

LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

**EXTRAORDINARY
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Held on

Wednesday, 12th September 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
EXTRAORDINARY MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 12th SEPTEMBER 2012

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon, everybody. May I welcome people in the public gallery and may I please remind everybody to please switch off mobile phones because they do tend to cause a distraction. If yours does go off during the meeting please come and see me afterwards with a donation for my charity, Crohn's and Colitis.

I will now hand over to Councillor Wakefield.

APPOINTMENT OF HONORARY ALDERMEN

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In moving this White Paper in support of the nominations I realise that all of us have got a very difficult task to talk about 140 years' service in 15 minutes and cover all the candidates, so in the usual way party Leaders will talk in more detail about their nominations but I would like to pass comment on all the candidates that are standing today.

The first one, of course, is Ronnie Feldman, a Councillor who worked so hard on a number of committees but one of the things that is not mentioned when you ask for background is one of his pieces of genius in managing to refurbish the whole of Hyde Park for not a penny, and working with Councillor Atha, which is a difficult task, Ronnie, you managed to turn that round, so I wish you well in the next few years of your retirement, or maybe a lot more.

The second one, of course, is Graham Kirkland who served Otley at various levels for 40 years and I think that alone deserves a nomination for something else than Alderman. Of course, Penny Ewens, who I have spoken to today expressing her passion, but for me we will remember her role in standing up for the City of Leeds School against her party and against her Leadership and I think many of us admire that spirit of defiance and commitment that Penny had towards those children, that school and, of course, education in total, so again to all three of you we wish you a very long and happy retirement as Aldermen.

Of course, I want to come on to my own colleagues and that is Geoff Driver, on the far left, and I am told by his Ward Councillors that Geoff is still partying because he is still attending farewell parties in his Ward! (*laughter*) I think that is a great tribute to the affection that people in Belle Isle and Middleton and Hunslet have for Geoff over many years. As many of you know, he served with John Battle and John Gunnell and Trevor Park and John Erskine and, of course, lately was tempered by Councillor Judith Blake and Kim Groves, who have made him much more sophisticated and much more urbane.

One of the things I think, Geoff, as well as being a very passionate Chair of Education, he also, long before the Big Society, did some incredible projects within the community – the Winter Aid Belle Isle, Buy-Sell (a kind of training project) and BITMO, a housing project. I think Geoff has very long evidence of being totally committed to his community.

He is an amazing guy with energy. It is not just with campaigning and leafleting and walking around the streets. Geoff is also an undiscovered rock and roller and jiver and many of us saw him at his 70th birthday carrying on till two o'clock in the morning and wearing everybody out. I think there is still a lot of energy in

Geoff and I know that he is still busy and again, on behalf of all of us, I wish you a long and happy retirement, Geoff.

If I can quickly move to my old Ward colleague of 24 years – and I know his family is here today to witness this. They gave me a lot of advice and support and Keith was outstanding. When I first got on in 1988, Keith took me down – I have said this story before but it is absolutely true – to the Kippax Working Men's Club, where he gave me some of the best political advice I have ever had with his ex-miners' friends. We used to talk about, at ten o'clock at night as the beer got more, so the advice got better. We did have really deep discussions about climate change, quantitative easing and multiplying, and he went on to test that theory out in William Hill up the road! We always had really good, sound solid advice from his colleagues.

I think if we look back, not only was Keith Lord Mayor, like Ronnie, Keith was also Chair of Employment and Estates during some very exciting times when there were millions of pounds flying around the city under Heseltine's release of capital assets and, of course, his deputy then was Geoff Driver, in part, on the Employment and Skills. They were really an excellent team, committed to employment and jobs.

On Saturday some of us were in Allerton Bywater – Keith was – and we were unveiling a memorial for the lives lost at one of the pits in our Wards and it reminded me of Keith's role. Keith joined the Council in 1986 following the closure of his pit which had been there for 30 years, and ever since that day Keith, as a Councillor, has spent all his time in making sure those mining villages did not fall to their knees or go into decline. Even now, well after he has retired, Keith has been fully committed and passionate about providing jobs, training, education and housing and, above all, sporting opportunities to his local community. He truly has been an outstanding champion of young people in our community. I think the good news is, he still knows where all the money is; the second thing is he is actually still carrying on that passion and commitment even today and I know over the next few years I am looking forward to carrying on working with Keith who, as I say, has been a friend, a colleague and a massive supporter.

Keith, I look forward to seeing you in the very near future and carrying on our work, and to all five of you, 140 years' of public service to the people of Leeds – thank you very much on behalf of this Council and the people of Leeds. I move.
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR A CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. It is my pleasure to second the resolution proposed by Councillor Wakefield today. He has already, of course, said numerous things about various of you but I would like to begin by saying that I am delighted to be able to support wholeheartedly on behalf of every member of my Group all the nominations before us today.

Like Keith I am going to particularly comment, obviously, about my friend and colleague Councillor Feldman – Mr Feldman, Honorary Alderman soon, I will get it right eventually.

First of all, the other lady and gentlemen. Geoff may not remember this but we first had our first real conversation in 1980. I do not think he had been on the Council all that long at that stage and I had just become the Chairman of the Housing Committee. He came to see me about some properties in his Ward, the Trenthams,

as I recall, where my predecessor had virtually agreed the steamrollers and the bulldozers should roll and these should be demolished.

The time was changing. The 60s and 70s had come to an end when we knocked far too much down instead of refurbishing properties and Geoff Driver made what I thought to me was a very cogent argument for keeping those properties and refurbishing them. I agreed with him and that was one of the first time I almost came a cropper with some of my own colleagues, but we got away with it and I will never forget that Geoff was extremely grateful for the efforts. Also, it taught me a lesson. It taught me that often it is very useful and absolutely right to work with colleagues of another party and I thank Geoff for that.

Keith and I have known each other for the whole time he has been on the Council, worked together closely and still do actually in one particular area. Keith has always impressed me as somebody who can turn £10 into £10,000 like *that* and he is never shy at speaking up for his community and really the epitome of a switched on Ward Member – what communities really need.

Graham and Penny were both outspoken and very straightforward during our time in administration in Leeds. Administrations need that. They need Back Bench Members of the parties or party in Government to sometimes stand up and say “You are wrong doing that, we want you to do that”, so again great examples of Ward Members standing up for what they believe is right for their community.

Ronnie. I will go back to the Hyde Park Cinema in a moment, which was a really interesting little project that Ronnie took under his wing, somebody else who can turn £5 into £5,000 like *that*, or almost. Ronnie first became a Councillor, and some of you will not know this, on the old Leeds City Council in 1971. Ronnie and I were both elected Councillors on the same day, me in Pudsey and Ronnie here in Leeds. In a couple of years, of course, we had the amalgamation, the new Leeds Metropolitan Council area and Ronnie and I became great friends almost from day one.

He has been Lord Mayor of Leeds and Deputy Lord Mayor of Leeds, supported ably by Honorary Alderman Ruth Feldman, who I am delighted to see here today. On both occasions they fulfilled that job with great dignity and great success. He served on various committees, always loved Licensing and loved Housing and, indeed was our spokesman on Housing for some time in Opposition.

When we were in control Ronnie was a very vociferous champion of the Licensing Committee which he chaired in part along with one of the Liberal Democrat Councillors. He was also a school governor at Allerton High School, Brodetsky Primary School and has represented the Council on Leeds Jewish Care. Again, somebody who has served his community with distinction for over 40 years.

He had one gap of two years, between that time in 1971 when he was elected to Leeds City, of two years; apart from that, continuous service serving the people of this city.

It is my pleasure to be able to support the nomination today but to all of you, congratulations for jobs extremely well done. I hope the people of Leeds are as proud of you as we are. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am very happy to support the recommendation that these legends are going forward to become Aldermen for this city. We did do a lot of eulogising at the end of the last session, I seem to remember, because we knew that a lot of these people were not going to be standing again and they needed some recognition for their commitment to the city.

Like my colleagues I am going to concentrate on my personal party companions but I have to make special mention of the others.

Ronnie Feldman made his legend before I even got elected to Council and I only got to appreciate why he was once he came back for a second go. I have to say, he stood out for me as a beacon of plain speaking and common sense and was particularly useful for the Scrutiny Boards when they first got set up on the Council because you showed how it should be done.

Geoff Driver and I, I think, did not get off very well to begin with. I think there was a little bit of bristling going on there, but later on I hope we actually achieved the mutual respect in terms of I recognise Geoff's real commitment to the young people in this city in whichever guise he took – he was, of course, Chair of the Education Committee and then later on he made sure that I was certainly challenged in the Council Chamber when I took over his tutelage and in a very real sense latterly has made real commitment to the Corporate Carers' Group on this Council which has specific responsibility for our looked-after children, so Geoff does it – he does not just talk about it, he does it.

Of course, Keith Parker, what I think about with Keith Parker is, he is a very decent man who will treat you as a human being and even though he is a Labour man through and through, when Don Wilson first got elected as the first non-Labour in a mining community for a long while in Rothwell, Keith did not turn his back on him and encouraged him and they both ended up having a bit of a bromance, I think (*laughter*) because Don learned how to get money in the same way as Keith did and often I think they helped each other out on that one.

That brings us, of course, to Graham Kirkland and Penny Ewens. Graham Kirkland, of course, got elected to Leeds City Council in 1974 but that was on the back of quite a significant career already in Otley. I do not think you could really under-estimate how well known Graham Kirkland is in Otley. A little bit like Keith, he is synonymous with the community that he represents, whereas Penny and Geoff are the volunteer of last resort and they will go anywhere in the city where they are needed.

Everybody knows Graham in Otley because, of course, he was a damn good Councillor but also, of course, most of them were his patients and quite a significant number of them he had actually helped deliver! There was a certain amount of come-back which probably helped towards his majority!

In the Council itself, of course, Graham became Lord Mayor and fulfilled that role in a dignified manner. Of course, despite being on the Fire Authority Graham never really sought to set the world alight with his rhetoric but when he did speak in the Council Chamber he spoke eloquently with a reasoned delivery, but also it was pertinent and it actually added to the debate. He was not interested in party points, he wanted to get things done.

Penny Ewens, I have to say, everyone loves Penny. The affection comes across the entire Chamber. I have a personal gratitude to Penny because she

introduced me to practical politics and if it was not for Penny standing aside after doing ten years of solid work in Weetwood, then I would not have been elected and I would not have beaten Anne Castle. *(laughter)* You might wonder about that!

One thing I did learn about Penny Ewens is that there is never a lost cause and if it was not for Penny working to keep the Liberal Democrats going in our really down time in the 80s, we would not have been part of an administration, we would not have been in the position we are now – in fact, we could do with another Penny to keep us going over this period.

Penny did not just keep the Liberal Democrats going, she also is a standard bearer and she will stand up for anyone she believes has a just cause and will not allow them to be overlooked. I am aware of her involvement in such things as Families Need Fathers which was all about making sure that young people get the support that they require and that families be protected and that fathers in particular should have access to their children as well as mothers. That commitment, I think, shows through and when her time did come again and she was asked to stand for a Ward which was not where she lived, she took that challenge up and she took the standard for her party and she won and she made a significant contribution. I think the fact that City of Leeds is still here is down to not just Penny, of course, but the fact that Penny was able to bear the standard for a lot of people behind her and encourage them to get new success.

I am very proud to bring all of these legends to be Aldermen for the city and in particular my mentor, Penny. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Elliott.

COUNCILLOR ELLIOTT: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. On behalf of the Morley Borough Independents our most sincere congratulations and support of the nomination of Geoff, Penny, Ronnie, Graham and Keith as Honorary Aldermen for our fabulous city of Leeds.

In the case of each of you the honour is well earned and richly deserved. We take this opportunity of thanking you all for the work which you have done for and on behalf of Leeds and wish you all well in the future. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to speak in support of the Green Group.

I have got to say you are right, they are legends and it feels a bit intimidating having them sat behind me. In fact, I have already been told if I say the wrong thing I will get my earhole clipped by them! I will have to behave myself, won't I!

Every one of them, you are right when you say they are legends. For instance, Ronnie, the first couple of days after I got elected, which is when Ronnie had his what you might call rest for a couple of years, Ronnie took me in hand and he said - for new members how you get it a lot easier than you did then because nobody used to tell you owt and being the first one of your Party there is nobody to ask. Ronnie came up to me and said, "You seem a decent sort. Nobody will tell you owt round here. If you want to know, come and see me", so I did. Thanks to Ronnie I learned the ropes quite quickly.

All of them – I have sat on committees from time to time and dealt with all of them at some point of time over the 14 years I have been on Council. I have got to say, I hold them all in great respect and I think they are all deserving of this honour. We are talking about five of the best Councillors this city has ever had and they thoroughly deserve it. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I am now going to call for a vote on the proposal in the name of Councillor Wakefield that Geoffrey Driver, Penny Ewens, Ronnie Feldman, Dr Graham Kirkland and Keith Parker be admitted as Honorary Aldermen of the City of Leeds. *(A vote was taken)* CARRIED Thank you very much.

I am delighted because all five of you have always put service to the city before anything else and I am really pleased that you are going to be Honorary Alderman.

I will now invite you to join me in the centre of the Council Chamber to sign the Roll of Honorary Aldermen.

(The Honorary Aldermen signed the Roll of Honorary Aldermen)

THE LORD MAYOR: I now close the first part of the meeting. I do hope the Honorary Aldermen will stay because I know that they have been missing Council since they left!

(The meeting closed at 1.48 pm)