

**LEEDS CITY COUNCIL**

**ORDINARY  
MEETING OF THE COUNCIL**

Held on

Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2016

At

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
CIVIC HALL,  
LEEDS

In the Chair:

THE LORD MAYOR  
(COUNCILLOR J CHAPMAN)

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**VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS**

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VERBATIM REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS OF LEEDS CITY COUNCIL  
ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 24<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2016

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE LORD MAYOR: I have got a couple of announcements. The first one, I am sure most of you will have heard that Ryk Downes is unwell. He has had an operation and he is now back at home recuperating. I have written to him sending our best wishes from the Council.

The second announcement is concerning Members who reserve the right to speak. This is only for today, this is not for any other meetings. The Whips will discuss this and then give me instructions for the next meeting.

I would like to advise Council that I have asked the Chief Whip to convene a meeting of Group Whips to discuss the method by which Members who have reserved the right to speak in a debate then subsequently exercise that right to enter the debate at a point of their choosing, or are provided with the opportunity to enter the debate prior to summing up. Now that ordinary meetings have time limited White Paper debates, I think having certainty on these arrangements would be of benefit to all Members.

For today's meeting, whilst there are no time limits, for the sake of clarity I ask that Members who have reserved their right to speak in a debate indicate to me the point at which they wish to exercise their right to speak in the debate. Those Members will be invited to speak immediately after the person that is speaking and in the order in which they have indicated to me.

I have at an earlier meeting today with Group Whips explained this position and I hope this provides clarity to all Members of the Council for today's meeting.

This, of course, Budget Day, is the very first Council meeting which I attended prior to being a Councillor and never dreamt that I would be sitting here today having to try and control the debate that is, I am sure, going to take place in a very friendly manner.

ITEM 1 – MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD 13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2016

THE LORD MAYOR: Could I first of all ask for the Minutes of the last meeting. Councillor Charlwood.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for the vote. (*A vote was taken*) The Minutes are CARRIED.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

THE LORD MAYOR: Declarations of interest. Do Members have any further declarations? I understand, Tom, you have one which you wish to bring up. No, it has been dealt with, thank you.

### ITEM 3 – COMMUNICATIONS

THE LORD MAYOR: Communications.

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I have received a letter in relation to the last Emergency White Paper on Flooding from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Elizabeth Truss, and that has been circulated to all Members.

### ITEM 4 – RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD – BEST COUNCIL PLAN 2016-2017

THE LORD MAYOR: Item 4, Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I move in terms of the Notice.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Charlwood.

COUNCILLOR CHARLWOOD: I formally second, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Andrew Carter.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. I refer to page 23, 2.5, Achievements and Challenges, regenerating certain areas of Leeds – Little London, Beeston Hill and Holbeck.

A fortnight ago tomorrow I wrote to the Leader of Council asking if she could give me some assurances that the Managed Area for Sex Workers policy in Holbeck would be reviewed in the light of concerns being raised after the initial period of twelve months and I am pleased to say I received a response in fact today indicating that a review was indeed taking place, a review by Safer Leeds under the Chairmanship of Neil Evans. I have written again because I would like an assurance from somebody that actually that report will be brought to the Executive Board, which was the body that sanctioned the initial report some months ago when the management status was changed, or rather made much more public. Thank you very much. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: My Lord Mayor, this report is interesting both for what it says and what it does not say. There is no mention of the NGT trolleybus, which is being airbrushed like Trotsky from City Council papers without waiting for it to be ice-picked by some junior Minister who has not even been heard of by anybody before.

NGT's abandonment will give opportunities for big ticket capital investment in something worthwhile such as flood management, though negotiations to move Central Government cash from one cost heading to another would be best done while the money is still pencilled in for Leeds. They must take place without delay.

Also, long-term revenue spending could be put to better use in subsidising NGT's day to day running losses.

Response to the Boxing Day floods is mentioned without going on to look at the immediate and longer term need to invest in flood prevention. River levels rose to within a couple of inches of flood in Kirkstall Road as long ago as 2000 and not much was done about it.

The report confirms that since 2001 the population of Leeds has grown at substantially less than both regional and national percentage rates but it does not mention the mismatched Core Strategy Housing Targets which were based on assumptions of almost exponential growth by which Leeds might have become Mumbai without the overacted films, or Mexico City without much need for sombreros.

As Councillor Walshaw confirmed at the January meeting, whether he liked it or not Leeds has not reached even once the Slow Start annual housing target of 3,660 dwellings allowed by the Core Strategy Inspector for the early years of the Local Development Framework. Dealing with the snowballing shortfall is a challenge which must be faced urgently, particularly as the Slow Start will come to an end in 2017.

It would be unfair and unreasonable to ask officers of the Council to advise us how to vote in a referendum but there should have been a mention of the bare fact, that regardless of the timing or outcome of any referendum, the shifting relationship between Britain and the European Union is likely to present challenges to a city which depends heavily on legal, technical and financial services, retailing, warehousing and manufacturing which often have international aspects.

As a backdrop to all this two things run through the report. One is welfare reductions some of which, in my opinion, are ill-considered and have been imposed by people who believe that they are unlikely ever to have to claim welfare payments. The other is reductions in Local Government spending, some of which again in my opinion seem to be dogmatic cuts for cuts' sake with little thought for immediate or long-term ill effects. It is likely that the long-term effects will be the most damaging. Thank you, my Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am surprised Councillor Leadley mentioned Councillor Walshaw without wishing him a very happy birthday. He is lucky enough to spend it with 99 wonderful people here.

I am interested by some of Councillor Leadley's comments that the MBIs want Morley to be independent from Leeds but have closer links to Europe. That is an interesting concept and one that I think we can work on in the months ahead as we start debating our relationship with Europe.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Not necessarily. Not necessarily.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: I think turning to the more substantive points, I think the recognition around transport and around flooding is actually there has been over decades a deficit in infrastructure investment in this city, whether it is flooding, whether it is transport infrastructure and whether it is housing to catch up with the needs of the city and central to this plan is about how we work towards having, to use the slogan that runs right through it, to have a strong economy in a compassionate

city. To have a strong economy we do need that infrastructure to make us an attractive destination for businesses to locate in and bring more jobs to the area.

I think in terms of Councillor Carter's comments, of course when we review our managed approach to reducing street sex work we will bring that report to Executive Board so I can assure him of that. Thank you.

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

#### MOTION TO SUSPEND COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULES IN RESPECT OF ITEMS 5 AND 6

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Charlwood.

COUNCILLOR CHARLWOOD: I will move in terms of the very long Notice, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

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

#### ITEM 5 – BUDGET MOTION

THE LORD MAYOR: We now move to Item 5, which is the Budget Motion which can be found on page 8 of your Green Papers.

We are now moving to the Budget Motion and amendments and I would like to remind Members that at the conclusion of the discussion on the Budget, recorded votes will be taken on all amendments and then the Budget Motion.

Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Yes, Lord Mayor, before I move to moving the Budget I would like to move in terms of the Notice in terms of the Fire and Rescue Authority Precepts.

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I need to call for a vote on this alteration. (*A vote was taken*) Motion CARRIED.

Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I find myself in the unusual position of not being able to take part in the all-important sweepstake that is going around the Budget Chamber at the moment. I am very much assured that there is no insider dealing going on and I can assure you that I have not been approached by anyone to comment on the length of the speech in front of you.

In terms of the clock ticking I would like to say it gives me great pleasure to move the Budget amendment (*sic*) for the 2016/17 Budget before us.

Lord Mayor, this administration is determined to deliver on our ambition for Leeds to be the best city and the best Council in the United Kingdom. Securing a strong economy will go a long way to enabling us to do that. Fulfilling our economic potential will ensure we are also able to be a compassionate city, one that uses growing economic strength to tackle persistent inequalities, reduce poverty and deliver new training and employment opportunities.

We want to ensure that local people and especially our young people are able to share in the success of their city. We cannot achieve those aims in isolation. We will need to continue to work with partners across all sectors making the most of our joint resources.

I do not underestimate the scale of the challenge. We are working in a climate of radical change for Local Government finance while, at the same time, experiencing huge increases in demand for our services. For the Council, it is more important than ever that we become a more efficient and enterprising organisation. However, as I set out this year's budget, I want to reiterate that no matter how great a challenge we face, especially from Government, this administration remains immensely proud of our city and hugely ambitious for its future.

I want to start this afternoon by paying tribute to Leeds City Council's staff for their continued commitment and hard work on behalf of the people of Leeds. I am very grateful to our corporate leadership who, under Tom Riordan, are guiding the organisation through a time of unprecedented change, and can I also – and I am sure you will all support me on this – give thanks to Alan Gay and the Finance Team whose work is invaluable in the face of extremely difficult financial challenges.  
*(Applause)*

I also want to once again put on record my thanks for the exceptional response from Council officers to the devastating flooding over Christmas. The speed and efficiency of the response to the flooding was an example of public service at its best. Council efforts were complemented by the response of the emergency services, the police and firemen, the health service, local media and the army of community volunteers that came out to help and showed Leeds in its very best light.

Drastic cuts and a dogmatic Tory drive to shrink the State risk eroding the public sector to such an extent that a similar joined-up response may not be possible in the future. While money may have been of no object when it came to the 2014 flooding in Oxfordshire, unfortunately that generosity of spirit does not appear to extend to the rest of the country.

Instead, the very departments that can help deal with the long-term impacts of flooding, the Departments of Energy and Climate Change, Environment and Local Government, have been dealt another massive round of cuts. If this Government continues to drive forward policies that fragment public services, we will not have the flexibility to respond locally to incidents like these. The strength of our response was possible because we have resisted pressure to outsource services such as street cleansing, and it was a great privilege to me to hear residents and businesses alike under huge pressure giving applause to our street cleaning services for the support they got in the aftermath of the floods.

Between 2010 and March 2016 Leeds City Council will have had to save £330m. It is becoming harder and harder to protect vital public services. Over 60% of our total resource now goes on Adult Social Care and Children's Services. We will always strive to support the most vulnerable members of our community. However, other Council services are inevitably squeezed even harder to enable us to do that.

If we are looking at a future of diminishing resources and rising demand for Children's Services and Adult Social Care, how are we going to make sure the bins are emptied and potholes repaired? Councils are losing expertise in flood management, highways engineering and bridge repairs as well as people on the ground to clean the streets, repair the roads and make the care visits.

The Adult Social Care workforce in Councils across the country has shrunk by a quarter since 2011. At the same time, other local institutions across the public and third sectors are also losing funding and capacity. Given this context, it is more important than ever that we secure the investment in flood defences we need to protect our homes and businesses. We have been lobbying for appropriate flood defences for many years, especially since 2007. Widespread flooding was predictable, as the Government knows all too well. Despite understanding our vulnerability to flooding, they chose not to act. London and the Thames Valley has been awarded £300m for flood protection. Why not Leeds?

The Northern Powerhouse and all of our economic potential will be nothing if it is under water. Had the floods happened on a normal working weekday, it is estimated the cost would have been in the region of £400m – twice the cost of the flood defence scheme cancelled by the Government in 2011, and we know there would have been substantial increased risk to life if it had been on a working day.

Yet again I call on Government to give us the flood defences we need and deserve as an economic powerhouse in Yorkshire. We are the third largest city in the UK, with a city centre economy that acts as the engine of the northern economy. We are told repeatedly there is no north-south divide when it comes to flood spending. However, over the last five years DEFRA has cut spending in Yorkshire by 16% at a time when London spend has increased.

It is hard to believe we are now entering the seventh year of Conservative austerity and yet the IFS has warned this month that recent turmoil on the stock markets is only one of a number of factors that could knock George Osborne's financial plan off course. This comes on the back of the Centre for Cities Report claiming we are far from becoming the high wage, low welfare economy the Chancellor keeps telling us about.

In reality, many cities are moving in the opposite direction as workers try to balance low pay and rising living costs. Soaring costs of housing are leading to an upsurge in the need for housing benefit, causing the fastest rise in welfare spend in those so-called high wage cities.

Three months ago at his last spending review, George Osborne claimed he no longer needed to cut as far or fast this Parliament. His reliance on over-optimistic economic performance now looks very misplaced. The Bank of England inflation report has downgraded forecast wage growth by more than one per cent since November, which the IFS warns could cost the Government £5bn. At the same time, the Chancellor is still placing big bets on volatile tax receipts. Borrowing is not falling as fast as forecast, the deficit which the OBR puts at around £70bn in 2015/16 should have been cut by £20bn by now but it is down by just £11bn and still George Osborne remains locked into his guarantee to deliver a surplus by 2019/20.

By tying himself to such a rigid fiscal plan the Chancellor has ensured he cannot deliver the ambitious national economy he needed to. Investment in infrastructure and productivity enhancing public services should have been at the forefront of spending plans for the next Parliament. Instead, Osborne is constrained, preventing much needed capital investment and at the same time as uncertainty

about our EU membership means business investment has stalled and much needed infrastructure decisions will be put on hold.

Let us just take a moment to look at his record. By 2019/20 spending on public services other than health will be at its lowest level as a fraction of national income since at least 1948/49, at a time when the population continues to grow and to age. Fewer homes were built over the last five years than under any peacetime Government. The 2010s are forecast to be the decade with the lowest rate of pay growth for a century. The productivity between the UK and our G7 competitors is the biggest since 1991. Last year the OBR downgraded productivity forecasts for the UK for the next three years. Osborne's economic plan is not working. He is failing to ensure we have resilience in the economy to defend ourselves against future fiscal dangers and the result is more likely to be hardworking families being hit by tax increases and more public service cuts.

Central Government grant funding provided to Councils through the Department of Communities and Local Government has been slashed by 56% in real terms over the period of the latest Comprehensive Spending Review. In Leeds this will be on top of the 40% real terms cut to Government funding since 2010. The toxic combination of increasing demand pressures and further cuts has left Leeds facing a further funding gap of £76m next year alone.

Let us be in no doubt, these cuts continue to be a political choice by Central Government. They are not a necessity. The House of Commons Library calculated that if Central Government grant was maintained at the same level throughout this Parliament, the Government would still be running a surplus of £4bn in 2019/20. There is a choice.

The choice the Conservative Party has made so far has been to hit the poorest Local Councils with cuts that are 18 times higher than the country's richest. Between 2010 and 2015 funding for the ten most deprived Local Councils has fallen on average by £782 per household. Compare that to the ten wealthiest Councils in the UK where the loss has been just £48 per head.

We have once again received a settlement that ignores the reality of the challenges facing Local Government. It seeks to recycle existing funding, making no acknowledgement of demand or cost pressures and placing an increased burden on local Council Tax payers. The original settlement in its essence was unfair; Labour-led cities in the North disproportionately hit hard. By 2020 Shire Authorities will see a rise in resources while Core Cities still see a reduction. The second least deprived Authority in the country, Wokingham, would still be £200 per head better off than Leeds. Overall, Authorities in more deprived areas with higher dependency on grants would be hit the hardest.

Imagine our deep shock: when Councils objected to the funding that was facing them, the Government responded two weeks ago with an announcement of a £300m transitional fund to help Local Authorities adjust to Government grant cuts, and when we look at the list of who is to receive this benefit, it is nothing short of shocking. It provides no support whatsoever to northern cities like Leeds, despite our massive challenges around poverty and deprivation. 83% of the new funding recently announced will, surprise surprise, go to Tory Councils and primarily Shire and County Councils. (*Shame*) These Councils have been much better protected already from the first cuts that urban Authorities have had to face and if you look at the figures, can you imagine Surrey will be £24.1m better off; Hampshire, £18.6m better off; and Herefordshire, £15.6m better off. This is nothing more than a cynical attempt to silence critics on Cameron's own back benches.



Following the recent handout, if Leeds had had the same spending power per dwelling as Wokingham, we would have had £77m more to spend on our services. If we had the same spending power as Harrow we would have had an extra eye-watering £133m to spend. These Authorities have very low levels of deprivation and significantly higher spending power. Could we as an Authority ask on what basis can the allocation of the £300m grant be deemed as fair?

In September David Cameron's letter – you remember this, it happened on the day of our September Council meeting – the Conservative Leader of Oxford Council revealed just how divorced Cameron is from the reality of his own cuts to Local Government and it appears that the National Audit Office had over-estimated the Prime Minister and his colleagues when it warned the Government had only a limited understanding of the savings Local Authorities have to make.

Members will be very disappointed to know that, as you recall, I wrote to David Cameron as a result of the Oxfordshire letter asking if he was prepared to meet me, and asking if he was prepared to allow me to go to No. 10 and avail of the services that he was offering to Oxfordshire County Council and, of course, it is no surprise at all that I have not had a reply as yet (I am still hopeful) to his letter.

Despite the continued attack on Local Government, it is worth remembering that over the last five years Local Government has remained more trusted than Central Government when it comes to taking decisions about local services and satisfaction levels remain high.

The Government has been keen to talk about certainties and a shift to four year settlements for Local Government. If that is genuinely on offer I think we would all welcome that. The traditional annual settlement that happens the day, the very last day before the House of Commons breaks up for the Christmas holidays, none of us would regard that as ideal. A genuine four year deal would give us much needed security and the ability to better plan services alongside our partners. However, there are already suggestions that a four year settlement is not quite what it seems. A civil servant has publicly admitted that the four year deal may not stick if the Government's financial position changes. The extra costs of the new Care Act and the living wage are not adequately reflected in the amount of money we receive. We still do not know what extra responsibilities we will receive when we move to 100% Business Rate Retention.

We welcome the additional certainty of directly receiving our share of the Better Care Fund but we know that that is not new money. Half of that funding will come from a review of the New Homes Bonus which was originally top sliced from Local Government funding.

We should also take a few moments to consider the implications of another piece of centralised legislation, the Housing and Planning Bill – a Bill that reveals much more about the Chancellor's need to raise extra funds than it does a desire to address the country's housing shortage.

The forced sale of vacant so-called high value Council homes effectively allows the Government to tax us on our housing stock. The Government will also be defining what they mean by "high value" and what it means in our area. Based on initial indications, 2,300 of our properties may be classed as high value. That is around 4% of our housing stock. If all those properties are sold, forcibly sold, we will lose around £9m in rental income. On top of that, of course, it will reduce the availability of much needed Council housing, reduce our ability to invest in new Council housing and to create the right mix of housing that residents can afford. It undermines our ability to meet the needs of our communities and it weakens the

obligation of private developers to contribute towards affordable homes for local people.

Since 2010 we have dramatically changed our organisation. Council accommodation has reduced by 250,000 square feet, city centre buildings have reduced from 17 to eight, staffing levels have fallen by two-and-a-half thousand, senior staff by 30%. We will be forced to lose even more posts by 2020. These levels are comparable to the losses elsewhere in the country in the steel industry. The closure of the SSI steelworks in Redcar involved the loss of 2,200 jobs. What is more, every job lost is one less post that can become available for the next generation of young people in the city of Leeds.

We are working differently to boost income, improve outcomes and reduce costs and yet Whitehall wants to give us lessons on efficiency. They do not have a good track record. Let us not forget, according to his first budget Osborne was going to have cleared the national deficit by 2015. Local Government has proved itself to be three times as efficient as national Government. However, in order to secure a four year funding deal, we will have to provide the Treasury with an Efficiency Plan. We will await the detail of what that actually entails.

What we do know is that Council Tax will be going up by 1.99% as it did last year. Last year the level of Council Tax in Leeds remained the second lowest of the Core Cities. This year residents in Leeds will face an additional 2% tax to pay for the rising cost of social care. We can call this Osborne's Tax because he has ensured it will be Local Councils that make the unpopular decision about raising a local tax to pay for the consequences of Central Government cuts. Given that the Chancellor has already built the funding into Council budgets, this appears to be Central Government setting Council Tax from Westminster.

At least, however, the Government is acknowledging the rising cost of Adult Social Care. Without a change in policy the King's Fund has warned that social care spending per capita is on course to reach its lowest levels since the mid-90s, despite an ageing population. Spending on social care for people of all ages has fallen from 1.2% in 2009 and if cuts continue at the same rate, that spend will be barely more than half of one per cent of GDP by the end of this Parliament. Nationally in the last year 3,000 care home beds have been lost with more older people than ever ending up inappropriately in hospital beds. As well as having damaging consequences for older people, that typically also costs the public purse twice as much. In January this year St James's Hospital saw a 12% increase in attendance to A&E compared to the same period last year. This resulted in an increase of 13% in admissions. Many patients were occupying hospital beds while waiting for residential care places. As a result some elective operations had to be cancelled. This shows the scale of the challenge we face and the distress it causes to all involved.

Osborne's 2% tax will not go far. It equates in Leeds to around £5.1m and will not even cover the cost of the new national minimal wage requirements for external care providers. We are facing pressures of £20m in Adult Social Care just to stand still.

Despite the pressures, however, we are putting more into Adult Social Care in our budget this year. That determination to demonstrate compassion, whatever the financial circumstances we face, has been recognised in the recent Equality Framework for Local Government. Leeds has been reaccruited as "Excellent" and one of the key strengths peer assessors highlighted was the compassion reflected in the behaviour of elected Members and officers.

We heard a lot of warm words from the Conservatives about the importance of public health initiatives in their 2015 manifesto. However, as Councillor Mulherin has pointed out to us on many occasions, with no prior warning the Government announced last June that it would be making in-year cuts of £200m to public health budgets. In Leeds that meant a cut of £2.8m in the final quarter of 2015/16. The Government's consultation about those in-year public funding cuts took place four weeks during the summer holiday. Despite the fact that this is a poor way to deal with such important issues, the responses were very clear. Over 75% of those responding said, as did we, that the Government needed to take into account the current financial position of Local Authorities. Leeds is still £6.8m below its target allocation from the Department of Health, but did they take any notice? Well, no, unfortunately further cuts have since been announced for the upcoming years which means that the Council will lose £3.9m next year and £1.2m in 2017/18.

This surely shows the worst in short-term thinking. Public health spending in our communities strengthens the health of future generations and will also be essential if we are to ease the pressure on overstretched NHS budgets. Over 85% of our public health spend in Leeds puts money into work that supports NHS services and third sector partners. It really is time the Government got to grips with the long-term benefit of preventative strategies. They need to understand and share the best practice of Local Authorities. They cannot afford not to.

Cameron regularly reveals the persistent short-term thinking within Government which is increasing costs to the public purse while also failing to improve services. The Justice system is a prime example. The financial cost to the taxpayer of imprisonment is huge. As an example, imprisoning mothers for non-violent offences carries a cost to children and to the State of more than £17m over a ten year period. In 2013/14 the cost per place per year in a secure children's home was £209,000. In contrast, alternatives to prison can be extremely cost-effective. If the Government invested in preventative action to reduce offending by women by 6%, it would recoup the costs of that investment in just one year. The human cost of failing to take preventative action is terrifying, especially for our young people. Fewer than one per cent of all children in England are in care but looked after children make up 33% of the boys and 61% of the girls in custody. Boys aged 15 to 17 are 18 times more likely to take their own lives in prison than boys in the community.

In contrast to Cameron's short-term thinking we have actively pursued preventative strategies in Children's Services in Leeds, despite losing close to £36.5m in funding since 2010. This approach is delivering real benefits for young people and their families as well as saving the Council millions of pounds. Children's Services use restorative practice to work with children and their families, empowering them to make positive decisions about their lives. Leeds Families First continues to be one of the Authority's most successful preventative programmes and has attracted national recognition. Over the past three years Leeds can evidence that it has turned round over 2,000 families and supported 366 adults into work and saved the Council millions of pounds.

Over the next four years Leeds will be working with a further 7,000 families with the opportunity to make further savings to the public purse as well as drawing down up to £13m from DCLG. Working with people to empower them will help build their resilience in our communities. If we can achieve that, the Council and its partners will have the capacity to direct our limited resources at those most in need.

Faced with such challenging financial circumstances I must thank Councillor Groves and her colleagues on the Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board for their review of fees and charges. The Board produced proposals for a charging structure that will enable us to target spending in priority areas and on priority services while

also raising some income to reinvest in future services. The financial impact of reviewing our charging structures could provide a lifeline for some of our best loved discretionary services. The Board identified that every one per cent increase in fees and charges could in theory equate to an additional £1m of income, which is clearly a substantial contribution.

Despite the very challenging context we are all working within, this Council continues to deliver for the people of Leeds. Following the Tour de France, the Grand Départ, we have become much more confident as a city at attracting world class events to our doors with a view to boosting our profile and attracting inward investment.

We have seen a hugely successful inaugural Tour de Yorkshire last year and plans for this year are well under way. 7,000 people took part in June's Sky Ride and we were a host city for the Rugby World Cup. We also announced details of the 2016 World Triathlon Series. I am delighted that the World Series has chosen Leeds, unusually as a non-capital city, to come to for some really significant world competition in our streets and parks. The triathlon, of course, has been spearheaded by the Brownlees and we will see both brothers competing in their home city. This will be the final opportunity to see Britain's best triathletes competing against international rivals before heading to Rio for the Olympic Games. We have also brought together a team to lead the city's bid to be European Capital of Culture and a great start to that campaign was the MOBOs coming to Leeds. The awards showcased our vibrant city to a global audience and also generated an economic boost of £1,350,000 to the economy of Leeds.

In recognition of the important role culture has to play in strengthening the economy, I took the decision when I became Leader to bring both the economy and culture together under my own portfolio. That work on raising our profile is producing results; bringing Burberry to Leeds, for example, with a £50m first phase investment providing employment for up to 1,000 people. We have done much over the last year to work towards our ambition to have a strong economy within a compassionate city and I want to thank Members of Council, each and every one of you, for your contribution; in particular to my Executive Board colleagues and to all the Lead Members who are working with them steering departments through very difficult times indeed. We remain determined to deliver ambitious regeneration projects. Through regeneration, transport and planning Cross Green has been transformed thanks to a £6m investment in improving homes, including energy efficiency, work to older properties to make them warmer and more economical to heat, improving 166 properties to date. We are also working to transform the South Bank, bringing more than 4,000 homes, employment areas for 35,000 jobs, an educational cluster that will be accessed by 10,000 students a day and new green space.

We have secured recommendation from Central Government that the HS2 station should be adjacent to the existing Leeds station. This reflected the united approach of both regional partners and sectors through the city and we have revealed plans to transform Leeds station into a transport hub of the city and the Yorkshire Region; redeveloping the station alone will create 10,000 jobs.

In Environmental Protection and community safety work continues to cut carbon emissions in order to save money, improve homes and health and tackle fuel poverty. We are half way to achieving our carbon cutting target of 40% by 2020. As part of that effort the new Energy from Waste Plant is delivering a £6m saving on waste costs as well as reducing carbon equivalent to 20,000 cars and producing electricity to heat 16,000 homes.

We are working with communities to reduce noise nuisance and incidents of burglary have reduced by 45% from 9,000 in 2011 to 5,000 in 2015. The Communities Team is continuing to roll out our Community Hubs across the city, making a huge difference to local people by providing more and better integrated services at the same or lower cost. By working with a wide range of partners from the police to the Third Sector we are improving outcomes for people, not least by helping more people into work.

I want to take this opportunity also to thank all of our Community Committee Chairs for their hard work and commitment to our communities over the last twelve months. Support continues for the Leeds City Credit Union with three new initiatives launched at the Compton Road Community hub in September 2015. The Credit Union now provides £5m-worth of loans to Leeds residents, protecting those borrowers from high cost lenders. It is estimated that the increased disposable income for Leeds families resulting from Credit Union services will be around £6.5m per year.

We continue to protect vulnerable residents through our Local Welfare Support Scheme which has made over 20,000 awards to vulnerable residents since 2013. Work also started in September on Extra Care Housing Developments in Yeadon and Swarcliffe which is part of a wider three year programme to build 1,000 new Council homes. This is in addition to the 1,104 completed refurbished handovers and 300 new build handovers as part of the Little London PFI.

Within Employment, Enterprise and Opportunity, 3,603 people have been supported into work in the year up to December 2015, putting the service on track to meet the target of supporting 4,500 people into work by the end of the year. We are targeting more and more challenging learners to help to move them closer to the job market. We are continuing to engage with more SMEs and facilitate more apprenticeships city wide.

Health, Wellbeing and Adults has invested a further £1m to meet the rising demand for telecare services to help more older people live safely and independently at home. 7,600 people are already using this service. We are also working with the Leeds Older People's Forum and the third sector to tackle isolation and loneliness through the Time to Shine project. Thanks to a successful Big Lottery bid this will see £6m invested in new services that aim to reach 15,000 older people.

New quality standards have been put at the heart of new contracts for independent community homecare from July 2016 and we have signed up to UNISON's Ethical Care Charter to improve conditions for homecare staff.

Approximately 100 new people continue to register for Leeds Get Active every day and over 4,000 visits are being made each week. In addition to the Families First work we have touched upon, Children and Families has continued to support children to get the best start in life and I know Councillor Yeadon will be sharing some of the progress that we are making later in the Council meeting.

Through Strategy and Resources we are working towards becoming a real living wage employer, tackling in-work poverty and benefiting the wider Leeds economy. We have delivered another £4.6m saving through procurement and I am sure you would all like to join me in acknowledging the work that Councillor James Lewis has been doing working on the budget over the last year, proving invaluable in very difficult financial circumstances.

Agency spend has reduced by 49% since 2010. Overtime has reduced by 14% and consultancy spend has reduced by 83%. Savings on sickness have

reached £3.7m and our workforce has reduced overall by 16% since 2010. JNC posts have reduced by 30% as we seek to protect frontline staff. We continue our efforts to become more innovative, efficient and enterprising. Our legal service, for example, developed a new Information Management System which is cost neutral to the Council but has enabled £2.8m efficiency savings over five years. The scheme has achieved national recognition and has the potential to be rolled out in other areas of the Council and is likely to be sold to other Authorities, generating more income.

Through the City Region we have secured a £1bn Growth Deal to support growing businesses, developing the skills of our workforce and to deliver on housing and our transport ambitions. Working with the LEP, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership will add an extra £1.4bn to the City Region economic output by 2020.

Part of the economic strength of our region is in its manufacturing sector. Leeds in particular has a rich manufacturing heritage and as we saw at this year's State of the City meeting, the sector continues to thrive. We need to make sure we are preparing local people and especially our young children, our young people, with the skills they need to make the most of the opportunities we are creating in this sector. The recent announcement of Burberry is just one of the number of success stories. DePuy Synthes, the global medical devices group, also opened a £21m research and development facility this year, supporting over 500 jobs. With so much activity it will be great to see the Leeds University Technical College opening in 2016. Specialising in advance manufacturing and engineering, the UTC will involve employers involving Siemens, Kodak and Agfa. We are supporting the project, which also draws on the educational expertise of the University of Leeds and Leeds City College, and I am delighted to tell you that enrolment is on track and parents and 14-year olds are voting with their feet to go and access this provision in the light of the future opportunities they will bring

Looking to the next three years our aspirations for the city are reflected in our ambitious capital programme. Between 2016/17 and 2018/19 the Council's programme of capital investment will create around 3,950 jobs in Leeds, generating £755m GBA for the Leeds economy. A further 770 jobs and £93m GBA will be created in the wider Leeds City Region.

Supporting communities and tackling poverty is a huge priority for this administration. That is why we are working hard to help people to be able to heat and power their homes. Much work has been done to improve the energy efficiency of homes and to support vulnerable people facing crisis as a result of fuel poverty. We want to go further by reducing the cost of fuel in the city. For the first time in the Council's history we will be working with a partner to establish a Leeds led Energy Services Company. This has the potential to save residents up to and in excess of £200 a year, focusing particularly on the low income households that are saddled with very costly pre-payment meters. The Energy from Waste plant will be fully operational in 2016, processing all of the kerbside black bin waste that is collected, linking this to our ambition to develop a new District Heating Network.

Kirkstall Forge railway station is going to be opening shortly, unlocking the site for both residential and commercial development. The East Leeds Orbital Road is being progressed with a view to unlocking the potential to build 7,000 new homes. We are also working to create green space on Sovereign Street and continuing the refurbishment of Kirkgate Market. The Victoria Gate shopping centre will move towards completion with 1,000 retail hospitality jobs in the completed scheme, following on from Trinity Leeds. We are in the midst of a half billion pound boom in retail investment in Leeds. We have over 600,000 square feet of Grade A office space and 300,000 square feet of industrial floor space under construction.

In order to encourage innovation our budget also includes £125,000 investment to ensure we can maximise the opportunities to raise income by selling our services and expertise to other Authorities, maximising inward investment opportunities and identifying opportunities to boost the city's profile.

We are changing perceptions of what it means to invest in the North. If you draw a triangle with Liverpool, Sheffield and Newcastle at its points, the area inside would be the same as Beijing, Los Angeles or the Greater New York Metropolitan Area. This is how we should be thinking about the North and is increasingly how international overseas investors are thinking about where they want to put their money.

Leeds City Region is the biggest city region outside of London. Our economic potential is massive. We want to go further to unlock our potential and to do that transport is our most visible challenge. Leeds City Station is the second busiest station outside of London, with 100,000 commuters passing through it every day. We need to become a fully integrated transport hub that can better serve our region. Improving connectivity has the potential to boost the Leeds City Region economy by £7.8bn. We want the same level of connectivity in the North that others take for granted. If you look at the map, Leeds to Manchester is the same distance as the length of the London Central line. Leeds to Sheffield is the same distance as London's Northern line. Our cities are not that far apart geographically but because transport links are so poor we have traditionally had separate economies.

We also are seeking a definitive answer on the eastern leg of HS2 and a firm commitment to build in the North. We want to start building the line in the North. We also welcome the establishment of Transport for the North, which has the potential to be the vehicle that enables us to deliver the change that we need.

Finally, PCSOs provide vital services that are highly valued by our local communities. Despite consistent attacks on the police by the National Government and despite our own financial challenges, PCSOs remain a priority for this Council. That is why we are setting out plans to provide an exceptional level of funding for PCSOs in comparison to our regional neighbours. Leeds will again contribute £1m this year to ensure we have PCSOs in communities right across the city. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Say that in the Liberal leaflets.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: By working closely with Mark Burns-Williamson, our PCC, we have secured a deal which means the number of PCSOs in the city funded by the Council and the PCC will actually increase. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Billy Liar. Billy Liar and the Liberal Democrat leaflets.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Additional PCSOs will also be provided by partners in key locations across the city. We intend to bring a report to Executive Board next month setting out how this will be achieved. It will propose that every ward in the city will have a minimum of three PCSOs. On top of that in line with our aspirations to provide targeted support to areas suffering poverty, deprivation and high crime levels, additional PCSOs *(applause)* will be provided by the PCC in response to specific need and this has been achieved without any need to attack our staff or trade unions, as in the case in Councillor Carter's amendment. *(applause)*

Despite scaremongering from the Opposition benches we have been able to safeguard this service so, Councillor Anderson, despite your claims last month that we are putting people at risk in their communities, we are not.

COUNCILLOR ANDERSON: But you listened. You actually bowed to the pressure I put on you.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Your Government has taken £140m out of the police budgets across West Yorkshire since 2010, so we are not going to take lessons from your party on how best to protect our communities. *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I am sorry to have to tell you that similar scare stories have been going out in leaflets from the Liberal Democrats in certain parts of the city *(interruption)*...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Shame. Print an apology.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: ...and I want to assure the Councillors who are quoted in those leaflets, that there is no stand-off, no uncertainty, no confusion. We are working in the best interests of our communities and delivering the best possible outcomes for local people despite the massive public sector cuts from the last Lib Dem-Tory Coalition and the current Tory administration.

COUNCILLOR TRUSWELL: Guilty as charged.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: When you leave this Chamber, I want you to be very clear about the scale of our achievements this year. That ambition will continue. We will pursue our efforts to have a strong economy within a compassionate city. We are a great city with many strengths, effective partnerships and varied sectors. Yes, we have been given another hugely unfair, damaging financial settlement; yes, the Government funding continues to favour Tory shires, but we will go forward with the spirit of confidence that sets Leeds apart.

We must be united in this Chamber in fighting for what this city deserves. We have got used in recent weeks to Cameron getting on his soap box on a Monday morning and bemoaning the state of our prisons, the crisis in mental health services, the shortfall in Adult Social Care funding and we are all too familiar with him blaming lifestyle choices for the pressures on our Health Service as opposed to his deep cuts to public health budgets. We predicted the consequence of this Government's cuts just as, in 2011, we predicted the consequences of failing to protect Leeds from flooding, but away from the Government's economics of the madhouse we will ensure a genuine, real Northern Powerhouse delivers for Leeds. We remain committed to reversing the decimation of public services that has been the scandal of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. With one voice, one determination, we will claim what is rightfully ours, to rebuild the economy for the people of Leeds. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you, Councillor Blake. Could we now turn, please, to page 14, a quarter of the way down the page. Councillor Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: I second and reserve the right to speak, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Carter.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Thank you, my Lord Mayor. Only in the strange world of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party could a reduction from five PCSOs a ward to three be painted as an increase. Before I get diverted on to some of what we



have heard, I am glad Councillor Blake never worked as a marketing manager for any organisation because she would have put them out of business. She spent half an hour telling the people of Leeds what a dire state everything was in and then tried to persuade them to stay here because it was not that bad anyway.

Leeds is doing extremely well but Leeds does not operate, Members of Council, in a bubble on its own. Leeds exists as a thriving city in an increasingly strengthening national economy, and Leeds is getting dividends from that strengthening economy. On every statistic you care to look at Leeds is doing better than the national average and we should be proud. I agree with Judith about this, we should be extremely proud of our city and everyone who lives here, the people who work here, we should be proud of our Local Government officers who I accept absolutely are delivering very good services in a time of severe financial restraint.

I want to thank Alan Gay and his staff and, indeed, the staff of all departments for their help with our amendment. It is interesting, and I think that everybody accepts and it is obvious from the size of the amendments by all the political parties today, that everyone accepts that the financial situation is not easy and that year on year we have had to find significant savings in Local Government and I have to say in Leeds we have been fairly successful in doing that. I will come to my views about Local Government finance in a minute but I want to conclude these few comments about the staff by again echoing the way in which members of our staff reacted to the flooding. It was exemplary and I am sure they would be able to do the same again in the future.

You know, Judith only ever gives half a story – indeed you might say even less than half a story - and it takes her quite a long time to do it. If I could just point out to you that there are now 31.3 million people in work. That is 588,000 more than in November 2014. 23 million people are working full-time, 436,000 more than a year earlier, 152,000 more than a year earlier still. The unemployment rate has dropped to 5.1%. It has never been lower since 2005 – that is long before the Labour Party's great recession kicked into the economy of this country. (*interruption*) I know you do not like reminding about the Labour Party's great recession...

COUNCILLOR TRUSWELL: No, we don't like lies.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: ...but it was your great recession, it has lost you two General Elections – it will lose you a third because quite clearly you have learned absolutely nothing.

As I said, to have a strong city economy and a thriving city you have to have a strong national economy and a strong country and that is where we are getting.

On the issue of Local Government finance, I have always made it very plain that I think this city has had an unfair settlement from a series of Governments; those of Brown and Blair, the Coalition and, yes, the current Government, but it is not a one party phenomenon, Councillor Blake, as you very well know. I find it quite unacceptable this hypocrisy comes from you as a Leader of Council who sat in this Chamber for very many years and has seen Rate Support grant settlements, Revenue Support grant settlements year in, year out that did not seem to recognise, as they should, the needs of this city.

The problem is, of course, when you fail to recognise that this has gone on for years and it is just a sudden phenomenon, is that you increase the scepticism of the people outside. We have all heard it, "You are all as bad as each other" and when we hear politicians in denial, like you, Councillor Blake, all you do is underline that cynicism.

You had a lot to say about the funding in the leafy counties. The funding per head in Surrey County Council is £284 a head; in Hampshire £240; Hertfordshire £284; in Oxfordshire £266. The Government funding per head in Leeds is £558 per head. I take it you are not suggesting to the people of Leeds, Councillor Blake, that actually we should go for the Surrey settlement, because we would be twice as badly off as we are already. I take it you are not suggesting that.

The simple fact is the Leeds problem with funding. It has been unfairly treated, we have been unfairly treated. My Lord Mayor, my colleagues sat in silence whilst Councillor Blake was speaking; I would be obliged if the Members opposite could do the same.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: I do not think they did.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: We need to look at what the other major cities get per head of population and in Manchester that is £726 compared to our £558. In Birmingham it is £912; in Newcastle it is £785; even Bradford it is £631. Now don't tell me, we all know Bradford almost as well as we know our own city, that the rates of deprivation and difficulties in Bradford are greater than here. Interestingly, you cannot even make the comparison that, well, we have got leafy suburbs in Leeds and they have not in Bradford. They have got Ilkley like we have got Wetherby, so why is it? The argument that we should be making to Government is why is it that when you look at the big city Authorities they get a lot more than the Shire Counties, why is it that Leeds seems to do so badly?

That is the argument we should be having with the Government. We have been having it with Governments in the past but we should not give up because it is unfair and it needs to be addressed.

Just to embark on the politics of envy and the politics of division by comparing with southern Local Authorities that really have no comparative nature to ours at all is not only missing a trick, it is downright stupid. What we should be arguing is like for like, big cities that get more spending per head of population than we do, why is the question? It must not be beyond the wit of man to come up with a formula that recognises Leeds' needs with some of the most deprived wards in the country.

You know, an interesting comparison is what Councillor Blake and her colleagues said about the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. Do you remember the Working Neighbourhoods Fund? It was introduced by your Labour Government in 2007/8 when the recession started to bite. Leeds got £15m but in the last Labour Government's plans that went down to zero. Did we hear a word from any of you? Did we hear a word from Councillor Wakefield? Did we hear a word from Councillor Blake? You were all sitting there. The other Core Cities continued to receive it into the Coalition Government's turn. Birmingham got £34m, Bradford £12m, Manchester £25m, Liverpool £29m, Newcastle £8m. If you are going to quote statistics, Councillor Blake, we can all quote statistics and these are pretty damning ones about your lack of action in those years.

The one thing you never mention is the elephant in the room, particularly in the Labour Party's room – Scotland. Scotland, the Barnett Formula, introduced by your Government, Harold Wilson's Government, by Lord Barnett. You will be waiting as long for another Government, I will tell you! Lord Barnett who admitted at the time it was a temporary measure – a temporary measure, 1974 whatever it was. It has now been in place for Heaven knows how long and this year equates to £1,500 per head of population more if you live in Scotland from Government funding than if you

live in England, and they have devolution, tax raising powers and all the rest of it and a great deal more, no doubt.

That is the other argument we should be having with the Government, is it not time that that Barnett Formula was scrapped. Of course, you are not going to say that whilst you are still clinging on to the hope that you might get some votes back in Scotland – some hope.

My Lord Mayor, I do not want to be diverted by Councillor Blake's concentration on national issues so I do want to turn to our amendment and the series of amendments that we are seeking to make are relatively small because they need to be, because we accept that the financial situation is not by any stretch of the imagination an easy one. We have already made it very clear that we are prepared to robustly fight Leeds' corner with this Government or any Government – I contrast that with how you behaved when we were in control here and your Government was in control supposedly in Whitehall.

The first of our amendments I want to talk about is our amendment to reinstate the £200,000-worth of cuts to the Community Committee Wellbeing budget. In a gross budget in this city of well in excess of £2bn, £200,000 is a relatively small sum of money and in my view could and should be found. To not do so brings into question the commitment of the Labour Group to devolution because devolution is a two-way street and whilst you go on about devolution coming from the Government, from Whitehall to the City Region, to the Combined Authority, whatever, it would appear that when it comes to devolving power down from your central administration to ward Members in groups in areas committees you are a lot less enthusiastic. To make this small cut is either a sign of incompetence or a total lack of commitment to devolution.

Local Members representing any political party should know better how to support the activities that go on in their own ward and their own area than the centre does. Those activities that generate voluntary activity in community life and at a time when real and very large savings are having to be made in the Council's budget, this small spending at local level becomes even more important.

What makes the decision to make the cut even worse is that some of the spending you have passed down to Area Committees is prescribed, so Area Committees are virtually told what to spend it on. It is as bad as the civil servants in Whitehall who say you cannot trust Local Government with devolved power and finance. Isn't that exactly what you are saying to every Member of this Council, including your own, by making this very small cut?

On the subject of devolution I want to comment further because it remains for me a great challenge and a great concern. I am very sorry that as yet we have not seen an agreement with Central Government and I worry that time is running out. We know the national Budget approaches on 15<sup>th</sup> March. I think getting that agreement for devolution is crucial to this Local Authority and the other Local Authorities that make up the City Region. It will give us access to funding streams we currently do not have and that will be essential in the future. It is funding streams that others where they have agreed devolution deals are now seeing those funding streams become reality.

I think – I know – that in the next few days, if they have not received it already, the Labour Leaders will be in receipt of the details of a deal that deals with the mechanics of what could be devolved. I think personally it will be a good deal. I am absolutely committed to the City Region. I would be – I chaired the partnership for four years and I think it is the future for getting greater powers from Central

Government, but the thing that is yet to be agreed and will be obviously a sticking point is a democratic form of governance sitting underneath the elected Mayor.

It will also be a two-stage deal. What we now know, and I think this is progress, is that North Yorkshire cannot just block a deal for the City Region, but it can only be a two-stage deal, so you have the combined Authority with the elected Mayor moving to a City Region with an elected Mayor in 2020. I am content with that providing we get the right powers devolved, and providing we set up a robust level of governance that suits all political parties. You might be losing interest in devolution, Stewart, but you really ought to think about it. It is a very, very serious matter and we have an opportunity – and I want to make it quite clear to the Leader of Council, I am absolutely ready to support the City Region deal providing we get the governance structures that are required to protect the interests of all political parties. The problem is, unless we do get those sort of structures put in place, it will not happen and we will be left behind and that is the biggest concern of all.

Briefly, just to touch on our amendment to caring charges. We abolished caring charges back in 2005, I think it was. You reintroduced charges in 2010/11, put them up once if not twice, but now what is happening is your income from caring charges is going down because you have put the charges up too much, so it is really not sensible to put them up again or you are going to finish up getting even less revenue. We suggest you just cut them back by, I think we are saying, £1.

I want to turn to our amendment on neighbourhood policing. The timing in the electoral cycle is an ideal opportunity to reinstate cuts that turn out to have been made wholly unnecessarily by the Police and Crime Commissioner, who you have already mentioned. Just let me remind Members, the Police and Crime Commissioner has underspent his front line staffing budget this year by £3.5m. He froze vacant posts for police and for PCSOs and as a result has underspent his budget by £3.5m. I have to say, that is appalling, quite frankly. What message does it give to the Government? What message does it give to people who want to see more police and PCSOs on the beat?

Now, of course, he is going to start recruiting but he should never have stopped in the first place.

COUNCILLOR: Must be an election!

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: It is unacceptable in difficult financial circumstances to then underspend by that sort of figure the amount of money that you have got to spend.

I should also tell you, enough to make your eyes water, Mr Gay, the Police and Crime Commissioner is sitting on general fund balances of £26.5m. That is more than Leeds has got. It gets better – he has got £102m of unused usable capital reserves, so West Yorkshire Police, the Police and Crime Commissioner has got the thick end of 130 million quid at his disposal, he has underspent his staffing budget by £3.5m and he is asking for us to vote for him again. Roll on devolution and no more Police and Crime Commissioner, says me. (*hear, hear*) (*interruption*)

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: We agree on something!

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Calm down, calm down.

THE LORD MAYOR: Please let him speak now.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: It is like being in a school room, isn't it? You get them to shut up for a while, it does not take them long until their minds start to wander.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we just let him complete his speech, please.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Let us talk about flood maintenance. You would not have thought, hearing Councillor Blake, that she has recently been passed a copy of a letter from Liz Truss, the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that we have all got – a very positive letter about what the Government are proposing, preparing to do. Of course there will be battles and of course we will have to say we want more, absolutely.

One thing is very interesting. They go on, this lot, about the spending on flood alleviation, flood defences in the south. Interestingly three times as much, £200m-odd was announced straightaway, within days, for what happened in the North of England with the flooding. That is three times as much as was spend on the flooding in the south-west, flood alleviation in the south-west, so please do not keep peddling this myth over and over again. What we want to see happen here, and the Secretary of State is absolutely right, we do need a National Flood Resilience Review because to be frank, if we had had phases 2 and 3 of the Flood Resilience Plans, the Flood Prevention Plans in place, it would not have stopped what happened; it would have shifted it elsewhere. I will tell you this (I have said it before and I will say it again) it would have turned Kirkstall into a reservoir, that is what it would have done, because we need to look properly and thoroughly at the effects of flooding all the way upstream not just on the Aire – on the Wharfe, on the Derwent, on the Ouse, every single one of them - and there now has to be, and indeed Governments have underfunded flood defences. Your lot did, when you sat there for however many years, Paul, your lot underfunded them, my lot have underfunded them but now what you cannot deny is that there are changing weather patterns and Governments will have to fund more, but we must play our part as well, and we can play a major part.

We are, as Judith pointed out, the third biggest city in the country. What are we doing? Our gulley emptying is a joke and has been for years. We have got gulley emptying machines and no staff to run them. It is a bit like Corbyn's view of submarines – you can build submarines without warheads. We need to have – you cannot say to people it can be between three and five years for your gulleys to be emptied, then wonder why they are running like a river the first time we get really heavy rain.

Similarly, you cannot lose a thousand mature trees a year and expect to plant saplings that will take up the amount of water through their root systems. It will not happen. We have to have a proper strategic plan. Most of all, and particularly in the Aire Valley, we need to be investing more money in wetlands. Anyone who saw the beneficial effects of St Aidan's, Fairburn lngs and, indeed, the smaller scheme at Rodley Nature Reserve, must understand that wetlands are the safety valve. We have an opportunity down the Kirkstall Valley to create a lot more wetlands and that is what we need to be doing, so that is why we are putting more money into this budget to do just that.

A colleague will comment on the housing situation and the effect that that will have on flooding in a few moments.

I now want to comment on the part of our amendment that puts a million pounds back into the reserves. Because of the uncertainty that I think exists around the ability of the Children's Services Directorate to deliver the budget they signed up to, we all absolutely understand that Children's Services, like Adult Social Care, are

subject to significant demographic pressures, not least the pressures brought about by inward migration. We also accept that when it comes to safeguarding young people and protecting them, if the money is required then the money must be found.

There is another part of the Children's Services budget, the part relating to the LEA, and that is what our amendment is about. In this financial year just about to end the books will just about be balanced with every other department finding additional savings to the ones required when the budget was first set. However, Children's Services will overspend by almost £4m. To come in with an overspend of that magnitude again in an even tighter financial settlement will have very, very serious consequences across all departments of the Council and I fear that far too much of the LEA budget and model is based on hope rather than expectation. I hope I am wrong but the figures of the past speak for themselves and cannot be denied. If you are trying to fund a model and the ESG we know is going to be cut further, then you run a very great risk.

Mr Gay, if I had been writing the Robustness Report on your budget I would have been making a very strong comment about that but I have very great fears and I think that we need to make sure our reserves are sufficient to cope with that eventuality.

I just want now very briefly – and I have been a lot shorter time than Councillor Blake but said probably a great deal more – to pick up on the comments of the other parties' amendments.

The Liberal Democrats – the flying saucers of politics; no-one can tell which end is which and they are never seen in the same place twice. They seem to be returning to their comfort zone. I have to say that I have some sympathy with your amendments and one of them, if you had not linked it to a way of saving we did not agree with, we would probably have voted with you.

Your Party has been – and I do not have any sympathy really because I think at the General Election you spent the whole of the General Election campaign denying any participation in or responsibility for the decisions taken by the Coalition Government and when the people saw you for what you are, they dealt with you in the appropriate way.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: As they will you in 2020.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Councillor Finnigan's amendments are very interesting and we look at one in particular. I have to say you could not possibly expect us to support an amendment in which you were proposing not only to put car parking charges up but introduce them into all the town and district centres just recovering from recession, small shops just getting back on their feet slapped with a parking charge courtesy of the Morley Borough Independents. No chance.

It is a pity. It is a pity because I had a briefing about the proposed closures of the elderly people's homes and the Siegen Manor one, there is a real point to be made there. I was not happy at all that Adult Social Care had properly identified suitable alternative accommodation, particularly for people with different degrees of dementia, so there is a real concern there.

The capital programme amendment is particularly interesting because Councillor Finnigan wants to use £3m to invest in our local communities. I absolutely support that, I think it is a great idea. The trouble is, he proposes to use the three million quid that is in there for NGT. It is like putting the cart before the horse, really.

We do not know the outcome of the Government inquiry on NGT and he wants to pull the money before we know. It just seems to me to be absolute nonsense.

Of course, if it is that the inquiry is lost then I would suggest to him that he brings back the amendment and we will vote for it, because I will tell you now, if the inquiry is lost my colleagues and I are not up for trying to save a sinking vessel and ploughing good money after bad.

I will conclude my amendment, Lord Mayor, by reminding the Party opposite that the reason we have a difficult budget settlement yet again, the reason why Local Government is faced with the choices it is faced with, is because their Party when in Government wrecked the finances of this country. (*interruption*) You have lost two General Elections on it and you will lose a third and what we have seen today from Councillor Blake, it is like Corbyn and McDonnell – interesting leadership style; very little leadership and no style. I move the amendment. (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J MCKENNA: Boris and Cameron!

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: I second, Lord Mayor, and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we now turn to page 16. Councillor Golton.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. If only I could come to this lectern, Councillor Carter, and say go forth and prosper. Unfortunately, as we have seen, the Leader of Council has already spelled out the stark truth of the financial settlement that she has the unenviable responsibility to translate into spending commitments here in Leeds and most of the Chamber know I do not like talking to script and my colleagues behind me know that too often I go off script, but I am going to try this time round, although I have to say some of what I have heard, especially from Councillor Carter, really does make me want to veer off and at some point I may actually do that, so please bear with me if I lose my way.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: You lost your way a long time ago.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Lord Mayor, I am not going to rattle off another list of ever more depressing figures or statistics, but I do hope that you will indulge me in concentrating on a few as I go along.

The crash happened last decade and we spent a long time arguing about it, about who was to blame then. As we can see, the argument still echoes in this Chamber. It might be because Councillor Carter is feeling a little bit defensive after the reality of what it looks like to live under a Tory Government instead of a Coalition one.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Get used to it, Stewart.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: We had the argument about the blame, I am not going to get involved in it now because we are talking about the City Council Budget. One thing that I can remind people of, though, is that we got five years of Coalition austerity to try and balance the books and the point of that was to get the economy back on track. It was not because cuts were good, it was to get the economy back on its tracks.

I know that some complained at the time that the cuts were too hard too fast, but overall all parties agreed, and even Labour under Ed Miliband agreed that public spending restraints were necessary. Perhaps the uncomfortable truth is that no political party proposed any reversal of the cuts disproportionately imposed on Local Government during that time.

Those cuts were unreasonable because year after year we delivered and we ended up being rewarded for balancing our books with what felt like more punishment, as each Local Government spending round showed no sign of easing off the pressure.

We berated Eric Pickles and we made him into a bit of a figure of fun because we believed it was all his fault at the end of the day because he always seemed to turn up to LGA Conference and be quite proud of the fact that he had gone back to the Cabinet Office and talked to the Treasury and he delivered the biggest level of cuts of any Government department.

At the time, as you will recall, we were in Coalition and there was a bit of a light at the end of the tunnel because there was the promise that the pain felt now would be rewarded with a new era of devolution and freedom from Whitehall control. Of course, Eric was not on message and at the time he was trying to tell us how many times to put our bins out and how much we could charge for parking fees and whatever, but thankfully the Liberal end of the Coalition still pushed the devolution agenda and we were one of the first City Regions in the country to actually sign a City Deal.

We thought that the gear was going into reverse and George Osborne started talking about the Northern Powerhouse and it finally felt that Local Government was being taken seriously.

Unfortunately, as the election grew near you might say we were in denial about the Coalition achievements. One thing that we did go on a lot about, actually, was devolution but as time went by the ever tightening control of the Treasury appeared on our devolution deals and the rhetoric grew about how much the Chancellor wanted the North to grow and how it was going to be a new motor of growth for the economy, but actually the delivery of it slowed down. It became clear that elected Mayors were the only provincials that the Government were interested in talking to and this delayed the delivery of our northern renaissance but Osborne thought this was a price worth paying. He was quite happy to delay our rebirth until he got what he wanted for elected Mayors.

Then the election actually happened and you all know what happened to the Liberal Democrats.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Tell us. Tell us again.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Shameful, wasn't it? Shameful.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Surprisingly for a lot of people the Tories were on their own, they were unfettered and they were ideologically free. We held our breath. Most of it actually was predictable in terms of what came. We got benefit cuts, we got an assault on what was left of our social housing and now, of course, we get a return to the internal civil war on Europe which is threatening to drag the country down again.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Hear, hear.



COUNCILLOR GOLTON: What about Local Government?

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: What about the promise of a referendum in your own Party?

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Forget about the battle for Leadership of the Tories as well.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Surely Local Government was due some kind of respite because we had actually taken the brunt of most of the public spending under the Coalition. We got told that Eric Pickles was going and we thought great, we are going to have something different. Then we get told it is Greg Clark, and Greg Clark was our man. This is going to be our man at the Cabinet table who is going to fight our corner.

Right, so what actually happened under Greg Clark? I will tell you. The City Deals Messiah that was sat next to Nick Clegg when we were all talking the ability of cities to take on more responsibility and more controls, he has shown his dark side, if you will accept the Star Wars point since I am a little bit of an extraterrestrial. *(laughter)* He has done nothing with our Coalition, he has done nothing with our devolution deal but sit on it. He has sat on it and he has been waiting so that the Mayoral deal, which has already been swallowed by our City Region, actually gets a geographical boundary which is a little bit more amenable to the Conservative Party which makes it a little bit more winnable, and that is a shame, it really is, because if you are really interested in taking the Northern economy forward, you do not mess about in getting it started.

Anyway, then we got, of course, the Local Government Spending Agreement and we got even more cuts from Mr Greg Clark, only this time instead of Eric Pickles' honest "Well, you can like it or lump it", Greg Clark actually turned to us at the LGA and said to us, "You should be grateful, you should be grateful it is not even more", like Bumble. Of course, Greg Clark tells us that he has got us more money for social care but actually the more money that we have got for social care is barely enough to cover the costs of their national living wage increase. Actually, who is paying for it because at the end of the day it is being paid for by our 2% precept. It is our local rate payers that are paying for that social care, it is not the Chancellor and it is not Greg Clark.

As for new powers because, of course, they believe in devolution, don't they, and they want us to take on more responsibility, it has become blatantly clear that the only reason that the Public Health Budget was transferred to the Council control was to allow the Treasury to make cuts by proxy to NHS services.

Of course, we have to be thankful for some things because now that the Coalition is over, the Government has stopped telling us that we are all in this together. Nevertheless, it is still shocking when this is spelled out so shamelessly in a Local Government context. Councillor Blake has already told us that there was a Relief Fund of £300m. She was actually being kind to Greg Clark because that, along with the Rural Services Delivery Grant increases, actually added up to £416m of relief that Greg Clark announced for Local Government who were feeling the pain for cuts, and then announced that the ones that were to get it were all Shire counties or places as unbelievable as Richmond Upon Thames.

When I hear Councillor Carter talking about how Councillor Blake was sowing the seeds of division and talking about the division between North and South, she is not sowing it; it is your Local Government Minister that is delivering it and you cannot argue with the facts. It is shameful and every one of you instead of sitting there and

saying, "Oh, Surrey gets half what we do", Shire counties, may I remind you, actually deliver less services than Unitaries do and that is one of the reasons why Unitaries get paid more per head of population, so don't you play politics with it and try and defend your party when, if you are a proper Northern Tory, you should really be standing by everybody in here and actually objecting to it. (*hear, hear*) (*Applause*)

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: Stand up for the North.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: Anyway, Lord Mayor, it is within this context that we meet here today to debate how what money is left to us is spent in the city. It is the responsibility of Opposition Parties to present amendments, to challenge spending priorities and present alternatives in the hope that they will be adopted. Our amendments must be presented as moving away from one spending priority in favour of another. However, when funding is cut to the bone, non-essential budget lines are harder to find and moving money about is harder to justify.

We have often noted every year how we agree with around 95% of what is spent in the Council and yet in the Chamber we argue about the other 5% very vociferously. I know that the Conservative Group, as the official Opposition, have done their duty and they have cobbled together eight amendments, yet adding them all up they come nowhere near to 5% of what we spend on this Council. Actually, if you put to one side the PCSO amendment the majority of them are mere gestures to change and half-hearted attempts to conserve what has been lost.

It should be remembered that reduced funding for Local Government not only affects how we deliver services, it also affects our democracy as it limits the ability of parties to offer compelling and competing alternatives. How are we supposed to talk to our electorate and say, "This is what change looks like" when actually the majority of us are destined to deliver much of the same?

Nevertheless, Lord Mayor, we try our best. The administration just needs to listen occasionally. In the past we tried to get you to implement an emission zone in the city when we knew that 350 deaths a year were attributed to pollution. You did not listen and now the Government is having to intervene to avoid fines. We asked you to invest the £6.5m windfall from the streetlights contract to invest in LED lights that would save money and keep our lights on. You did not listen and now some of our streets are dark.

This year the Liberal Democrat Group amendment has one sole proposal in the hope that it will concentrate minds and that the administration will indeed listen this time. Like the examples given above, once again we are championing the environmental aspirations of our citizens and recommitting ourselves to getting food waste collection for every household in the city. Austerity should not relegate recycling to the back of the queue as a priority in the city, especially when it is one of the top aspirations for our taxpayers. Our proposal includes the construction of an anaerobic digester facility which would process up to 30,000 tonnes of food waste per year, producing around five million cubic metres of biogas which can then be used to fuel our fleet of refuse vehicles, be fed into the gas grid as a revenue stream for the Council or provide fuel for a combined heat and power facility. If it gets built I will call it the Ron Grahame Power Plant (*laughter*) as a consistent supporter of anaerobic digestion

Also included in the proposal, Lord Mayor, will be the introduction of glass collection to 120,000 households, overcoming the frustration of haphazard availability of glass recycling sites, often full to the brim of uncollected bottles.

The funding for this scheme is not dependent on depleting any other service budget and will be funded through prudential borrowing. The borrowing will be serviced by income diverted from two areas. The Liberal Democrat Group has been consistent in their opposition to the subsidising of trade unions through the Council budget. Unions are financially robust institutions and paid for already through their members' subscriptions. They are all too aware of the pressures on Local Government finance and should support the withdrawal of subsidy in the spirit of solidarity in defending front line service provision. Moreover, this proposal will result in the creation of new Council employees who would no doubt express their gratitude in union membership.

The secondary element of servicing the funding would be through a one year suspension of increments for staff, a pay freeze for staff earning above £30,000 and on allowances for Councillors above the same amount. The Council is committed to protecting and increasing the income of lower paid staff and that is commendable, and those of us within the organisation on higher pay should find common purpose to forego automatic enhancements to enable a scheme that provides greater employment, a greener city and civic enterprise.

At the mention of civic enterprise I remind Members once again of the Commission for Local Government, a blueprint for Town Halls to navigate an age of austerity endorsed by our former Leader, Councillor Wakefield. Civic enterprise means taking a chance on the long view in spite of naysayers, and grasping opportunities that present themselves, taking on new partners and ways of working and hopefully creating a legacy.

It may not be challenged on a budget line here, Lord Mayor, but Councillor Mulherin and Councillor Coupar both know that the Liberal Democrat Group are challenging hard on how their departments are responding to civic enterprise in the way that they deliver care and also community support.

This is where I go off piste...

COUNCILLOR: You had been doing really well! *(laughter)*

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: ... and refer to Councillor Blake's rabbit out of a hat. Yes, it makes a good headline, a million pounds for PCSOs, but Councillor Carter hit it on the head. It is not just about the money that you spend, it is about how you spend it and it is about how you involve the community going forward to make sure that our money goes further and our partners are taking part as well. To talk to the Police and Crime Commissioner and make a deal and call it a success that reduces the commitment that this city makes from five PCSOs per ward to just three PCSOs per ward is not progress.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: That is minimum.

COUNCILLOR GOLTON: This is why civic enterprise is needed at all levels to ensure that actually we talk to every community in the city, in this diverse city, and ensure that how we implement actually suits that community on the ground and not just our desk top calculations.

In administration, Lord Mayor, to conclude, we created a civic enterprise legacy. The Arena has regenerated a whole area of the city centre and generated prestige, income and business rates for the city. The Energy from Waste plant at Cross Green now saves the city £4.5m every year and has kickstarted a District Heating Scheme set to save money for residents and business alike. The Labour Group opposed both schemes when they were proposed and now they benefit from

them. Do not make the mistake of dismissing this opportunity and losing your legacy. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell. Can I remind you that we are now on limited time.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Second and reserve the right to speak.

THE LORD MAYOR: OK. Councillor Finnigan.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. On formally moving the Morley Borough Independent Budget amendment can I pass on my thanks to the work of the Finance Department, especially Neil Warren and Doug Meeson who worked wonders on polishing up an initial amendment that perhaps was a little unclear and less coherent than it is now. Their work, patience and good humour is greatly appreciated by the MBI Group.

It is rare that the MBIs put up a Budget amendment but these are challenging times and the amendments we are putting, though modest on the impact of the overall Budget, are realistic, achievable and positively enhance the lives of residents across the city while giving a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable people across Leeds.

We are in uncharted waters with significant funding we have to face. The Budget in front of us is a reasonable attempt at using the available resource; indeed, all the amendments from the different parties deal with a small percentage of change. We are at an ideological crossroads with Local Government. It is clear that all Governments of whatever political persuasion have little respect for Local Government and see it as a brake on or an inconvenience to Westminster. They have placed little value on the work we do and attempt to remove the political mandate we have by imposing more conditions and directions on how Local Government should work, often removing the local electorate and what they vote for from that equation.

Such reduced settlements mean we are restricted almost to only providing those activities that we are legally obliged to provide – education, child protection, adult social care, highways repairs, planning control (at least for a little longer) and waste removal. It reduces our capacity to provide the quality of life issues people value – libraries, parks, sports centres, youth services, community support and community safety. We are withdrawing to an almost similar position to Councils a hundred years ago which sends us, in our view, backwards and not forwards. When you consider that surveys show Local Government is trusted much more than national Government, then this is clearly a retrograde step.

The financial contribution from Central Government is again disappointing and this comes to a further point that is obvious to any observer of this annual process, that is the incessant gerrymandering of Central Government finance to Councils by whatever National Government is elected.

I have been sitting here long enough to see Labour Governments financially stuff Tory shires as they bung cash to their mates in Local Government as they did in the early 2000s to friends in Manchester, Nottingham and Bristol. Leeds was not regarded as one of Tony's and Gordon's mates and its settlements were poor.

Under the Coalition we saw Central Government cash pass away from Metropolitan Councils towards more rural areas as the north saw reductions other

regions did not see and Labour areas were given a similar stuffing. Leeds was not regarded as one of Dave and Nick's mates, so settlements were again poor.

Now in 2016 we see further reductions across Local Government but with some Tory shires again doing better than those large urban areas that surely need more of the cash. Leeds was not regarded as Dave and George's friend, so again a poor settlement was provided, and this is a recurrent theme throughout the last 20 years where Central Government fiddles the rules to stuff cash into the pockets of their party political friends.

This has to change. We need a Royal Commission to look into Local Government finance to set out a series of mechanisms that will allocate finance on the basis of what is collectively accepted as a needs basis and enshrined in law to avoid the constant repackaging of any financing process which looks to allocate funding on a partisan basis.

The lack of faith all Central Governments have in us and the almost pathological dislike they have for Councils can be seen in the decisions to ringfence some budgets nationally while letting others, especially Local Government, take the brunt of the austerity programme we are going through.

It cannot be fair or reasonable to ringfence foreign aid, education, the NHS, defence, the police budgets and let Local Government take an ever-increasing burden of the cuts that are being made. Local Government has become leaner and more efficient over the last six years; it has had to become so, and that is a good thing, but there is no more fat to cut without damaging what happens at a local level to our residents' lives.

The inevitable outcome if we continue down this road is that more libraries shut, sports centres become tatty or are closed, parks become unkempt and deteriorate, playgrounds become old and rusty, youth work becomes a rare occurrence with an already stretched voluntary sector trying to fill gaping holes in provision. It is a retrograde step.

Can we find a better use of national resources to support Local Government? I think we can. We could scrap HS2 and spend the money more wisely. We could subject the Foreign Aid budget to the same scrutiny and value for money assessment that we subject Local Government to. We could reduce our contributions to the European Union, an unelected and unaccountable organisation that has not had its accounts signed off for years, and use the savings (let's Brexit!) to support Local Government. We could even cancel our membership to the EU entirely, saving between £11.1bn and £7.9bn a year from 2016 to 2020. (*interruption*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Can you allow him to speak, please?

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: Clearly no financial belt tightening there.

Turning specifically to our Budget amendment, we propose increasing charges on parking to raise an additional £650,000. This will generate the revenue we need to keep open three social care homes across Leeds, including Siegen Manor in Morley. Why are we proposing such action? The Government is to be commended for giving Councils the power to raise a 2% levy on Council tax to cover the cost of additional adult social care demands. It is a blunt instrument but they deserve some praise for taking a tough decision to do something about adult social care funding. Successive Governments, Labour and Coalition, talked about it for years but took no action.

In Leeds the levy will generate an additional £5m for the first year, £10m in year two and so on, generating £20m a year by 2020. We think in these circumstances it is wise to pause the closure programme of Leeds City Council care homes while alternative options are explored. The residents in all three care homes are some of the most vulnerable in the city and a period of reconsideration and reflection, along with future commitments to provide extra care accommodation for those residents, seems fair and reasonable, especially when considering the modest amendments we are proposing.

The second leg of our amendment will generate the additional revenue to cover 22 additional PCSOs financed by a 50/50 split with the PCC to be allocated to the outer areas. Labour's PCC will inevitably, with his ringfenced budget boast of recruiting an additional 300 officers, move PCSOs from outer to inner areas, leaving the outer areas to fend for themselves more. The allocation we are proposing will give outer areas some relief from such political chicanery.

Our further amendment will cancel NGT and allocate the capital to Community Committees to finance spending that benefits all the communities. NGT is another example of white elephant spending – similar to Supertram, which cost £40m without an inch of track ever being laid.

NGT will waste taxpayers' money in a project that, even if it happens, will benefit few people. Our amendment spreads that money so that Community Committees can finance projects in their communities that benefit everyone, not a chosen few.

I formally move my amendments and hope colleagues will support what is a modest and realistic approach that improves the quality of life for our communities. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Leadley.

COUNCILLOR LEADLEY: I second Councillor Finnigan's amendment, Lord Mayor.

THE LORD MAYOR: I turn to page 17. Councillor David Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Similar to the earlier speakers I want to thank officers for their help in producing the three amendments and their help in explaining and helping one understand what is in the Budget. It think it is fair to say that if every amendment in front of us today was passed it would not fundamentally change the basic Budget, it is just tinkering around the edges. In fact the opportunity to make fundamental changes is becoming less and less each year.

A year ago people were saying this will be the last year of austerity, but the truth is it is here again, it is going on and on and on and on and the question is, if these cuts continue will there be any point in having Local Government in a few years' time?

The Government continue to talk about the Northern Powerhouse and devolution. The truth is, what is happening is a modern day harrowing of the North where Northern cities get cut and poor shires in the Southern counties, like Surrey and Hampshire, get transitional relief. I will just pick up on something that Councillor Carter said. When there was the last Labour Government and we got some cuts there, one of the reasons we got cuts is Leeds is peculiar; Leeds is not like normal Metropolitan Districts because it has got a large rural hinterland and logically from

that, from what officers told us at the time, that means that if you are funding shire counties, Leeds should be better off than most Metropolitan Districts, but we are not at the moment and it is not fair. The problem with Leeds is, Leeds has not had a fair settlement from any Government and Councillor Carter is quite right there. It is just not on what we are getting.

Moving on from that, the other day actually, I am coming back to the North of England here and I am not actually seriously meaning what I am saying here, the other day when Cameron announced his referendum I thought wouldn't it be interesting to add another box on, "Do you want to be ruled by Westminster, Yes or No?" At the current moment I would say "No" but anyway, that is me. It would be interesting doing that and the fact is, if we got a bit more like Scotland and got a bit more pushy and started being the Northern nation, I think we might do a little bit better because they seem to do all right out of it. We have been too quiet too long.

With regard to the three amendments in my name, I will deal with the first two, 13 and 14 first, which I think are less controversial. What I am proposing to do is to take money from reserves. The total in question, I think we are only talking £381k...

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: It isn't a lot when you say it quickly, is it?

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: ...in total which still keeps us well within £17m which, I have got to say, is low but there are some things we have to do and we are in a situation now where things are becoming that tight seriously we have got to take stuff where we can. I am proposing that, on the first amendment, let me get my figures, taking £10k per ward and giving that to Community Committees for any environmental spend within the wards. How many of us have problems with dog fouling? How many of us have with litter? We could then use that to utilise it. It is a one-off payment just for a year but a one-off payment but that could benefit our communities greatly.

The other, second, amendment is to take £51k from reserves and reinstate the Youth Activities Fund. I do not believe that the cut of the Youth Activities Fund is on at all. We are talking about really, really small amounts of money in the order of things and that money, when Community Committees have got it, does so much good for our communities. I think that basically it is miserly to cut it.

I will move on to my third amendment, which I obviously expect not to get through – in fact I expect to get a lot of aggravation about it. For a number of years my Group – and we will continue to do this next year and the year after and the year after that and the year after that until we get it passed – my Group has felt that allowances that are paid to Councillors are too large and what we did a number of years ago, probably about twelve years ago now, we actually put caps on what we can draw. What I am putting before you is what I and my two colleagues and their predecessors have been allowed to draw. I am not asking you to do anything that we are not doing because we have done this and we have done this for a few years.

I am proposing a cut of Special Responsibility Allowances by approximately 28% and basic allowances by 9%.

COUNCILLOR J McKENNA: 40% reduction, David.

COUNCILLOR D BLACKBURN: Of that I want to take approximately half of it and put it into a food waste collection, extension of food waste collection similar to what the Liberal Democrats were talking about earlier. The other is to replace as a contingency fund the cut in money on winter bin collections which I think is being somewhat – because we have not used it the last two years and I know it is not a lot

of money but because we have not used it the last two years it does not mean we will not do next year and then the rest of it made up of savings in year from reorganisations which they have not decided what they are yet. I have got to say, that does not seem to me – that seems high risk. It does not seem to me deliverable.

I am putting that back as a contingency. If officers deliver, if the department delivers, then it goes back to reserves.

Moving on to the other Party amendments, there are a number of them that we intend to support. In fact, to a great extent the objectives of all the amendments seem to us sensible and good but clearly what we are not prepared to do is, we are not prepared to do anything that affects trade union rights in this Council because we think it is important that they are supported, and anything that affects the premium time any of our staff get for working weekends. On that basis we will not be supporting amendment number 1 and amendment number 6 in Councillor Carter's name and we will not be supporting the Liberal Democrats, Stewart Golton's amendment number 9.

Regarding the MBI amendments, while we agree with what Councillor Finnigan is trying to do, which was not explained there, these parking charges also will be given at £25 a year to people who have residents only parking and while we have no problem at all in increasing parking charges, as Greens, we have a problem about charging people where we have put a scheme in place to protect them from people parking. I have got one currently being consulted on in your ward caused by Leeds United Football Club as, I think, Beeston Councillors will have as well. The thing is I do not think that is right, they should not be paying and if that had not been in it we would have supported the MBI motion.

With that I will go and we can move on and maybe do a bit more business. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Ann Blackburn.

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

THE LORD MAYOR: We now turn to page 18, please. Councillor Yeadon.

COUNCILLOR YEADON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am very proud of the fact that Leeds Children's Services has been completely transformed since the 2009 Ofsted. We are still the only Core City to achieve a "Good" rating overall with "Outstanding" for leadership and governance. We have been invited by the Prime Minister to become a partner in practice as one of only a handful of exemplar Children's Services across the county, and we are one of only three Local Authorities on the DFE Improvement Framework.

You are all aware of our priorities and we have seen significant successes. Our number of looked-after children is falling by over 14% since 2011, saving the city £15m in three years. Our NEET figures have continued to fall. We have created 1,433 new primary school places in the past six years, and 92% of children attend a primary school rated as "Good" or above, putting us above the national average and top of the Yorkshire and Humber region.

All of this shows the fantastic work that is taking place with children and young people every day across Leeds and I would like to thank all our staff and partners who have helped achieve this in spite of a £36.5m reduction in our budget since 2010 due to continuing Government cuts.



One of our biggest successes is the Staying Put programme which ensures that young people who are in care stay with their foster families for longer, resulting in huge benefits for that young person. We are the most successful Authority in the country with regards to this initiative which is great, but it comes at a cost. Next year the cost of Staying Put is just over £1.3m but we will only receive a £220,000 Government grant, meaning that once again we have to find that extra million from elsewhere.

Briefly on the amendments, Councillors Carter and Blackburn have both recommended increasing the Youth Activity Funding but have not suggested a sustainable way of doing so. ICT savings and plundering reserves may work for this year but what do we do the year after? We are facing challenges and in particular an increasing demographic challenge. We are a growing city with high birth rates and a rising population of children and young people with special and very complex needs. This not only puts pressure on social care but also on education and we are currently faced with a £67m shortfall in Government funding for school places.

The demands on Children's Services continue to increase and we must find a way to meet these while sustaining our high standards within one of the most severe financial settlements this city has ever faced. We are already in the process of meeting partners to discuss what a sustainable Children's Services should look like in the future, but despite the significant reduction in funding we are continuing to prioritise spending on early intervention services and in particular children's centres.

We remain committed to our 57 children's centres across the city and we will keep them open for as long as we can. The impact that they have on families is vital and I am delighted to say that in that spirit there will be no fee increase this year. Keeping them sets us apart from many Councils up and down the country when over 750 children's centres have been forced to close since 2010, including in Mr Cameron's own constituency.

This Government talks a lot about being family friendly but have overseen childcare places fall by at least 40,000 and childcare costs escalate at more than six times the rate of wages. What message does this send to families?

The result of Conservative policies does not match their rhetoric. Perhaps David Cameron should listen to his mum who has recently signed a petition against the cuts in his constituency. It seems that she understands the importance of investing in public services; it is just a shame he does not.

Here are a few of the ways that the family friendly Tories have supported children and families: cutting Child Tax Credits for middle income households; freezing Child Benefit for three years; axing the Sure Start Maternity Grant; abolishing Child Trust Fund payments; wasting £440,000 on free schools that did not even open; they overspend on academies by £1bn and cut the funding of State schools to pay for it. They wasted £114m on consultants to plan for their free school and academy reforms. They scrapped the Educational Maintenance Allowance; they tripled tuition fees; and just yesterday they voted to plunge a further 700,000 children in the Yorkshire and Humber Region into poverty. Unfortunately my five minutes does not give me much time to go through them all, there are so many.

Under this Labour administration we have one of the best Children's Services in the country, but how much more could we have achieved if we had not had our budgets slashed so dramatically? We are committed to being a child friendly city and putting children and young people at the heart of the economic growth strategy. The

difference between us and the Government is that they say they are family friendly but the evidence suggests otherwise. We say we are child friendly and we truly are.

Lord Mayor, I support the Budget in the name of Councillor Judith Blake as it is a budget that continues to protect the most vulnerable in terms of ever-increasing austerity. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Anderson.

COUNCILLOR B ANDERSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. As Private Frazer would say, we are doomed, at least if you listen across there. In supporting Councillor Carter I want to make some things clear. We do support a Royal Commission on Local Government finance. We do think that it is the right thing to do and hopefully that is something as Leader of Council you can then follow and agree with as well. Also to make it clear, we on this side are not happy with the settlement we got, we are disappointed with the way that Local Government has been treated by successive Governments and anybody who knows what I have said before will know that I am not making that up, I genuinely do think we have had a bad deal.

To listen to today's debate, where are the alternative strategies from Councillor Blake? How is she going to take the city forward? How is she going to develop the city? How is she going to make everybody in the city benefit from what is happening in the economy just now? We have heard nothing.

What we have heard from her, however, is all the things that have been done. Well, these have all either been done under the last Coalition Government or under the current Government. Very little has been done that she has talked about under the previous Labour Government and all the money that she has talked about that is getting spent in the city has been given by previous Governments as well, so it is thanks to the Conservatives and the Liberals at a national level that she has got some of the investment that she has got. She has made no mention at all about the demographic and policy pressures that she is bringing on our budget the way that she looks at it.

To look more precisely at our budget amendment, we do think that there is the need to put another £1m into improving the road conditions in this city. It is not acceptable the amount of potholes and the poor condition of the roads in this city and if we are trying to attract businesses into the city, when they start coming in and go over these types of road conditions, why are they going to start investing into these things?

There is also a number of other things missing from the Budget today. What about specifically looking at the collapsed gulleys that Highways have got responsibility for? What is also missing is further comment on reducing and bringing forward a strategy in terms of overtime payments, the use of contracted agency staff. Yes you have made inroads, yes I agree with you, but there is still more to be done.

We have just heard from Councillor Yeadon but we need a proper vision for the future of education within Children's Services. Councillor Alan Lamb does have such a vision, as do a lot of other people on this side of the Chamber, a vision as to how we can take this city forward. Do not think you have a unique way, that you are the only people that have got ideas. There are a number of good thinkers throughout this Council Chamber and it is time that everybody's skills were used to benefit the city in terms of what we are doing.

In terms of risks that we face, in City Development it is all based on if the staff changes, staff reductions do not come along you are going to have a problem in that

budget. You are also allowing some very good quality staff to leave under voluntary redundancy and we will reap that poor harvest at some time in the future unless something is done about the way that you are allowing some people to go under VR.

In terms of Environment and Housing, I was advised yesterday that because of the efficiency of the Energy from Waste Plant in this current year of budget, you managed to save £400,000 and that has been put into the central budget. Why do you not think about prioritising and saying to people like Neil Evans, "There is the £400,000, you spend it on some initiative because you have taken the hard steps by making further savings."

There are some questions that still remain to be answered and it will be interesting to see if Councillor Blake is willing to answer any of them. Will you finally deliver on the promise that we will have zero based budgeting brought into this Council to look and see whether or not we need to do all that we are currently doing just now? Do you not think that in terms of the devolution power that you have complained so much about that you want more power, if you sign a devolution deal you will have more powers to do these sort of things.

Lord Mayor, we need a vision and a number of us in this Council can deliver it. We need policies for 2017 and beyond, not a Socialist utopia from the past that will never, ever return. Even the Labour Party nationally accepts that. We need to develop a new model. I support the amendment by Councillor Andrew Carter.  
*(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking in support of Councillor Blake's budget and in favour of delivering a Socialist utopia. *(laughter)* I cannot, before I turn to some of the other amendments, help noticing that we have a Boris Johnson/David Cameron style split on Europe on the Morley Borough Independents' Front Bench. I am not sure which is which but Councillor Leadley wants Morley to have less ties with Leeds but more with Europe – maybe a Berlin airlift style approach – and Councillor Finnigan wants Morley to cut off from everywhere, though Heaven help him if Morley gets cut off from Kirklees, where he lives. *(laughter)*

Turning now, we had a few history lessons this afternoon. I particularly enjoyed Councillor Carter telling us about the Wilson Government. I am sure for many of us, certainly on this side of the Council Chamber, born after Harold Wilson was Prime Minister that trip down memory lane was very useful for us. I think I will give a little bit of a history lesson and a little bit of a look at the public finances, because the single fact remains for all the bluster we have heard from down there, in just six years George Osborne has borrowed more money than every single Labour Government that has ever existed... *(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: To sort out your mess.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: ...because Osbornomics have failed. Let us not remember Labour Governments – Labour Governments have through history given us the NHS, the Welfare State, the Open University, built Council houses, national minimum wage, rebuilt schools and hospitals. What has George Osborne got for his massive borrowing? A new hard hat and a hi-vis jacket for his photo opportunities.  
*(Applause)*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: To sort out your mess.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: We have as part of the failure of Osbornomics the deep cuts to public services, the deep cuts to our Health Service and the deep cuts to Local Government, and the phrase “successive Governments” sometimes echoes around this Council Chamber. Again, it is all bluster because let us not forget, we are here to talk about Leeds City Council’s budget 2016/17.

We have seen the Tories have somehow managed to magic £25m out of somewhere to put money into Surrey, the magic £15m for Hampshire and Hertfordshire East. It is austerity for some and a boost for others and it is just not fair and it is just not dealing with the problems we have in this city.

Now I would like to very quickly turn to the Tories’ reaction with running dogs in the Liberal Democrat Party who spent five years with great glee cutting away at public services. Government Gollon used the phrase, I think, he said that the Lib Democrats’ amendments were mere gestures as if they did not matter, but I think when the Liberal Democrats choose to inflict the impact of Tory austerity on the Council’s frontline workers by freezing increments on pay, it just shows that the DNA of that Party is still one that sits very comfortably alongside the Tories’ chosen austerity and the Tories’ assault on public services.

The Lib Dems talk a lot about waste as well and different forms of waste disposal. What is quite clear, as Councillor Blake said, is the one big form of waste disposal we need is Councillor Dobson producing the city’s biggest green bin to put all the Lib Dem leaflets that have told misleading facts and figures about PCSOs. *(laughter)* Those Lib Dem leaflets have said that Labour is cutting PCSOs – prove them wrong and they are going back into the dustbin of history like the Party themselves.

I just also wanted to turn to the common theme between the Conservative Coalition partners there about our relationship with the trade unions in the city because I think it is an important one to deal with.

Our relationship with the trade unions has not just delivered on the penny-pinching measures that they put in their budget amendment. It has delivered over £12m a year savings in terms of better flexibility, redeployment of staff, changing the workforce, voluntary leavers’ initiative, early leavers’ initiative, reducing overtime and agency workers and avoiding compulsory redundancies where possible. That is what modern industrial relations look like. I know some over there might want to put the trade union movement back in the days when people swore secret oaths under trees but that is not what we want in this city. We have got a positive relation with the trade unions, we are changing the workforce and the organisation for the better and we have done it avoiding the mass industrial action that scarred the dying days of their Coalition administration in this city. *(Applause)*

We have signed up, we are the first Council to sign up to UNISON’s Ethical Pay Charter, improving conditions for home care staff and we are paying a living wage this year. This Council will not build the future of the organisation or the city on low pay and an unregulated workforce.

We heard a little bit about job creation from down there and let us not forget this single fact: 34% of people in full time work and part time work in Yorkshire do not have a permanent job. It is temporary work, it is deregulated, gives people no security. That is wrong for the city. Our future vision for the city is one built on good jobs, good pay, rising prosperity for all and I support Councillor Blake’s budget. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Blackburn.

COUNCILLOR A BLACKBURN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I am speaking in support of the Green amendments. We are told how important Community Committees are, yet their funding is being cut for the third year running, this year by £200,000. We are therefore proposing an interest in the Citizens and Communities Budget of £333,000 to go to Community Committees to spend on local projects in their wards. We think this is very important. We know every ward has different priorities and this is really giving the money to the wards to decide what their priorities are and for them to do something about it. That is what Community Committees are all about, doing stuff in the community.

We are concerned that £51,000 is to be cut from the Youth Activities Fund. We believe that it is important to provide activities for youngsters in our wards, to try and keep them from hanging around the streets not knowing what to do with themselves, which in some cases leads to bus shelters being smashed and other vandalism taking place, hence our amendment 14 reinstates this amount.

For some time we have had a food collection service in Rothwell. We think now that it is about time that this service was expanded. We accept that there is not loads of money generally in the budget to do this but we think even if we can make some small expansion, that it is the way that we should be going and so we have put money in our amendments to allow for this.

We are concerned that the Winter Contingency Budget for refuse collection is being proposed to be cut. I do not know what the Council knows, whether they have had a word with the man up there that they assume that the next winter and the rest of this is going to be fantastic, I do not know, but to be honest nobody knows that so if we are sensible we should really have a contingency budget to allow for that, hence we have allowed for that in our amendments.

Also, we allowed for the fact that if there is a problem with bins being collected regularly, as we know that our electorate get very upset if their bins are not collected on the day they are supposed to be, that we allow for a budget so that there is a workforce that is able to collect them the following day or at least during that week. Again, we have allowed finances for that.

To show that Councillors are also willing to accept some cuts themselves – because in this budget I notice that it has been suggested cuts from the workforce in some budgets and also cuts in trade union, in the people that we employ to carry out trade union duties – obviously we believe that as Councillors we should be able to show we are doing our bit and so we know this will not be popular, it never is, but nevertheless we are there again, we are putting in an amount to be funded from cutting Councillors' allowances.

I ask that you look at these carefully. I am sure that a lot of you will agree with at least some of the stuff that we have got down here and I hope that you can support if not all of them some of them. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Procter.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In seconding the amendment in the name of Councillor Andrew Carter I want to focus on one point in particular and that is amendment number 5 and our proposal to properly support Planning Services in the increasingly complex area of planning appeals. Over the next six months the decisions of Plans Panels of this Council are to be tested. Where Plans Panel has issued four refusals on a range of PAS sites, volume house builders are going to test those decisions through appeal. They will bring some of

the best barristers and planning consultants in the country to the table and it is only right that our officers should be similarly supportive. One of those four sites, Lord Mayor, is actually a flood plain and we hope that the controlling Group will deliver on their promise to review through the Site Allocations Process all of the sites that are in danger of flooding in the future. That is certainly something that we will be holding the administration to account on, Lord Mayor.

I had hoped the change in Leadership of the City Council would also bring about a change of approach. I hoped that the moaning and carping would stop and that we would see a modern, fresh approach to politics in this city. Problems solvers, not blamers; leaders of a great city, not followers of a national Labour line. Sadly today from the performances that we have seen from the controlling Group, that has not occurred.

Lord Mayor, quite unbelievably Councillor Blake talked about us entering the seventh year of Conservative austerity, and yet she and I suspect most of her colleagues never stop to ask the question why? Why has there been a need for what you would call austerity? It is simple, Lord Mayor, because the Conservative Government has had to tidy up the mess that was left behind by Labour.  
*(interruption)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Can you let him speak, please.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: Lord Mayor, some Members, not the newer ones, know that I am an avid reader and I read a wide selection of literature. I can lend *this* to any Labour Member who has not read it so far...

THE LORD MAYOR: What is it? *[Councillor Procter held up a copy of 'The Third Man' by Peter Mandelson]*

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: ...because so many of you claim to have been in the know; so many of you claim to be at the heart of Government. Of course, none of you were. This man was, The Third Man, as he describes himself and to quote him, Lord Mayor:

"The central argument over the future economic strategy was no closer to being resolved. Gordon was resisting any talk of new cuts in spending to reduce the difficult deficit. We were simply in denial..."

("Simply in denial", Lord Mayor)

"about the scale of the financial hole we found ourselves in. We would simply keep on spending, borrowing and taking on debt, a burden that would take an entire generation of future taxpayers to pay off."

Lord Mayor, that is the reality of this budget, that is the reality of the economy of this country – a Government, a Labour Government who taxed and spent the lot, Lord Mayor – the lot. The Economic Secretary to the Treasury left the famous note, "There is no money left", Lord Mayor, and that is why a Conservative Government is having to make the cuts – yes, the cuts – that it has done and continues regrettably to do.

Lord Mayor, Councillor Blake talks about a choice. Indeed, there was a choice for this country. It was the choice between the two Eds, Miliband and Balls, or Cameron and Osborne. In May of last year the people made their choice, Lord

Mayor. In this city they elected another Conservative Member to represent them in Parliament and nationally, Lord Mayor, they elected a Conservative Government to clear up the mess that Labour left behind. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Campbell. Can you allow him to speak, please?

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I know traditionally we begin these speeches by saying thank you to the Council staff for the work they have done to help us produce the Budget amendments etc, and I would like to extend that. I would also like to extend a bit thank you to the members of the public who have sat through the debate this afternoon. *(Applause)* I am sure they all came along hoping for Labour's clear vision of the future for our city and I suppose they have got a clear vision because they have worked out, have they not, that the increase from five to three of PCSOs in each ward seems to be the big thing.

I have sat through quite a few Budget debates, Lord Mayor, and I am thinking back, and looking at the wall back there, to George Mudie. Those of you who have a long enough memory and were not in short trousers in those days will remember that George Mudie used to do a full speech and I am sorry, yours pales into insignificance compared with the length that he could go to. *(laughter)* I will give him his due, he did spend at least an hour – at least an hour and usually longer – explaining the Labour Party's vision for the city and how they were going to fulfil that vision. He then spent probably a similar length of time complaining about the Government, but there we are.

What we have seen this afternoon, I think, from the Labour side, is a lack of a vision for where they want the city to go... *(interruption)*

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Load of rubbish.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: ...let me get to the end – and a very, very, very long whinge about the Government. I listened to Judith's speech. Judith's speech, more than half of that speech was complaining about the Government. It was not talking about what Labour wants to do for the city. Another 25% of the speech was saying, "Actually, Leeds is doing quite well economically. There are a lot of people coming here" and we had the quote "Burberry is coming here" and the sort of implied claim that Burberry was coming here because of the efforts of the Labour Party in Leeds. Actually Burberry – I suppose they might be coming here because with Judith getting a large allowance she may well be able to afford a Burberry (sorry about that) but to be honest, they come here because Leeds is a thriving city and it is a city they want to be in and it is an attitude from the entire Council about a positive attitude as we have shown through the meeting in relation to manufacturing, a positive attitude towards encouraging people to come to the city.

The same was true, unfortunately Lucinda, with you...

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Are you not going to mention your amendment?

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Speaking on the amendment because we have not heard it yet.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Another Councillor woken up at the back there! *(laughter)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Can you let him speak, please.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I am coming to that because...

COUNCILLOR LYONS: He is not speaking to that, Lord Mayor.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: I am speaking to that, Lord Mayor, if I get the chance.

THE LORD MAYOR: I have said will you let him speak, please.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Councillor Yeadon, again we have got a positive story to tell about Children's Services, we really do and I think we would all agree that actually the city pulled together, the Council pulled together and have created a Children's Services Department we should be proud of, but unfortunately instead of trumpeting that success you actually spent three-quarters of your speech complaining about the Government again.

Then we went on to Councillor Lewis, who I have often said mistakes quantity for quality. We had that inspiration about the relationship between the trades union and the Labour Party, and it is quite simple, the relationship between the trades union and the Labour Party – the Labour Party subsidises trades union officers and the trades union subsidise the Labour Party election funds. It is as simple as that.

Let us get on to our amendment. (*cheering*) We actually have a positive contribution to make to move this city towards a greener and a more sustainable city. We talked about that with the Energy from Waste plant which I know that you, Mick, were a great supporter of.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: Councillor Lyons. (*laughter*)

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: In fact I am surprised that Councillor Dobson has not come forward with a suggestion we name it after you.

COUNCILLOR LYONS: I found out that the wind is blowing across the Baltic normally.

COUNCILLOR CAMPBELL: That was a positive suggestion from our side of the Chamber. These are more positive suggestions to turn Leeds into a much greener, more sustainable place and I would urge you to support them. Thank you, Lord Mayor. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Cleasby.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: Thank you, Lord Mayor. Lord Mayor, Council, I have a prepared speech but before I deliver that, just some points on the things I have learned today. David, allowances are voluntary not mandatory. If you do not want to pick up allowances, don't. Remember, we all collectively in this Chamber agreed that the Independent Panel would set those allowance figures for us. We all agreed that.

Andrew (he is not here yet) referred to the £200m and the famous Liz Truss letter. What does annoy me is that my belief is that of that £200m, £40m of it will be VAT. I think something ought to be done with the Government on that to make sure we get £200m-worth of value in flood defences.

Judith, you referred to so many things. I wrote down these things as it went along. Best outcomes for local people – we will get to that in my speech. Police Commissioner election is due. Well, come on, the man is not daft. Of course he is



going to make sure he is spending the money putting extra PCSOs in for us to con people, surely. He has been working with the police; isn't that the kind of thing that they do? We know that from the CCTV and other uses that the police use this for.  
(interruption)

Judith spoke about imaginative thinking but, Judith, it was all outside of this Council. I am going to be speaking about imaginative thinking within this Council. You said, Judith, "We are working differently to boost income and reduce costs."

Right then, Council, I will start reading for you. Council, after some 20 years I am aware that this Budget, although new to most is, in fact, months old and some of the moneys already committed to current projects. We have all tried to put back-to-back projects together at the year's end and at the beginning of the next so my contribution today is the lack of imagination displayed in this budget.

It is not for us, Liberal Democrats, to put forward an alternative budget. As I have said, most of the budget is already committed by departments. Councillor Golton has given a few examples of our thinking – thinking based on imaginatively investing in services. Remember, we are part of the official opposition.

Councillor Townsley and I were amazed to be told by an officer that the Horsforth Housing Office was being transferred to the Mechanics Institute to gain a capital receipt. There was not discussion of this; we were told. He was going to turn the ballroom there into offices and when challenged, stated it was under-used. We knew that and we know the reason why. The bookings are done from here and I have been able to furnish the Chief Executive with the evidence that to book it was almost impossible – that is right, Tom, isn't it? The ballroom is used by a dance academy who are currently teaching 500 people a week. I will quote from an email to me from them:

"In July 2015 we became aware of Horsforth Mechanics Institute being available as a perfect venue for ballroom dancing and set out to hire the facility. Facilities Management Lettings arranged to let the venue to us but it seems that the venue was not part of their property portfolio and as such they were not able to make some key decisions regarding access, etc. The Community Hub seemed to own the building but there also did not seem to be anyone willing to make a decision about the building. From talking to proactive people in both organisations, it seems that the building falls between them both, making the practicality of leasing and using the building extremely difficult.

Having received a signed contract in mid-August 2016, it was only in late September 2015 that we finally had confirmed access to the building, once the not insignificant issue of access was resolved. It is not surprising that the ballroom is under-utilised, given the difficulty that we have had in arranging to lease it."

It has moved on a little bit since then because Councillor Townsley and I have got involved and Asset Management are beginning to listen to us and we could be in line for quite a decent capital receipt as a consequence.

I will go on. Another example, Council, and many of you on Planning are aware of this, of Leeds City Horsforth Campus. I believe Education are now embracing my suggestion that it would be an ideal Sixth Form base. Horsforth Academy are fully behind the idea, realising that this could release capacity at the

school without new build. If the three high schools on the A65 supported the idea, then we could release 700 plus places as a consequence.

THE LORD MAYOR: Red light.

COUNCILLOR CLEASBY: I will close with one sentence, Lord Mayor. Council, please be more imaginative. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Thank you. Councillor Blake, we now come to your summing up. You have up to 15 minutes.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I do find being lectured at on lack of imagination and vision by the people on the other benches somewhat difficult to stomach when you actually listen to what they have said, anything creative or anything constructive that we could pick up and take forward. I am very pleased to welcome students from Trinity here today and always pleased to support them, but I do not know if you realised that you would be having quite the history lesson or even the ancient history lesson that you have been subjected to this afternoon.

I do just want to say one thing and it something that I have noticed over different Council meetings going back, that when in particular the Tories (and we have seen it with other Parties today as well) when they do not have an argument to make and they do not have anything constructive to say, what do they do? They start attacking individual Members personally.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: That is rich coming from you. My goodness.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I just think we have got beyond that and I am really disappointed that that is the way that you come and also this is real Back to the Future and I just thought Councillor Lewis's comments about Harold Wilson were absolutely bang on.

The other thing that if you actually read through the amendments, in terms of funding the very minor changes that have been put forward is yet another attack on people who work for the Local Authority and for the trade unions that do such a good job in this city working with their Members but also working with us in terms of delivering quality services. I find it very hard to take when we quite rightly heard from you all about the incredible work that our Council staff did after the dreadful flooding on Boxing Day and beyond, and then to see in the amendments further suggestions of cuts to their terms and conditions.

The other thing about putting that forward as part of a Budget amendment is the high risk that is attached to it, the length of time any of their proposals would actually take to implement. It would take months and they would not deliver the savings that they have put forward if they were in a position to implement them.

We know, all of us know, that public sector workers have suffered years of pay restraint and across the public sector should we not be doing everything we possibly can to boost morale, to make people feel valued, instead of which in all of the main public sector areas why have we got such a problem recruiting teachers? We look at what is happening in the Health Service, in the NHS at the moment and the comments that totally disillusioned teachers, junior doctors are making as a result of the way that the negotiations or lack of negotiations have been going.

I think we should be doing everything we can in this Chamber to promote what public servants to do contribute to the real civilised nature of our city and we

should be doing everything we can where there are opportunities to encourage young people to come in.

On some of the specifics, we have mentioned flooding and we have had some good debates about flooding but Councillor Carter refers specifically to the letter that we have just received from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and I have to say, whilst it is welcome that they have announced a feasibility study for in particular the River Aire and its catchment, it took some time after the meeting with the Secretary of State for a commitment to be made that there would be such a study, and if you actually read it it is going to take between 18 and 24 months for that feasibility study to be done. I have to say, what confidence does that give to us, to Councillor Yeadon who worked so hard with the communities, the businesses in Kirkstall, to go out and say well, actually, we have got nothing at all to offer you for the next two years and then on top of that the build of the scheme. We will continue to press for urgency.

We cannot allow the city to be left unprotected and also we would like to know that there is money at the end of the feasibility study from National Government to implement the flooding protection that this city needs.

The other issue connected to this that several of you mentioned is around devolution. Stewart quite rightly said that an unexpected Conservative Government coming in last May meant that George Osborne's first demand on the devolution agenda was for every area to have a directly elected Mayor, and Councillor Anderson has said we ought to just sign the deal. I wish it was that simple and I welcome the comments that Councillor Carter has made in his commitment to Leeds City Region, but all of you sitting there know that the block on us moving forward is coming from Conservative MPs across Yorkshire who are trying to impose a so-called Greater Yorkshire model upon us which has had no negotiations, no discussions at all and I look forward to working with you to make sure that we can put the needs of Leeds and Leeds City Region first and we are not held up by the politics of the Tory MPs who are completely concerned about the prospect of a Labour Mayor. It simply is not good enough. The people of our city and the wider region depend on us moving forward.

I just want to be clear from Councillor Finnigan, are you in your amendment suggesting that you will be introducing car parking charges into Morley? I think that is something perhaps that the people of Morley will be very interested in hearing about and I am sure they will hear about that suggestion.

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: They will be if he shuts Siegen Manor.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Also, I understand that the Morley Borough Council has chosen not to support additional PCSOs...

COUNCILLOR FINNIGAN: That is not true.

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: How can they when your PCC has changed the funding regime?

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: ...and I think that is a disappointment to hear. As Councillor Procter knows, a significant number of the PCSOs are funded by other agencies and that is how we will be able to work to make sure that the provision we have targets need going forward.

I am intrigued by Councillor Carter's constant obsession with the LEA, as he describes it. I wish you would join forces with us to make the case for protecting

Local Education Authorities because I have to tell you that the whole of the drive from the Government particularly when Michael Gove was Secretary of State for Children's and for Education, as he changed it to, he was absolutely set on diminishing Local Education Authorities, taking money out of the centre from Councils so that Councils no longer have the ability to fund what they need to do in our schools. We brought, with cross-party agreement, Education Leeds back into our Children's Services because we believe that education should be at the heart of Children's Services. Children spend so much time in schools and to have them arm's length without any accountability to us is a great disservice and I am afraid many Local Authorities around the country are having to close their education functions down altogether. I am very pleased to say that that is not the case in Leeds but we have to be very vigilant about the direction of travel going forward and I do miss my sparring opportunities with Councillor Lamb, it seems to have been a while, I am surprised he did not speak today in the Budget.

We have put forward a budget that is coping with the grant cuts to us over the next year with the additional pressures that we are facing with the pension increases, the living wage, all of the things that the Government has failed to take into account. I have to say that we should keep going back and referring to just how unfair the settlement from this Government has been and continues to be with the additional support that has gone into other areas.

Maybe Councillor Anderson has a point. If we are one of the most diverse Local Authorities in the country in terms of geography, then perhaps with your help we could be asking for rural support in the way that the Shire Counties have gone to them. Why shouldn't we?

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Or the reverse.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I would be really happy to work with you on that.

COUNCILLOR ANDREW CARTER: Or the reverse, Judith.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I want to summarise today by first of all saying that this Budget lays out our commitment to working with the most vulnerable in our society, working to mitigate the fact that the money that the Labour Government gave to us in grant form to support the areas of highest need that your Government has come and slashed repeatedly, we will continue to do everything we can to make sure that the people that we represent have the opportunity to achieve their life chances, make sure that the businesses that come and work in this city continue to work with us so that we can create the opportunities for young people to take the jobs that are on offer, to achieve the training that they need to go forward.

This is a dynamic time that we are living through and I notice with great interest that you did not reflect on your amendment for cutting the budget to ICT. I have to say, what all of us know in this day and age that information technology, communications, the change in the way that everyone works, we need to be finding ways that we can invest more and more money into that area so that we can become more efficient, that we can address the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century workplace and we can go forward leading by example for the city in putting our people first.

I am very pleased to commend our budget to this Council and I look forward to working with all of you to implement it over the next twelve months. Thank you.  
*(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Charlwood.

COUNCILLOR CHARLWOOD: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.4 I call for recorded votes on all amendments and the Budget Motion.

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Latty.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: I second that, Lord Mayor.

*(Recorded votes were held on Amendments 1 to 15)*

**Amendment 1**

91 Members were present, 24 voted "Yes", 8 abstentions, 59 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 2**

91 Members were present, 20 voted "Yes", 6 abstentions, 59 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 3**

91 Members were present, 27 voted "Yes", 5 abstentions, 59 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 4**

91 Members were present, 21 voted "Yes", 11 abstentions, 59 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 5**

91 Members were present, 21 voted "Yes", 11 abstentions, 59 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 6**

91 Members were present, 18 voted "Yes", 11 abstentions, 62 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 7**

91 Members were present, 26 voted "Yes", 6 abstentions, 59 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 8**

91 Members were present, 32 voted "Yes", 0 abstentions, 59 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 9**

91 Members were present, 6 voted "Yes", 9 abstentions, 76 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 10**

91 Members were present, 9 voted "Yes", 6 abstentions, 76 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 11**

86 Members were present, 5 voted "Yes", 3 abstentions, 76 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 12**

90 Members were present, 12 voted "Yes", 19 abstentions, 59 voted "No".  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 13**

91 Members were present, 14 voted “Yes”, 18 abstentions, 59 voted “No”.  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 14**

91 Members were present, 8 voted “Yes”, 24 abstentions, 59 voted “No”.  
The Amendment was LOST.

**Amendment 15**

91 Members were present, 8 voted “Yes”, 6 abstentions, 77 voted “No”.  
The Amendment was LOST.

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

85 Members were present, 64 voted “Yes”, 20 abstentions, 1 voted “No”.  
The Motion has been CARRIED in the name of Councillor Blake. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Can we now turn back, please, to page 3.

ITEM 6 – MINUTES

THE LORD MAYOR: If we could move on, please, we are now on to Item 6, which is the Minutes. Councillor Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thank you, Lord Mayor. In moving the Minutes can I suggest that Councillor Yeadon sums up because it looks unlikely that we will be beyond the Children’s Services Minutes from the time frame, if that is OK with you.

THE LORD MAYOR: OK, fine, no problem. Councillor Charlwood.

COUNCILLOR CHARLWOOD: I will second that the Minutes be received.

THE LORD MAYOR: I call for the vote. *(A vote was taken)* The vote has been CARRIED.

**(a) Executive Board**

**(i) Children and Families**

THE LORD MAYOR: We are now on Children and Families Services, Councillor Cohen.

COUNCILLOR COHEN: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I thought I had three minutes there because I thought Councillor Lamb was going first so you took me semi-unawares.

Thank you, Lord Mayor, I will be speaking to Minutes 135 and 137 from the Minute book.

Members will be aware from last year the embarrassment, frankly, that we faced as a city and the shambles that we faced as a city in respect of school places, particularly across the north of the city with my own ward of Alwoodley, Moor Town, Roundhay had a real issue last year in terms of ensuring that children were offered a suitable place at a local school.

Anybody would think that there was a serious election on at that time last year because people were organising meetings with an energy that is rarely seen to try and reassure members of the public but because of the publicity that rightfully last year's debacle received, I have genuinely lost count of the number of really worried parents, bizarrely not just from Alwoodley as I have had to refer them on to their own ward Members, but a significant number of really worried parents about what is going to be happening this year. Some Members will be aware, again particularly Members from Moor Town, Roundhay and Alwoodley, that some months ago there was a stakeholder conference, if you will, organised with stakeholders or schools, ward Members, looking at a whole range of potential solutions. One of my concerns is that there does not appear to have been a huge amount of feedback from there other than to say that there were not any immediate solutions that come to light.

I make no bones about it, I think that Councillor Yeadon has a much better grasp of the issue than her predecessor did and I am looking for today a real assurance that we are not going to see a repeat of last year's situation for the good of all of those across the north of the city.

We have, of course, had some good news in terms of school places; a new Government funded free school helping capacity in Temple Newsam; a new Government funded free school approved in Roundhay and I hope that the administration will work with them to find a suitable site for it. I am sure that come May voters in Roundhay and Temple Newsam will recognise that it is the Conservative's free school policy that has delivered school places in places that really do need it.

Now it is time for the ruling administration to embrace this positive and exciting opportunity across the city and I am sure Councillor Yeadon will for the good of the city. Thank you, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Robinson.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I rise to speak on the school admissions minutes here and I wish to take the opportunity to wish all children and all parents in Leeds good luck in applying for school places this year, because the chaos that we saw last year in parts of Leeds must be avoided.

Michael Gove's name has been mentioned a few times today. I think one of the things that I would draw attention to, aside from all the criticism of Mr Gove, is that the Pupil Premium has been brought in and we should all be in favour of the Pupil Premium. Especially recently Michael Gove has talked a lot of sense.

School admissions face a real problem in Leeds. I know I have raised it with Councillor Lucinda Yeadon before around school transport to our schools. We have got a situation in the north-east of Leeds and in other parts of Leeds where there is no choice because people feel forced, through school transport issues, to go to certain schools. That is making life very, very difficult for parents, it is making it very expensive for parents who can ill afford it as well.

Academies and free schools, despite some of the opinions opposite, are not going to go away. They are here now, there are going to be more of them and by the time there is the next General Election there is no turning back from them. The thing that we need to do now is work far more easily and more comfortably with academies and free schools. We need to make sure that we are helping them bring additional school places forward, often in areas where they are needed most and suggesting and nudging them to those areas as opposed to opposing them altogether and outright.

I would ask for Councillor Lucinda Yeadon to say what greater collaboration has been taking place in co-operation with multi academy trusts, with free schools and academy chains; what work has been done to work with free school providers to look at where they can be opened and what dialogue has taken place.

School admissions are all intended about choice and at the moment for many people it does not feel like a choice. In Shadwell, in the Harewood ward, the catchment area for the primary school at the moment is 0.3 miles; in Collingham it is 0.2 miles. It is not a threat that you might not get into the school and into a local school, and especially a good local school; it is actually a very real problem that we are experiencing at the moment.

I met with headteachers all over the country and in the north-east of England one headteacher told me that if people were not getting into his school they were leaving the Local Authority area. That is a risk that I do not want to take in Leeds. We should be making sure that Leeds is a bastion of good education, people want to come from all over. One parent in Shadwell approached me last year when we went through this debacle and informed me that they were forced to look at private schools. That is a Labour Council – a Labour Council – that is forcing people to look at private schools. This was a single parent who could ill afford to look at sending their child to a private school and look at that being the most credible option.

THE LORD MAYOR: You have run out of time.

COUNCILLOR ROBINSON: Lord Mayor, I look forward to the answers. Thank you. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Pryor.

COUNCILLOR PRYOR: Lord Mayor, I am delighted to comment on page 387 Minute 135 on the proposed expansion of Brudenell primary school of which I am a Governor.

Education is a cornerstone of our economic success and the foundation for an engaged society. There is no better route out of poverty, no better way to increase aspiration and social mobility and no better way to secure prosperity and build the kind of high wage, cutting edge economy that we want to build, which is why it troubles me to see the Government failing in such a huge way on school placed planning. The Government's free school programme and free market approach to creating new places is completely inadequate.

In a time of rapid rising for demand of places, crossing one's fingers and hoping that a parent group or charity will come along at the right place and the right time is at best wishful thinking and at worst a failure of duty. It also flies in the face of the Government's so-called localism agenda. The Conservatives talk a big talk on the elusive Northern Powerhouse but with schools they are removing oversight and centralising power in Whitehall.

Back in Leeds we found different ways of thinking about school places that require cross-departmental co-ordination and provides a solid solution, particularly in the Brudenell area. Brudenell primary is a fantastic school and a shining example of multiculturalism in Leeds. We have been lucky that we have been able to use the Brudenell centre to enable the expansion of the school. The area is densely populated and there was no option but to expand on the existing school site. I am particularly pleased that we have been able to offer ten places for children with complex communication difficulties, including those from the autistic spectrum.



Increasing this provision will be providing a vital service for children and families. It is important that children can access provision such as this as close to their homes as possible.

Lord Mayor, every child (*sic*) wants the best possible education for their child and I am pleased that in the midst of the Conservatives' permanent revolution of our education system Leeds has cut through the chaos and delivered for families in our city. Thank you. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Dowson.

COUNCILLOR DOWSON: Thank you, Lord Mayor. All the Minutes on this portfolio relate to the provision of school places and how we as a Local Authority are ensuring we continue to meet that statutory duty to provide sufficient places for children across the city and I would just say to Councillor Cohen, if it was a shambles – if it was a shambles – it was a shambles of the Government's making by not allowing the Local Authority to build schools (*hear, hear*) where they are actually needed. (*Applause*)

It is becoming more difficult as the money provided by the Government for school places simply is not enough. I have spoken many times in this Chamber about the shortfall that we are facing so let me give you figure, and it is a figure that Councillor Yeadon has already given you and it is bigger than the £200,000 here. £67m shortfall. That is huge. £67m because we are not given enough money to do the work and before you start saying it is because we are extravagant and we spend too much money, you know that the Government has actually been to the Authority and they have actually said that our departments provide very good value for money – in fact we are one of the best in the country so you cannot throw that one at us.

It may be helpful if I share with you the feelings of the Local Government Association. The LGA's Children and Young People's Board is currently chaired by Councillor Roy Perry. On the opposite Bench the Tories may actually recognise that name because he is the Conservative Leader of Hampshire County Council. He has been calling for Local Authorities to be given back the power to open new schools for years. The LGA is also warning that Councils will soon be unable to provide school places for all children in their areas. Councils across the country have started to voice their worries about the future, even in Conservative run heartlands such as Hampshire, so you see it is not just us and it is not about politics, it is about an issue that impacts children and families across the country. Councillor Perry explained that Councils have created an extra 300,000 primary places in all sorts of ways.

I am going to ask again for cross-party support for the continued lobbying of Government asking them to return the powers to Local Authorities to build schools. I really do not understand why, when the Conservative LGA and Young People's Board speaks out with one voice regardless of political persuasion, we appear to have difficulty in achieving that one voice here in Leeds.

It is not a political position and it is not an ideological position. This is a logical position to ensure that children have a school place where it is needed. Government has got this one wrong. They need to reverse their decision or it will be young people who suffer. Young people will suffer but it will be the Local Authority that will be to blame. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Sobel.

COUNCILLOR SOBEL: Lord Mayor, I would like to speak on page 387 Minute 135, which refers to the school expansion programme, in particular the Hyde Park and Headingley area, as well as the update on school places in Roundhay and Alwoodley which affects many families in my ward at Moor Town.

I welcome proposals for Brudenell School and know that it will allow families in the local community to go to a school near to their home for many years to come. I am fully involved trying to get more local places for families in north-east Leeds. However, I have concerns over the position Local Authorities are being put in up and down the country with regard to provision of school places and the lack of adequate funding to provide those places.

We have been told many times to protect the shortfall and Councillor Dowson was very eloquent in her explanation of funding provided by Government for us to provide sufficient school places in Leeds, and we know many Local Authorities are facing these issues and call for the Government to act.

This is bad enough but what is really galling is the amount of money the Government is prepared to throw at free schools and deny Local Authorities the ability to open new schools to ensure only free schools can come forward. Free schools also fail to meet geographical need and are often placed where there is not a need for extra places and not allowing Local Authorities to meet demand where it is needed breaking parental choice as parents cannot send their children to a local school. The free school policy was a flagship policy of the Government and the previous Coalition Government that they are not prepared to admit has failed. Rather than put their hands up and say they made a mistake and take a few steps back, they seem to believe that if you throw enough money at a project it will ultimately succeed. How wrong they are. It is simply not the case and the examples are numerous, the latest being a massive payout of £11.75m to buy some land – not to build a school, just to buy the land in West London, and they do not even have planning permission on that land.

Not only this but the Government has hired a PR company to publicise this school – unbuilt, unplanned – to combat the 1,200 signature petition that was collected against it by local people. A study by the National Audit Office in 2013 found that £241m has been spent on free schools in areas that already had enough school places - £241m, and they say that we are wasting money. In addition to this the same piece of work found the DFE had spent £8m of public money to pay off debts of private schools that became free schools.

Free schools also receive more funding once they are open. DFE figures show that per pupil spend in 2013/14 was £7,761 in free schools compared to £4,767 for Local Authority schools, the most outrageous being Ark All Saints Academy in London getting £19,420 per pupil – sounds like private school funding levels to me.

How can this possibly be justified when we are facing a shortfall of £67m just here in Leeds? As a Local Authority we are doing what we can to bring forward expansion solutions to Brudenell but I worry about how much we can do in the future with this damaging free schools policy. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor Coupar.

COUNCILLOR COUPAR: Thank you, Lord Mayor. I would like to comment on page 387 Minute 136 and the approval of the publication of the Statutory Notice to expand Fieldhead Carr Primary School.

We have an ambition in Leeds to be the best city, a child friendly city and the best city for learning. A huge part of this is ensuring our children and young people are able to attend good local schools. Both Fieldhead Carr and Grimes Dyke are popular local schools with a good reputation within the surrounding area. As the population continues to grow in the area, and in particular with new housing planned as part of the East Leeds extension, it becomes even more important to ensure the right levels of support and infrastructure are in place.

At the current time and with the current demographic projections, expanding Fieldhead Carr is the most sensible course of action and is being welcomed by both the school and the local community and all ward Councillors. It will mean that more local children are able to attend a school close to their home and I am sure that the school will continue to go from strength to strength.

I would like to thank the Executive Member for Children, Councillor Yeadon, and her officers, for her support on this expansion.

I also wanted to touch on the suggestion made within the paper concerning the potential for using the Grimes Dyke Park and Ride site to create a local school with Grimes Dyke primary. As we all know, pressure on primary school places now will become pressure on secondary school places in years to come and I am reassured that consideration is being given to the long term future of education provision within the area. We are going to see significant development in the ward over the coming years and it is prudent to plan for that now. I think that this is a very exciting time for both schools as the potential for their future development is very encouraging. This is something that, as a local ward Member, I am very happy to see go through as everyone wants the best for their children and I know that this investment in Fieldhead Carr Primary School will be of huge benefit to the community for many years to come. Thanks, Lord Mayor. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: Now we turn to page 7 and I ask Councillor Yeadon to commence summing up, please.

COUNCILLOR YEADON: Thank you very much, Lord Mayor. This reminded me of a debate we had, one of the first debates I was involved with when I became the Executive Member for Children's Services when we were first looking at the challenge that we had as a White Paper that we were discussing a few Councils ago. As Council may remember, we have to look at creating an extra 26 new forms of entry for primary places for September this year.

I think the reason why we are able to have this opportunity to have this debate today on the Minutes is because we are creating those 26 new forms of entry and we are on track to fill them all.

Just taking Councillor Cohen and Councillor Robinson, I am very pleased to be continuing the good work of Councillor Blake that she did on this particular issue and I think we do have to – Councillor Robinson says that we have got to recognise that academies and free schools are not going to go away – I think as long as we have got a Conservative Government you are right, they are not going to go away...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: A long time.

COUNCILLOR YEADON: ...but I think we also have to recognise they are not the panacea to all our problems and while Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide school places but we do not have the powers to be able to build, it is always going to be a problem and free schools are not going to be the panacea to that problem.

We are being criticised for not embracing the free school and academy agenda but also this agenda has given the Government the ability to asset strip Local Authorities, we saw with Fir Tree, and that free school two years down the line still is not open. This just makes a nonsense of school place planning.

We as a Local Authority still need to provide school places elsewhere and without, as Councillor Dowson articulately explained, we have not got the appropriate funding to do so. We are currently looking at a shortfall of £67m to be able to spend on the capital build that we require.

Just going on to Councillor Pryor and Councillor Coupar, I think it is really positive that we are able to look at these school extensions and it is really, really needed in those particular areas and we know that we have got more work to do. I think Councillor Cohen commented on the OBA sessions that we are running. We are very keen to ensure that this has got cross party involvement and that we are running those sessions to get the best solutions for local communities, but our hands in some ways are very much tied when we are not able to build new community schools. I think Councillor Sobel quite clearly explained the difficulties of the free school model and that as a Local Authority we are having to compete with free schools that are able to have the ear of Government and able to...

COUNCILLOR J PROCTER: What is wrong with that?

COUNCILLOR YEADON: I know you have got the ear of Government, Councillor Procter, and I am sure that you will continue our lobby to Nicky to explain why Local Authorities need those powers as well.

We are not going to say that we will work with all partners and we do work with all partners in the city and I have met with the free school applicants for Roundhay and we will work in a pragmatically and sensible way, but at the same time I think what Councillor Dowson was asking you was, you also have to recognise that the current policy does not make sense. If we have the statutory duty we should also have the powers to fulfil that duty. Thank you very much. *(Applause)*

THE LORD MAYOR: I would like to call for a vote on the motion to receive the Minutes. *(A vote was taken)* The vote is CARRIED.

Thank you very much, that is the end of the Council meeting for today. I look forward to seeing you in March.

*(The meeting closed at 4.50pm)*