

**LEEDS CITY COUNCIL**

**MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Held on

Wednesday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2014

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
CIVIC HALL,  
LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR  
(COUNCILLOR T MURRAY)

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**VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL  
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 26<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2014

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon everybody and welcome to the Council meeting, primarily the Budget.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: I am going to begin with Announcements on the Order Paper.

The first, a reminder, of course, that the cameras, four cameras, are in the Council Chamber and that the meeting is to be webcast.

The second announcement is a new announcement for Members. It is about recent changes in legislation. All votes in respect of the Budget motion and any amendment will be via recorded vote, so later on we will be carrying out that process.

A pleasant announcement also. Dominic, Councillor Harington's son, took part in the Winter Olympics. (*Applause*) A member of the Great Britain team, a great achievement for a Leeds lad and I am just pleased and proud to put that announcement on the record.

ITEM 1 –MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 15<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2014

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 1, Minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> January. Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: I move that the Minutes be approved, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

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

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 2, Declarations of Interest. If any Member would like to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests. (*No response*) As I look round I spot no hands, so I will move on to Item 3.

ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Chief Executive – nothing from Tom Riordan but I do have a statement from Councillor Blake, I understand, making a factual report around E-Act. Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am sure most of you will be aware that there was an announcement yesterday regarding the academy chain E-Act. I have been asked to just give Council an update of what we know of the current situation.

E-Act is a national academy sponsor and sponsors two academies in Leeds – Leeds West Academy and Leeds East Academy. We believe the Department for Education has decided to remove E-Act as the sponsor for ten schools nationally and these include both Leeds East and Leeds West Academies.

I would like to make it clear that not all of the schools that have been removed from E-Act are failing academies. Leeds West in particular has been assessed as good with outstanding leadership by Ofsted.

We are in conversations with the Executive Headteacher of the two schools, as well as the Department for Education and I can confirm that we had no prior knowledge of this decision.

The DfE have underlined their commitment to work with us, to keep us fully informed moving forward and we in turn have offered our support as the situation progresses. We are working with the DfE to ensure that any future sponsorship arrangement is the best for these Leeds schools and their communities.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blake.

#### ITEM 4 – REPORT ON ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 4, Report on attendance at meetings.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, that the Report of the City Solicitor on attendance at meetings be approved.

COUNCILLOR NASH: I second, my Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for the vote. *(A vote was taken)* That is CARRIED.

#### ITEM 5 - BUDGET

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 5, the Budget. Councillor Harper.

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

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

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

Can I ask you all now to move to page 8 on the Order Paper. We are now moving to the Budget and the amendments and the reminder is there again that at the conclusion of the discussion of the budget from all sides, recorded votes will be taken on all those amendments and then we will vote on the Budget motion.

Councillor Wakefield.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Before I start the Budget speech I have to move Item 5 on page 8, I am sure it is as clear as daylight, in terms of the Notice and that allows the Police and the Fire to have a budget to spend next year.

For those people who are betting in the sweepstake, this is not included (*laughter*) in the time. I would like to start the Budget speech, which will only be three hours, according to some people!

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield, can I ask Council to approve the alteration first? I think I might have to ask to do that first. (*A vote was taken*) I think that is CARRIED.

Ok, Councillor Wakefield, do not sit down! Your time starts now!

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Lord Mayor, again, before I start this year's budget proposals I would like to do our traditional thanks to all our staff for their continued commitment and professionalism during what has been an extremely difficult year for Local Government against the background of one of the most difficult financial times for Local Government since the 1930s.

Despite the uncertainty of Local Government's future, despite the continued wage constraints, our staff have continued to show incredible commitment and sacrifice during a year of extreme weather conditions of rain, severe winds and floods, and this is best exemplified by the fact that 40% of our staff, over 5,000 of our staff, have not had one day sick in the last twelve months. That is an incredible commitment shown there and incredible dedication.

I would also like to thank our Directors and Departmental Finance Officers, who I understand are here today, because they have been helping to drive change, innovation and also reducing costs in order to protect and provide public services to the people of Leeds and we should recognise also the constructive partnership with trade unions in achieving these changes.

Finally in our appreciation, as we all know, we could not deliver our budget proposals without the excellent work, support and advice from our corporate officers Helen Mylan, Doug Meeson (who is now back following his illness and we are all delighted to see this, he is literally back) (*applause*) Maureen Taylor and, of course, Alan Gay, the Coloccini of the Finance Department. (*laughter*) If anybody does not know who Coloccini is, he is a nasty piece of work, a defender for Newcastle United! (*laughter*) That is why our finance has always been very healthily managed. Again, without them we could not have managed to be here today putting our proposals.

Lord Mayor, as background to today's budget debate we should start by recognising that there is now overwhelming evidence that Local Authorities are still taking the biggest burden of public sector cuts. Local Council grants have now been cut by 28% since 2010 and there is more to come, evidenced by the Government's announcement that a further 15% will be cut for the 2015/16 year, resulting by that time in a 43% cut to Local Government grants.

The recent Public Accounts Committee report expressed real concern when it argued, to quote, that "Ministers have not assessed the cumulative impact of funding cuts of the financial sustainability of Local Government and the services they provide." We know these horrendous cuts will get even worse for Councillors if this Coalition Government continues past 2015, yet if we remember in 2010 we were promised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, that he would balance the books by 2015. As we know to our cost, this promise has been

completely broken as he now admits he is borrowing £198b more than he planned in 2010.

In short, after three-and-a-half years of sacrifices and draconian cuts, we are further away from balancing the nation's budget than when we started in 2010 and despite the hype and rhetoric that has followed the welcome small economic recovery, we should not forget that the level of the GDP will not return to its 2008 peak until the end of this year, at best. Furthermore, it will now take a full decade before real wages catch up lost ground. In the meantime, most working people are now £1,600 a year worse off since 2010.

Perhaps the biggest critic of this Government's boast of strong economic recovery is our friend Vince Cable, who labelled it a very fragile recovery fuelled more by borrowing and debt and with no real substance. More recently Mark Carney, the Governor of the Bank of England, has labelled the current economic recovery as "unsustainable". Regrettably for all of us, we can hardly call this a resounding successful economic recovery as the public sector, Local Government in particular, faces more years of grants being slashed as the Coalition Government attempts to bring down public expenditure to the same level or lower of GDP in 1948.

Conclusive evidence we all know would suggest this is more about ideological dogma than economics, more about ending the Welfare State than balancing our economy and what makes matters worse and what is so grossly unfair is not only the speed and depth of these cuts but their geographical, social and political application which has meant cuts have been made far deeper in areas of greater need and deprivation. Inevitably, the north and Yorkshire in particular are being hit far harder than more affluent areas in the south. (*hear, hear*)

Figures produced by SIGOMA (and Councillor Atha represents us on that) will know this. SIGOMA, the Special Interest Group of Metropolitan Authorities, predict that by 2017/18 the cumulative impact of all the various funding changes, which includes New Homes Bonus help and welfare reforms, will result in total reduction of £2.7b across the Yorkshire and Humberside region or, put it more simply, Yorkshire and Humberside will lose £502 per head of population compared to London's £352 per head and, in the wealthier south-east, £256 per head.

The claim in a written statement by Brandon Lewis, the Minister for Local Government, that we have tried to be fair to every part of the country, north and south, rural and urban, metropolitan and shire, is proving to be totally false and hypocritical. For example, SIGOMA also found that between 2010/11 and 2014/15 the ten most deprived areas of the country lose six times more spending power per head of the population than the ten least deprived.

Like other northern cities, Leeds has suffered as a result of this political bias towards more affluent areas. As we know, since 2010 Leeds City Council as a result of its cuts to grants, cost pressures and so on, has had to reduce its budget by almost £200m and it would be by March this year and, sadly, we have lost 1,800 staff, yet had we got even a simple average reduction of grant across the country, we would have been £17m better off. Predictably, the growing outrage and criticism the unequal allocation of grants has led this Coalition Government to introduce a new heavily masked criteria called Spending Power, which includes all Government funding systems and which basically is designed to make huge differences in grants look small. Under this criteria Leeds loses 3.6% but compare that to reduction in spending power to Hampshire and Surrey which is 0% and 0.9% respectively. Those differences actually involve millions of pounds difference between us.

The most glaring example of financial bias relates to places like Wokingham, which is the third richest district in this country and despite the enormous differences in health inequality, despite Leeds having 50% more children in poverty and three times more long-term unemployed, as a result of the new financial arrangements, Wokingham gets almost the same spending power in grants as Leeds, around £1,850 per dwelling. How can that possibly be justified if we are all being treated fairly?

Indeed, the recent research of the House of Commons Library has also revealed a very strong political bias of the financial system when it highlighted that every Labour controlled Council, whether it was district or shire, took twice or more the amount of cuts than a Conservative controlled Authority, so in the shires Conservatives took a 1% cut compared to Labour's 2.2%. In the districts, Conservative controlled had taken 1% and Labour 2.2%. In single tiers, excluding the Isles of Scilly and the City of London, Conservatives had taken a 2.2% cut and Labour a 4.3% cut.

This is not the only bias against the north in favour of the south, which is also reflected in transport spending. To remind us, 86% of our national transport expenditure is spent in London and the south-east. I can fully understand why even Conservative Leaders in Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Durham and Lincoln, to name a few, have really openly and publicly lost patience with the funding system to northern Local Authorities which is pushing them to the edge of financial crisis, and they are not afraid to say so. They have written an open public letter to Cameron and the rest of the Government about this.

Now we are being made aware through the Municipal Journal of Local Government that a third of Councils are close to the edge of financial collapse and may be unable to provide essential services, and a further third are using up their reserves to get through. Only recently we heard of Councils in the south-west completely closing roads because they can no longer afford to keep roads safely maintained. Liverpool has also announced it will now cut 25% of its statutory adult and children's services which means mass closures of Adult Day Centres and Children's Centres. It is simply a catastrophic financial situation for many Local Councils.

There is also a serious threat to Local Councils' vital economic role and this is why Core Cities (which Leeds is part of) representing 16m people and responsible for 27% of England's economic output, have argued that the financial bias against them is seriously undermining their potential in driving economic growth and jobs in their region. To quote a recent Core City statement:

"By using a formula that takes a crude percentage cut in revenue support grants means that big cities, often with the greatest need and the lowest tax base, gets the greatest cuts. This means that most vital services, adults and children's services, attract cuts which are nearly impossible to make."

Indeed, Core Cities like Leeds are also being forced to cut non-statutory obligations such as our leisure and cultural facilities – the very services that play a vital role in attracting people and investment to this city.

Endless damage is being done to our cities by cutting social and welfare support. As Professor Michael Parkinson's research shows, you cannot isolate economic growth from the social fabric of big cities. All the evidence from European cities suggests economic performance is stronger when there is stronger social cohesion and equality. In this context, Leeds has some very serious challenges to

tackle, as we know. Despite helping 10,000 households save thousands of pounds in energy bills, we still have 55,000 households living in fuel poverty. We have over 32,000 children living in poverty. We have 150,000 people who are regarded as living in the worst 10% of poverty in this country and we should never forget the shameful health inequality, twelve years, between certain parts of our city within four miles of each other.

Unless we address these challenges, we are not going to unlock the full potential of our city's talents and abilities. This challenge is not being helped by the grossly unfair removal of £320m from the most deprived communities in this city as a result of the Health and Welfare Reforms. Inevitably in the last few years we have witnessed the rapid growth of money lenders, now nearly 60 officially; food banks, now at nearly 20 officially; and pawnbrokers, as more and more desperate people seek help and support from everywhere, including the Council and voluntary sectors.

Both sectors have witnessed massive increases, over 100% in people seeking help and advice on poverty-related issues. As the Archbishop of York has said, to quote:

“Reports of malnutrition and food poverty disgrace us all, leaving a dark stain on our conscience. How can it be 27,000 people were diagnosed as suffering from malnutrition in Leeds?”

In relation to our budget proposals, as the recent consultations demonstrate, the people of Leeds still want to protect and prioritise the most vulnerable groups – the elderly, the young and disabled – in our budget proposals. They still want to ensure our people, young in particular, share the economic success and therefore prevent a whole generation of young people in our cities being written off. Sadly, we still have 12,000 18 to 25s not in employment in this city.

In addition, the comments of Members of Scrutiny Boards and the voluntary sector's submissions also support the views of the people of Leeds. Needless to say, they have been taken extremely seriously by this administration, so our budget proposals today are about doing everything possible to maintain services, to gain efficiencies and to innovate in order to protect and provide public services to the people of Leeds, particularly the vulnerable.

For example, our Civic Enterprise, responsible for school meals and other services, is forecast to grow income by £5m and has recently won a contract from the Ambulance Service. This Civic Enterprise not only provides valuable security and growth to hundreds of low paid staff working for the Council but also provides vital meals, transport and support to our young and elderly.

In Children's Services, by investing £4.5m in Early Intervention and working with families and partners, they have managed to reduce the number of children going into care to 1,357, a strategy that has saved us £5.5m and the wider public partnership with public agencies, £28m. By changing the way Children's Centres work we have managed to ensure we keep our 57 Children's Centres open, reflecting our commitment to give every child the best start in life in Leeds. (*Applause*) We are the only city to maintain our number of Children's Centres in the north. Councillor Blake will talk of other examples of innovation in Children's Services, such as working with families which has managed to get children back in school, reduced antisocial behaviour and youth crime and also helped families to get off benefits and back into work. Once again, this example demonstrates you do not have to demonise, victimise or bully families to improve the lives of children and their families as well as saving public money.

In relation to Adult Social Care, we all know the enormous demographic pressures we face while at the same time experiencing a real 11% cut in funding since 2010. As we know, in the next 20 years we have a demographic forecast of 50% increase in the over 65s, a 100% increase in the over 80s and we all know that there will be eight million people over 100 years old living in our society in this country. Inevitably that will put enormous pressures on Local Councils as well as the Health Service. The challenge to look after our elderly unfortunately has been made harder this year by the Chancellor's Budget, which short-changed Councils and the National Health Service by double counting. Only recently has the Government acknowledged this disgraceful deception well after the announcement to Parliament. In Leeds this double counting involves the same £50m being assigned to Health and Local Government.

Despite the setback of the double counting, our pioneering work of integration between Adult Social Care and the Health Service has already been recognised nationally as making significant progress. The success of this project is not only vital to the future of Adult Social Care and health services but to thousands of elderly people in this city who need support in the community.

Further examples of transformational changes in Adult Social Care leading to vital savings relate to the South Leeds Independent Centre, an investment of £2.3m which reduces unnecessary admissions into hospitals and residential care, saving at least £1m a year. By further investing into Reablement Services we also help people to stay in their homes and communities while at the same time saving £2.5m over the last three years and next year will be a very important and proud day for this Council as it opens its Assisted Technology Centre, the only one in the country to accommodate all the elderly and disabled equipment under one roof.

Finally in this section, looking after our most vulnerable people, we should also recognise as well as the extra £4.3m investment into community care, we have also continued our extra £300,000 to our outstanding Neighbourhood Networks, now recognised as being one of the best in the country. *(Applause)*

In recognition of their vital role of providing support to vulnerable groups, we have continued the £200,000 hardship fund to the voluntary sector so they can feel more financially assured and secure to carry on their amazing work in our communities. As proof of our commitment to prioritise vulnerable groups, we now spend 58% of our budget on Children's and Adult Social Care but we all know that the total amount is still not enough for the growing demand, but we will remain committed to find ways of meeting the pressures.

In Leisure and Public Health the challenge of integration of services has already been successful, with the £500,000 Lottery and Public Health money which is helping to encourage people from deprived areas to take up sport for the first time. This will continue to 2014/15 as we tackle health inequalities in this city.

In relation to our Environmental Services, through redesign and improved ambition, we are now achieving up to 50% of recycling at times, as well as saving £1.3m. Lord Mayor, to underline our commitment for cleaner, greener and safer communities, I would like to take this opportunity to dispel any fears or rumours about the number of PCSOs in London (*sic*). As a result of working in partnership with the new Police Commission, I am pleased to announce there will be no reduction in the PCSOs to the people of Leeds. *(Applause)* We all recognise their importance in tackling crime and giving reassurance to our citizens about the safety of their communities. We will ensure that this remains our priority.



However, despite many examples of enterprising and imaginative savings in all our departments, I have to warn this Council the challenge of financial sustainability will get much, much harder. Despite this year's further savings of £5.4m in procurement on top of £25m already saved, despite reducing senior management by 25%, despite our plans to reduce city centre buildings from 17 to six, we have not been able to avoid reductions or losses to our services. All of us are aware of the loss of libraries, sports centres and day centres and, given this year's and next year's cuts to grants, I have to warn that Leeds City Council is not immune to financial breaking points. Elsewhere we know, Birmingham cannot balance their books without Government help to reassign their debts. As a result of strong financial management here, we are not in that extreme situation but we are under severe and unprecedented financial pressures.

As a consequence of not securing sponsors yet, we will not be able to stage our wonderful concerts of Opera and Party in the Park. Both events gave Leeds a national and regional profile but we have been forced to concede to the financial pressures we face.

Lord Mayor, since 2010 this administration has never exaggerated or dramatised the impact of the cuts but it is clear that we can no longer financially sustain our traditional structure or traditional deliver of public services under this current financial blitz against Local Councils. As I said earlier, the delivery of statutory services has become harder and harder – almost impossible – and yet next year we face a further 15% cut in our grant.

As a result of these intolerable financial pressures, this administration is proposing to take a very difficult decision to raise the Council Tax by 1.99% - in other words, 43p on a Band D per week. Of course, we are aware that energy price rises of 9% for electric and 18% gas has made the cost of living difficult for many people, but we promise our increase is not just about providing profits in our bottom line like the energy companies, but about maintaining help and support for our statutory services to the young and elderly and disabled as we are pushed to the financial edge like many Authorities.

We know, however, that this small increase is not the total answer to the financial survival of this Council. All the Core Cities are united in arguing that the current financial system is totally broken and means a root and branch review in order to provide a different model of financing and resourcing Local Government services. Big cities have already proven they can deliver public services more efficiently and effectively than Whitehall and it may be worth noting that Whitehall costs have gone up 11% whilst Local Government costs have gone down 6%. We really do have here a proven track record of being more efficient than Whitehall.

For example, Leeds City Council with partners has helped to reduce the NEETs from 10% to 6.24% and it is still going down. With the devolved Whitehall Skills Budget we have managed to achieve 69% of 16 to 18 year olds into jobs compared to the Government scheme of work contract of 30%. *(Applause)* A fantastic achievement.

The argument is simple. If allowed more devolution of public services, if allowed to keep more of the money generated, we could transform the most centralised Government relationship in Europe to a more sustaining local model and there would be no begging bowls to Whitehall. *(hear, hear)*

There is no doubt the strength and potential of our economy gives us a very strong foundation for that ask, and I will explain the background.

As we all know, in the last ten years both administrations have created £3.9b of investment in the city. Developments like the Trinity Scheme have pushed Leeds into the top six destinations in the UK for retail and has increased footfall to 18m people a year since it opened in March 2013. That scheme alone has protected and created 5,000 jobs. As the Centre of the City Report shows, Leeds is now in the top ten cities for creating jobs in the private sector and that growth has allowed the Council and its partners to double our apprenticeships from 3,500 to 7,000 in the last two years. *(Applause)*

A further £5b of investment in this city is forecast in the next few years, which includes the John Lewis scheme, Aire Valley, South Bank, Holbeck Village, Kirkstall Forge and so on and these developments will create thousands of jobs, apprenticeships and new homes to add to the 15,000 net jobs created in the last few years by this Council. These developments will also create millions in business rates and tax as well as growing our economy and business base, and so will our town and district centres. That is why we have continued the investment of £700,000 a year to enable them to provide jobs and retail opportunities to local communities. Among some of the towns and districts include Harehills, Beeston and Armley which are all being put in this year's programme.

Our sport and cultural ambitions are now giving us a global audience. On top of the successful hosting of the World Cup Rugby League, we have the biggest sporting annual event in the world this year, the Tour de France, with the Grand Départ on 5<sup>th</sup> July with a potential TV audience along of 3b viewers, as well as millions visiting Leeds and Yorkshire – a real massive boost to our tourism and investment profile and reputation, and we should not forget our wonderful world class arena which is bringing in millions to the city to witness world class artists in a truly iconic arena.

All this has allowed us to be bolder and more ambitious by announcing our bid to be the European City of Culture in 2023. These great projects will provide an opportunity to grow our tax and economic base through investment and growth.

We should not also under-estimate the impact of our capital programme which, over the next three years, will represent over £800m and create 6,732 jobs for the city region. Given the changing governance and funding infrastructure and partnerships, we should also not forget the impact of the Local Enterprise Partnership which played a vital role in providing jobs and apprenticeships in our priority growth areas for Leeds and the region.

Therefore, in helping to create a more successful economy we should be allowed to keep more of the taxes and income that our city generates. As it stands now all Councils, but Leeds in particular, only keeps 5% of the total tax generated and the rest goes to Whitehall. Compare that to big cities in Europe and America who keep well into double figures, and to places in Northern Europe where they keep up to 40% of the income tax generated. That is one way to solve some of our problems we face.

If we are seriously to tackle the big challenges facing us, particularly youth unemployment and growth, transport, health and social care and reform, it is time to give Local Government more freedom and responsibilities over resources that we have helped to generate.

These new powers, along with more devolvement of Whitehall services, would provide a real opportunity for Local Government to determine their own priorities and their own future. Indeed, it would be a 21<sup>st</sup> Century answer to restoring

a more meaningful Civic Enterprise role for Local Government as they did in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

I have to say, despite Eric Pickles' excessive micromanagement of Local Government from finance to bins, there appears to be more genuine willingness from this Government to discuss more devolution to Local Authority. Indeed, I am pleased this mood has now caught on with our Shadow Front Bench and Leader because it genuinely creates a truly historical opportunity that no Party in this Chamber should refuse to campaign on if we are to challenge the growing financial crisis in Local Government and the growing inequality between north and south.

Lord Mayor, to summarise our proposals, our budget is the start of a long journey that will see the end of the post-war Local Government municipal model and provision as many of us have known it. Indeed, as I said earlier, our challenge will be to continue to change in order to survive and deliver vital statutory services.

Despite the draconian and unfair allocation of Government cuts, this Council has shown resilience, innovation and enterprise to provide those vital services to the people of Leeds.

For the 43p increase in Council Tax Band D, we will show ambition for our city to provide investment, growth, homes and apprenticeships for our young people. We will show compassion to tackle the inequality in our city by extending additional social and welfare support to those in desperate need. We will also support the people's priorities to continue to provide our statutory services to the vulnerable. We will also start to address one of the outstanding challenges in our city in relation to the growing crisis of income inequality.

This has to be seen in the context of the recent reports that Barclays were paid £2.4b in bonuses to its staff. On top of that, we hear millions of pounds in bonuses will be paid to the publicly owned RBS, and a £1.8m bonus is to be paid to the Chief Exec of Lloyds – another part-publicly owned. Only yesterday the Chair or Chief Exec of HSBC gave himself a £32,000 a week increase.

Along with other bankers' bonuses, this will mean more bankers earn over £800,000 a year in this country than the whole of the European bankers put together. We are being told that the average Chief Exec pay in the private sector has gone up 18% this year. Compare that to the recent background that ordinary workers' pay has gone down in real terms by 15%. This is morally, socially and politically totally unacceptable. (*hear, hear*)

Even the CBI Director is now attacking employers for keeping far too many workers on minimum wages. This Council has a duty to bring dignity to our low paid workers as well as encouraging other employers in the city to treat and pay their employees fairly. Working with the unions, we will show commitment to low paid workers by introducing a regional living wage for this Council and for this city. (*Applause*)

Lord Mayor, I commend the Labour administration's budget to the Council. Thank you. (*Applause*) (*Standing ovation from Labour Party Members*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Gruen to second.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, I formally second and I reserve my right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter has actually sent his apologies, he is attending a hospital appointment this afternoon so he cannot be here. I suppose that is bad news but the good news is that Councillor Carter will be replaced by Councillor Procter. *(Applause) (Standing ovation from Conservative Party Members)*

I just want to add a little bit more. I just want Council to know that Councillor Procter, of course, will be replaced by Councillor Lamb. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I am not so sure that came out in the right order, actually, but never mind.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: John, they only applaud you like me because they have won the sweepstake!

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Indeed, the right ones. Talking of which, Lord Mayor, the Leader of Council made a comment at the outset that there was a sweepstake running as to how long he would speak for and I have to tell him that there is an even larger book running, I understand, as to how long I will keep my facial hair for, but we will see how that goes.

Lord Mayor, before I outline the Conservative Group Budget Amendment for this year, I want to start with some thanks. Firstly, to my friend and colleague Councillor Andrew Carter for notifying me on Monday evening that there was a small – small – chance he would be incapacitated and that I would have the honour of delivering this speech. Further, Lord Mayor, I would like to thank, in the customary manner, Mr Gay and all the Finance staff who have co-operated with our Budget team. Shall we say *some* officers within the departments have been more helpful than others. For the others, we shall be recommending an impartiality training course that we look to the Chief Executive to deliver. *(laughter)*

Lord Mayor, each year from our Group a small Budget team get together to put officers through their paces. What you see before you is a fraction of the work that takes place and I think in great tribute to them the statistic I got earlier in the week that something like two-thirds of the proposals that came forward behind the scenes in the working groups carried out by my colleagues have now actually been implemented by this Labour administration and by officers of the Council, so it is tribute to my colleagues *(laughter)* that I pay for getting those very sensible proposals enacted, albeit behind the scenes. It is important that Members from all Groups have access to all officers of this Council to make sure that the budget setting process of this Council is open and transparent. Finally, I would like to thank staff within the Conservative Group office who once again provided us with first rate support.

On a personal note I would like to thank those who have supported me and continue to support me in our Group office and also with my lifelong struggle with acute dyslexia. I can read but I have to say set piece speeches are certainly not my forte so, Lord Mayor, we will see how we go and, colleagues, you will have to bear with me.

As expected, Councillor Wakefield makes his usual very selective comparisons with Local Authorities based mainly in the south of England. I have to say, his time would be better spent and his efforts more supportable if he was to look at how Leeds fares in comparison with all other major cities, most of them, as we are aware, in the north.

COUNCILLOR NASH: It is better.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, this will be a lot easier for everybody if colleagues like Councillor Nash simply stay quiet. I can stay on my feet as long as I want, it is unlimited time.

THE LORD MAYOR: A request by John.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Let us make some progress, shall we?

We all know the cities that receive many millions more per year than Leeds does, and that has historically been the case. It was the same under the last Labour Government and yes, indeed, it is the same now. In this area we should be focusing all our efforts and attention to seek to get a more level playing field, but it is little wonder that Central Government are sceptical about some of the actions and finances about cities such as ours. Here in Leeds we are sitting on reserves of £44m. Birmingham has reserves of £204m, Bradford reserves of £120m, Wakefield reserves of £84m, Liverpool £136m, and so the list goes on. How these Labour-run Authorities – and I include Leeds in this category – can make cuts to any vital services when they are sitting on such huge levels of reserves ought to be a matter of national debate. It is in fact, Lord Mayor, a national scandal.

I want to refer you to some very interesting statistics that are buried within the budget. In the presentation of this budget that has just been moved by Councillor Wakefield it assumes that 2,500 new homes and 2,600 new homes will be in the Council Tax base. We have just been to a quasi-judicial public planning enquiry where Leeds City Council told the Planning Inspector that we wanted a rate of build in five years of about 3,600 houses per year. I should be very interested to see what figures Mr Gay includes in his Home Bonus projections and his tax base figures for 2015/16.

If, for example, 3,000 extra homes were built, then there would be about £750,000 in New Homes Bonus and about half a million pounds a year in Council Tax. I have to say, these two figures that I have quoted cannot for long remain out of kilter. For every 100 new homes built, the New Homes Bonus of £145,000 per annum for six years comes to the Council. In addition to that, at an average Band D Council Tax rate, a further £112,000 per year comes in extra Council Tax. If, therefore, in 2015/16 we hit our target of build, 3,600 homes, we will receive an extra £1.5m in New Homes Bonus and an extra £1.2m in Council Tax.

Lord Mayor, the Conservative Group on the Council want to make a very firm commitment to the people of Leeds. We would not only, given the chance, have frozen the Council Tax in this coming year but we would do so in the following year as well, 2015/16. To do that a number of steps need to be taken in this coming year which are well overdue, the first of which (and one which I might say we have been promised by the controlling Group for the last two years) is to start with a zero based budget. We need to start, Lord Mayor, with a blank sheet of paper. The administration has promised this for the last two years and still not delivered it. As budgets get tighter – and yes, we do accept that budgets are getting tighter – it is essential that this methodology is put into place and in practice.

In 2010 the average pay of an employee at Leeds City Council was £28,000 per year. It now stands at £31,000 per year. That is an increase of 11% and this at a time when, if you believe the unions and the Labour Party, Local Government employees have been subjected to a pay freeze. Clearly, this is not the case.

We would immediately begin negotiations with the unions to end the payment of increments to any member of staff earning more than £30,000 per year. We would also bring to an end the practice of paying the first three days of sickness absence.

Whilst some progress has been made in lowering sickness levels, it needs to go much further. Let me be clear, the vast majority of our employees take little or no days' sick leave whatsoever and when they do it is because of a serious illness. There is, however, an imperative to cut down on these casual days of sick. It would save the Authority £3.5m a year to the Council Tax payer and the city and in the first year as an incentive, any employee who had no days' worth of sick would be given an extra day's worth of holiday.

COUNCILLOR: Wow.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I hear "wow" from opposite, Lord Mayor, but that is a real proposal.

Now to move on to our amendment, as in the Order Paper. We have set out quite clearly what we would like to do. It is a very modest scale amendment, Lord Mayor. There is no point whatsoever pretending to the electorate that things can be achieved that cannot be achieved and that savings can be made when they can only be made over a one or two year period. However, we would freeze Council Tax this year and make a commitment to freeze it in 2015/16. We would fund this in the way set out in the Order Paper.

The key highlights are to halve the cost of funding trade union convenors; to make the trade unions pay for their own costs in attending meetings; to cut back office agency staff, to place a moratorium on the purchase of new office furniture; to increase Labour's proposed additional charges for services from the LEA by a further £150,000; to reduce the maintenance budget for empty buildings and instruct the Development Department to put these buildings on the market with immediate effect; to increase the advertising revenue budget by £200,000; to reduce staffing numbers by voluntary means by a further 50 in the year 2014/15 and a further 100 members of staff in the year 2015/16; to roll out new in-cab technology in refuse vehicles which will not only save money but which will give us a much more efficient service (it has been resisted by the unions for far too long); to cut back the cost of the Communications and Marketing Department that have once again rocketed to almost £2m a year; we would scrap the controversial evening and weekend parking charges; and turn the whole of the International Pool site into a long stay car park.

Lord Mayor, before anybody tells me it is against policy to do so, I simply ask this question: whose policy? Is it not about time that it was made crystal clear in this Council that officers do not set the policies? The Council does. Officers implement Council's policies. It is a clear example, though, of Labour's continued war against motorists. *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Les Carter should be making that speech.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: There is something here for everybody!

We do not believe that the reserves held by Leeds City Council are hugely excessive. It is a fact that for the past two financial years, however, we have underspent by £6m in 2012/13, by £3m in 2013/14, and we believe it gives the opportunity to use a very modest proportion of the Council reserves to reinstate the cut to Area Committee Wellbeing funding. It is quite ridiculous to make what is a very small saving at the expense of initiatives by local Councillors through their Area Committee.

We would reverse the cut in the Environment Budget to ensure also that PCSOs can continue to fight crime and not pick up litter.

Over the course of 2013/14 the administration has been making a real mess of changes in the Children's Services Transport budget. At times it looked as though we could face legal challenge. The phased changes proposed by the administration would begin to bite in 2014/15. We would provide £300,000 from the general reserves to stop these changes whilst a thorough review was carried out for a more equitable solution. Yes, there is a massive £31m Transport budget; yes, we agree that there are savings that can be made in that budget. It is the way in which those savings are achieved. The Labour administration has not gone about this in a fair and equitable manner.

Lord Mayor, I want to turn for one moment to a subject that is very close to my heart and that is education. I want to make particular mention of what is happening in education in this city under this Labour administration. It is time the ruling Group faced up to the fact that they are not presiding over a child friendly city because on too many counts they are failing young people in education.

At the last Executive Board we had a very interesting paper which revealed the progress or lack of progress the administration is making in this regard and I want to quote some of those figures to you because they are disturbing to say the least, Lord Mayor.

At Key Stage 1 in maths the percentage of pupils achieving level 3 or above, Leeds is ranked 143<sup>rd</sup> out of 150 Local Authorities. At Key Stage 1 average point score reading, Leeds is ranked 127<sup>th</sup> out of 152 Local Authorities. At Key Stage 1 average point score writing, Leeds is ranked 122<sup>nd</sup> out of 150 Local Authorities. At Key Stage 1 average point score maths Leeds is ranked 144<sup>th</sup> out of 152 Local Authorities. At Key Stage 1 average point score reading, writing and maths, Leeds is ranked 129<sup>th</sup> out of 152 Local Authorities.

At Key Stage 4 the percentage of pupils with no passes at GCSE, Leeds is ranked 126<sup>th</sup> out of 151 Local Authorities. At Key Stage 4 the percentage of pupils expected to progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in English, Leeds is ranked 134<sup>th</sup> out of 151 Local Authorities. Finally, Key Stage 4, the percentage of pupils making expected progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in maths, Leeds is ranked 124<sup>th</sup> out of 151 Local Authorities.

Lord Mayor some people may say, to use the educational parlance, the LEA must do better. I am sorry, I would say the LEA has failed and is yet again failing another generation of young people in our schools. It is not a case of must do better, it is a case of has to do better.

Lord Mayor, it is obvious that the LEA under the present political leadership is obsessed with blocking the national Government's political agenda and has completely forgotten the real education agenda, which is to ensure that proper educational provision is made in all areas of our city, whether that is through enlarging existing schools or by setting up free schools or encouraging academies to be implemented.

This City Council must provide the appropriate number of places in the right locations and above all it is the duty of this Local Authority to improve the life chances of young people going through our schools. It is quite clear from the statistics that I have just given that that is not happening here in Leeds. A generation of young people are in fact being failed, Lord Mayor. That is simply not acceptable.

Lord Mayor, back in 2010 when Labour took back control of this Council, we said that we would never let them forget the state in which their Party left this country's finances. (*hear, hear*)

COUNCILLOR ILLINGWORTH: It is rubbish.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: You will hear the headline, John, in a minute. We shall continue to remind the British people right up to the General Election that they left one of the worst budget deficits in Europe, debt interest at £70b, the cost of the EU more than tripled, 2.5 million people out of work, one in five young people unemployed, £150b wiped off the value of pensions, Britain's gold sold at a 20 year all time market low, orders place for two aircraft carriers with no money to pay for them, 4,500 Civil Service posts with no designated job at all to do, at a cost to the nation of £161m per year.

This country was heading for bankruptcy and to cap it all the outgoing Labour Chief Secretary to the Treasury left the now infamous note for his successor, "Sorry, there is no money left. Good luck."

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: The bankers spent it all.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: What was Labour's answer, Lord Mayor, supported by this gang over here? It was to welcome, Lord Mayor, the election of the new French President, François Hollande, and his vow to do exactly what Miliband wanted to do in this country if he had been given a chance, and that was to spend his way out of debt.

Lord Mayor, you do not hear Miliband trumpeting the French economic policy much now, do you, because three years into his Presidency Hollande had to announce a 50b Euro cuts package. That was only last year, something way beyond anything that this Coalition has had to do or would ever do.

I ask the question, where are the riots on the streets and the protests? Where are the mass strikes predicted by Councillor Wakefield? In France. In France and not here in Britain, so so much for Labour's economic model of recovery.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Do you want riots?

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, we have put forward a deliberately very modest budget amendment but let us be absolutely clear, we would freeze Council Tax given the chance this year and put measures in place to freeze Council Tax next year as well.

Lord Mayor, the difference between the controlling administration and us is that, given the choice, Labour will always increase taxes and, given the chance, we will always reduce them. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I formally second and reserve my right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Golton. We are now on page 17 and I am going to ask Councillor Golton to move his amendments.



COUNCILLOR GOLTON: *Absolutment. (laughter)* Monsieur le Mayor.  
(laughter)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Let us get started. How do you follow that? That was a hairy performance by Councillor Procter (laughter) There is a little bit of *vive le devolution* in this, as opposed to the *revolution* that we were talking about earlier, but that is about as far as my French credentials go in this speech.

Lord Mayor, first of all, as is perfunctory, I would like to thank the officers that have helped us put together our amendment speech. I always feel like I am taking up a lot of their time, considering that...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Is that all of them?

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: ...there is not that many of us and we are not that close to taking over the Council, but they still indulge us...

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: You never know.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: ...with our investigations into the Council's finances and I do think actually the process is good for all concerned because it produces new ideas and challenges assumptions that we have always had. I do pass out my thanks to Alan Gay, Helen Mylan and, of course, the Liberal Democrat team who helped to put our abstract thoughts into words.

OK, Lord Mayor. Once again this year the Liberal Democrat Group approaches the Budget debate in the spirit of shared responsibility and constructive opposition. The ruling administration has faced consecutive budgeting periods of unprecedented financial restriction. We share your anger that Local Government's ability to make savings year on year for the Treasury is not rewarded with thanks but simply more of the same.

I applaud Councillor Wakefield's call for an English devolution to Local Councils. It is clear that devolution for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland has allowed greater ability to loosen the purse strings of Whitehall. Without similar authority to shape our own destiny, the great Town Halls of England will wither to become nothing more than architectural curiosities.

We want to see them reborn, Lord Mayor, to fulfil the promise of the Commission for Local Government chaired by Councillor Wakefield. We will innovate, we need to lead and we need to guide where previously we sought to control, to dictate and to employ as Authorities.

The post-war consensus has gone, yet we are surrounded by its legacy, its culture and its structures. Our ability to shake free from its restrictions while still retaining our core ethos and values will be the litmus test for us that we are able to build public services fit for the future.

Difficult decisions are not just about finding the least painful way to let people down. It is also about challenging how we work and challenging the formula that we work to. At our nation's most exhausted hour we built the NHS. When we feel at our most embattled, Councils can still shape a better future.

Much of that transformation is already happening and our nine amendments aim to complement that huge task; to challenge where the status quo is no longer

supportable; to offer alternatives where we think you have made bad decisions as an administration; to support partners where we feel they have been overlooked; and also to make achievable goals that have been left on the shelf through what can only be explained as exhausted ambition on behalf of the ruling administration.

So to the amendments themselves. Our first two amendments are about fair outcomes in difficult times and our obligations to Council Taxpayers and to our employees. In last year's Budget debate Councillor Wakefield said:

"By working with trade unions to make more savings, this Council will become a fair wage Council next year so we can help our low paid staff and protect them from further hardship from this Government's attack on the poorest."

Instead of abandoning that commitment, Lord Mayor, and keeping it on the reserve bench, as the administration has done, our amendment seeks to make the commitment reality. Furthermore, rather than spread a 1% pay rise across the Council workforce, it concentrates the wage increase on those who need it most and focuses on those who do not qualify for the higher rate of tax.

I also want to work with the unions to achieve this and in the spirit of true partnership I hope that they can accept the loss of Council subsidy to achieve a significant outcome for the lowest paid in one of the largest employers in the city.

In the same spirit I would expect that our schools would take up the gauntlet set by the Council to ensure that low paid schools-based staff achieve the same wage security with the help, I am sure, of all elected Members involved in governing bodies. That is a model which other Local Authorities such as Stockport and Cumbria have used when successfully implementing a living wage.

Equally, our commitment to the Council Tax freeze is a commitment to those facing what the Labour Party has coined the cost of living crisis. Put quite simply, we do not see what is fair about a Council Tax rise that increases the cost of living crisis of our residents now to potentially improve the Council's own cost of living crisis in the future. It is putting the interests of the institution before the interests of those it is meant to serve. (*hear, hear*)

Our use of reserves to release £2.3m of Government money will be portrayed as irresponsible but to our taxpayers to hold on to tens of millions of reserves that sustains nothing more than your financial rectitude, then turn down £2.3m from the Government only to claw it back from Leeds residents, is mind boggling, especially when you are telling them at the same time that it will all be different when you are in Government in 2015. It does not add up.

That brings us to the issue of increments. The majority of our residents are employed in the private sector and Councillor Wakefield has just emphasised how the private sector is creating many new jobs and opening up opportunities for many of our citizens. However, those same people, in common with Council staff, will expect a wage rise below the rate of inflation this year. They are used to the concept of performance-related pay, but when they hear about public sector increments, they cannot understand why someone gets a pay increase for simply being in the same job for one year longer, especially when others face losing their job within the same organisation.

Our employees are socially aware, dedicated public servants. Four out of five of our staff are already at the top of their scale and those remaining would, I suggest,

gladly forgo an increment for a year to help shield hard pressed families from an imposed Council Tax rise and to secure valued colleagues' and their own futures.

You may say it is not achievable but I ask you to look at what your Party colleagues have done down the road in Sheffield. They introduced a freeze for three years before scrapping increments altogether.

Our remaining amendments concentrate on issues where we feel the ruling Group has made errors in policy and we hope to offer a chance to think again, while others hope to better achieve goals already set by them.

Lord Mayor, every pound that is available to be used must be stretched to achieve the best outcomes for our residents. The Council's reserves have already been mentioned but contingencies for a rainy day within departments cannot be left idle. In the course of our scrutiny of the Council's finances this year we came across £1.7m unallocated in the Public Health budget. One of the biggest challenges facing the Council is to keep our older residents as healthy and as independent as possible and to help young families raise a new generation of children ready to learn. The inflation busting rises to allotment rents and bowling club charges risk pricing out many elderly residents from an activity that keeps them physically and socially active. We would reverse these rises, paid for through those Public Health funds we identified.

When in administration the Liberal Democrat Group championed the Narrowing the Gap Programme to reduce inequalities in the city. Those inequalities start very young and equalising opportunities in formative years is key to giving everyone a fair start in life. Liberal Democrats in Government have achieved the introduction of the Pupil Premium. We have increased free child care and we are introducing universal free school meals in primary schools.

At this point I will pause to reflect on the headline that Councillor Wakefield offered earlier, where he pointed out how 27,000 people face malnutrition in this city. Lord Mayor, I think it is worth clarifying that "malnutrition" means poor nutrition. There are not 27,000 people starving in this city. Some people who have malnutrition can actually also be obese. What "malnutrition" means is poor nutrition and, Lord Mayor, we recognise the challenge for some families to provide filling as well as nutritious food to young children and we propose that we provide all our infants up to four years old with healthy start vitamins to make sure they reach school healthy and ready to learn, so if we want to make a difference about that statistic for 27,000 people with malnutrition, this is the amendment that you should be supporting.

Lord Mayor, our Children's Centres are at the front line of supporting struggling families and I support the administration's commitment to keeping them all open and I applaud their ability to do so. However, the latest increase in charges is in danger of being counterproductive if it makes it unaffordable for the neediest. We propose to fund the shortfall through reserves so that every child still matters, although it should be noted that this could also have been funded through the unallocated Public Health budget.

Another area of short-sighted cost saving is the proposed switching off of street lighting. The New Labour Government of Tony Blair won on the slogans of "Education, Education, Education" and "Tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime." I will say nothing about the mixed legacy of academies, as Councillor Blake has already gone forth on that one, but I would like to dwell on the issue of crime and street lighting.

Do any of us seriously think that darker streets equal safer streets? (*hear, hear*) For those of us who have supported the Reclaim the Streets demonstrations to make it safer for the women in our city, do we seriously think that after they have enjoyed a safe night out on the town in the city centre they should travel home in a taxi to darkened suburban areas where they feel more vulnerable? Lord Mayor, I think not. I know that there are plenty of us here who are in bed by midnight but what of our children and grandchildren that enjoy being out until the early hours? I think we owe it to them to offer them a safe journey back home. What of our parents and grandparents fearing the burglar, now more confident to practise their code under the cover of darkness.

Lord Mayor, our amendment offers you as Members of this Council the chance to say "No" to 4,000 residential street lamps being snuffed out at no cost to the taxpayer and I urge you all to support it.

Lord Mayor, at times of strain our residents are sympathetic to the Council's need to rein in costs. However, there are some basic services that the Council is expected to deliver well for the Council Tax that we pay. Waste collection is such a service. Fortnightly collection has been introduced successfully but it is still perceived to be a reduction in service and weekly collection of food waste is the best way to fulfil the recycling ambitions of our residents. The administration says that it is unaffordable, but it is more affordable as landfill tax increases and the Liberal Democrat Group recognises that it is inequitable to offer it just to the citizens of Greater Rothwell and our amendment would introduce a new round to the north of the city as a first stage to a larger roll-out year on year.

In the intention of commemorating a significant Olympic year and the forthcoming Tour de France, our final two amendments are to make a significant year on year investment in sport legacy. The delivery of Council services in the future will depend on ever closer working with local partners to achieve results shaped by communities of place and interest. Our amendment setting up provision for a Playing Field Fund was inspired by the Hyde Park Olympic Legacy Sports Proposal. It highlights the development pressure on open spaces that could provide a permanent Olympic legacy in our inner cities and therefore deserves the support of the Council. The fund would allow other local groups the opportunity to purchase valuable scarce open space as community assets.

Our Cycling Facilities Investment Fund seeks to build on the legacy of the Grand Départ de Tour de France by diverting spending from unfair mileage rates for Council officers who currently can claim 65 pence a mile, which is an anachronism, and instead divert that money towards year on year cycling improvements identified through working with the members of the Leeds Cycling Campaign. If we are really serious about encouraging people out of their cars and to take to two wheels, we must ensure we make this choice as safe as possible and follow the guidelines set for us by the users themselves.

In conclusion, our amendments recognise the challenge facing the ruling administration to manage an ever-depleting budget. However, we hope to create further challenge to think about the opportunities lost that may be reconsidered and also those that are left knocking that may be answered.

In recent years we have suggested changes that were rejected at first, then adopted later after millions had been wasted. I offer you one example. Our 2012 amendment to raise fees for Council foster carers to enable recruitment to bring down our reliance on private fostering agencies. Lord Mayor, two years ago the budget doubled to £12m with only two foster carers recruited. Two years later, after

accepting a proposal put here at the Budget meeting, costs are down and the Council has successfully recruited 42 carers this year alone.

To Members opposite, if you are here for the people of Leeds and not just the Labour Party in Leeds, please vote on each amendment on its merits and not on its politics.

I move the amendments in my name on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Golton. Councillor Downes to second.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I second and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. The bottom of page 19, it is Councillor Finnigan to comment.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. We would like to pass on our usual thanks as well to the Finance staff who have helped and assisted us to understand this budget better.

This budget is a reasonable budget which copes with what are significant reductions in Government grants in a balanced way. We support its broad principles and the emphasis it has on protecting children and adult care services and supporting a lot of other Council services such as community safety, highways, parks and countryside and street cleansing.

We believe we have reached the point where fundamental questions need to be asked about what Councils exist to do. We have, in our view, achieved all the savings and efficiencies we can without commencing a robust debate what Councils are there to do.

Keith blamed the present Government for reducing the funding we receive and will, no doubt, say that they are to blame for some of the present challenges we face. There is some truth in this. Both John and Stewart will no doubt believe that the previous Government's handling of the nation's finances have materially contributed to our present challenges. There is some truth in this also. Do we really believe a Labour Government would be offering a different settlement at this time? I think not.

The truth of the matter is that the big three national parties do not see the point or relevance of Local Government. They all see it as an inconvenience and are reluctant to delegate power and cash to a local level. In truth, they do not trust us and the formulas created to finance Local Councils are corrupted to achieve national Government ends.

While Labour are in power they favour their own Labour strongholds with Manchester, Nottingham and other towns and cities benefiting more and when we have a Tory Coalition Government, the Tory shires and other areas get similarly favoured. The one thing that you can consistently count upon, however, is that Leeds does not get a fair deal regardless of who is in Government nationally.

We will therefore reconfirm our call for a Royal Commission to explore the funding of Local Councils and to define their purpose. It needs to confirm a fair formula for funding Councils which is beyond political manipulation, prevents National

Government favouring its own supporters. It also needs to confirm what Councils are about. We are presently heading towards a future where we will no longer be able to undertake our statutory obligations and discretionary spend, quality of life issues such as parks, libraries and leisure centres will stop being an obligation we have as we can no longer afford them. That will be a bleak day for all our communities. It will be a retrograde step where we all lose.

Our role needs to be clearly defined and, when agreed, the finance needs to be guaranteed to deliver on that defined role.

Turning to the specifics of this budget, although we support its broad principles and overall spending, we are of a view that other works and other priorities need to be considered.

We commence this work and will look at the budget, recognising that this Council has had many sections pull a budget together and worked very hard to achieve what they have achieved. We particularly note the work from both Children's Services and Adult Care Services to support the vulnerable and to provide more with less.

What would we do differently? We would scrap NGT which, like any flagship that is holed, is likely to sink to oblivion. We would use the cash saved to increase spending on delivering affordable homes, in partnership or on our own. *(interruption)* that is not true, you have got capital set aside for it so it is not true. You have choices. You are choosing to finance NGT. NGT is clearly the white elephant in the room.

We would slice £100,000 from Leeds' contribution to the Regional Policy Unit as we do not believe it to be effective and that cash would be forwarded to Area Committees to support local priorities. We would reduce spending on interpretation and translation services by £200,000, which would still leave a budget of over £300,000 a year. £100,000 would be used to support English as a second language classes, with the other £100,000 being forwarded to Area Committees to support local priorities.

Turning to some of our colleagues' amendments, we see some merit in what they are proposing and will be selectively supporting some of these options they have suggested.

To conclude, Lord Mayor, we broadly support this budget, we support most of the priorities within it but question some of the others. We believe the Council needs a new deal on Fair Financing Formula and a reconfirmation of its future role and the future role of all Councils. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Before I start, you can all see (and the cameras will) I have got a mark on my face. It is not that I sat down this morning and read the Budget and failed to commit suicide; I cut myself shaving, so that explains it!

Firstly, I would like to thank Mr Gay and his staff for their assistance in explaining the intricacies of this year's budget and, as always, their help and assistance in this matter has been clear and very impartial.

In this country, this very wealthy country where money is no object, according to the Secretary of State Mr Pickles (or that is what it says in the papers, anyway) I

expected that a letter would have arrived in the last few weeks to say that we have made a terrible mistake and we are not actually in the financial mess we thought we were in and you can have some more money, but unfortunately I forgot the two things – we are not in the southern Tory heartlands and we have not suffered from floods this year, anyway, not this year.

Mind you, we can be grateful for some small mercies that the cuts this year is not as bad as it was the previous two years and are not as bad as they are going to be next year.

In fact, if there is a change in Government in next year's General Election it might be right for the Leader of the new Government to say "Things can only get better" because this time they cannot get any worse.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Come back to Labour.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: In fact, one feels some jealousy with the people of Scotland who are going to have the opportunity later this year to make a decision on their own future which us in England cannot do.

COUNCILLOR: You can join them.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: It is quite possible if things go on I might apply for political asylum!

COUNCILLOR: We will support it.

COUNCILLOR: I will give you a lift in my car!

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Lord Mayor, I will move on. The budget that we have before us and, for that matter, the amendments just prove one thing – that there is little room for manoeuvre, whatever Members say, in the current situation. It is no longer about making meaningful change, it is about tinkering around the edges and making sure that no more than one wheel falls off the bus.

Of course, in the spirit of Localism, if we need additional funding by increasing our income tax by more than 2%, we can do this, we can have a referendum, pay out £900,000 for a referendum and then if the citizens of Leeds say "No", a further £200,000 for funding new bills to go out, so what choice is that? In fact, I always thought in the past, anyway, these sorts of decisions were done at a thing called an election, not a referendum. That is what we are elected for.

This is not to say I am supporting putting up the Council Tax, I just make that as a point. The fact is that whatever party is forming an administration, the major decision will be the same. The fact is, we have not any choice.

Going back to the 1.99% increase in Council Tax, while I have never been one for unnecessarily putting taxation up and I have always been appreciative of how that affects those on lower incomes who are not subject to Council Tax benefit, I think that we are getting to the stage where our tax base has fallen that far behind what it should be that at some point in this year, or maybe next year, we have got to make that movement forward.

Of course, the worry is that we already have a £9.5m Council Tax freeze grant and my worry certainly is after the General Election, I will say whatever Party gets in, that might go and we are in real, real trouble if that goes.

I welcome the comments that were made regarding PCSOs by the Leader. As he knows, we were very keen to keep five PCSOs per ward and that is very encouraging.

COUNCILLOR: He did not say that.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: He has, right. Also, the comments Councillor Wakefield made on local taxation which I think is the crux of the point. You go back to the previous Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher and she was always talking - certain Members on the Front Bench of the Tories seem to have forgotten who that lady was at one time - but the thing was always that Local Government should fund more of its own expenditure. Yes, that is no problem but give us the opportunities to raise the tax in the right way.

Central Government wants to take all the decisions and give us all the responsibilities and basically if anything goes wrong it is our fault, not theirs, and the fact is virtually every Local Council in this country is a damn sight more efficient than Central Government is. (*hear, hear*)

Moving on to the amendments, we will be supporting (after I have just had a go at them) the Conservative amendment number 4, reversing the £0.2m cut in the Wellbeing budget as we believe that benefits the community from this small amount of money while the outcomes are far more than the actual cost and a small drop in reserves is negligible. Similarly, we will be supporting their amendment number 5 which reinstates the £0.2m for enforcement and antisocial behaviour. It is our view that any cuts in these areas are likely to create further cost against other budgets and again we feel a small reduction in reserves is acceptable.

We will be supporting amendment number 7 on the food waste and we believe that this is the way forward and in time will pay for itself, but unfortunately we cannot support a similar amendment, number 16, put forward by the Liberal Democrats, who seem to be using a reduction in sickness benefit in staff as a way of attaining this level. That is not the way to deal with sickness benefit. You do that through negotiation. (*Applause*)

In line with our support for the allotments and bowling greens over a number of years we will be supporting the Liberal Democrats' amendment number 17, putting 100k in allotments and into the bowling green budget. We will also be supporting amendments 2, 13, 14 and 15.

Coming on to the living wage, the Conservatives last year put an amendment on the living wage which we supported and we as a policy, as Councillor Wakefield knows, support as a Party. I have got to say that, while we support a living wage, we do not support the Liberal Democrat motion.

COUNCILLOR: Because they are the living dead. (*laughter*)

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: I do not see how an attack on the trade unions and doing things in that way is resolving that. The other point is, they are taking money from reserves to pay for it so what happens next year and the year after and the year after that? What do we do? Do we make more staff redundant? No, we have to find an affordable way forward and all I have got to say, Councillor Wakefield actually ruined a bit of my speech because if you remember (*laughter*) at the last Council in response to the Tory amendment you said "We will introduce a living wage this year." Well, you have not but you just said you are going to do, so when are we going to get it?



Finally, moving on, and this is a bit I have just added on, we were talking with Councillor Procter who is hiding behind and, as you know, he is sporting this new beard and we were saying how continental he looked, like a Romanov. After that speech on the budget, I know what Romanov – I think he is a Romanov anyway – Ivan the Terrible! Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blackburn. Leaders have unlimited time to speak, as it says in the Order Paper, and we are now moving to Councillor Gruen for five minutes.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: Lord Mayor, in seconding the Budget Motion I want to begin by talking about some savings and I want to point out some threats that we also face as a Council.

Savings have been made. I only want to give one example, the Housing Management Review. An immediate £1.4m saving because of staff changes, £16m from reserves put immediately into the capital programme, better ways of working, less repetition, consistent practices, quality of management, of leadership, of governance and of customer care.

Councillor Procter referred to the potential of the New Homes Bonus. I want to refer to the actuality of losses due to the national changes in right to buy. We all know that we invested £800m in decency standard throughout this city. The maximum discount for Council house purchases is now 70%; that is irrespective of whether the market goes up or down. The qualifying time is reduced to three years. The Treasury wins over and over again. Our receipt is 30%. In other words, it is not one-for-one funding; for every one we have to sell we get a third back. That is hardly playing fair with public spending and the great long list of public spending from Councillor Procter, he forgot to mention, didn't he, the sale of Royal Mail, which cost this nation £1b overnight. (*hear, hear*)

Then he goes on, and there is a nasty streak in his speech, is there not, about sickness levels – not working with staff but working against staff and threatening staff. Let me remind you, in 2010 the sickness level left by his administration was eleven days – eleven days – but working with staff and engaging our workforce, the sickness levels are now down to 9.5, so you do not work in terms of threatening and bullying staff; you work with staff and you work with trade unions.

The other big change to our budget is the bedroom tax, the benefit changes. There is real evidence now that over 60% of under-occupying tenants are now in arrears. We spend our time and our resources chasing rent, coming to agreements and going to court if we need to. We know because in our surgeries (and actually on this side we do hold surgeries) how many people come almost destitute because of bedroom tax and Council changes.

I move, if I may, to the rent increase. We know we have to have a rent increase because it is the only income through the Revenue Account and that funds new Council homes and Capital Programme. The impact of not having put up the Council Tax would be in the region of £6.5m per year, so that would make a significant dent in our ability to have affordable housing and substantial repairs.

I want to say a few words about the planning process which is central to the new way we might get affordable housing and housing growth and therefore income through the Homes Bonus. In ten months we have taken 3,437 planning decisions. It is Councillor Taggart who often reminds us, and while other cities nearby have a dearth of planning and a dearth of applications, we have many more. We were planning to build 1,000 new Council houses in Leeds. The PFI scheme in Little

London has started and is bringing much needed investment into that particular area, also new jobs and apprenticeships. *(Applause)*

Can I just say in terms of the amendments, we will be supporting amendment number 2, increases in Housing Growth Programme. We will not be supporting the other amendments, particularly the revenue cut in Wellbeing budget, the shared ownership and the £2m to buy land under threat of house building.

We have a coherent programme, we have well worked out plans. The Leader has outlined the threat to Local Government and to this city and we will be working with staff because we recognise the only way forward and to make a difference to people's lives is to produce better solutions with our staff, with our partners and with the trade unions. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Lamb, do you want to respond as a seconder or should I move on?

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I will wait for a bit.

THE LORD MAYOR: OK. Councillor Downes, do you want to speak now?

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. We agree that there should be a freeze on Council Tax. It is what we can do as elected representatives of the people of Leeds who are in hardship at the moment and we can actually do something about that and putting an extra 1.99% on their Council Tax I think is wrong. Both our amendment and also the Conservative amendments are fully costed out and approved by Alan Gay that they are deliverable, so it is through choice that this Council Tax is raised, it is not through necessity. There are options, there are alternatives.

It is interesting that the Labour candidate for Otley and Yeadon this year, when discussing the Otley Town Council Budget, their preset, said, "The truth is that the Labour Party believes in people making a little bit extra contribution." I think that is what they are trying to do here, they are trying to take from people a little bit more that they cannot afford and they do not need to. I think that is the core of both of the major Opposition Parties' amendments and I really wish they would think again – there is no need to do so.

In doing so, the Government has offered money for Authorities that do not put up their Council Tax and so by putting it up by 1.99%, you actually do not get very good value for money. You could take the Government's money, put a Council Tax freeze on and you can actually get the money from elsewhere.

I would also like to turn to amendment 18. I think we could all find areas in our wards that we would like to ensure do not get built on and that are protected as green space. I think in particular in my ward of Yeadon Banks, there was a planning application there some time ago, or a builder who was wanting to build on it, and this Council successfully turned it into a village green. However, there were numerous challenges against that land and there may still be future challenges coming to it. Half the land is owned by the Council, the other half by a developer. The Council could, for example, buy that land and protect it in perpetuity for the people of Yeadon.

In Otley the former cattle market site near the bridge is in the flood plain and has already attracted one application to build on which, thankfully, was rejected. By buying that it could be turned into a leisure area and returned to a wildlife sanctuary. That is things that we could do by adopting amendment 18.

The other one I just wanted to bring up was when Councillor Wakefield said that he would protect PCSOs and we very much welcome that. They are a very important part of crime prevention and also seeing uniforms on the street is something that people find great comfort in. However, what he has not said, and I will challenge him to do so in his summing up, is to reassure people that they will be evenly distributed across Leeds to the taxpayers because that is what we would want to see and I am very concerned that previously the Labour Party has said that they would take them out of areas such as mine and redeploy them into inner city areas and that is something that I would not want to see done. We all pay equal Council Tax; we should all get equal services from that.

With that I would just like to say I support all the amendments that we make and we will be supporting some of our colleagues to the right's amendments as well, but not quite all of them. With that, thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In supporting the Conservative amendment, I just want to put one or two things hopefully on the record.

We have heard a lot about poverty today but one thing I think is clear to the people outside, maybe not to the majority in here, I accept that, is that there is a poverty but a poverty of ideas by the ruling administration as to how they can move this city forward. I am very concerned at some of the measures that they have put forward. They lack vision in terms of what they are doing. You have not outlined any of your future plans for improving education within the constraints put forward by the Government, not one iota have you said anything about that. You have not come forward with any proposals as to how you are going to improve the infrastructure needs of the city, whether it be in Garforth, Kippax, Cross Gates or wherever. You have made no mention of how you are going to go about improving that to meet the needs...

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: NGT.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: NGT, yes. That will set the city backwards. There is a lot more to do.

For example, you have never put any more money into road maintenance. We have. You will not invest in our roads which means that when people come into this city they are driving over more and more potholes. The backlog is getting longer and the number of legal challenges and claims that are being made against you are increasing all the time and you are doing nothing to reverse it.

There are some things that are not in our amendment that we would have liked to have seen, but for many and varied reasons we were told it was not possible. For example, overtime payments. Alan Gay is doing an excellent job in holding a number of the Chief Officers to account over overtime. For example, in swimming pools on a Saturday, we pay people double time on a Saturday to take swimming lessons. When we asked why we were told, "That is the way it is negotiated nationally. There is nothing you can do about it." Why are we not employing these people on a standard contract, because we all know that Saturday is going to be the busiest day when it is happening? What are you going to do about shared services? Where is your vision about how you are going to shared services? Website advertising – why do you not look at that as a potential way of bringing income in? What about the cost of publishing traffic regulation orders? We would like to see

more 20mph zones in certain parts of the city. The cost of implementing that, why are you not doing something to try and address that?

The cost of collection. Sometimes it costs you more to collect debt than the amount you actually deliver. I campaigned to get a saving for private landlords who are having to pay Council Tax from the day that a tenant leaves. Now you have reversed it. The administration has reversed it because the point was made that the amount that you were claiming back was sometimes less than the cost of actually sending the bill out the first time. How many other bills have you got where you have got that?

If you want to get more housing, why do you not look at de-risking some of the land that is causing a problem? Why can you not take some funding and try and help and do something about that?

Where is your way forward in terms of renewable energy investment, using anaerobic digestion or biomass? These things that will save money in the future. what are you going to do about CCTV expansion?

If you want to know how to save money in the translation services, Councillor Wood – where has he gone? He has gone. Councillor Wood, he will be able to tell you and give you examples of what we can do.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: He got fed up with you, Barry.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: There are also some things that are going to impact on Area Committees. When are you going to talk to the Area Committees about some of those things? We have already heard about your weasel words over PCSOs. You are still intending to reduce the PCSOs in places like Garforth and in Kippax.

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: You do not know that, you have no idea.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: You have suddenly decided that you are not going to do that now?

COUNCILLOR P GRUEN: You do not know.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Is that your recommendation?

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: That was not my recommendation. My recommendation was that you needed more information, that you needed to do something about it because we on our side believe that you are here to act for all of the city, not in political jealousy in terms of what you are doing half the time.  
(Applause)

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: Just to reiterate one other point, you are guilty of anti-car rhetoric.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Les, get up and speak, man.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: You are chasing businesses away from this city because you continually penalise anybody who is in a car. No matter what it is you are doing, you try to penalise them. (hear, hear)

What I would say in summary about your budget is it will not deliver the growth or the improvement that we all want in terms of increased jobs and various

other things. You are not coming forward with vision. You have accused me of this in the past and you are just as bad if not worse. Thank you.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Anderson. Councillor Martin Hamilton.

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I want just to make a couple of comments about our sports-related amendments but before I do that there was just one thing that Councillor Gruen referred to in his contribution about sick leave that I thought was worth just clearing up. I think you are absolutely right to say that since you took over control sick leave has gone down from eleven days to 9.5 days, that is four years. I think when we took control of the Council average sick leave was at 20 days and it was brought down to eleven days in a period of six years, so actually I think we need to know the full facts about that, Peter, I think that is quite important.

In terms of the two amendments I want to speak to, the first one was amendment 13, which is a proposal to use £210,000 from reserves and £210,000 by reducing the mileage allowance to create a fund of about £420,000 to use on cycling related measures.

First of all, Lord Mayor, just to say, I am really surprised yet again that this particular cost saving has not been attempted by the administration, even if you do not use this particular scheme. It seems to me bizarre that across the private sector but also across the public sector all other organisations and companies operate within HMRC guidelines as far as mileage allowances are concerned. It is a saving that can be made quite straightforwardly, it is perfectly fair and I am really surprised that you have not done that this year.

Lord Mayor, this fund is really about building on the contribution we had a couple of Council meetings ago to try and increase investment in cycling infrastructure in the city, so in the first year we would have to use some reserves but in future years there would be an annual budget of about £420,000 and it is a start in trying to increase the amount of money that we spend on cycling infrastructure.

We asked the Leeds Cycling Campaign what their priorities would be, so if we had this money available this year what could be introduced in year to actually make a difference, and they came up with five things that they would want us to do. There are a couple of measures to improve particular hot spots, particular difficult areas for cyclists – Hyde Park Corner, Victoria Road, an area in Rothwell was mentioned, Armley Gyratory, which is a particular problem for cyclists, improving some of the existing cycle routes and also improved signage and also adding some dropped kerbs. All of these things could be done relatively straightforwardly, they could be done in year and it will start to make a difference. They also flagged up schemes such as a loan scheme to encourage more people to take up cycling and also the importance of cycle training, so I think there are lots of things that could be done with that budget. As I say, it would make a start and I think it is an amendment well worth supporting.

Lord Mayor, the second amendment that we propose is in relation to sports facilities and sports fields in particular. This would create a fund of £2m in capital which, with Section 106 money, could actually build to maybe £4m, £5m.

We know there is pressure over the next few years to build more houses and that this creates pressure on our existing green spaces so I think we have to do what we can to protect those existing green spaces and to find new ones where we can and this is what this particular proposal would hope to achieve.

Lord Mayor, I make no apology for the fact that this is a fund that is inspired by the work of the Hyde Park Olympic Legacy campaign to preserve the Victoria Road site, currently owned by Leeds Girls' High School. A vote for this amendment is actually a vote to preserve that particular facility, the fields and sports centre, and to ensure that they remain available for future generations, but also the fund would probably pay for a number of other schemes, four or five other schemes across the city. Ryk has mentioned one particular example in Otley – I am sure there are others that we can all think of as well.

Lord Mayor, it is affordable, as far as I can see. It is a relatively small amount of money from reserves which would create opportunities for future generations, so I really think it is something which is well worth supporting. Thank you, Lord Mayor.  
(Applause)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. You have heard already today the challenges that Children's Services are making. Government grant cuts alone have led to reduction in our budget of around £23m since 2011 and we have a population growth seeing a rise in the birth rate of 32% over the past ten years.

Changes in benefits and Government policy mean that more families are under increasing stress, leading to an increase in child poverty, more children eligible for free school meals and also an increase in those with special educational needs.

We have seen a significant increase in demand for services, school place expansion and face-to-face services have seen referrals alone rise by a staggering 14%. All of us have seen the impact of Government policy on family income with a shocking increase of food banks in all our communities.

Our response to this has been to implement a whole new approach to the way we work, keeping the needs of children and their families at the heart of everything we do, delivering our obsessions from the Children and Young People's Plan, investing in preventative and early intervention, safety, Turning the Curve, reducing the number of looked after children, our lowest since 2009 against a national trend which has seen an increase in numbers coming into care. Huge savings to the budget through this.

The basis to this is our expansion of family group conferencing; 55 young people safely and appropriately kept within their families, every £1m invested leading to a saving of approximately £3m. We will continue to invest in this key area of work next year and we will continue our Families First programme, intensive targeted support focusing on school attendance, keeping young people out of crime and supporting family members back to work, already estimating savings of £15m to the city as a whole. Other areas of focus, you have heard about the reduction of young people in NEET.

Now education, let us just stop being partial here. More than 80% of Leeds schools are now rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding, an increase of 16% last year and that relates to 77% nationally. I think we have just heard an example of complete denial from John Procter. I have to say, he must have been badly briefed by the Shadow for Children's Services on your benches. (interruption) There is absolutely no mention in John's comments about all the improvements at every stage, every measure bar one at Key Stage 2, and a very selective look at this. 2009 he was in control, Key Stage 4 GCSEs, 49%. They have gone up to 57% in 2003 and we have gone up ten points in the Local Authority rankings in the last two years

alone. If you do not believe me, I will do a proper briefing for all of you so you can see the full facts of the situation.

More than 80% of our Children's Centres are good or outstanding and, as you know, against the national trend we are keeping all 57 open at the heart of our programme to tackle inequality, working with all of our partners, providing quality provision, helping us in our ambition to provide the best start for our children in Leeds. Yes, we have had to make difficult budget decisions and this includes increasing our fees but, Councillor Golton, we need to have a national debate on the cost of child care in this country. Children's Services cannot achieve all these improvements alone and I would like to commend all the partners within the Council and across the city in helping us deliver this important work with our children.

Over the next year we are going to have a relentless focus on early years, preparing children so they are ready to learn. It is too worrying that developmental standards across the country when children arrive at school are falling and Leeds has one of the widest gaps in affluence and deprivation that obviously makes this worse.

Lord Mayor, we predicted the impact of Government policy on our most vulnerable families, we have discussed and debated what that impact is going to be in this Council on many times. Tomorrow it appears they are finally going to acknowledge the impact of poverty on our children. Well, at last, but how tragic that we now have four years of damage to put right. Thank you, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. It is Councillor Lamb's chance to comment.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Blake has just committed one of the cardinal sins of Front Bench politics.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Told the truth.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Leave my briefs alone, Councillor Blake! *(laughter)* Councillor Procter was merely repeating the statistics that your officers prepared for your Executive Board report. I do not intend to say any more about that.

Lord Mayor, turning to the rest of the budget, I want to start with Councillor Blackburn and his comments. I do not accept that we have no choices, that there is nothing that we can do and all we can do is tinker around the edges.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: That is what Mr Osborne tells us. That is what Mr Cameron says.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: A lot of your speech was very good but it reminded me of Eric Morecambe – that it was all the right words, just not necessarily in the right order.

Coming to the budget, there are many choices that can be made; 566 choices, to be precise. What many Members do not realise, because I suspect many of them do not read the budget and fewer still actually understand it...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: That is arrogant. You should be ashamed of yourself. What a load of rubbish.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: ...that when this administration came to office – you might learn something if you pay attention, Members – when it came to office the Revenue budget for the Council was £569m. The Revenue budget you are about to

pass today is for £566m. It is complicated formulas so I am not saying it is like with like.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: What about Public Health coming in?

COUNCILLOR LAMB: There are all sorts of things that have changed and it is one of the most challenging years.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: You do not understand the budget.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: I do understand the budget. There is £566m to play with, there are many choices that can be made. If you listen carefully and if you had actually read the budget, while Keith's words might have sounded very warm to most of you, you would have realised that it did not bear much relation to what is actually in the budget and the hypocrisy, even by Councillor Wakefield's standards, was appalling. I will come to that in a minute.

Over the last few years they have made all the wrong choices. They spent £1.8m on a new website that we did not use and is not any better than the one we used to have, they have spent millions of pounds on furniture that we did not need, they have split the Adult and Social Care Record System which cost the taxpayers of Leeds six-and-a-half million pounds more than it needed to...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Have you heard of the NHS database, Alan? Your Government, millions gone down the tube.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: ...they had the chance to implement a living wage last year and they did not and while it is small change in the terms of the budget, yesterday, the day before they wanted to put up the Council Tax, put up fees, cut services and lay off staff, they were busy laying a new carpet outside the Banqueting Suite in the Civic Hall. *(interruption)*

COUNCILLOR S HAMILTON: Pathetic.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: Lord Mayor, what is pathetic is the words of Councillor Gruen, first of all. All year we have listened to them bleat on about the bedroom tax, which is not a tax at all, incidentally, and was something that was introduced by the last Labour Government.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: If you have to pay it it is a tax, I can assure you.

COUNCILLOR LAMB: They have been going on and on and on and on about the bedroom tax. Never mind the bedroom, they put up tax on the whole house this year. *(Applause)*

Let us turn to Councillor Wakefield. Let us turn to Mr Hypocrite on the Front Bench of the Labour Party. *(interruption)* He had the cheek to stand up...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: We know where you live!

COUNCILLOR LAMB: You never come – you keep saying you will come and you never do! *(laughter)* Councillor Golton has already read out his extract from last year from Councillor Wakefield where he promised to introduce what he called a fair wage last year. He chooses his words very carefully. He did not promise to introduce a living wage, he promised a fair wage and I think anyone who looks at the verbatim will find he said the same thing this year. He did not promise a living wage.



If he wanted to introduce a living wage it would have been in this budget, it would have been in this budget ready for you to vote on today. He has not done it.

He then went further than that and started talking about the outrage of income inequality and providing dignity to low paid workers. Well, here is what he has done in charge of this Council with the opportunity to do whatever he wants with the wage structure. He has choices and he has made his choices. Lord Mayor, we have already heard the average pay of workers in Leeds City Council has gone up by £3,000 since Councillor Wakefield took charge. What I can tell Members, that they may not realise, is the pay of the lowest workers in this organisation has gone up by £200 in that time. (*Shame*) The gap between those who earn the most and those who earn the least under Councillor Wakefield has got wider. How is that providing income equality? How is that providing dignity to low paid workers in this Authority?

You ought to read the budget, you ought to dig deeper, you ought to start asking questions of your Executive Board Members and your Leaders because while you stand and applaud and cheer, he is flying in the face of everything that you stand for and you are standing up and giving him a standing ovation for it. I hope you are proud of yourselves. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR: We are, we are.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield to sum up.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I always thought Councillor Lamb would be dangerous if he ever got a brain (*laughter*) and I think today's contribution just demonstrates on a serious matter like the budget, the future of services, the future of looking after our vulnerable, he actually trivialises by personally abusing people. Fancy trying to try and make something out of what is a commercial operation by the Lord Mayor's Reserves and brings in £70,000 a year by using that part as a studio for TV. In fact, if you watch DCI Banks you will find that this Council is used. It brings in £70,000 a year. What he did, something that nobody in this Chamber has ever done, he actually tries to smear the role of Lord Mayor. None of us have ever done this, none of us have ever actually tried to politicise that, but he does in order to distort the actual debate.

Let me come to the amendments because they were weird and wonderful. I think we had 19. It reminded me of that old joke about two bald men fighting over a coat. There was one amendment which we have accepted. The one that Councillor Golton did and Councillor Hamilton, I think, has a lot of merit in terms of the principle of buying land in inner city areas to turn into recreation I think is one that we support. The trouble that we have is, most of their finance, their amendments, are premised on a very reckless, incoherent set of beliefs, and I will come to them.

Let me also give Councillor Golton a prize for the wackiest amendment. Dr Golton – French Dr Golton, as we know today – has suddenly decided to give out vitamin tablets. I think that is what his Group have been living on. It is not keeping him going, by the way, you still have not got long. This is what makes me laugh. There is no scientific evidence yet, it is going through NICE, the report is coming and we are trying to tackle public health inequality. That means that you look at smoking, you look at obesity, you look at health inequality and so on, but Dr Golton has decided to give everybody tablets for £453,000. I have got to say, I think Councillor Lamb's is probably the worst and Councillor Golton, that one is probably the wackiest.

Let us deal with the more substantial amendments. I think the one that we hear every year now – every year we hear this in this Chamber – let us take away

trade union facilities. Let us do that. It is like Groundhog Day. That is how forward thinking they are...

COUNCILLOR: You never take any notice.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: ...and yet last year we showed that for every pound invested in trade union facilities you actually gained three or four pounds. That has been proven through objective research.

COUNCILLOR: Spend the whole budget on it.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: We also said that actually when you are going through a change like we are, we have £10m to save and both of them are prepared to risk destroying the relationships we have with the unions, sacking everybody in order to try and come out with £238,000 when we have got far more there.

COUNCILLOR: No-one has said that.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: What a reactionary and rather superficial idea because it would take months to do and you would not ever achieve it. You just would not achieve the savings.

I think the living wage one, I think people have already said it. The living wage, by Councillor Golton. Another one where you sack everybody and not only would you get yourself into a degree of conflict, which you are bound to, you would actually start having equal pay problems just up the road like other places which you tried to do that. It is not practical.

I just wondered, when Alan Gay came to brief you, were you wearing black and white scarves, because he could have actually told you that this is not feasible, practical or even...

COUNCILLOR M HAMILTON: He signed it off.

COUNCILLOR DOWNES: He signed yours off so we won't believe yours either.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: By the way, Councillor Hamilton, you have quoted a figure today which I got confirmation, you quoted 20 days – actually it was 14. You do tend to exaggerate, you lot. It is another story. *(Applause)*

Let me go to the reserves because frankly it is the reserves. You heard Councillor Procter, we heard this at Executive Board, Councillor Procter said use your reserves and he exaggerated the number. This is actually from the headquarters of the Tory Party, to go round and round, to get everybody thinking. What he did and what Andrew did, Andrew Carter, his complaint, earmarked reserves with ordinary reserves. Earmarked reserves – let me give you some examples of earmarked reserves: Health and Social Care, Transformation Fund, Highways Maintenance, Mercury Abatement, PFI grants, Leeds Learning Network and so on. In other words, earmarked reserves are all assigned. What we have actually got in reserves is actually 27 which we will reduce to 21.

If you accept Councillor Golton's amendment today, a really serious point because this is supposed to be a serious strategy moving forward, if you accept Councillor Golton's amendment you will actually bankrupt this Council in two and a half years because we are still using reserves and next year we will have to. It is all right you being Viv Nicholson, spend, spend, spend. Even the Conservatives are.

Actually it is a very dangerous one. Stewart, if you want to bankrupt and talk about all these reserves we have got, our reserves sit at 3.8%.

All of this nonsense we have had to put up with this afternoon has been just a way of avoiding the real debate about whether we can actually manage to get through and carry on financing statutory services. That was our debate. Why have we done it? Because actually the pressures are so great.

Do you know what, when they were in power, North Yorkshire Tories, guess what they have done? They have been honest, they have put up 1.99%. They said "We cannot survive it." What did Cambridgeshire, Cameron's own constituency, do? They put it up 1.99%. Guess what, 40% of the Local Authorities that have put up their poll tax are actually Conservatives.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Realistic Conservatives.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Here we have the Conservatives trying to pretend they are not listening, with Councillor Anderson leading a very poor debate, who actually said in 2006 and 2007 – you want to hear these quotes from their Leader, and Councillor Golton as well. Here we go:

"This administration"

(they were asking for four and a half per cent)

"This administration will continue to ask the people of Leeds only for what is needed to run the budget ... we will ask for what we need and we will not jeopardise front line services",

etc, 4.5%. Councillor Golton, there he was:

"We can honestly say that all parties have been shocked at the scale of the reduction in the settlement received by the Council from Whitehall. Moreover, these have come at times when the demand on the local public purse ... are increasing and cannot be denied if we are to hold our heads up high as guardians of the vulnerable in this city."

Two years ago he was saying bang it up; a few years ago they were doing four and a half per cent every year. Suddenly this year they are all diving for cover coming out with the most phoniest amendments we have ever seen.

I will tell you what it is for me – it is not being honest. It is actually not standing up for the Council. It is actually not standing up for statutory services. It is actually not standing up for the people of Leeds. I am pleased this administration is going to do that and I would urge you all to reject all the amendments bar one. I move, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I move in accordance with the Council Procedure Rule 16.4 and call for recorded votes on all amendments on the Budget Motion.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am going to call for the votes on the Budget, through a whole series of amendments and I am going to ask Tom on my right to talk through the procedure which you are familiar with but we will start with the instructions once again and they are on page 21.

*(Recorded votes were held on Amendments 1 to 19)*

**Amendment 1**

95 Members were present, 32 voted "Yes", 0 abstentions, 63 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 2**

95 Members were present, 95 voted "Yes", 0 abstentions, 0 voted "No".  
The Amendment was CARRIED.

**Amendment 3**

95 Members were present, 22 voted "Yes", 10 abstentions, 63 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 4**

95 Members were present, 34 voted "Yes", 0 abstentions, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 5**

95 Members were present, 34 voted "Yes", 0 abstentions, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 6**

95 Members were present, 17 voted "Yes", 5 abstentions, 73 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 7**

95 Members were present, 33 voted "Yes", 1 abstention, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 8**

95 Members were present, 29 voted "Yes", 4 abstentions, 62 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 9**

95 Members were present, 32 voted "Yes", 2 abstentions, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 10**

95 Members were present, 17 voted "Yes", 5 abstentions, 73 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 11**

95 Members were present, 31 voted "Yes", 3 abstentions, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 12**

95 Members were present, 15 voted "Yes", 19 abstentions, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 13**

95 Members were present, 14 voted "Yes", 5 abstentions, 76 voted "No".

The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 14**

95 Members were present, 13 voted "Yes", 4 abstentions, 78 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 15**

95 Members were present, 31 voted "Yes", 3 abstentions, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 16**

95 Members were present, 13 voted "Yes", 21 abstentions, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 17**

95 Members were present, 28 voted "Yes", 6 abstentions, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 18**

95 Members were present, 12 voted "Yes", 7 abstentions, 76 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 19**

95 Members were present, 26 voted "Yes", 8 abstentions, 61 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

*(A recorded vote was held on the substantive motion)*

95 Members were present, 61 voted "Yes", 34 abstentions, 0 voted "No".  
The Motion was CARRIED.

THE LORD MAYOR: That ends the voting, well done everybody. That was an effort!

Can I now ask you to turn to page 3 on your Agenda Paper and, at the top, there is Councillor Harper to seek leave of Council. Councillor Harper.

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: Lord Mayor, I second, reserving the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: OK. Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Seconded, Lord Mayor.

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

**ITEM 6 - MINUTES**

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now moving on to the item to receive the Minutes of the Executive Board and other committees. This will end at 4.45 at which point the Leader of the Council will sum up on the Minutes for a period of no longer than ten minutes. I would ask Councillor Wakefield.

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

COUNCILLOR G HARPER: I second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I am going to invite comments on the Minutes now and ask Councillor Harland to start.

- (a) **Executive Board**  
(i) Leader of Council's Portfolio

COUNCILLOR HARLAND: Thank you, Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors. I would like to speak on the Executive Board Minute 159, page 561, regarding the role of Post Offices within communities.

Post Offices are a vital part of local communities, providing residents with invaluable services which many of them could simply not do without. It is vital that we do all we can to work with local, regional and national partners to ensure that the Post Offices stay at the heart of our neighbourhoods and they have all the tools and resources required to provide the first class service that they offer.

Kippax Post Office is no exception. The staff there do a brilliant job and I am delighted to announce that the much-needed refurbishment has now been completed. The Post Office has modern facilities, is more accessible for disabled people and has longer opening hours. This is part of a wider project to modernise around 6,000 branches across the country. Other Post Offices in Leeds have also gone through similar refurbishments, such as in Armley and Holbeck.

The community service needs to be maintained. I am sure that many Members will share my concern that privatised Royal Mail may not share the same values as the Council or the Post Office.

I believe Leeds City Council has been given a fantastic opportunity as one of 25 Local Authorities selected to develop a more strategic relationship with the Post Office. The Council and the Post Office are already doing excellent work together to join up and share services, offering more ways to ensure our residents get the help and support they need.

It is brilliant that residents can pay their rent and Council Tax, pay for the use of our sports facilities and get signposted to other useful contacts in the Council whilst at their local Post Office branch. The Council has provided funding towards these refurbishments at Belle Isle sorting office and helping to secure the future for Cross Gates Post Office too. I believe this excellent working relationship can only be strengthened, especially when we have to share more services to work more efficiently.

The citizens at Leeds Agenda will see the Council work closer with the Post Office and other public and private bodies to co-locate services and maximise the use of assets in a co-ordinated approach to improve customer access and financial inclusion for other people in Leeds.

I look forward to seeing our relationship with the Post Office and other bodies develop so we can better meet the needs of our residents. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Groves.

COUNCILLOR GROVES: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to comment on the Executive Board Minute 160, page 561.

The Leader has already highlighted how important the Jobs and Skills Agenda is to this Council and I would like to share with you how that translates at a locality level.

Middleton Park Ward had one of the highest rates of unemployment in the city and, despite budget cuts, we have worked on a locality based model that includes many partners from the public, private and third sector.

In December 2012 our Job Seekers Allowance had a number of 916 people claiming Job Seekers Allowance. In December 2013 that is down to 654. We wanted to work in a locality model because we knew that we had future opportunities in March this year and May with the opening of a new Aldi store which I am pleased to announce another 22 people secure jobs for local people.

We worked on the model because Asda is a massive investment, it was the biggest single investment in 30 years in Middleton with the opportunity of securing 350 local jobs. Our team from Citizens and Communities, Employment Leeds, worked together with over 50 partners. They provided pre-employment sessions that helped people – in fact 1,110 people – update their CVs and create email accounts. I would like to thank them on behalf of the Middleton Members for the support that they have given to our community.

We know that we have to do more and when Councillor Wakefield spoke about devolving Central Government money down to Local Government, I think that we need to look at devolving Local Government money into localities because when people have been through the incapacity route, they need wrap-around services very similar to the ones that Children's Services are providing to the top 100 families. The top 100 families who are getting that wrap-around support in Middleton, we have a 45% success rate on that.

How did we prepare? This was an integrated way of working. We will need to work differently with the budget cuts that we face and this Council is determined to do so. Despite the financial challenge, let us be positive. Looking at Leeds we have strength in manufacturing, major finance centre, major business centre, fantastic retail development, fantastic hospitality and hotels. The city of opportunity needs to connect to unemployed citizens of Leeds so that they can share the success. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Hardy.

COUNCILLOR HARDY: My Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, I wish to speak to Minute 160 on page 561. John Procter does not have the monopoly on being dyslexic and have difficulty reading speeches. I too have this problem, so please bear with me.

We have heard from all sides of this Chamber today about the unprecedented financial constraints being felt right across the Council. In these difficult times it is vital that services seek to become more efficient and innovative in everything they do.

I would like to take a moment to talk about the roll-out of alternate weekly collections which began in April last year. Farnley and Wortley, there is about a thousand homes were moved to fortnightly collections. I think we can safely say that thus far the scheme has been a big success and I would like to thank the staff in the service for making that so. Local residents are telling me the changeover has been pretty easy and they welcomed the adjustment period on the side waste which was built into the proposal to allow the time to adapt their waste management habits.

The impact of AWC on people's management of waste in Leeds has been huge. Over 36 weeks in Phase 1 area we have seen a staggering reduction of 3,750 tonnes in the amount of kerbside residential waste being collected. In the first eight weeks of Phase 2, a similarly impressive 1,750 tonnes less was handled. Recycling rates have been boosted too and in June we hit the height, with 52% of the city's waste being recycled. I am delighted that the Council's targets have been revised upwards and we are now seeking a recycling rate of 55% by 2016 and 60% in the longer term.

The impact upon all this is clearly beneficial to the environment and the importance has been highlighted recently with the devastating weather patterns further south.

Not just one Party can claim they are green and care for the environment but within the confines of today's discussions the savings to the Council in 2013/14 as a result of less waste being sent to landfill from the AWC area has been over £450,000. In the past there have been accusations that bringing in fortnightly black bin collections would damage the quality of service for ratepayers but I know from experience in my own ward the vast majority of people have really bought into the scheme, and so we all should. I know in some areas residents are contacting their Councillors to ask why they cannot get involved.

Finally, much of the success of the roll-out to this point has been in the past due to the fantastic work of the Waste Doctors who are helping residents to manage their household waste in a more efficient way. Their positive engagement within our communities should fill us with confidence as the service looks to move the changes in some of the more challenging parts of the city. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Congreve.

COUNCILLOR CONGREVE: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on Minute 160 on page 561 of the Minute Book in relation to the Financial Health Monitoring Report and specifically the impact that the new South Leeds Independence Centre is having on social care and health budgets.

Council may be aware that the former Harry Booth House residential home in Beeston was last year redeveloped into the South Leeds Independence Centre, the city's first integrated intermediate care centre. The centre, which sometimes goes by the acronym of SLIC, is a fine example of adult social care integrating with health service. It is managed by Leeds Community Healthcare NH Trust and is staffed jointly by health and social care workers.

Its function is to help people regain their independence after a stay in hospital, helping prevent them going into residential care when they might not need to. It acts as a type of bridge between hospital and the home, providing that little bit of extra support to help people regain their confidence and daily living skills.

The benefits are twofold. It is better for the public purse and it is better for individuals receiving the care. People tell us time and again that they want to stay living at home for as long as possible. After a period at the SLIC they are likely to have fewer hospital readmissions and they are less likely to need residential care, meaning that they can continue living at home near their friends, their relatives and in their communities for a longer period of time.

Hospital care and residential care are both very expensive so any admissions that are avoided help save both the Council and the NHS money. On top of this, the



SLIC helps avoid delayed discharges as it provides somewhere for people to go from hospital if they are ready for early discharge but not quite ready to live independently at home again. Delayed discharges can cost the Council money so again the centre is having a positive impact from a budgetary point of view.

The centre really is a fantastic facility for south Leeds, providing great service to some of the most disadvantaged areas of the city, helping people get back on with living their own lives independently when in previous times they might have lost their confidence and ended up in a care home. At a time when the Government's grant settlement means it is important to find new ways of delivering services that help save money, the SLIC is a very welcome innovative way of delivering care and services. It also has the added bonus of being located in my own ward of Beeston and Holbeck. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Maqsood.

COUNCILLOR MAQSOOD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to comment on Minute 175, page 2. Given the current financial pressures and the vast scrutiny on every penny that is spent, it is even more important now than ever that as a Council we get the spending right.

One of the most notable successes the Council has contributed to over the last few years has been the management of and investment in the city centre. The result is the thriving and still growing city centre that we see today which attracts thousands of visitors each year in addition to the many Leeds residents who come into the city to shop and to work.

However, equally important to the Leeds continued growth, success and prosperity is the continued development of our local town and district centres which make up the city. Indeed, they are a key feature of our city and contribute significantly to what makes Leeds what it is – local identities which reflect our city's broad and diverse make-up. Maintaining and strengthening these community hubs is a key part of the vision for Leeds to be the best city in the UK.

The Council has already undertaken several successful improvement schemes across the city and I am delighted to hear that there are now plans to press ahead with improvements to my own ward in Harehills. Harehills Lane is an example of an already vibrant and buzzing district centre. You only have to walk along the street at any time of the day to witness the variety of shops and services open for businesses and the number of people walking around. Areas like Harehills Lane are already the real community hubs in our city. However, I also believe that district centres are untapped opportunities that can be made even more integral to local communities, given the right planning and investment.

Shopping and accessing services in Harehills is part of people's daily lives and routines. While I share residents' pride about the area, it will only be fantastic to see cosmetic improvements made to the area to really show it off to its full potential and give local people even more to be proud of.

The plans for Harehills are centred around the brilliant Compton Centre, located on the vibrant junction of Harehills Lane and Compton Road, which will be the community focal point for the scheme. As part of the plans, Harehills Lane will receive a face lift in the form of new litter bins, guard rails and flower planters along with new lighting columns. Bellbrooke City car park, which is well used by local shop workers and shoppers alike, will also undergo a significant refurbishment. Elected Members and business owners have already been consulted on the plans and, of course, they will be eagerly awaited. We are looking at a completion date of

November this year, which is really something exciting to look forward to. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Janet Harper.

COUNCILLOR J HARPER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I am speaking on Minute 175 on page 2 of the extra paper, the Housing Capital Programme.

The Council Housing Capital Programme includes spending of £467,000 on a District Housing Scheme for the Clydes multi-storey flats and Phil May Court. This is long overdue and potentially a very beneficial scheme for tenants. I think that it is absolutely brilliant that the Council is doing really positive work for the benefit of residents in the Clydes and Phil May Court, who represent some of the most deprived in Leeds.

We all know how tough it is for the residents because of the recent rises in energy prices so it is great to see the Council stepping in to give them the support they deserve. By prioritising existing commitments it shows that as a Council we can help communities even in the hardest of times.

The District Heating Scheme is a smart solution to the challenge of increasing fuel and heating costs with residents expecting to see around a 10% reduction of their fuel bills. This is a great achievement in helping tenants who are finding it difficult to see how they will cope with these hard hitting energy costs.

From the Council's perspective the scheme could generate an income from the Renewable Heat Incentive which can then be used to reinvest in other housing improvements. Councils could become very reactive in the case of Central Government cuts. The bedroom tax threatens rent accounts and adds further risk to the Council in being able to collect and use rental income. It is heartening that this Labour Council is not reneging on commitments to tenants at this time of extreme uncertainty about rental income.

There is still some work to be done, my Lord Mayor, and so I would like to offer my encouragement to those working on the project to remind them of how grateful these residents are for their hard work. Therefore, on their behalf I would like to thank you for your continued dedication to putting this project into action and I am certain this will be a complete success. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lyons.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. I am speaking on Minute 175, page 2 extra papers, Active Lifestyle. That is why I always run to the bar first to show I am all right!

Across my ward they built houses before the war and they released people from their TB hospitals, or consumptive hospitals as they were then, and they looked out across a bed of fields right to the river and it was there so that they could get fresh air, plenty of exercise and all the lot. It was a brilliant idea of what they did. If you look at it now, they are building incinerators, they are building all kinds of stuff so that is what they look out on.

We have got the Active Lifestyle. What we are talking about is the amount of heart, lung and cancer cases that is across that area so what we have got to do is to get these people that we do not want them on NHS, we want them fit, we want them well. If we take Meadowfield Children's Centre, mums and kids there now with what has been put in are getting advice on their diet, they are getting advice on how to do

and they are also taking exercise and, would you believe it, they are having pram races as well to keep fit.

If we go on to old people's places where we go, they are getting advice on the dietary and light exercises. If you go on to Roundhay Park, all the kids now, we are trying to get the kids in with this Active Lifestyle to go to school on their bikes as well as everything else. We are also having a very active walking bus. A walking bus is where you walk to school, you do not come, and with parents. Parents are joining in so everyone is a winner on there.

I cannot let it go without saying about Colton football club. We are second in the league now and we have got one of our officers that runs them and if Leeds United are doing bad, just go up to Temple Newsam up there and watch them, but do not watch the kids, watch the mums and dads shouting at the kids and running round and round the pitch to keep active.

People do not live as long in our area and say "We will move, just before we die we will move up to Wetherby so that we will live a bit longer" I have got them on another thing now and it is called leafleting for Mick Lyons, so they are keeping very active going across Temple Newsam telling them what the Labour Party is all about and if some of you have got friends up there in Colton, get some of my leaflets and read the truth (*laughter*) of what is going on because unfortunately for you, you have got no Councillors now that represent that area from the Tory Party. We have got three in here for the Labour Party but they are very active we well – one of them has just had a baby and she has been more than active (*laughter*) with all the others that keep going forward.

I have got to say that if we are spending money we might as well spend it well, keep them out of hospitals and keep them with pram races and running round Colton football field. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Lyons. It is Councillor Fox.

COUNCILLOR FOX: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. It is curious that we have just approved the Council Tax increase for the coming financial year and yet there is another opportunity to comment upon it and I refer to the same item, Minute 175 page 2, that is the Executive Board discussion prior to the Budget meeting.

I was struck when I got the papers relating to the Budget that when the Third Sector was consulted there is a very splendid comment there in terms of what savings could be achieved, the suggestion was to reduce the time spent on producing lengthy reports that are not fully read, and I suspect that the 550 pages or so of the Budget Report has been read by very few. I am sure you will all deny that you have done other than read every word of it.

Within that report on page 34 there is a bit of a description describing the background to the Budget and there is a quote in there that says that:

"The Commission for the Future of Local Government"

(which Leeds led and published in 2012, and you will all be well versed with that)

"is still central to the Council's thinking and approach and we are using the five propositions from that to set our direction."

This is inspiring stuff. The next paragraph actually increases the five to six, goodness knows how, but it then says:

“The Council recognises this very different environment together with a reducing funding envelope and within its best Council ambition it has defined and identified the six best Council objectives to be prioritised over the medium term.”

So, we have got six best Council objectives – I am sure you can all name them – which drove the Budget we have just approved which, of course, was an increase in the Council Tax. It then goes on to list the six, the first of which is ensuring high quality public services. What has the Council done about that? Remember this is a prime objective. It reduced the spend by £5.4m. It then goes on dealing with the Council's waste, effectively, what has it done there? It has reduced the spend by £1.2m. It then lists building a child friendly city. We have heard mention of this earlier this afternoon. What has the Council done there? It is reducing expenditure by £5.8m on this key objective. We have got the Delivery of Better Lives Programme. What have we just approved? A reduction of £2.2m. When it comes to promoting sustainable economic growth, we have reduced it by £2.3m. Becoming an efficient and enterprising Council, business improvement, we have reduced that by £3.2m.

The Council, relying on its 2012 master document, has reduced the six objectives, and they are the only ones that are mentioned, by £20.1m.

It is, my Lord Mayor, I think, a strange way of running a Council. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cohen.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Like my colleague, I will also be speaking to Minute 175, which is page 2 of the extra papers.

I have listened to today's debate and subsequent comments with a great deal of interest, as I am sure Members today have and I am sure the press will as well. What residents of Leeds will have seen and heard today is that it is the Conservatives who would have helped hard working families and hard working individuals by freezing Council Tax. It may well be that the truth is painful but it is, nonetheless, the truth.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: If only it was the truth.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: It is the Conservatives who would have invested an extra £2.5m in our city's crumbling road network. It is the Conservatives who would have helped businesses in Leeds City Centre and those wanting to visit them by abolishing evening and Sunday car parking charges.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: You are going over closer to UKIP, you have adopted all their lies. It is not the way to be more UKIP than UKIP.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: If you want to speak put your name down. It is the Conservatives who would guarantee every ward retains five PCSOs because we do care about public safety and law and order, of people feeling safe in the streets and in their homes.

The Conservatives would have done all this and more and the residents of Leeds will have noted and heard that today.

Lord Mayor, when the hard working citizens of our city are just coming out of the last Labour Government recession, Leeds residents will have taken note of

today's budget and they will have realised that it is a Leeds Conservative administration that would have genuinely appreciated the value of their money. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: They have to clap that. We can just laugh.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Wakefield to respond to the Minutes.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I like the comedy act at the end and I will probably make reference to that at the end but I will try and deal with them in the order that they spoke.

Firstly, Councillor Harland is absolutely right. I can recall this Council going back to 2002 working in Wortley and, actually, getting to use Post Offices for financial and cash transactions and that has built up over the years and actually we now put over the desk of Post Offices £48m. That has really given some light and actually saved quite a few Post officers from those early days of closing the housing desk down for cash and actually giving people access to the local Post Office. I am sure you remember, Anne and David, what we did in your ward, although you never thanked us.

The important thing about now is that in Kippax, and I know in many of your communities, there are no big banks and so the Post Office is actually going to be the only ethical alternative if you have not got a credit union. I think that is really an opportunity to work with Post Offices in many of our villages, many of our high streets where there is no bank, no alternative, and I think that underlines some of the work that we are doing with working together, co-location in Seacroft, I think, Holbeck refurbished theirs and relocated it. We are trying to get them involved in dealing with financial exclusion so they do play and will play a real big, important role in our communities.

Where is Councillor Dobson? I actually saw him smile for the first time this afternoon and I did because Councillor Hardy was talking about the success of the alternate weekly collection. I have to say, most people I know – no spin to this – think it is a good idea, they like it. They would like the food waste; we have had a debate about that. I like the food waste but just for a stat which we did not get to, it is expensive. If you did the 183 which I think was in both of the amendments you would actually only recycle 0.6%, so that is a bit of a balance about whether we could afford it, but if there comes a time when it becomes more affordable, I can assure you this administration would support that idea. I probably should have said more at the time.

The reason I like the alternate weekly collection from this administration is, guess what? You see this document, 50 pages? 50 pages from Civil Servants writing highly political accounts and bribing and bullying us to do weekly collections. 50 pages here. People talk about waste of money; you should read this. What they did is told every Authority they would grant them if they had this. I am glad we rejected it because, guess what, that grant has run out and many Authorities who took it will be really in trouble there.

Councillor Groves, a brilliant example of what we can do locally. Our big challenge, nobody knows – Councillor Yeadon knows this and she has said it often – is getting local jobs for local people and I think that is a fantastic example as well as using credit union and all the training and skills there.

Just to give you an example of the opportunity, in Aire Valley we have got 8,500 in South Bank we have got 9,000 jobs. In Kirkstall we have got 2,000 jobs and in Thorpe Park we have got 13,000 jobs coming. All of those are out of the city

centre and we have got to get our act together to make sure those jobs go local. I think the work of Planning and Procurement, Peter, and as well we have got 2,300 people into jobs through Planning and Procurement, 3,000 through the Employment Scheme, so massive things to do and I think it is a good start that you have made and a really good example to follow.

District Centres, absolutely brilliant. They are vital. We have got Meadowhall and so on.

Let me come to Councillor Fox. Where has he been? I am not sure whether he is on those vitamin tablets that Councillor Golton was. He never heard a word. All those cuts he mentioned, all those things are actually called the cuts.

Let me just say to Councillor Cohen, because I will not be doing much, Councillor Cohen, that was a great advert for the Conservative Party.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: I nearly thought of switching when he said that! Do you know what, when the energy bills went up 9%, when the electricity bills went 18%, guess who said nothing for hard working people? Councillor Cohen and the Tory Party who, like them, have done nothing to control their price rises, have done nothing to control the banks ripping us off. No wonder Councillor Cohen never talks about the £11m the banks give to their Party and that is why he always gets on to us to divert our attention.

I move the Minutes, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Wakefield. You have obviously been on your feet a bit this afternoon and you have just had five minutes summing up on your Minutes.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Don't do it, Keith, save us all!

THE LORD MAYOR: You now have ten minutes to be able to exercise your right of reply on your Minutes again, but let me remind you, you stand between Council and tea! *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR WAKEFIELD: Thank you for your subtle hint. I am going to make myself the most popular speech this afternoon and say I move it all, Lord Mayor, no further comments. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I think that is on record, that must be Councillor Wakefield's shortest speech ever.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: And the best!

THE LORD MAYOR: You cannot go just yet though, I have got to call for the vote on the motion. All those in favour of receiving the Minutes? *(A vote was taken)* I think that is CARRIED and I now think Council is finished for this afternoon, thank you for attending and I think we deserve a nice cup of tea and a bun. See you later.

*(The meeting closed at 4.45pm)*

