointed.

I do think if they can put pressure on us and, as I say, no problems with that, why can't this Council express an opinion about the Government and Civil Service for doing completely the opposite to what we do, so I did not understand why you have not supported my amendment, although I did smile when you asked me to second your White Paper and then did not support the amendment – it looked quite bizarre.

I thought what we could do, we could really extend this debate because it is very topical at the moment. We could talk about – I could put Amazon in, I could put Google in, I could put a whole number of companies in, off-shore companies, and then we could have a real battle but I did not, I tried to keep it constructive about tax avoidance vehicles, what numbers of people are using it and quite frankly we should say simply this, that tax avoidance in the public, in the private or the voluntary sector is not acceptable. We are all paying our way. It is time some of these rich organisations and rich people contributed the same way as we do. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Groves.

COUNCILLOR GROVES: I formally second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Speaking to support the amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield.

I think it is very important to remind ourselves of the context that we are raising this debate, looking back to what we have been discussing today with particular reference to Children's Services in terms of the cut in the Early Intervention Grant, welfare cuts and poverty, and particularly the pressure that we are under as a Council with the Academies programme, the enforced Academies programme in particular and what that actually means for Councils such as ours and not just Leeds, across country still to keep a role in education with the resource being taken out from the centre and how we can actually manage our affairs so that we can call on expertise to come in as and when we need it.

I think the debate has moved on, as Councillor Wakefield says. The five that came to our attention at the last Council meeting have been looked into and have been dealt with and I think it is absolutely crucial that a Council of the size of Leeds City Council should be leading by example. I think there are going to be more and more examples coming forward of where tax avoidance has become a major issue. This surely should be our real focus. There is so much focus at the moment about families under enormous pressure who might be gaining more from the benefit system, allegedly, than all of the tax avoidance schemes of national companies. When you actually look at the debate that Starbucks is going through in the Select Committee, it is simply outrageous.

Let us all of us have a sensible debate with the resources officers. We need to be absolutely clear what we can and cannot do going forward. Where we have a situation where we might bring in people for a temporary arrangement, we need to be absolutely clear on the basis on which that is done. We are operating in very, very difficult times where so much national resource goes into allowing people to avoid paying the proper tax and I welcome the amendment that Councillor Wakefield has put down so that we can play our full part and make sure that our tax arrangements are absolutely clear. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR P GRAHAME: Lord Mayor, I would like to confirm that as Chair of the Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services) I would be happy for my Board to monitor this issue as requested by Councillor Lamb.

I doubt that anyone in this room believes it is acceptable for individuals to be paid via a private company. I am delighted that we have successfully reduced the numbers of individuals paid this way from five to zero but, I agree, we must be vigilant in ensuring we do not see these arrangements returning to Leeds City Council.

As Councillor Wakefield has already highlighted, we are not alone in needing to tackle this issue. The use of off payroll arrangements for permanent employees completely undermines the standards we expect of those working in all areas of the public sector. At the very least it creates a suspicion that employees are seeking to avoid paying tax and I am relieved that we have put an end to such behaviour here. As Scrutiny Chair I will seek to ensure that no Member of staff is working as a permanent employee but being paid off payroll. I will also work to make sure that officers have very clear guidance in place so that they can confidentially make informed decisions about how they cover interim positions.

In discussing this issue over recent weeks there has been a great deal of consensus from Members of all political parties. We all feel that this practice is

wrong and we all agree that it is right to have ended existing arrangements. However, I remain concerned that officers have not felt confident in challenging these practices in the past. I will therefore be seeking to explore why that was the case, with my colleagues on the Scrutiny Board (Resources and Council Services). We shall be calling the Directors to the Board, who I hope will be singing off the same hymn sheet. Providing that sort of independent challenge is, I believe, a vital role of Scrutiny Board as Council seeks to address some of the biggest cultural changes the organisation has ever seen. The need to bring in external expertise to cover interim positions raises questions for me about why we, as a large employer, often find significant skills gaps in our services. I would therefore also like Scrutiny to consider whether services can better plan their skills requirements over the longer term and whether that could ultimately offer the Council better value for money than relying on buying in external expertise.

In summary, I believe it is right that we expect the highest possible standards of officers working within the public sector. It is right that we have addressed the payment of individuals via private companies. It is also right that we provide support and guidance to help staff challenge inappropriate practices where it is identified. I support Councillor Wakefield's amendment. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I think if I can echo Councillor Grahame's comment that none of us in the room support this practice and so I have to say I was slightly surprised when an amendment appeared for your White Paper, because I thought it was fairly clear, it made it clear we did not support this, we wanted to make sure that it did not happen again, we recognised there had been a problem and we would sort it out.

I looked at the amendment. I have an awful suspicion it is an amendment for an amendment's sake because it allowed Councillor Wakefield to have a go at the Government. I am not sure whether that actually moved the debate on a lot.

I think we have to give some credit to Councillor Lamb who has pressed this issue forward and I suppose Councillor Wakefield in the end because he actually, in the end, grasped the nettle and we have effectively done away with it.

I think I would like to compliment Councillor Grahame about that actually – sorry about that! (*Laughter*) I think her contribution of the three so far has been the most constructive in that she has accepted that there was an issue in the past, she has accepted that there is a role for Councillors, in particular her Scrutiny Board, to make sure this does not happen in the future, and has picked up that torch and decided to run with it.

I hope the other people who comment bear that in mind because it is about constructive comments. I think it is fairly simple. We as a Group do not agree with the practice. We as a Group want to ensure that we do not do this again, for whatever reason, and therefore we would normally be supporting Councillor Lamb's proposal. We may actually have to support Councillor Wakefield because he is likely to get it through because he has got a larger Group, but I would raise the point with you Keith, and think about it, I know it is useful to have a go at the Government, it is a good laugh.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Would you do it with a Labour Government?

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Plays well to the audience; quite frankly if it had been me I would have done it myself, but there we are. Certainly do not lose the

point that is trying to be made in an attack on the Government about Starbucks. The way to cure Starbucks is quite simple – do not go. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: It is not in the amendment.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, this is simply a disgrace, a total disgrace. The biggest disgrace of all though is that I, you, we all thought these people were officers of this Council. That is the disgrace. We thought that the people who came to brief us, came to talk to us, were regular employees like any other officer of this Council, employed in a way that we understand and we know, that have the same confidentiality as every officer, the same constraints, the same responsibilities to ward Members and the same responsibilities that we have to our constituents as well – and they were not.

We are not talking about people who are junior supposed officers. These are people who were right at the top of the tree with titles such as Area Social Worker (Leeds), Head of Service, Deputy Director. Those are the people who you see and you have spoken to and you know and those are the people you have been talking about today, not people who are faceless, anonymous people who are somewhere in this Council. These are people who you come into contact with every day and that is a thing which is quite concerning.

We are not talking about a few pounds – we are talking about hundreds of thousands – hundreds of thousands of pounds; £211,000 to one particular outfit; £151,000 to another outfit and again these are not for years and years, these are, in one instance, £211,000 whilst you have been in that administration since 2010, so these are serious, serious matters indeed.

I have to say we have been warning for quite some time now about officer interests and we have been stonewalled. We have taken it to Scrutiny, we have taken it to the most senior officers and we have been stonewalled. I turn to the head of the paid service – we are still being stonewalled and we are getting nowhere with it. It is only right that officers should declare their interests and they are not, and it is a disgrace and we should be making progress on it, Lord Mayor.

I will make an offer and issue a warning. The offer is that we will be more than happy to join in an all-party group to see how we can move forward with the registration of officer interests, to be open and transparent so that everybody knows, that we know and the people in this city know the interests of those officers.

I give a warning. We are currently going through, as we have spoken earlier today, about the sit allocation process.

THE LORD MAYOR: Please will you make your final point now, Councillor Procter?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Indeed. You might like to know that there are officers of this Council with land in the SHLAA that if allocated will give them millions upon millions upon millions of pounds, and you do not even know about it. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR ATHA: We do now.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: My Lord Mayor, warming to the theme, Members may remember that at the last Council meeting I asked Councillor Wakefield a very direct question and I actually, something I have done before, I asked him the supplementary in precisely the same words as I asked him the original question, and I did so absolutely deliberately because his first answer was somewhat disingenuous and his second answer, therefore, was equally disingenuous because it was precisely the same.

What he should have done was to get up and say yes, the practice was going on, he did not know it was going on and now he was doing something about it, but he did not say that at all. Again today during this White Paper what we have seen from the Council Leader is an attempt to completely distract from the point of the debate, which is about officers of this Council not being employed in the way that we thought they were, to go on about what happened before 2010, so he referred to Education Leeds which, my Lord Mayor, was a private company and we all know it was a private company because it was the company set up when you lot lost control of the Education Authority, taken off you by your own Government, and the way you are going it may well happen again.

My Lord Mayor, then he goes on about Civil Servant numbers and he picks a very interesting statistic out of a moment in time. Let me tell him, between 1997 and 2010 when his party lost the General Election, thousands upon thousands upon thousands of Civil Servants were employed by his Government with these strange ways of being paid, so do not be hypocritical and do not come crying crocodile tears in here because that was what was going on.

My Lord Mayor, talking of private companies, Amazon and Starbucks, were either of those companies operating in 1997 or did they arrive here less than 13 years ago and be allowed to continue throughout Labour's years of Government unhindered, because that is exactly what was happening. Keith, what you should have said was you have no idea upon what terms certain officers in this Authority were being employed and many of us who would have been in a similar position to you would have had to have said the same thing, and what you should be saying to this Council is that from now on everyone has been instructed that no officers...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I have just said that.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: ...will be taken on unless they pay tax at the point of earnings and pay their National Insurance contributions. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Your hearing must be going. I said it at the start. Your hearing is going, Andrew.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Les Carter.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Lord Mayor, just a couple of points, I am not going to take a long time, I know we want to get on. Can you get the terminology right? Judith, there is nothing wrong with tax avoidance. Tax avoidance is legal. Every court in the land would say you have a right and proper duty to set your affairs – you did, you said avoidance but what you mean is evasion. What you mean is evasion because evasion is illegal but avoidance is not illegal.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: It is immoral.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: Is it immoral? You have got a car, you have got an ISA, you may have money in other things, you can all sorts of things which gives you tax relief. Be very careful...

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Be very careful.

COUNCILLOR J L CARTER: ...before you shout the odds, otherwise you are going to get a lot of people who are going to get devoid of things. Be careful about the words. It is important and every court in this land will say that a person has a right to set their affairs in such a way as to take the advantage of whatever is there on paying tax. It is not allowed, evasion. Tax evasion is illegal, you do not have to change any laws, it is illegal now but you did say avoidance. I am sorry, that is why I have stood up, I was not going to speak to this debate. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lamb to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, I think we have heard an awful lot of talk in this debate, as ever. I actually think that Councillor Grahame summed up the debate perfectly. She had the tone and the pitch right (*interruption*). You can buy me a drink afterwards, Paulene.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: That's you scuppered!

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I also take Councillor Campbell's points thoroughly on board as well. It is disappointing, I have to say, that Councillor Wakefield put an amendment down to this paper and, Lord Mayor, the point that I want to make is that actually if what was in Councillor Wakefield's amendment was the words he actually said I would have been inclined to support it...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Come on then.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: ...but what is in the paper is not what you said.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Come on, Alan.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: You said you wanted to attack the Government in the Paper. That is not what this White Paper amendment says and the reason that I cannot support it is because actually the final recommendation that you make is going to waste a huge amount of officer time. The motion I put down is quite clear and simple. I welcome the fact that you have brought this to an end and have given a commitment to do that, I welcome the fact that Scrutiny, through Councillor Grahame, is going to take this on board and monitor it and bring things forward. The problem is for those people in this Chamber who actually understand this kind of legislation and understand the implications of IR35, they know quite clearly that tightening up on IR35 will make absolutely no difference to stopping these practices whatsoever and you will be wasting a huge amount of officer time asking them to bring this report forward.

There is a clear opportunity, there is nothing in the paper that I put forward, I do not believe, that anyone in this Chamber could disagree with and I think Councillor Campbell was quite right, it is amendment for amendment's sake. The difference is, there is nothing in here that attacks the Government. It just points out some simple facts.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Through a Labour Government you can give it some stick.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Lord Mayor, I think we are all agreed that this practice is totally wrong. It is not illegal. I agree with Councillor Atha, I think it is immoral to do it and I think that people, especially in these times when we are talking about cuts

to budget, if everyone paid their fair share of tax, and we could have a debate about what that fair share should be, you look at the complications of the tax system that were introduced for the 13 years of Labour Government that allowed people to get away with these things, actually the policies of implementing a much simpler and fairer tax system would stop these things happening in the first place.

Lord Mayor, it would be a real shame if we are not united on this issue. I really hope the administration will see fit to support the White Paper I have put forward so that we can deal with this issue as a united Council. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: May I call for a vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Wakefield? *(A vote was taken)* The amendment is therefore CARRIED and becomes the substantive motion.

Could I call for a vote on the substantive motion, please? *(A vote was taken)* Thank you very much. CARRIED. *(Applause)*

ITEM 14 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – PLANNING PERMISSIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: We come now to the White Paper motion on Planning Permissions in the name of Peter Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: My Lord Mayor, thank you very much. I hope we will return to unanimity again. I think this White Paper on Planning brings all of us together in terms of local democracy and where decision making should rest and puts us squarely against the kind of encouragement or indeed discussions in the House at the moment by Commissar Pickles.

I think it is interesting to note that on the one hand we are encouraged to do neighbourhood planning and there are 28 such plans in different parts of fruition. We heard earlier on about the sanctity of Plans Panel decision-making and yet Mr Pickles takes upon himself powers that he can dispense altogether with a planning authority and take all those decisions by himself.

Incidentally, Councillor Dawson, will you do me a favour? If you would just stand up and walk to the back of the Chamber, please, and from that board will you take eight large paces in *that* direction? *(Councillor Dawson did so)* That, ladies and gentlemen, and Mrs Gledhill, who comes to take the notes (welcome to see you again) that is the distance of an extension which Mr Pickles will grant without any planning permission. Eight metres. You may sit down again, thank you. *(Applause)* Thank you very much – it was a very effective Morley contribution!

What this resolution says very clearly is that the measures in the Growth and Infrastructure Bill at Committee stage are not acceptable. In his television interview last Sunday Mr Pickles said that 90% of garden extensions (that is what they call them - some will say garden grabbing but garden extensions) are allowed by the Local Authority, so I would say, well, what is the problem? If 90% goes through with neighbourhood consultation, with everybody knowing what is going on, why are you blaming the planning system for any shortcomings?

I think it is important that this Council restates its strong desire for local decision making and local democratic accountability. You know, it is interesting, is it not, when this Coalition Government first came in and they told us they are going to

abolish unelected, undemocratic quangos – do you remember that? – and so the Regional Offices went and Yorkshire Forward went. What is now the single biggest undemocratic quango left in the country? The Planning Inspectorate in Bristol. Why do we have a Planning Inspectorate in Bristol when actually through localism we could take all the local planning decisions ourselves and for those reasons, in the short time available, I want to highlight those reasons. Those are the key messages we should together send to Government, that this Authority is putting its house in order, we are making prompt decisions, we are making quality decisions, we are taking courageous steps forward with the core strategy. We are doing all the things that could be expected of us to do but we believe in the local democratic framework and that is how we want to do it.

I move the White Paper. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR J MCKENNA: This must be a first, Andrew.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: It is a reversal of roles, if you pardon the expression, from a couple of Council meetings ago when Councillor Gruen, for the first time in a long time...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: But not the first time – not the first time!

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: But not the first time. My Lord Mayor, do not let them distract me with all this banter. I could remind you of some debates when I seconded Councillor Gruen and he seconded me and none of you lot would like them at all!

COUNCILLOR ATHA: We have not changed. *(Laughter)*

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: We will not even go there. I second this for one very simple reason, that nobody who believes in Local Government could do anything but second it and support it.

I am sorry that, like one or two of his other colleagues, he has wandered off into blaming this Government for being the first Government to interfere with planning. Just let me remind you again about the SHLAA, the unwanted, disgraceful creature of Gordon Brown that he inflicted on planning authorities. Let me remind you too of the stroke of John Prescott's pen that altered planning guidance at a stroke to allow garden grabbing and developments in people's back gardens. This is not the first Government to tinker with the planning process and I suspect it will not be the last.

Nevertheless, it is absolutely wrong to start to tinker, in my view at any level, with the planning system. It seems to me too many people in Government in both political parties have got their mindset back in the 1980s and they have not been able to break out of that mindset. I was a bit concerned when I heard Councillor Leadley mention that particular decision in Morley and compare it with the things that used to happen in this Authority as well as many others many years ago when groups of one party got together and decided whether a planning application should be passed or not. Thankfully that, I hope, has gone for ever.

Planning has moved on and very often local Councillors are more concerned about decisions planning officers recommend to us and we do something about it, but we cannot have Government, in my view, dictating the minutiae of small planning

applications which can cause massive neighbour disputes if we went along the lines they said.

Equally, this Government was elected on the basis that we would have a more democratic say about planning and I expect them, as a Member of their Party, to deliver on that pledge and these current things that they are doing are not delivering on that pledge and many of us expect them and intend that they will.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, Councillor Gruen's motion looks a bit like one of those which drip irresistibly with treacle and congratulate Leeds Rhinos on their latest success but actually, if you pick it up and look at it, some of the treacle turns out to be a bit thinner than you might think.

His opening paragraph about the importance of the views of local people, locally elected Members and sustainability, did not seem to be applied at Daisy Hill or Bruntcliffe Road in Morley. Those decisions seem to be part of another culture.

Looking at it more seriously, Government proposals to allow some extensions without planning permission up to eight metres long behind houses are grossly mistaken. It may seem tedious bureaucracy to applicants but house extensions, including large conservatories, must be guided by the planning system. We live on a crowded island, England from Bristol eastwards and from Leeds southwards is especially overcrowded and people will not be able to live happily alongside each other unless they respect the rights and needs of their neighbours for privacy and sunlight. That was policy made on the hoof and may not get far but there is no harm in making sure that it is killed off.

Developers always have been able to appeal against conditions attached to planning applications. Taking a step back, though we have been more successful in getting affordable housing from commercial development in recent years, supply has never come anywhere near demand and the attempts of Governments of various colours to get enough affordable housing by extracting some of it as a by-product from commercial house building have generally failed.

There is a need for Central Government to face the fact that substantial public funding is needed to build enough social housing. If it proves to be necessary to relieve commercial builders of their affordable housing burden, something else will have to be put in its place – almost certainly funding by general taxation.

Slow decision making more often than not comes about because applicants or their agents are slow in providing supporting information or in forwarding amendments to their plans. DCLG needs to be reminded of this probably at least twice a day.

Oddly, I have some sympathy with the view that nationally significant applications may need to be viewed in a context broader than that of one local Planning Authority, but we must be sceptical about that. Applications might be recovered by the Secretary of State out of expediency or as a result of lobbying rather than out of concern for national interest.

Councillor Gruen's proposals is a White Paper and it is not meant to be a comprehensive manifesto, so we will support it.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Congreve.

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: Lord Mayor, I am deeply concerned about how national planning changes will affect local decision making. First and foremost, I believe locally elected representatives are best placed to make decisions about local planning developments. The proposals give a large amount of power to the Planning Inspectorate. This undermines efforts to respond to local priorities and the needs and aspirations of local communities.

Under the new rules an agreement with local support and Scrutiny can be replaced if this is seen to prevent the development from starting. Section 106 agreements are not made to stall developments; they are made so that reasonable infrastructure can be attached to a scheme so that the needs of local people are met, so that those in housing need can have a decent place to live. Undermining that process will undoubtedly create problems for communities for many years to come.

Under the changes, developers will be able to apply directly to the Planning Inspectorate if the development is nationally significant. However, a nationally significant development will still have a greater impact on the local area than it will on other parts of the country. The Government has stated that consultations will still take place. Sadly, given their track record on this issue, I fear Government assurances about consultations will not be meaningful.

Local decision makers look at a development in the round with a keen awareness of local amenities, facilities, infrastructure and perhaps most of all aspirations. Local Plans Panels consider all these things when they make a decision. We all know that local Planning Authorities across the country are not perfect. Sometimes decision making is slow but where that is the case questions should be asked as to why that is. Is the Panel doing things in a sensible, flexible way that means it takes longer but has far better results and fewer appeals?

The Plans Panels see the worry that some people feel when their neighbours are planning their rear extension. The Panel can consider the concern and look at this when making a decision. Doubling the size of rear extensions allowed without permission will certainly increase animosity between neighbours.

I think it is important that Central Government stop and look again at these changes. Blaming Planning Authorities for stagnating growth is unfair and unreasonable. It is important for local decision makers to come to an agreement with developers so that areas can transform in a way that benefits the current communities. We are recognising a lot needs to take place but in a way that reflects our needs and aspirations for this city.

I urge you to support the White Paper. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I will keep it simple. We will be supporting the White Paper resolution because we feel local decision making is best. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Fox.

COUNCILLOR FOX: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I have to confess that when I first saw this White Paper motion in the name of Councillor Gruen, I read it through twice and the on the third read through I thought, well, where is the trap? I have to confess I have not spotted it so maybe I am naïve but I did feel that it was something we could support.

I suppose my concern is that really planning policy in this country is almost in a state of chaos. If you remember the MPPF coming out, that caused a huge row and it was sold on the basis of it is going to be 1,000 pages down to 55 – well, there is the 55 pages, all our planning is based on that. That is quite remarkable. Happily it was very much watered down.

Then actually this business about garden extensions is not so much a part of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill, it is a departmental decree. It is out for consultation at this very moment as to whether the permitted development rights should extend from the current four metres to eight metres. Pickles has been mentioned, I think, already, but actually the truth is that this particular measure is nothing really to do with Pickles, it is to do with George Osborne, because that measure was supposed to stimulate the economy. That is why it is a three year limited time period to get the economy going. All I have to say to that is what utter nonsense it is and, in fact, Councillor Gruen quite rightly pointed out that 90% of all rear extensions are approved anyway, so it is hardly the planning system that is preventing that. I think to call it an economic measure has to be absolute nonsense.

Can I move on to the second part of the motion? The business of applying the Article 4 I do have concerns about because although it sounds attractive that the Council could put out an Article 4 directive, in fact, if you bother to read the National Planning Policy Framework on page 47 it actually says that it can only be applied in very limited circumstances. In fact, what it says is that the use of Article 4 directions to remove national permitted development rights – and this is what it would be for three years – should be limited to situations where this is necessary to protect local amenity or wellbeing of the area, and that normally means a conservation area, not the area of Leeds as a whole.

It goes on to say that communities can use such orders to grant planning permission but where such an order is in place no further planning permission is required but it basically says that Article 4 directives...

THE LORD MAYOR: Please can you sum up now, please, Councillor Fox?

COUNCILLOR FOX: Yes – should actually not be used to run counter to current planning policy. As with the rest of Council, I heartily endorse this White Paper. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor John Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As I think Council has heard, the most fearsome critics of the current proposals are ourselves. Planning is very important to this Group and the wards that we represent and, as the Leadership of the Labour Group knows, we have left no stone unturned in this regard and have been lobbying hard and fast since the Government got in on everything from the change of RSS all the way through until now and we continue to press for meetings on an all-party basis to try and influence some of the decisions that are currently being looked at in London.

In terms of the eight metres and the extension and planning powers being taken away from the Local Authority, yes, clearly it is of concern but we should not become hysterical about it because it is not actually here. It is consultation and we do need to make our arguments forcibly. In terms of the planning powers being taken away from the Authority, we should have nothing to fear at all providing applications are handled in a responsible way and we act appropriately, and I sincerely hope that that will be the case moving forward.

The real sad fact to me is that we, collectively, have, on this occasion and for the last goodness knows how many years – 13 years, more even – been ignored and it is not just us effectively that are powerless. I think the LGA has got quite a bit to answer for and I look around the room to those who sit on the LGA and say frankly the LGA needs to do more because the Home Builders Association as they are now called – not the House Builders, they build homes now not houses, it seems – frankly got there before the LGA did, they persuaded George Osborne that they were able to build this country out of a recession in the same way that they persuaded John Prescott and Gordon Brown and the like of similar previously, and developers in such a way have managed to I say con successive Governments that their way is the right way and those of us in Local Government are left trying to deal with the consequences of all of that.

With that in mind I hope that we can redouble our efforts on a national basis to further invigorate the LGA. You do think sometimes that we are the only people facing this. We have spoken a lot today about LDF and the problems we have got in terms of housing numbers. Leeds is peculiar in that way. Unlike Manchester it is peculiar in that it includes areas that I represent whereas Manchester and the like do not. John Prescott and Gordon Brown and the like of similar previously and developers in such a way have managed to I say con successive Governments that their way is the right way and those of us in Local Government are left trying to deal with the consequences of all of that.

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THE LORD MAYOR: Please would you sum up, Councillor Procter?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: That is why we have got the problem that we have got. In short, Lord Mayor, I sincerely hope that we can continue collectively as a Council to oppose some of these policies. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ann Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Yes, thank you, Lord Mayor. When I was on Plans West Panel a bit of time ago, it was not unusual to spend quite a lot of time actually when we did sites visits, which I always went on the site visits, a lot of time was spent actually on garden developments and the problems that they could cause. This could be by reason of access or many a time overlooking, so I do wonder if what is proposed, what the Government is proposing to just allow these extensions to go forward, I think it would cause a lot of trouble with neighbours if they can just build anything and nobody have a right to put in comments or whatever about it. I do wonder what on earth we might end up with as far as buildings go.

I also think that, as I understand this has been put forward to try and alleviate the housing problem and I must just say if the Government thinks that, I wonder what planet they are on because they are certainly not on the same planet as me.

Having said all that I would say that, yes, we, again, agree with this White Paper and we will be voting for it. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dobson.

COUNCILLOR DOBSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. For me it is a simple question I would like to put to Members of Council. It is, fundamentally, why are we here? Why on earth are we here? All 99 of us go and knock on doors – answers on a postcard – we go round, we knock on doors hail, rain or shine, gathering support to make strategic decisions that affect the city and protect our ward and the wellbeing of our residents therein. That is the starting point for me.

We have had a conversation earlier on in Council about the LDF and the majority of Councillors here understand the significance, the importance of acting together in the best interests of the City of Leeds, but we are supposed to not have any influence in what is happening in our own back yards, so in the one element we are supposed to be very mature about how we allocate housing going forward for the future - big, strategic decisions and on the other hand we do not get a say.

For me that is not right and looking at some of the points that are raised in this consultation process about when a decision is of national significance we do not get to adjudicate on it. I think we are perfectly capable of making those decisions in this Council. As a regular attendee at Plans East I know for a fact the decision making process in that Plans is good, it is robust. Do I always get the decisions I want on behalf of my residents? No, a compromise is reached. Do the Members of that Plans Panel listen? Yes. I think that we are in real danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater and losing lots of expertise and good practice that we have developed over many, many years.

I always equate it to my time when I was on Licensing and when Members used to come to Licensing Panel on decisions, you always listened to what the ward Members had to say and you made your decisions accordingly because, as I have said before on many other issues in this Council, the 99 of us are the best resource that our wards and communities have in terms of the knowledge, the local knowledge and the expertise we can bring to these matters, and my only significant run-in with the Planning Inspectorate was not a really good experience, to be honest with you, because at the Garforth Cliff development I rocked up thinking I was going to put down all these sophisticated arguments about why it was a bad development in terms of traffic movement, the infrastructure, the fact that it was a flood area and basically it was all poo-poo-ed.

Do I want to give this particular body more powers in relation to the City of Leeds? No, I certainly do not. I will finish on that note but I am glad that the Council has got a collective position on this and it is one I wholeheartedly support in the White Paper. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Again, can I thank everybody who has taken part in this debate. I know there will be many others who could have done and make valuable contributions. Councillor Campbell, thank you for your stirring words, it was much appreciate. Councillor Fox, you will never say a nicer thing about me ever again, I recognise that. Thank you.

The Article 4 debate is important but talk to your Front Bench because the idea came from your Front Bench and we incorporated the wording about Article 4 in the White Paper. It is the right thing to do, it is right to think about it, it is difficult, I accept.

Councillor Carter mentioned SHLAA again. I think I hinted earlier on about my personal feelings but we will need to re-examine exactly how a particular body does work.

I think Mark and Tom hit the nail on the head – nationally significant, and who defines it? Mr Pickles. Nobody else. Nothing in the legislation, nothing dotted and Ts crossed, Mr Pickles will decide what is nationally significant and what is not. That is not where democracy ought to rest.

Somebody mentioned infrastructure again. Absolutely right, as we said this afternoon some of these developments cannot happen unless we as a Council get ahead of the curve and actually redefine what infrastructure is required as part of major significant developments. It is not good enough for us to wait until planning applications come in and then run after the ball and say, “Oh, by the way, we would like a roundabout here”, or “We would like that there.” Actually, Council officers, it is much more important than that. We need to be defining what the infrastructure needs are in our areas because otherwise the pain of taking some of these very significant home building programmes will be too severe.

I am very happy to see such unanimity in adversity, to some extent, and I also say that actually I do need to talk with home builders in this region, in this city, because I would rather we did it ourselves than somebody else elsewhere, from Bristol or somewhere else, makes those decisions.

The Home Builders, finally, have a choice, in my view. They can either come into our society and build with us in the areas where we think it is appropriate and where they will still make their profit but they will put something into our communities and a legacy that will be important to our communities, or else they will be defined as the next set of bankers, and we all know what society thinks of the bankers. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: May I call for a vote on the motion in the name of Councillor Peter Gruen. (*A vote was taken*) That is unanimous, thank you very much.

ITEM 15 – WHITE PAPER MOTION – LETTINGS POLICY

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 15, White Paper Motion on the Lettings Policy in the name of Councillor Golton. Councillor Golton, please.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Housing. The 80s, 90s and for most of the noughties unfortunately we had lost decades not just here in Leeds, in terms of social housing. Quite frankly we had too many sold off and not enough built to replace them. I know that we have had some building regimes in place under the last administration and also under the present one, but unfortunately that gap has not been filled and will not be filled for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, demand is higher than ever in social housing because the private house builders are not building either, despite those thousands of permissions that Councillor Carter was on about earlier.

Lord Mayor, this means that we have restricted the social housing supply and this led, eventually, to the introduction of the choice-based lettings system, which effectively is a rationing system. It basically says there is not enough to go round everybody that requires social housing so we will try and make sure that it goes to those who need it and it was a policy that was universally accepted by all parties and we agreed that it was a fair system and, to begin with, to be fair, it did give fair

outcomes. It made sure that housing allocation was not subject to political corruption, it meant that those in the greatest need could be put at the top of the list to get them out of harm's way or give them a better future.

Unfortunately, Lord Mayor, that original fairness which was accepted by most, now, I have to say, the choice-based letting system several years down the line is increasingly becoming resented by those same residents that it is meant to be benefiting. It is not serving the people that it was intended to benefit as some are feeling that they are never, ever going to get their turn. Although it gives a fair outcome for those who have the greatest need, for those who still have need, they do not get a look in. For a fair system it has some very unfair outcomes.

Lord Mayor, just to give you a few examples in terms of what situation we are talking about, we do have 58,000 Council properties in the city and last year there were 4,976 homes that were let, and in total 432,695 bids were cast for properties. That meant that every single property that we had had an average of 87 bids, and if we can think about how it feels to bid for your future home, think about how many times we as a Council have been asked to bid by central Government to access a certain fund and get told time and time and time again, "You are not really needy enough, there is somebody else who deserves it more than you". We know that this can become a very debasing and have a very dehumanising effect on many of our taxpayers and many of our citizens.

Increasingly the system is freezing the current housing market. To give you an example, I have an old pensioner in my ward and the lady basically cannot keep up with the three bedroom home that she has kept her family in for generations. She got told to bid for the one bedroom property which is in the next street which would have allowed her to be in the community she has grown up with, where her support mechanisms are. There are other families who are in two bedroom accommodation and they want to move into a three bed property so they have more space for their children. They can afford it, they are not on benefits, they are a hardworking family. Then you have another family who is in a three bedroom property who want to reduce to the two bedrooms because they are not keen on paying the extra that the housing benefit won't stretch to these days.

THE LORD MAYOR: Please will you make your final point, Councillor Golton?

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: All of those people potentially will not ever get to the top of a bid for a property they want to go for. Allow the freedom for our local housing officers to unleash that extra supply in the system because those three properties would never, ever come to a supply because those people will never be able to move and they could not move into the home that they need. Please give us a chance. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Formally second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Peter Gruen.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I am moving an amendment not because I do not think that Councillor Golton's resolution is well intentioned – it is – but because I think we are actually doing work and bringing work forward are at the point of taking a report to the Executive Board within a month of now. Some of what he says the work is already in progress.

There is a myth around choice-based lettings which is that if anything does not work it is the fault of choice-based lettings. The fault actually is we have not got enough Council housing. We should have more. We should have more social housing. The country needs more social housing. If Government give us the money to invest in more social housing and we will build more Council houses. That is what we need to do and there is nowhere where there is a bigger difference of opinion in policy terms between us and this particular Government, and I include the Lib Dems in that because you are Coalition partners.

The Government believes that social housing is a safety net for those people who cannot do any better. It is there if you really have to have it. We believe social housing is a genuine alternative for people who want to live and rent. Whether they rent in the private or the public sector, it is a way of living which is absolutely and perfectly understandable and they deserve long term tenancies, they deserve security just like anybody else does. This Government through welfare reform and other things is trying to make it more and more difficult, more and more tenuous for people to retain their place in social housing.

You cannot get to the top of the list, says Councillor Golton, and that is because we have 27,000, 30,000 and not enough stock. We would not have enough stock if we only concentrated on the people affected by Welfare Benefit, and only on a criteria of downsizing, such is the problem inflicted on tenants' daily lives by the Government – not by us - but they are forced, either to take a 12% or 25% in their housing benefit or find accommodation, usually one bedroom.

I will tell you something, what do we do about multi-storey flats? I will just give you one example. If somebody moves out, do we then move families on to the 30th floor in a multi-storey flat with young kids? It is not our policy, it is not what we want to do but we are being forced into areas where we do not want to go.

I think our amendment is a fair amendment. It takes cognisance of what Councillor Golton and his Group want to achieve, which is that we attack that particular issue. It says we are bringing forward a report and it says we will have an all-party working group in taking that report forward and implementing the recommendations of that report. I think that is a fair response to a serious complex issue which has been raised and I commend it to you. I will not be accepting Councillor Anderson's amendment, again well-intentioned though it is, but as one of his own Group earlier on said, it is an unnecessary amendment because you have got a perfectly good one in mine. Thank you very much.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Congreve.

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: Second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I make it very clear from the outset that the Conservative Group fully supports the need to get the social housing issue sorted out in this city.

Can I correct some errors? I know you might say this is pedantic, but we do not have 27,000 people on the housing list. As at 13th November we had 25,278. It is still too many, I accept that, but of these 25,000, 4,000 of them are in Bands A and B and that leaves 21,000, roughly, are in Band C. As Stewart has already said, in the last two years we have only let 5,000 houses in each of those two years. Assuming that those people at A and B actually get a house, that is all going to be taken up and then you have got the people who are coming on to the housing

register to replace those, so you will end up with the same number. We need to be clear about that and that is why we had a little bit of difficulty with what the Liberals were doing in terms of we felt it was a little bit muddled thinking.

What about the homeless? Under Councillor Golton's(*sic*) amendment, what would you do about the homeless people? Would you stop giving them the priority that we agreed, because if he says he would still continue it, where is he going to get the extra houses that he wants to get through here? What about those on housing options that have been evaluated as having greatest need? Are you going to suddenly put them further down in order to give your people priority? Are you going to take people who are coming from Her Majesty's Services, who have served us in this country, are you going to put them further down the list in order to get people to do it. You cannot keep saying no because to get somebody to go up the list, somebody has to go down the list. What do you mean "No"? Is this another part of Liberal things that these laws do not exist? This is typical utter Liberal thinking. You seem to think that you can go against all laws that have ever been invented because it suits you for your own political purposes to try and pretend you can be all things to all people and you turn out to be nothing to anybody. (*Applause*)

What we need is actions, not words. We need to start doing something about it.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Say it all again, Barry.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: The Government have made it very clear in terms of their stuff that they recently brought out that Authorities are still obliged to ensure that social homes go to the most vulnerable in society and those most in need, i.e. effectively what the current policy says and we all look at amending that and it has been amended with cross-party support for the last few years so I think we should continue in that vein.

What we have got to look at is what can be done. I would say look to a Conservative Authority because Conservative Authorities can deliver. (*interruption*) For example, in Hammersmith and Fulham they have been able to get 500 new houses into the social sector by having a Joint Venture Partnership. Kensington and Chelsea have got a build to rent offer – these places look after, they have got a fantastic record of looking after their social tenants down there. If you ask the tenants down there, they will tell you, they work with the private sector to get partners.

It would have helped if you had also kept on the policy that Councillor J L Carter had about his under occupation scheme, that would have helped.

What I would say in conclusion is, and I address this directly to Councillor Gruen: Councillor Gruen, with your Conservative traditions (*Laughter*) and Conservative tendencies...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: They all know it's true!

THE LORD MAYOR: A very short conclusion because the red light is on.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: You should know the value of engaging with the private sector. Do it and they will help you get out of the mess that has been there for a number of years.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lamb.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Lord Mayor I would formally to second Councillor Anderson's excellent White Paper.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Ingham, and I understand it is Councillor Ingham's maiden speech.

COUNCILLOR INGHAM: Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I would like to speak about this matter as it will have a significant impact on my ward. Burmantofts and Richmond Hill is a ward with large amounts of deprivation and social rented housing. Three-quarters of the areas are in the ten per cent most deprived nationally. Most of the households in my ward claim Welfare Benefit. Many residents' lives are marked by poverty, they work in part-time jobs, look for work or care for young children or sick relatives. There are 3,300 children in my ward whose parents claim housing-related benefits, yet it is these same low income families that will be the hardest hit by welfare reform.

Coalition cuts in welfare act against our aspirations to be a child friendly city. Moves to tackle under occupancy will impact more households in my ward than any other in Leeds. 704 working age households are seen to be over occupying. Residents in my ward will have to pay a total of £345,000 more a year. We know families will get into rent arrears as they struggle to pay their bills.

My ward is also affected by low quality private sector rented accommodation and poor private landlords. The Council has tried to improve this by selective licensing in Cross Green and Yeadon Park. There has been success combating landlords who flout decency standards. I welcome the prosecution of landlords who put tenants at risk.

Social rented housing offers a way for people to know they are dealing with a legitimate, genuine organisation. I see the good work Councillor ALMOs and other social rented housing providers do all over my ward. It would be unfortunate if they had to direct most after chasing arrears.

These benefit changes are going to hurt my residents, undermine community cohesion and affect the social housing providers that try to assist them. I want to minimise this harm for my residents. They did not ask for this cut.

We have an obligation to see what can be done to support people affected by this Coalition cut. It is necessary for us to look at the best ways of helping people who are willing to move into smaller properties. We need to continue together to deliver social and affordable housing in Leeds.

I support the work the Council has already been doing and look forward to the Draft Lettings Policy being presented to Executive Board in December 2012. These are huge changes for the constituents we all represent. That is why ward Members need to provide their views on the policy. I therefore support the amendment for an all-party working group to help with the development of this policy. I urge you all to vote for this amendment. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Jonathan Bentley.

COUNCILLOR J BENTLEY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking in support of this White Paper. We all know that the real issue, as has already been mentioned, is too many people chasing too few houses and not enough houses to suit the different types of families and individuals that need them, and we have heard from Councillor Golton how the current priority system works against couples and families who want to downsize and the knock-on effect on families in overcrowded

accommodation, and I am sure all Members have got their own examples of the hardship and frustration that is caused sometimes by the inflexibility of our Lettings Policy.

Our proposals in this White Paper offer a simple change to the allocation system to give special priority to tenants who want to downsize. This could be implemented by neighbourhood management teams relatively quickly and would bring some immediate benefit.

We do not want to go back to the bad old days of a non-transparent system where neighbourhood managers and their favourites and there was political interference, etc. We want to keep a system that is transparent, but there is nothing to stop the administration implementing a change to the Priority Lettings System.

I know the theme of today's Council has been all about localism and non-interference from Government but if you want to get a bit of guidance from Government, from the Department of Communities and Local Government, their guidance on allocation of accommodation encourages Councils to give appropriate priority to tenants who want to downsize, helping them to move to smaller, more management properties and freeing up precious social houses for crowded families.

Just moving briefly to the amendments, Councillor Anderson's amendment, whilst it would make a good White Paper and one that we might support, really does not deal with the issues that we are talking about. It is not about the lettings issue, although we did enjoy his performance and I loved his rant and, in the words of David Cameron, I felt like saying, "Calm down, dear"!

Councillor Gruen simply wants to set up another talking shop, another working party. If that is to join a working party to develop proposals, as Councillor Ingham suggested, we would be happy to do that, but we do not want to join a working party to implement proposals that we do not have an input into.

This White Paper proposes doing something that can be done quickly and will have immediate results. I understand that the Council is proposing to have a series of neighbourhood roadshows to explain the Welfare Reforms. If these changes to the priority allocations were brought in they could be promoted at these roadshows and demonstrate that the Council is doing something positive to alleviate tenants' problems.

I support this White Paper, thank you very much, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I have got to say at the start, I am actually going to speak in support of the Liberal Democrat amendment but the first thing I will say is that I entirely agree with virtually everything that Councillor Gruen said. The issue actually is about we have not got enough Council houses, and that is what we have got to do. We need schemes like the previous administration did in my ward, which we finished off recently, which was a development on two sites on my ward in Waterloo, which was done along with the private sector. They built us some Council houses, the first for many, many years. We need schemes like that but we need more of them than we have now. That is the crux of the problem, we have not got enough houses for people to go into.

The fact is that this motion is about moving people about. What we do know, we know from the scheme that Les Carter brought in that there are many people who

are over housed and there are many people who are in Council houses who are under housed, and it is about switching those people round.

I fully support what they are trying to do in this motion but, as I said, at the end of the day, Councillor Gruen is correct, it is about houses but this to me is about helping that situation.

I am going to support the Liberal Democrat motion. I fully expect the Labour amendment to get passed but quite a lot of what is in that I support as well. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Very briefly, Lord Mayor, obviously we all agree that the welfare reforms are going to have a significant impact on the social housing, it is going to have a significant impact indeed on the question of over occupancy. It is quite singular that we are being told by a Conservative Prime Minister that if you have got one bedroom too many – that is you have got a second bedroom if there is only a pair of you then you have got one too many. One wonders just how many bedrooms he has got spare in one of his establishments, but where we are is where are and they are going to impose this.

Without doubt these changes in money are going to affect a very large number of tenants. I have got the figures here and I will just show you by reading some of them. The total number apparently affected by loss of benefit if this goes forward – and it is going to go forward – is just over 7,200 or, to be more precise, as one of my colleagues over there insists, 7,247. The actual gross figure is £3.9898m. That is the amount of money the poorest people in this city are going to lose, and it is not evenly spread out. If one looks at the figures, Burmantofts and Stanningley almost tops the list, I think, with 704 individuals who are going to lose out and that is well over a third of a million pounds. The next big one is Killingbeck and Seacroft, which has 675 people affected, again with an enormous figure of £376,686 lost.

If one looks at these figures and you mark those which are high and those which are low, the cost of carrying this burden falls on the poorest people in our community, and that again is just morally wrong. We cannot abide by it, it is so unfair. If I am at home and someone knocks on my door with this kind of problem, what do I say to them? What do you say to a chap who has lived with his mother, looked after her until she pegged out and he is now in a position where he has got one bedroom too many. I wonder if we should not speak to the lawyers and say can't we look at the second bedroom in some of these flats and define it as a box room, because some of them are small enough to be a box room. If we re-define them as a box room, would that work? We at least ought to see whether that is possible.

In my view, it is a dire situation that is coming up, it is immoral. What should we do? I would like to see this re-defined as a bedroom, I would like to see us insisting that we build. In my ward there is a house with a thing on it that records 30,000 houses built by Leeds City Council and this is the last 30,000th one (you know about it, Lucinda, Thomas Penn Lane) and that registers the building of those houses in just 20 years. We were a great housing department at one time, we could go back again.

I also think we ought to insist as far as we can on---

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Atha, please will you make your final point?

COUNCILLOR ATHA: Yes, rent restriction as they used to be for the private landlords and also no lettings with these benefits to a landlord that is not registered as meeting decency standards. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cohen.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I must confess I read this White Paper in the name of Councillor Golton with an immediate thought came to mind of the well-known adage, to err is human; to really make a dog's dinner of something takes a Liberal Democrat. Quite frankly, the notion of trying to further complicate the current system of priority in the way Councillor Golton suggests would, I am certain, strike absolute fear both into those who are currently trying to run the current priority system and, in fact, those tenants who are engaged in the current priority system. To make it worse for both tenants and those managing the scheme is something of an achievement.

Speaking for my own ward, Alwoodley, which has a large number of Council properties, I get regular complaints by tenants who have both priority A and, indeed, priority A+, who seem to have to wait an inordinate amount of time to find a new suitable property. How much worse would that be under Councillor Golton's new super priority?

Far from helping I am absolutely convinced that those who desperately need new housing and rehousing would be in a far worse position.

What we as a city need to do, what we as a Council need to do, is to think outside of the box. We need to be innovative. To put it absolutely bluntly, and this will not go down well over there, we need to think like Conservative-led Councils who have found innovative new ways of delivering new real housing, not the imaginative magical mystery housing that Councillor Golton was creating before.

Councillor Anderson gave us excellent examples such as Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea. They will have Council tenants. Let me tell you about Westminster Fair Housing Scheme. You will learn if you listen, it is amazing. The solution they provide, high quality housing, high quality units for shared use by individuals, they are affordable to people earning a living wage. Yes, these rents are higher than social housing but below the market rate and those additional revenues are then used to build new affordable homes or, indeed, improve existing units.

Council what we need in Leeds is simple and clear. We need innovation and clarity, not confusion and obfuscation. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: We have run out of time for more speakers so can I ask Councillor Golton to sum up, please.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It becomes clear that the only guy in the house to get it is Councillor Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: That is worrying!

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: He is backing everybody.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: What's new there?

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: The two amendments that we put forward all concentrate on the only solution. I know you are not listening because actually underneath you are all Conservatives and you are quite happy *(laughter and applause)* for the *status quo* even though it is iniquitous and it means that for too many of your citizens they are actually getting a bad deal. Actually, if you look at the

actual facts, you can change the way that choice-based lettings works simply by changing the proportion of houses which are associated with just the bidding process and others that could be associated with management lets. That is a possibility. You could do that now. That is something concrete you could do not, not have an aspiration to build a load of social housing in the future which does not help those people that need it now.

Please take responsibility as an administration and actually do some action. To invite all the parties round this Chamber to some kind of working group after you have worked up what you are actually going to do so that a working party can oversee the implementation of it, that is completely the wrong way around and it is the same attitude we have towards our people that come to us to provide a home for them. It is basically, we will decide what's what and you have just got to take it and you have just got to get on with it.

Actually we are going to accept your amendment because it is going to win anyway, but secondly we want to actually accept the principle of having a working party, but please include us before you bring the paper to Executive Board. I am giving you that plea, because we do have ideas that you can take on board.

In terms of the Localism Act, which was brought in by this lot...

COUNCILLOR: Your Government

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: We were holding our noses at the time! Primarily it was brought in by the Tories and part of the Localism Act brings new freedoms to us as housing providers locally to actually do some of those direct lets. We have already seen the guidance that Councillor Bentley pointed out which says that we should be giving priority to people who want to downsize.

When we put priority in our Council motion you might have noticed it had a small "P". It did not necessarily mean that it had to be formalised into a priority process. You might wish to interpret it that way. What we did want to get across was the fact that we do need to prioritise to get people who want to downsize to enable them to do so and that sometimes means opening up the supply that we already have so that instead of having 4,900 houses exchanged over the year, you actually get maybe triple that amount. It will not solve the problem but it will go some way towards it and there will be far more people out there that will be satisfied customers of this Council instead of people who have been apologised to. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: May I call for a vote on the amendment in the name of Councillor Gruen, please? *(A vote was taken)* The amendment is CARRIED.

Can I call for a vote on the second amendment in the name of Councillor Anderson, please? *(A vote was taken)* That amendment is LOST.

The amendment in the name of Councillor Gruen becomes the substantive motion. Can I call for a vote on that, please? *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

That brings us to the end of the Council meeting. Thank you very much for your attendance.

(The meeting closed at 7.32pm)