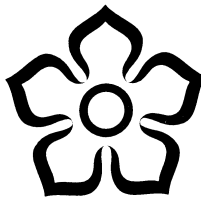


Thursday, 19 September 2013



Leicester
City Council

At a meeting of the LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL held at the Town Hall at FIVE O'CLOCK in the afternoon on Thursday, 19 SEPTEMBER 2013 duly convened for the business hereunder mentioned.

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BUSINESS

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1. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

4. PETITIONS

- Presented by Councillors
- Presented by Members of the Public

Petitions for Debate

4.1 Elderly Persons Homes

5. QUESTIONS

- From Members of the Public
- From Councillors

6. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE

6.1 Review of Core Strategy Policies, to Enable New Office Development and Employment and Training Opportunities

6.2 Bid for UK City of Culture 2017

7. REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

7.1 Revision to the Constitution for Leicester City Council

7.2 Elected Member Absence from Meetings

8. **EXECUTIVE & COMMITTEES** - To note any changes to the Executive. To vary the composition and fill any vacancies of any Committee of Council.
9. **NOTICES OF MOTION**
10. **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

PRESENT:

MUSTAFA KAMAL, LORD MAYOR
CHAIRMAN

Abbey Ward

HARSHAD DAHYABHAI BHAVSAR
ANNETTE BYRNE
VIJAY SINGH RIYAIT

Aylestone Ward

ADAM CLARKE
NIGEL CARL PORTER

Beaumont Leys Ward

VIOLET GEDDES GRAHAM DEMPSTER
SUNDIP MEGHANI
PAUL THOMAS WESTLEY

Belgrave Ward

RASHMIKANT JOSHI
JOHN WILLIAM THOMAS

Braunstone Park and Rowley Fields

MICHAEL ERNEST COOKE
WAYNE JAN NAYLOR

Castle Ward

NEIL CLAYTON
PATRICK JOSEPH KITTERICK
LYNN SENIOR

Charnwood Ward

PAUL DARREN NEWCOMBE
ABDUL RAZAK OSMAN

Coleman Ward

MIAN MOHAMMED MAYAT
DEBORAH SANGSTER

Freemen Ward

ELLY CUTKELVIN
WILLIAM HENRY SHELTON

Humberstone and Hamilton Ward

RITA PATEL
BARBARA ANNE POTTER
GURINDER SINGH SANDHU

Knighton Ward

ROSS GRANT
INDERJIT SINGH GUGNANI
DR LYNN MOORE

Latimer Ward

VEEJAY PATEL
MANJULA PAUL SOOD

New Parks Ward

DAWN ALFONSO
STEPHEN PETER CORRALL
MALCOLM WILLIAM UNSWORTH

Rushey Mead Ward

CULDIPP SINGH BHATTI
PIARA SINGH CLAIR
ROSS WILLMOTT

Spinney Hills Ward

HANIF AQBANY
SHOFIQUUL ISLAM CHOWDHURY
MOHAMMED DAWOOD

Stoneygate Ward

LUCY CHAPLIN
IQBAL ALIBHAI DESAI

Evington Ward

DEEPAK BAJAJ
BALJIT SINGH

Eyres Monsell Ward

VIRGINIA CLEAVER
RORY PALMER

Fosse Ward

TED CASSIDY
SUSAN WADDINGTON

Thurncourt Ward

LUIS FONSECA
ROBERT WANN

Westcotes Ward

ANDREW IAN CONNELLY
SARAH CHRISTINE RUSSELL

Western Park Ward

DR SUSAN BARTON
GEORGE COLE

LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

CRIME VICTIMS

Following the sad events of last weekend, in which five people lost their lives, the Lord Mayor asked Members to join him in sending heart-felt condolences to the families of those involved.

The Council observing a minute's silence in the memory of those who had lost their lives.

KEY STAGE 2 RESULTS

The Lord Mayor announced that National Key stage 2 results had been published for children aged 7 to 11. The Lord Mayor was pleased announce that more city children than ever before have reached the expected level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics and stated that the results showed that the partnership work between the Council and our schools was continuing to pay off.

The Lord Mayor congratulated the children, staff and parents who had all worked hard to ensure that children make good progress throughout their primary school.

LORD MAYOR'S APPEAL

The Lord Mayor thanked everyone who was contributing to his appeal in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. Contributions were greatly valued and would all help in the charity's valuable work.

The next event that was being prepared was work to take part in the Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning. As part of this a coffee morning would be held in Town Hall Square on Friday 27 September from 10.00 am until about 1.00 pm. The Lord Mayor invited all to join him at the event.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Lord Mayor invited Members to declare any interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

No declarations of interest were made.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Moved by the Lord Mayor, seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor and carried:

16. That the minutes of the Special Meeting and the Ordinary Meeting of Council, both held on 27 June 2013, having been printed and a copy sent to each Member of the Council be taken as read and that they be approved as a correct record.

PETITIONS

PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None

PETITIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor Willmott presented a petition with 173 signatures in the following terms:

“We the undersigned call on the Council to keep the part time staffing at Rushey Mead Recreation Centre. Please do not force us to use the key fob entry system as we do not feel safe without staff and will no longer be able to use the centre.

We also ask the Council not to impose charges we cannot afford as all the money we raise we give to charities including LOROS and the hospitals so we also cannot afford to pay for room hire. We have been meeting here for over 20 years and there is nowhere else for us to go.”

Councillor Fonseca presented a petition with 50 signatures in the following terms:

“Petition raised by local residents of Croyland Green, Thurnby Lodge to ask that the constant problems of water drainage and flooding may be looked into and dealt with accordingly.”

The Lord Mayor stated that under Council Procedure Rule 13a the aforementioned petitions would be referred to the Monitoring Officer for consideration and action as appropriate.

PETITIONS TO BE DEBATED

Elderly Person’s Homes

The Monitoring Officer noted that the verified signatures for the petitions were below the limit required to trigger a petition debate but in the light of the public interest in the matters shown the City Mayor had agreed that the petitions should be the subject of a debate under the rules defined for Petitions Debates. There would therefore be a debate for a maximum of 15 minutes.

The Monitoring Officer advised that following the debate, the Council could decide how to respond to the petition and may decide to:

- recommend to the Executive to take the action the petition requests,
- recommend to the Executive to not take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate,
- recommend to the Executive that further investigation into the matter be commissioned, or
- note the petition.

Mr P Bromiley presented a petition in the following terms :-

“My Lord Mayor the text of the petition that I presented to Adult Social Care Scrutiny

Commission on 11 July 2013 was as follows:

This petition is being submitted by family, friends and a wider public who wish to protest against the proposed closure of Council Care Homes. The signees wish to inform the Council that they want the Homes to stay open.”

Ms Haines presented a petition in the following terms:

“My Lord Mayor the text of the petition that I presented to Council on 27 June 2013 was as follows:

We the undersigned wish to register our protest at the closure of Nuffield House Elderly Persons Home.”

Miss Chandarana presented a petition in the following terms:

“My Lord Mayor the text of the petition that I presented to Adult Social Care Scrutiny Commission on 11 July 2013 was as follows:

We the undersigned petition Leicester City Council not to close Herrick Lodge Elderly Persons’ Home.”

Moved by Councillor Moore, seconded by the City Mayor and carried:

17. That the Council notes the debate and recommends to the Executive that the proposals for a phased approach for the closure and sale of the Council’s Elderly Persons Homes be endorsed.

QUESTIONS

Questions from Members of the Public

Question 1 – Mr. Jones: My Lord Mayor. Noting the minimalist explanation on the Council web pages, what are the expectations of a Councillor in a Ward Community meeting?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Clayton.

Councillor Clayton: My Lord Mayor thank you to Mr. Jones for his question. The expectation is that all Councillors would attend their Ward Community meetings as far as they can do. We appreciate that people can’t attend absolutely all the time, but the expectation would be that a Councillor would attend the vast majority of their Ward Community meetings.

Mr. Jones: I would like to thank Councillor Clayton for the response. My experiences in the Thurncourt Ward is significantly different in that one particular Councillor that I’m not allowed to name under the rules has had a zero attendance rate at these meetings. One of the concerns that has since arisen when going through the City Council Constitution, is a requirement that there be two Councillors at any Ward meeting. Now in my particular Ward there are only two Councillors there but in the last 12 months it would mean that every single meeting would have not been quorate, therefore bringing into question all the decisions being made by myself, who has attended most of these meetings, and all the other members of the public and other organisations who have attended. I would therefore like the Council, bearing in mind this is a constitutional matter, not a party matter, I would

like the Council to at least look into the issue of how to compel members to actually attend these Ward meetings. Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Clayton.

Councillor Clayton: My Lord Mayor, I am not aware of that Constitutional position that Mr. Jones has put forward. I support the emphasis of what he said though, that Councillors should attend Ward meetings and this is an issue that I will take back and discuss with the Monitoring Officer in due course. Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Mr. Jones your next question please.

Question 2 - Mr. Jones: OK. My next question is actually following on from this. "What can be done if a Councillor fails to attend any Ward Community meetings in a calendar year"?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Clayton.

Councillor Clayton: May I thank Mr. Jones again for his second question. There is very little that can be done by the Council if a Councillor fails to attend any Ward Community meetings in a calendar year. The requirements within the legislation are that if a Councillor fails to attend a meeting at all within six months then they would no longer be eligible to be a Councillor, but a Ward meeting is just one of those meetings that counts towards the requirement to attend a meeting within six months. As the Chief Whip of the Labour Group my expectation is that Councillors do attend their Ward Community meetings, and when instances of them not doing are brought to my attention I deal with those instances and take appropriate action.

Lord Mayor: Mr Jones, your final question.

Mr. Jones: Thank you. With regards to the issue, at the last Ward meeting at Thurncourt it was moved by the Ward members unanimously that because one Ward member was a serial non-attender that there be a de-selection vote and de-selection debate at this meeting. Now the Ward member who was in attendance who has not missed a meeting in fairness, said that he would communicate his concerns with the City Mayor. I too wrote to the City Mayor and have had correspondence with him and with yourself I believe with regard to what is going on. What we would like to see is noting the amount of expenses that are claimed by many Councillors, this is all available on the internet, I request that if Councillors are not attending these Ward meetings, bearing in mind the importance placed upon them in the City Council Constitution, and by the way the quorate point is 2.6 in the Constitution it is the point that says it there, I have it in front of me here, would like basically to suggest that Councillors basically don't get their expenses if they are not going to attend this very important part. It is something that the City Council highlighted as being phenomenally important, this interaction with the residents, with the citizens of the City, and noting the high expenses of some of the Councillors, I would like to suggest that that be taken on board as a point of consideration if nothing else? Thank you

Lord Mayor: Councillor Clayton.

Councillor Clayton: Thank you Lord Mayor. I think that was little more than a question, but I would say on behalf of virtually all, the vast majority of Councillors within this Chamber, that they work extremely hard at their Ward duties. Instances where that is not the case within the Labour Group, as Whip it is my job to deal with

those instances, and I will continue to do that.

Lord Mayor: Mr. Weston your question please.

Question 3 - Mr Weston: Thank you. "Is the City Mayor and Leicester City Council as a majority Labour Council prepared to allow vulnerable members of our community who basically helped put you in power to be put at risk of dying through these cruel austerity cuts such as the welfare reform, the bedroom tax which is the policy of this coalition government not the Labour government"?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you my Lord Mayor, and I thank Mr. Weston for his question. There are a significant series of changes that have been made by the Coalition government that are having huge impact day in day out on citizens across our City, across the country, and we know that for many these are placing them in positions of real hardship. They range from changes to Council tax, changes to access to legal services, changes to the rate regarding housing payments and we will be getting to a point of looking at universal credit and a significant number of changes around there as well as benefit capping which is having a huge impact on individual households that may be losing as much as £500 per week to be able to live on. This is not something we support. As a Council we have a legal duty to carry out legislation passed nationally, but what we have done is, wherever possible, we have put in local powers, local responsibilities, additional funding to support those most vulnerable residents. So we have put in close to £350,000 of council tax discretionary relief. That has not been done in other places, that is something we have chosen to put aside for those residents who are struggling. We have also put into place welfare law advice, £370,000 worth of welfare law advice, that the government has cruelly cut right across the country. We felt that was vitally important for the citizens of Leicester to be able to access and we have been able to support that. We are also looking at other options to ...

Mr. Weston: But you are stating all of this but what are you doing as a Council to stop people in the City of Leicester from dying?

Lord Mayor: Look you have a chance to put a supplementary question, you can ask a supplementary after this one. Councillor Russell would you please go ahead.

Councillor Russell: Lord Mayor, was that my supplementary question?

Mr Weston: No it was part of the supplementary.

Councillor Russell: Those are the specific things that we have done in this City that have not been done in the rest of the country, to be able to support our residents to try and help them in these times when the government are making such dreadful changes to our welfare services.

Lord Mayor: You now have the chance to ask a supplementary question.

Mr. Weston: As part of my supplementary question, the first part is I actually asked is the City Mayor and the Council, so I cannot understand why Peter Soulsby is not even answered is he personally as City Mayor going to do it? Secondly at the end of the day there is a lot of austerity cuts which include the bedroom tax and other welfare reforms, and a prime example at the minute is around the bedroom tax, you have also got where the people that are over 65 are getting whacked with Council

tax which is probably just a little bit better than the bedroom tax but it is putting them into the same position. But is Leicester City Council willing to still stand by and not do anything at the minute because as far as I am concerned as a Council you have not done anything. So, as a Council what I am asking you are you at this stage prepared for your local people in your constituency to die”?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you Lord Mayor. In terms of why I am answering the question. As a mayoral team we each have specific responsibilities and revenues and benefits which links in with the welfare reform is one of my areas of responsibility which is why I am answering the first question this evening. So apologies if it was not the City Mayor, as this is one of my areas. In terms of specific things that we are doing around the additional support for citizens in the City, I have listed a number of those already. In terms of the bedroom tax we also have discretionary housing payments which we are using to be able to support residents whilst they....

Mr. Weston: That's only

Councillor Russell: If you would let me answer, the payments are in place to enable the people who are looking to be able to change homes to make sure that they are not disadvantaged in the meantime. In terms of other support being offered, there is support for challenging benefit claims, support for housing payments, support for council tax payments and in terms of our pensioners, they are actually excluded from a significant number of the government reforms. So we have been able to focus the majority of the assistance on to those of working age.

Lord Mayor: Mr. Weston, your next question please.

Question 4 - Mr. Weston: Why has there been no attempt to install a policy of any type ensuring that vulnerable people of Leicester City are not evicted for basically the bedroom tax?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Connolly

Councillor Connolly: My thanks to Lee for the question. Firstly I would disagree that we have not installed a policy of any type because we clearly have. We have been extremely proactive in contacting all of our tenants who are affected by the bedroom tax to offer them assistance, we have changed our allocations policy to give greater advantage to those who need to downsize to avoid the bedroom tax, we have written to all tenants advising them of the discretionary housing fund, of which many have applied and have been successful in order to mitigate the issue in respect of arrears, and as Lee is aware, as I announced at the Housing Scrutiny Commission, we are prepared to consider a no eviction policy but I would say at this stage nobody has been evicted as a result of the bedroom tax in the City and I hope that that continues.

Lord Mayor: Mr. Weston, a supplementary question please.

Mr. Weston: So my supplementary question towards that is that you are saying that basically at the minute you might consider a non-eviction policy, but you are going on about the discretionary payment which basically is for a maximum of 13 weeks for the government incentive but then an extra 13 weeks if the local Council decides to allow you to have it, but that is also if you are granted it in the first place. So at this stage to me what you are doing is you are just using delaying techniques

rather than actually grabbing hold of your balls basically and standing up and saying no we are not going to evict people. At the minute all that the Council are doing here is delaying whether they will or whether they won't not evict anyone. So what I want to know today is will Peter Soulsby as the City Mayor and everybody else in this room as a City Council actually stand up and say no we will not evict in Leicester for bedroom tax or for older people that are being affected by the Council tax which is another form of bedroom tax?

Councillor Connelly: My thanks for the supplementary. What I will say is, as I said at Housing Scrutiny, we are prepared to consider a no eviction policy, but it is a complicated issue. We do need to look at the implications of that. We have not come to a decision but when we do come to a decision that will go back to the Housing Scrutiny Commission and we will listen to the recommendations of the Housing Scrutiny Commission. What I will say is there is a mixed picture in respect of no eviction policies. Bristol have reversed their eviction policy because it is a very complex issue, but clearly our priority is to ensure that the tenants we have in our Council properties, that we sustain them in those properties, but at this stage I can't say that I can give a commitment that we will have a no eviction policy. What we have said is that we will consider a no eviction policy and the wording that was put to us is about people who cannot pay and that is something we need to look at. We will certainly look at it and I would like to think in light of the reports that are coming out even today from the National Housing Federation, that the government will reflect on the fact that Council rent arrears are increasing as a result of bedroom tax, they will reflect on this unjust policy and remove it as they should do.

Lord Mayor: Mr. Weston, your next question.

Question 5 - Mr. Weston: How can Leicester close down hostel services by at least 37% when the need for the hostel services has risen across the whole of England by at least 23%?

Councillor Connelly: James, with the greatest respect, we have met a number of times and I have always had the courtesy to meet with you and listen to your views, and would like to think we can continue to have a constructive dialogue, and it is not particularly constructive shouting down from the gallery.

Mr. Weston: But to be fair Mr. Connelly, when we were at the Housing Scrutiny meeting last week we sat there very polite, we did not disrupt it and did not disturb it and then at the end when you get on to any other business we asked to put our point across and we was refused. So, in James' way James is frustrated.

Councillor Connolly: I understand that and what I will say to you before I get on to the question, is that I did stay after the meeting and met with you and I subsequently met with both you and James since then and I am still happy to continue to meet with you, it is no problem. In respect of the question, as an authority we were required to review our homelessness strategy and our view was whilst we had a good homelessness strategy before, it was not perfect and certainly the view was it was not working, and What we have done is that we have sought to move and use our funding in respect of preventing and supporting people so they don't become homeless. Now we recognise that we can't always prevent people from becoming homeless with the best will in the world, but once they do become homeless then we are within our resources to support them to get them back into fixed premises. And therefore we are of the view we do need less hostel spaces and we are seeking to reduce hostel spaces because we are changing our service to one being proactive instead of reactive. So instead of keeping people in hostel

spaces, freeing them from there by giving them support to move into fixed premises.

Lord Mayor: Your next question Mr. Weston.

Mr. Weston: I thought I had a supplementary bit to that.

Lord Mayor: There is no time left.

Mr. Weston: But I have got to do a supplementary.

Lord Mayor: I want three questions in two minutes.

Mr. Weston: I mean I will go for that but then at the end of the day I will expect to ask a supplementary which I have been told in writing that I am allowed to ask. At the end of the day it is not my fault that because unfortunately this is important So are you saying at this moment that you are not going to follow through what you have provided to me as a Council in writing?

There is no time limit for questions.

Mr. Weston: well it seems to be because we was at the Housing Scrutiny..... and I wasn't allowed to ask any questions, and there were people sat there waiting...

Lord Mayor: The next item is a question from Councillors. Question 1 – Councillor Singh:

Mr. Weston: Can I not ask the rest of my questions?

Mr Weston: I am following procedure and I need to ask these questions.

Lord Mayor: No we have ran out of time. At the end of the day I have to run this meeting and we have run out of time. Why don't you write to Councillor Connolly and he will write back to you.

Mr. Weston: I have got it in writing on Council headed paper from Matthew Reeves that I am entitled to ask my six questions on each part.

City Mayor: Lord Mayor on a point of order, if I may, it is quite unusual for us to have so many questions from members of the public and I think it is quite understandable that Mr. Weston was probably not aware of the fact that I think there is a 20 minute allowance for it. Given that he has three questions left, can I perhaps prevail on you to give him a couple of minutes perhaps on each one and just to exercise your discretion on this occasion.

Lord Mayor: Two minutes on each question please.

Question 6 - Mr. Weston: Thank you very much. "Why has the homeless strategy, phase 2, been agreed but the City Council has not to date published how much of a reduction in services is to be done and where services have been stated to be cut"?

Councillor Connolly: Yes, I will be swift in respect, the Council has published how much services will be reduced and increased, and this information is easily available in the reports that accompany the decision notices for both phase 1 and

phase 2 of the strategy.

Mr. Weston: My supplementary question to that is why have they not been more publicised? Why are they not actually out there more?

Councillor Connolly: Lord Mayor they have been as publicised as any decision. They are widely available and I am quite happy to provide them to Lee tomorrow if that is what he requires.

Lord Mayor: Question number 7 please.

Question 7 - Mr. Weston: Why has Housing Options not supported and not informing people of the rights around their declaration of homelessness and around the City Council's duty of care?

Councillor Connolly: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I would disagree with the view that we are not supporting and informing people of their rights. We have the legal requirement under the Housing Act 1996, Part 7, but I do recognise that there are some issues around that and I have arranged a meeting between an advocate of the homeless and the Head of Housing Options on the 8th October to discuss these issues.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary please.

Mr. Weston: At the minute I will leave the supplementary on that one.

Lord Mayor: Question number 8.

Question 8 - Mr. Weston: "Will Leicester put policies to enable and empower local businesses to distribute unused food that they still throw away often being bleached or having food dye or other dye applied to it. People using food banks has risen by 87% and the demand is outreaching the supply. The quality of food distributed is still reducing in quality?"

Lord Mayor: Councillor Palmer.

Councillor Palmer: Thank you Lord Mayor. To answer the question, I think the first thing to say those of us on this side of the Chamber deeply regret and actually find it a scandalous consequence of what we are seeing at the moment that we are seeing that increase in demand for food banks and growing number of food banks having to be set up across the City. In terms of the specifics you raise about dye and bleach being applied to food, I am not aware of that being done in a deliberate way by businesses to stop food being donated to food banks where food is dyed it is often done so because it is not fit for human consumption to take out of the food chain. Where food is bleached it is quite often again done in a deliberate way to disguise food that it not fit for human consumption and to reintroduce it to the food chain. What we are doing through the emergency food plan we have established with partners and food in fair share and voluntary organisations is to actively work with businesses as you suggest to make sure we maximise good quality supplies to those food banks to make sure those people who need that food aid get good quality food aid and we will continue to do that.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary question.

Mr. Weston: The supplementary question to that is in two parts, because firstly I

did not think that you actually answered my question which is will the Council actually put policy in place. So really there is that, but secondly the supplementary question is considering I have eaten out of skips for at least the last 12 months, at the end of the day food that is in them is firstly edible because the people that go skipping go within 24 hours of it being put into the skip, secondly it has also got lots of nourishment and stuff in because there is vegetables, meat, cheese, milk the full works. So at the end of the day nearly everything that is thrown in that way is basically useable by people, and as a Council we need to put something in place, first off to stop the bleaching and the dye taking part and then secondly basically it is not just the food banks that need this, food across Leicester is not being distributed correctly. At the end of the day a lot of the hostels get it and other things, but the thing is there are people on the streets that also need access to this food and it is not being done in any form. So can it be done?

Councillor Palmer: I am not sure we disagree on these points. I think on the dye and bleaching...

Mr. Weston: No it is more around the policy...

Councillor Palmer: The dying and bleaching issue is probably beyond our control and is probably wrapped up around national legislation around environmental health. I am happy to explore that. In terms of food being put into skips and being thrown away by businesses I agree there is a food waste scandal in this country and lots of good quality, perfectly edible food is wasted and is needlessly thrown away. We are actively working with businesses and other organisations to make sure that that waste is minimised and that as much good quality food is not wasted in the City and remains in the food chain for people and organisations who can make use of it. I will take on board your comments and I am happy to send you a copy of the emergency food plan which has been developed and would welcome your input into that.

Mr. Weston: Thank you very much for letting me speak but at the end of the day I come here and I worked with your policies same as last week I sat in the Housing Scrutiny meeting and I was polite and I sat there until the end even though I asked one question in the meeting, for the rest of it I sat there until the end respectfully to ask questions and then I was told that I could not because you could see certain people come home. As far as I am concerned this is important because every single person that is sitting in this room has been put in here by the people. No matter what the people have put people in here and it is people like me which is members of the community that want to come forward that feel that they are able to come forward because not everybody out there is. You have got a lot of people – my father lives in Braunstone and I was speaking to people today who basically were saying that they feel that when they get to 65 years old Leicester City Council

Questions from Councillors

Councillor Singh: My Lord Mayor in my 25 years of local government this is the most extraordinary and memorable meeting of the full Council I have been to and I am sorry I did not commence my Council questions at the time and I do appreciate that the City Mayor interjected and we allowed the process to carry on. But my question Lord Mayor is:

Question 1 – Councillor Singh: Would the Deputy City Mayor inform this Council of the findings of the inspection carried out by the Care Quality Commission into the serious failures at the Bradgate Mental Health Unit?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Palmer.

Councillor Palmer: Thank you my Lord Mayor and thank you Councillor Singh for your question. On the 4th and 17th July of this year the Care Quality Commission carried out inspections at the Bradgate Mental Health Unit. Those inspections resulted in two warning notices being placed upon Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust and three compliance notices also being placed on the organisation in relation to a number of issues of very serious concern at the Unit. Since then LPT have set out an immediate action plan and are putting in place measures to respond to the very serious concerns which that report presented, and I just want to say no-one should underestimate the seriousness of some of the issues which that inspection unearthed and presented to the organisation, to the public and to our communities as well, and I know that this will be an issue which the Health Scrutiny Commission will continue to look at in detail along with Commissioners and the Health and Wellbeing Board as well.

Lord Mayor: Any supplementary Councillor Singh?

Councillor Singh: I do. Can I thank the Deputy Mayor for that answer. I was hoping that perhaps there could be more details to inform the full Council. As a member of the Commission I am already aware of course of the very serious nature. Lord Mayor, in view of the critical nature of the CQC investigations into the operational failings which may have contributed towards the tragic suicides at the Bradgate Mental Health Unit, will the Deputy Mayor give serious consideration through consultations with the Council's Legal Services and Councillor Cooke, the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission Chair, to request the Secretary of State to institute a public enquiry into this matter.

Councillor Palmer: Thank you my Lord Mayor. As I said at this point LPT have set out an immediate action plan and they have publicly apologised as they should have done. But at the end of the day they will not be judged on their words they will be judged on their actions, and their ability to make the improvements which we clearly need to see there. And what I will say is that those organisations which commission services at the Bradgate Unit and indeed across LPT's wider services, the Scrutiny Commission, the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Council as a whole, we will continue to keep under very close and rigorous scrutiny LPT's work to improve the situation there, and in doing that we will of course keep open all possible options and formal channels available to us to secure more action and more improvement if that is what is needed as things progress.

Lord Mayor: The next question, Councillor Singh.

Question 2 – Councillor Singh: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I welcome the City Mayor's roll out of the 20 mile per hour zones in the City as probably the single most important measure of road safety to curtail speed on our roads. How soon will the 20 miles an hour zones be a reality in general, including in my Ward in Evington?

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor can I thank Councillor Singh for this question. We are currently delivering an extensive programme of 20 mph zones across the City. In the programme right at the moment we have got Sandhurst Road, St. Matthews, St.

Mary's Field School Area, Woodstock Primary, Aylestone Village, Mowacre Hill Primary, Harrison Road, Bradgate Heights and Humberstone Village. And at the moment although there is currently only one of those zones in the Evington Ward, it's the one that covers Church Road and High Street which of course Councillor Singh will be very familiar with, we have met recently with Ward members, including Councillor Singh, to talk about rolling out the programme in his Ward and in others and I am looking forward to getting back to him and other colleagues in the very near future about how we take forward the programme over the next three years because I do anticipate, for exactly the reason we set out in the question, continuing to roll it out over the next few years as resources are available, particularly as we committed ourselves in our manifesto in response to areas around schools and in response to resident's concerns. I hope that that will reassure him that Evington, along with other parts of the City, will continue to benefit from these excellent contributions towards road safety.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary question Councillor Singh?

Councillor Singh: Thank you Lord Mayor. Yes, it is only in view of the fact that two sets of quite large petitions have been presented from schools in the Evington Ward. But my thanks to the City Mayor for the answer. I simply wish to ensure that as a result of his initiative and the meetings that have taken place which I have attended and recommendations made about the 20 mph zones in Evington will remain on track purely because of the concerns which are of course City wide but clearly within Evington.

City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. As I said in my initial response we are responding to issues about whether there is evidence of road safety particularly around schools, but also to public concerns in particular areas, and I am well aware of the petition to which Councillor Singh refers and of course that will help us to determine the priority for works over the coming period. I was actually looking at my potential response to this question my Lord Mayor and was very interested in the information from officers with regard to 20 mph schemes. I think members will be very pleased to know that we now have 35 different 20 mph zones across the City, covering 421 streets and just over 86 kilometres of highway. My calculation is that 86 kilometres is over 50 miles and that is a lot of 20 mph zones and a lot of contribution to road safety.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Bajaj.

Question 3 – Councillor Bajaj: How many employees do we employ on zero hours contracts as a Council?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Thank you to Councillor Bajaj for the question my Lord Mayor. The definition of a zero hours contract is when an organisation employs an individual on unspecified contract hours, hence the zero hours, and also expects a degree of obligation in return, so they are requiring the individual to take up assignments when offered, expect them to be available for work when demanded and requiring them often not to take work with another employer. Now clearly those contracts are by their very nature exploitative of the employee, and I am pleased to be able to reassure Council that we have no such contracts in Leicester, and intend it to remain so. We do, however, do and I think Members will expect us to do, we do employ casual staff but the distinction of course is that those staff, although they don't have specified hours of work, they are not under any obligation to the Council

as a result of agreement and that is an important distinction. They can take up other work, they can be very flexible in the way in which they respond to our request for them to work for us, and of course they are obviously in many cases ones that very much suit such employees and certainly one should not exploit them.

Lord Mayor: Any supplementary question Councillor Bajaj?

Councillor Bajaj: There has been a sharp increase in recent years in so called zero hour contracts as employer try to find cost effective ways of meeting short term staffing needs where people agree to be available for work as and when required, but have no guaranteed hours of time. As an employer you are not obliged to offer work to workers on zero hour contracts, but nor are they obliged to accept any work offered to them. The unpredictable nature of working times means that they won't be given full benefits like the permanent workers. There is no guarantee of a decent income. Can I ask you the City Mayor to give some sort of commitment here today in the Chamber to ban the Council from using zero hours contract workers where available even where there is no guarantee of any work, and the zero hours contracts that require workers to work exclusively for one business and in the mis-use of contracts where employees are in practice working regular hours over a sustained period and gives anyone working for more than 12 weeks on a zero hour contract the automatic right to a full time contract based on an average time worked for 12 weeks.

City Mayor: Yes my Lord Mayor. I would very much welcome that change at a national level and would very much welcome an end to the exploitation that underlies the zero hours contracts. As I have indicated the Council does not directly employ anybody on zero hours contracts. We do have casual workers and have done for probably many generations, and that is of course something that is inevitably to our advantage as an employer but also something that works well for those employees. And of course as part of that we do ensure that those casual staff do have proper rights including the entitlement to receive holiday pay and the eligibility to enter into the local government pension scheme, and I am determined that that situation should not change and that we should not in any way undermine the rights of those employees or indeed our other employees.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Cole your question please.

Question 4 – Councillor Cole: Thank you Lord Mayor. “Will the City Mayor be doing anything to uplift the appearance of King Richard Road as it is the only main road leading to the City and into Jubilee Square that has the late King’s name, and if so can I ask that he extends the work back to the junction of Hinckley Road, Woodville Road and Wyngate Drive as this would help the efforts of the newly formed Western Park Road Traders Association who are working very hard to improve the status and appearance of the businesses on Hinckley Road between Woodville Road and Kirby Road?”

City Mayor: I thank Councillor Cole for this question. Yes indeed King Richard Road is an important approach and gateway into the City and not just because it bears King Richard’s name. It will obviously be enhanced at the City end by the work that we are planning at St. Nicholas Circle and of course by Jubilee Square and I was very disappointed that the recent City Cycle Ambition Bid which would include cycle ways on King Richard Road to the Fosse Road junction at least, was not successful, but I do hope very much that we will find alternative sources of funding for that in the not too distant future. But the particular area that Councillor Cole talks about in the area of Woodville Road, Wyngate Drive and so on is indeed

an important part of the road and an important suburban shopping area for the City, and our programme of retail gateway improvements has been focussed on some other areas as a first priority - Narborough Road, Melton Road and so on. But I do believe that the success we are having with that does lend it to be extended to other areas and I would like to give Councillor Cole an assurance that I think this is one of the areas that could well benefit from such a scheme. I am going to ask Councillor Cole to talk to me afterwards so that we can ensure that we make contact with the Western Park Road new Traders Association and through him and with them see what assistance may be provided, perhaps in the interim managing the shop front guidance, but I think in the not too distant future would actually be including them in these very successful schemes.

Lord Mayor: Any supplementary questions?

Councillor Cole: No.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Waddington

Question 5 – Councillor Waddington: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Will the City Mayor consider the introduction of a ban on pavement parking in the City because of the problems such parking causes to pedestrians including those with disabilities, and those pushing buggies and the damage such parking causes to pavements?

City Mayor: Thank you Lord Mayor. I am very, very sympathetic to the point that Councillor Waddington makes in her question but I am advised that there is currently no national legislation banning parking of vehicles on pavements, and the only places where it has been done on an authority wide basis have been, I am advised, in London and Exeter on the back of local act powers. Now that is obviously possible to do but it takes quite a lot of effort to get those powers together and to get the parliamentary approval as necessary. What I think I would like to do is to suggest to Councillor Waddington and to other Councillors to identify those areas in particular Wards where there are problems and I would be very happy to try and collate all of those and work with officers to see whether there are specific issues we can deal with in those particular areas perhaps with civic enforcement undertaken in those areas and to see perhaps from that how extensive the issue is across the City and whether, indeed, going for local act powers might be appropriate. But I do know that this is something that may well fall within the purview of her Scrutiny Commission, and I do wonder whether she might wish actually to undertake scrutiny of this issue, and perhaps as part of that seek to collate evidence across the City as to just how extensive the problem is and how best we might deal with it.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Waddington any supplementary questions?

Councillor Waddington: My Lord Mayor. Well clearly I would be happy to do that, and I would ask the City Mayor for his support in helping to investigate whether Leicester City Council could, if it wished, apply for the relevant powers as Exeter and part of London have done to introduce a City wide ban on pavement parking except where such parking is unfortunately inevitable.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor. Yes I would be very happy to co-operate with Councillor Waddington in doing that. I would just say again though that the actual process of achieving local act powers is quite lengthy and it may be that even if we do decide to go for that we would nonetheless need to look at shorter term measures to deal with the more immediate issues. Certainly my recollection is that

the last time the Council went for local act powers on quite a sensitive basis was some time in the 1970s and it was something that took a lot of work by a lot of officers and some wondered whether it was to any good effect, but that is another matter that I am sure her Commission can advise on.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Waddington

Question 6 – Councillor Waddington: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I would like to ask Councillor Dempster a question, whether she “Can confirm that the disgraceful huts used as classrooms at Alderman and Richard Hallam school are to be demolished and replaced by permanent classrooms”?

Councillor Dempster: Thank you. I would like to thank Councillor Waddington for her question, and also for the fact that I think it was Councillor Waddington that actually originally brought this matter to my attention, and I can confirm that the huts are going to be demolished within the next academic year and furthermore, actually there is going to be quite a building programme at Alderman Richard Hallam, and not just the huts are going but there is going to be an expansion of what is a good and popular school, so responding to local needs. I would also like to just, I am not sure if Councillor Waddington is aware, but this week we had a celebration event at another school in her Ward, English Martyrs which because of a Labour government is going to have a substantial BSF programme and that is underway now, and of course getting rid of a load of huts that accumulated under the Tory government of the 1980s. So we are getting there in terms of the huts despite this government.

Lord Mayor: Any follow up Councillor Waddington?

Councillor Waddington: Well I am really pleased to receive such good news. The first good news of the afternoon and may I thank Councillor Dempster and I will ask her to pass on my thanks and the thanks of the children and the future generations of children who will no longer be required to sit and learn and freeze and overheat in those school huts. So thank you and thanks to all who worked on this.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Chaplin.

Question 7 – Councillor Chaplin: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “Please can the City Mayor confirm how many of the Council’s parks and historic gardens have fruit and vegetables growing in them, and will the produce be distributed to local food banks or to local food producers like the Knighton Kitchen”?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Clair.

Councillor Clair: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Thank you to Councillor Chaplin to ask me this question. As we have in our Labour Party manifesto that we will create orchards which we have, and there are parks other than those like Evington Park, Evington Arboretum and Castle Hill Park, Western Park and there are some established orchards like Lilly Merriot Garden, Aylestone Meadows and apart from that there are so many nature reserve areas around our open space and parks where there is a mix and match of fruit trees like apples and plums and pears and in particular blackberries, and also we have a programme now which is very active in primary schools, growing your own clubs and we have taken an initiative also to have some demonstration plots in other parks to grow vegetables and get the community involved. And we have another 23 which is we have established a

programme through it is your neighbourhood and obviously those projects are up and running and they are free for any community members. They can go and pick and actually collect and take for their consumption and also to take wherever they so wish to actually display or take to those banks. Obviously all those products are produced and harvested for public and community groups and it is very possible my Lord Mayor to say whether there are any of those products if there is any supply I cannot confirm.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary Councillor Chaplin?

Councillor Chaplin: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Thank you for a comprehensive description of where our orchards and trees are. Perhaps the Assistant Mayor might like to also know there are also quinces and in some of historic gardens and some of those fruits are quite difficult for people to get hold of and you might find that local food producers would be very welcome to have those to make into preserves, but what I want to ask as a supplementary, is as well as quinces, and apples, and pears and there is also a banana plant which is in one of the greenhouses at the Belgrave Hall, formerly a museum. And since it has been decommissioned as a museum on one of the days when the garden was open for the public it was noticeable that the banana plant which I know has been quite an attraction as part of those historic gardens, is very much diminished. What has happened to it?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Clair.

Councillor Clair: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I actually just forgot to mention apart from what I said earlier on, there are very intensive programme of our allotments which of the 52, 44 are active and obviously I did visit some of them and there is a lot of things going on and if there are any demand and people want to actually collect them, I am happy to actually provide you with the contact numbers, obviously those volunteers can go. I am aware of that banana plant which is at Belgrave Hall which is on the other end of near cross corners greenhouse and I can assure you that every effort has been made to actually preserve and keep those plants which are on those actual greenhouses. It is valuable for children when they grow up to have a real educational experience and that will be kept care of.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Chaplin your next question please.

Question 8 – Councillor Chaplin: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Please can the Assistant Mayor for Children and Young People's Services provide an update on the changes for children's audiology service?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Dempster.

Councillor Dempster: Thank you. And again I would want to thank Councillor Chaplin for her question and also I think it was originally Councillor Chaplin that brought this to my attention. So thank you for that because it is a very, very important issue. It may be for a small number of people but for those people a very important issue. And it is a service that has been heavily reliant on local authority funding and I am very pleased to say that the NHS have recently discussed this issue and they are now going to be funding two additional audiologists posts for the service. So I think that is excellent news.

Lord Mayor: Any supplementary Councillor Chaplin?

Councillor Chaplin: Thank you Lord Mayor. Thank you for the update Councillor Dempster. I would ask that given the length of time that it has taken to get this far about the changes, will she be referring this or perhaps will the Scrutiny Commissions perhaps for Health and Children and Young People be able to do a piece of work about reviewing how this became about and looking at it for the future. Would she agree to that?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Dempster.

Councillor Dempster: Well I would be very happy for that. Obviously that it not within my gift that will have to be the decision of the Scrutiny Chairs but I will certainly bring this to the attention of both Scrutiny Chairs.

Lord Mayor: Your next question Councillor Chaplin please.

Question 9 – Councillor Chaplin: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Please can the Assistant Mayor for Adult Social Care state how many people have so far responded to the consultation on proposed changes to the Council's mobile meals service?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Patel

Councillor Patel: Thank you Councillor Chaplin for that question. Since the launch of the mobile meals consultation exercise on 9th July we have had 109 responses in total so far. 107 of those are from the 260 people currently in receipt of meals and they have responded by questionnaire. This is a response rate of 41%. A further reminder is also going out to encourage as many people as possible to participate and the closing date for the consultation is 7th October.

Lord Mayor: Any supplementary Councillor Chaplin?

Councillor Chaplin: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Given that we have had a public petition about the elderly people's homes this evening and a debate, I wondered if the Assistant Mayor would be able to confirm is this also to be an exercise in being seen to listen?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Patel.

Councillor Patel: I'm sorry my Lord Mayor I did not hear the end of that question.

Councillor Chaplin: I said is this also going to be an exercise in being seen to listen?

Councillor Patel: I am sorry that you feel the way that that sentiment sounds to me. I absolutely intend to listen to the people who want to come back on the consultation. We are going out of our way to try and make sure that we maximise all of the people who receive meals at the moment that they get an opportunity to say something.

Lord Mayor: Your next question Councillor Chaplin.

Councillor Chaplin: Thank you my Lord Mayor. To ask again the Assistant Mayor for Adult and Social Care, how many people are affected by the proposed changes to the lifeline alarm system for older people and how many of those are in the Stoneygate Ward?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Patel.

Councillor Patel: Thank you my Lord Mayor. The proposal is for the Council to no longer pay towards the cost of the alarm service and this will affect 739 people of whom 55 live within the Stonegate Ward. The Council currently pays a subsidy to the Housing Associations for costs associated with the alarm service for their residents. Council tenants, the housing revenue account pays for Council tenants. We don't pay for anybody else so all we are trying to do is to try and encourage Housing Associations to take on the responsibility of subsidising for their tenants.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary Councillor Chaplin?

Councillor Chaplin: No thank you.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Dr. Moore, your question please.

Question 11 – Councillor Dr. Moore: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Will the City Mayor join me in congratulating the Friends of Knighton Park for organising another very successful fund day in the park at the beginning of this month”?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Clair.

Councillor Clair: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I am really delighted to congratulate the Friends of Knighton Park in celebration of their 60th anniversary of the park to organise a fun day, and they have really good collection of our parks and I am proud to say that we have achieved almost one dozen of green flags. That reflects the way in which we care for our parks and the way in which we have committed ourselves as a local authority to provide services to our local community, and I am really so delighted Dr. Moore with the way in which that day was organised. Without the volunteers we would not have done so good otherwise so we value their efforts. I do extend my congratulations to those volunteers and Friends of Knighton Park on behalf of Council.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary Councillor Moore.

Councillor Moore: No.

Lord Mayor: Your next question please.

Question 12 - Councillor Dr. Moore: Thank you my Lord Mayor. The City Mayor I am sure will be pleased to hear that with the support of the Knighton Community Fund, Northcote Road was closed for the afternoon two weeks ago so that children could play without the threat of passing traffic. The event was very successful, attended by over 100 children of all ages. Will you join me in congratulating the organisers and would you be interested in following up what was a pilot project by rolling out some similar arrangements across the City and if they are could I suggest a catchy slogan of “A street a week”.

City Mayor: Thank you Councillor Moore for first of all drawing my attention to this and also for pressing, yet again as I am sure she has done so on previous occasions, the concept of play streets which I think is something that I would want to join her in seeing established where appropriate in Leicester. As I understand it this was indeed a very successful event and very much enjoyed by not just children but adults as well and indeed the whole community, and I would, I think, on the

back of that just want to encourage other members, and indeed other Ward community funds, to take similar initiatives. I think this sort of thing is best done when it comes from the community up rather than from the top down, and I hope that we will see them, not just in Knighton Ward, perhaps in Knighton Ward as well, but in other Wards as well where members working with their local communities are able to experiment in this way, and who knows these pilot schemes may one day become capable as being established as a longer term reality.

Lord Mayor: Any follow up Councillor Moore?

Lord Mayor: Next question Councillor Moore.

Question 13 – Councillor Moore: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Is the City Mayor aware that the University of Leicester has changed its application for the use of the former College Hall from a conference centre to a conference centre plus hotel and entertainment venue?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. As Members will be aware matters relating to planning application are not within my purview, they are matters obviously for the Planning Committee and its Chair. But nonetheless I have looked at the background to this and I understand that planning permission for external alterations and extensions to provide what was then described as a conference and training centre were granted on 20th September 2011, and that in that case a committee decision was required because the application was recommended for approval and there were more than five objections. Now, officers advise that while some non-conference use could have happened without a change in the use of the building, they actually advised the University that they ought to apply. And this is perhaps where the matter becomes contentious because they applied to allow some hotel and function room use, and it was dealt with on the 29th July under delegated powers. Although conditions were applied, that is clearly something that has left many local residents, and indeed the local Ward Councillors, being concerned about the extension of what was originally applied for and approved and as I said although the matter of the granting of planning applications is not something I am directly involved in, I am sure that having raised it in this way in the Chamber it would be appropriate to ask whether the Planning Committee would consider whether it was indeed appropriate to have taken the decision under delegated powers or for it to have been considered at the Committee.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary question Councillor Moore?

Councillor Moore: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I suspect that the City Mayor, from his answer, is aware that the Planning Officers approved this change of application, but was he aware that they did this without challenging any conditions and with minimum notice to local residents. This has paved the way to creating a potential source of public nuisance and a threat to wild life in a quiet residential area and moreover conservation area, and this will also allow a large road-side sign to be put up which by distracting drivers could create a serious hazard and it has sullied the reputation of the University of Leicester, one of the City's most respected institutions, and a major contributor to the City economy in that it appears to be putting profit over our local heritage and the individual rights of families with young children to have a quiet life. Does he share my disquiet that, whether wittingly or unwittingly, our planners seem to have colluded with this?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor. For the reason I gave earlier I don't think it is appropriate for me to really comment whether the decisions were appropriate, but I do think that there are questions here as to which types of application are dealt with under delegated powers and whether with something as significant as this it ought to have gone to the Committee for their consideration and for them to apply conditions. Having said that perhaps as well as looking at that issue, the Committee might also wish to consider whether, with the benefit of hindsight, officers ought to have imposed more stringent conditions, but I think that is a matter for them to decide.

Lord Mayor: Question 14 Councillor Grant.

Question 14 – Councillor Grant: Thank you Lord Mayor. How many businesses that do work for the City Council are waiting for payments for longer than 30 days, 60 days and 90 days and how much money is owed for each of these time periods?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor. I am advised that we don't analyse our payment performance by each individual supplier because quite clearly some suppliers are supplying more than once over the period. However, I am told we pay 138,000 invoices per year to 13,000 different businesses. Obviously that's approximately ten to each business, with a total value of £393 million. Last year apparently we paid 81% of those invoices on time or within the 30 day period that Councillor Grant refers to. Apparently when looked at in value terms, about 90% of the value within that period. Of the remainder of the 81%, 19% was paid between the 30 and 90 day period after the due date. But I think it is perhaps worth saying to Members that there are often very good reasons for payments not being made immediately. There can often be dispute or challenge of the content or value of an invoice. So I think it is perhaps inevitable that for some at least there will be a delay. But certainly looking at it overall, I think our performance is at least acceptable, although obviously I would want to continue to encourage officers to pay as quickly as possible at any time, particularly at times when so many of our local businesses are feeling the effects of the situation with the national economy and obviously needs to ensure they have the cash flow to continue to thrive.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Grant any supplementary?

Lord Mayor: Question 15 Councillor Grant.

Question 15 – Councillor Grant: Will the City Mayor ask for a review of the Planning Department's handling of applications relating to College Hall in Knighton since the granting of permission to the University to use it as a conference centre? I welcome the comments the City Mayor has already made but believe that actually the issues go further.

City Mayor: Thank you to Councillor Grant. I mean he does acknowledge my answer to the earlier question from Councillor Moore. I think in the first instance this is a matter for the Planning Committee to look at just for the very reason that there are separation of responsibilities within the Authority. Should the Planning Committee, having looked at this matter, consider that there are matters for the administration of the Council, I would be very pleased to take a look at that stage.

Lord Mayor: Any supplementary?

Councillor Grant: Given that my co-Councillor was so concerned as to ask for the vice-chancellor to confirm there were no improper inducements to officers in relation to the site and College Hall, will the City Mayor reassure residents by confirming that there is no political soft pedalling in relation to the University of Leicester?

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor I hope I have made that very clear in my response to these questions and would also just want to say to Councillor Grant that if there is any suggestion whatsoever of impropriety in this or any other matter with regard to the handling of the planning application, I hope that he and others and indeed members of the public would very quickly bring that to the attention of the Monitoring Officer.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Grant question 16.

Question 16 – Councillor Grant: In light of the answers to a Freedom of Information request, and his own responses to questioning at Scrutiny, will the City Mayor tell us what criteria Councillors' question must meet in this meeting to receive an honest, accurate and timely answer?

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor. Whenever a question is tabled by a Member they ought to expect an honest, accurate and timely answer, although I have to say such questions are perhaps somewhat easier to answer if they are clear and sensible in the first place.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Grant.

Councillor Grant: Yes Lord Mayor, in light of the Freedom of Information request, where it is quite obvious that the City Mayor refused to give Councillor Porter an answer to a straightforward question, will he give Councillor Porter an apology for that and will he instruct officers to release the information that I have asked for about the questions that I have asked which I have asked for under the Freedom of Information Act but has been refused because of the time it would take. I would appreciate it if he would instruct officers just to release it without me having to rely on the Freedom of Information Act.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor. I am absolutely delighted to see Councillor Grant's concern for Councillor Porter's welfare. This is clearly a reflection of how closely the Alliance partners work in government and at a national level, and it is good to see that that close working relationship at a national level is not somehow belied by the distance that they sit apart in this Chamber. My Lord Mayor, I am not actually aware of what the second part of the question actually referred to. If Councillor Grant would like to see me later I would be happy to try and follow that up for him and to ensure he gets, as far as is possible, the information that he asked for.

Lord Mayor: Question 17 Councillor Grant.

Question 17 – Councillor Grant: I will need to amend this and I understand if that causes the City Mayor a problem he may need to reply to me slightly differently and in writing. The City Mayor was dismissive of my questions at a previous meeting of Council highlighting the inadequate investment being made to protect homes in Leicester from flooding. Would he reconsider his answer, particularly as there has been another incident of flooding in Knighton since we last met?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor I am glad that Councillor Grant has asked that because I went through the transcript of the last meeting in vein to find out what on earth he was talking about. I don't actually recall the particular occasion that he is referring to but I just want to say to him and to Members of the Council that I and the Council do take very seriously our role as a flood risk management authority. We are investing very heavily in measures to manage and mitigate flood risk. Each year we spend a sum of about £50,000 on watercourse maintenance, but of course beyond that we spend £390,000 on our drainage maintenance to effectively get the rainwater off the streets as quickly as possible and avoid what is called pluvial flooding. On top of that gully cleansing and of course our flooding emergency response and in addition we spend well over £200,000 per year about £236,000 in the current year, to carry out our statutory role managing local flood risk including the development of a local flood risk management strategy and we have indeed this year approved a further £400,000 to take forward a range of projects to help manage the risk of flooding including £240,000 for improving highway drainage. I have recently met with the representatives of the Environment Agency to talk about flood risk in the City, and some of the ways we can work together to combine our efforts, first of all to minimise flood risk but also to get other environmental benefits for the City, and have I think last year had the opportunity to meet with the Chair of the Environment Agency and to talk with him about flood risk management in general and our particular problems in Leicester.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary Councillor Grant?

Councillor Grant: Can he direct officers to look at the issue of repeated flooding in South and West Knighton to see what can be done in addition to the work that is being undertaken by Severn Trent as a number of residents have come literally within minutes of having their houses flooded during heavy rain?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Yes thank you Lord Mayor. I would be delighted to do that and obviously if other members have similar issues in their Wards I would be happy to pass on their concerns. I would also be happy if members wish to arrange for officers, who as I say have done a tremendous amount of work with the Environment Agency on this, to talk with them about the issues of flooding generally in the City, the issues of flooding in their Wards in general, and indeed issues for particular streets where there are increased issues for flooding. Just remind them that broadly they have two sorts of flooding. There is what is described as pluvial flooding, what happens when it rains, and pluvial flooding when rivers and brooks overflow their banks. Both of these are mapped very extensively in the City and probably documents that, if Members have not had a chance to see them, I am sure officers will be happy to discuss them with them and to discuss the mitigating measures that they are taking.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary Councillor Grant.

Councillor 18 – Councillor Grant: At the last meeting of Council the City Mayor said my questions about the net-books for schools were not timely. Actually to quote it says "I wonder frankly why Councillor Grant is raising it at this time, it certainly could not be said to be something that is current or timely. A week later he requested an independent report into the matter. Will he now ask for that report to be extended to include some investigation of educational outcomes as this was not

part of the report but is an important element of the scheme?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Yes, notwithstanding the remarks I made about the considerable passage of time before this matter was raised, I did feel that in the light of Councillor Grant having raised it with me that it was a matter that ought to be examined properly, and I had provided Councillor Grant with a copy of the independent report on the project which draws a number of specific conclusions with respect to this particular provision. The fact is that all the schools that were selected for inclusion in this project were under-performing at the time of approval, and all of these schools were performing above the floorstandards by 2012 – clearly progress. And in addition the overall performance gap between deprived and non-deprived pupils is now significantly narrower than it was in 2010. But it is not of course possible to establish retrospectively how each school selected the children to use the net-books, nor is it practically possible at this stage to attribute particular performance gains in particular schools and certainly not particular pupils directly to the net-books themselves given obviously the lack of monitoring and evaluation methodology having been established at the start and a base line having been taken. I think, looking back at it, I think it is certainly my view that the scheme would have benefited from a clearer monitoring and evaluation methodology, but clearly their touch methodology cannot be recreated after the event.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary Councillor Grant?

Councillor Grant: Thank you Lord Mayor. Notwithstanding the failures in the setting up of the scheme and the absolute lack of any thought given to monitoring the spend of £360,000, with some little experience in market research it would not be inappropriate for us carrying out a qualitative piece of market research amongst the schools and to gather some anecdotal evidence about the scheme even at this late stage. It was unfortunate that the timing of the report that was undertaken was over the summer holidays and therefore none of the schools were actually contacted. Would the City Mayor again I would ask extend it to at least contact the schools and get some response from them about the schemes and if he needed any help in doing that I am more than willing to assist.

City Mayor: I think after the lapse of time my Lord Mayor, as indeed I said last time and to which Councillor Grant has referred to, I really don't think that we would produce even very significantly useful anecdotes never mind any proper research and I just do believe it would be inappropriate and disproportionate to seek to return to the issue now.

Lord Mayor: Question 19 Councillor Grant.

Question 19 – Councillor Grant: How does the City Mayor respond to the new guidance from government on car parking in towns and cities given the view anti-car measures are driving motorists into the arms of internet retailers and out of town superstores, taking their custom with them, confusing and difficult car parking practices are undermining the economic vitality of the high street and tourist destinations and town halls need to ditch their anti-car dogma making it easier to park, and this will help support local shops, local jobs and tourism?

City Mayor: Thank you Lord Mayor. Councillor Grant talks about the government as if it were a single entity. Now in fact there are deep divisions within the government on these issues and on the one hand we have the Tories saying car

park wherever you like, free for all, does not really matter about the environment and does not matter about the City centre either, just allow anybody to park anywhere. We have got the Lib/Dems of course on the other hand saying that they are very anti-car and want to restrict the use of cars in towns to I think an excessive extent. Now, I think what we have got to do is take a balanced approach and pragmatic approach to what is right for Leicester. And so with that in mind we have taken a number of measures in Leicester to rationalise parking and indeed to free up parking, particularly in the evenings. Extensive areas of the City have seen the removal of double yellow lines in the evening for example, and as a result of that I think we have seen a major boost to the evening and night time economy in the City, and we are also undertaking a very significant amount of work across the City looking at the signage for those coming in in their cars and ensuring that is compatible with the variable messages we have for our car parks and that they actually give motorists the sort of information that they need so that they can make sensible decisions as to where they want to park in the City. We are also doing a very thorough review of both off street and on street parking in the City and it is my intention early in the New Year to announce some very significant changes to the way in which parking is regulated and paid for in the City such that it is much easier for motorists to know what they will need to pay if they come into the City, find somewhere to park when they come into the City and continue to contribute very significantly to the economic well-being of the City.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Grant supplementary please?

Councillor Grant: Yes, anticipating that the City Mayor would probably reject the use of Eric Pickles, does he also reject the report by the Association of Town and City Management which was very much talking about the importance of parking provision, and isn't it the case that really Leicester has no plans for parking apart to reduce it and the evidence of that was the removal of parking at St. Nicholas Place where the local businesses were told that there would be a replacement car parking but none has yet been forthcoming?

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor. What we have a lack of in Leicester is not a lack of parking space but a lack of quality parking space and parking spaces in the right place. It is very interesting if you look across our multi-storey car parks in the City a number of them are significantly empty most of the time, a lot of them are significantly empty all of the time. So it is not actually a lack of parking spaces it is a lack of quality and indeed perceived safety in some of those areas. So it is not simply a question of a comparatively small number of car parking spaces in Jubilee Square being lost it is actually something that is much more strategic that is needed in terms of our approach to the issues of parking in the City and it is that strategic approach that I intend we should adopt.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Barton.

Question 20 – Councillor Barton: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Would the Mayor, Lord Mayor and Council join me in thanking and congratulating the Friends of Western Park for organising a fantastic Western Park Festival on the 6th July, and also thank the talented musicians and performers for putting on an excellent show which was enjoyed by around 10,000 people in what is only its second year?

Councillor Clair: Thank you my Lord Mayor, likewise I did reply to the question from Dr. Lynn Moore for Knighton Park and this is another exceptional park which is well used and really the local residents and county residents they really appreciate the way in which they actually use our park services. And especially on the day of

6th July, the way in which the Friends of Knighton Parks got together and actually they put their heads together to organise this festival. It was great success and obviously I met with one of the ladies who is a Friends of Western Park at Dovelands Primary School to join them for the whole ceremony. I was really impressed with the way in which she admired the role of local Councillors, Councillor Cole, and Councillor Dr. Barton that it was really good to work in partnership. As we are pushed by Liberal and Tory government to have so many cuts and we are struggling to maintain our services, it is Friends of Western Park who can be the strength of our services to deliver in these difficult times I congratulate wholeheartedly all those volunteers had have actually put this event together. I wish them all the best for years to come and also I do appreciate the way in which local media did support and did actually highlighted in Leicester Mercury the success of this festival by attending 10,000 people. Thank you my Lord Mayor.

Lord Mayor: Any supplementary Councillor Barton?

Councillor Barton: Thank you I really appreciate the chance in the questions to be able to do something which sort of lifts the spirits a bit after all the bad news and gloom we have been talking about austerity and cuts to actually be able to celebrate things which are still going on within our local communities. Indeed last weekend I hope you will join me again in thanking and commemorating and celebrating a group called the Seahorse Creative Hullabaloo held a contemporary arts festival called 'Windows On' which raised £2,500 for multiple sclerosis support in the City so I hope you will join with me in supporting all our community groups that do so much for the cultural life of the City.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Clair response.

Councillor Clair: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Just to say that I have really been excited with the community involvement. I will endeavour to support my colleague and also especially from the City Mayor whatever we could do in those circumstances we will try our best to make those events a great success.

Lord Mayor: Question 21 Councillor Barton.

Question 20 – Councillor Barton: Thank you again. Would the Mayor, City Mayor, Councillors, Lord Mayor join me in congratulating a Western Park resident, Danielle Tomlinson, who is part of the City of Leicester Swimming Club who took part in the international children's games and won two silver medals at a recent event in Canada which the Council supported her travel costs to do?

Councillor Clair: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I am most pleased to join Councillor Dr. Barton congratulating those young athletes similar who went to Canada and also Lord Mayor I thank you for your time and reception you have given them before their departure and the Council has organised a reception in their honour. I met them all seven athletes and I am so proud of their achievements. They came fourth in that event which is at international level. Three gold, three silver and one bronze. I think what it gives us a real good platform for those young people who learn and pick up experience to actually compete at international level and they do actually train at one of our leisure centres, Braunstone, and we have a partnership with them and we shall always endeavour to support them. Obviously these games are Olympic session event and last time it happened in Korea and those athletes did the same performance and obviously myself being a former long distance runner and athlete my heart goes out for any sporting activity and any individual who wants

to actually succeed in their sporting career so I will endeavour that whichever the sport it may be in the future we will actually try our best.

Councillor Barton: Thank you for that and thank you to the Council for giving the support to that team. I hope that talented people will be supported and encouraged in the future as you have said to take part in international competition both representing Leicester and also representing Great Britain as is the ambition of some of those young people in that team and I add my congratulations to those of City as well.

Lord Mayor: Question 22 Councillor Porter.

Question 22 – Councillor Porter: Thank you Lord Mayor. How much did the Council sell the velodrome site for?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor

City Mayor: Thank you Lord Mayor. As I think Councillor Porter will be aware there has been a general expectation that Councils will sell land, buildings for best consideration, but of course there are a number of exceptions to that particularly when something is very clearly in the wider interests of the City. And I can think of numerous occasions over the years when we have sold land and buildings for less than best consideration to achieve other ends. Now this particular land the former velodrome site was in fact sold for very much a nominal sum. It is a matter of public record and it has been in the Mercury. It was the sum of £1 but of course that was because there are very substantial public benefits from that disposal. Disposal is to Leicester Housing Association who have got a very proud record of providing affordable homes in the City and it is also an area where we are very keen to pump round further development in the area to get the infrastructure in and to get other land there developed. And what we are getting in return for the disposal of this 1.18 hectares of land is a minimum of 45 much needed affordable homes for rent in the City and certainly at a time when the government very significantly limits any ability for us to do that directly ourselves doing it through housing associations is a way of actually ensuring that is provided in the City. It includes 10 supported accommodation units for independent living, five wheelchair compliant properties and of course I think it is very evident to members that as has been the case on many other occasions this is one where it was very appropriate for us to make that happen for the wider good of the City rather than to take the narrow interest of just how much money we could get for it.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary Councillor Porter?

Councillor Porter: Yes thank you Lord Mayor. It is interesting you give such a detailed explanation as to why you can sell it for £1. If you can sell that for £1 why can't he sell the Haymarket Theatre for £1? But my question Lord Mayor is "How many other Council owned brownfield sites remain undeveloped and shouldn't the Council have a policy whereby the brownfield sites are developed ahead the greenfield sites because once the greenfield sites are lost to development then they are gone forever?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Yes, I have indicated on previous occasions that if we had the right person prepared to take on the Haymarket Theatre I would pay them to take it off our hands. Quite clearly it is a liability to us. It is a very strange analogy. If

Councillor Porter wants to put in a bid at £1 it could be arranged. On a more general theme of course it is important that the Council keeps its land holdings under review and we do that on a frequent basis. Particularly that we seek to bring forward those parcels of land, particularly brownfield land, that will initiate and pump prime regeneration in parts of the City, and of course although obviously the velodrome, long overtaken by more modern facilities elsewhere, particularly in Manchester, was an area used for sport. It is technically a brownfield site that has previously been developed and actually seeing it used for affordable housing in this way I think is something very much to be welcomed and not questioned.

Lord Mayor: Question 23 Councillor Porter.

Question 23 – Councillor Porter: Thank you Lord Mayor. What were the results of the call for sites consultation exercise in terms of sites in Aylestone?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Yes. In reply to his opposition colleague earlier on I talked about the desirability of questions being both sensible and clear. This one is far from clear because I have tried with officers to understand what particular call for sites in the Aylestone context Councillor Porter is referring to. They come with three possible explanations. One was a call for sites in 2010 which produced Aylestone Meadows, Belvoir Drive Sports Ground, Franklyn Fields all for different purposes. The other was a call for office sites which produced no sites in Aylestone and that was in June 2012. Then of course there was a call for sites in the context of the gypsy and travellers sites which again I don't think produced anything suitable in the Aylestone area. So perhaps in his supplementary Councillor Porter will be able to give some indication as to which particular one of those he is referring to.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary please?

Councillor Porter: Thank you Lord Mayor. I think he needs to actually listen to what he is saying himself because he did run through a whole list of different sites and as he says it was only the first one which had sites in Aylestone and I think he mentioned Belvoir Drive, Franklyn Fields, Aylestone Meadows so of course that is the area I am referring to. Local residents have raised concerns with me that the Council appears to be side stepping the proper planning policy in terms of their eagerness to get the Franklyn Fields site developed in Aylestone. This site had a special and specific allocation in the local plan so can the Council please follow the proper planning policy and allow proper public consultation before specific details for the Franklyn Fields site are brought forward?

City Mayor: Yes, it really would have genuinely been very helpful if Councillor Porter had made that clear initially. I genuinely did struggle to understand what it was about. There was quite a lot of speculation in the office as to whether it was about travellers sites which is the first favoured option and then they went through a number of others and Franklyn Fields had not actually occurred to people as the likely purpose of the question. But now I have got it, it does give me the opportunity to thank Councillor Porter for all his engagement in discussions about the future of Franklyn Fields. He has actually enormously helped together with his colleague, Councillor for the area, he has enormously helped in shaping the proposals that we have now come forward with, he has had a number of private discussions with us about it and I am enormously grateful to him and Councillor Clarke for the work they have done to make sure that the proposals that we have now brought forward with their agreement are ones that do recognise the importance to keep a balance in

development of this site such that we have to take the opportunity to close off any opportunity for roads being built through there, which is of course the original intention for the acquisition of the site, to ensure that we build to the highest environmental standards and also to ensure that we respect the relationship of that site to the Aylestone Meadows which is just of course across on the other side of the canal. All of those have been built in as a result of the discussions that we have all had as Ward Councillors and with me as City Mayor with officers about this before bringing forward for public consultation which I can assure him and others will be as full as it needs to be.

Lord Mayor: Question 24 Councillor Porter.

Question 24 – Councillor Porter: Thank you again Lord Mayor. What are the Lutterworth Road bus passenger figures for each month so far this year, obviously excluding the period when the road was closed?

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor were I, as Mayor of Leicester, to have the powers that the Mayor of London has got, I could give Councillor Porter a definitive reply to this. Unfortunately as he will be aware and we discussed in this chamber on a number of occasions in the past, regrettably the Mayor of Leicester does not have the same powers as the Mayor of London with regard to specifying high quality and reasonably priced public transport. As a result of that we are entirely dependent, we are not able ourselves, as the Mayor of London would be, to say for a particular route what the monthly data is and what we do get from them and they volunteer to us those monthly data for the City as a whole. Well that is helpful but it does not help much to answer these questions or indeed to help us to plan the bus service across the City. We do undertake our own surveys but of course inevitably we can't do those on a frequent basis. We try to do them on every route annually, and the one that was in March/April this year just north of the A563 junction on this corridor showed that over a 12 hour period, that is 7am to 7pm, 1316 passengers were recorded inbound on 86 buses and 1279 outbound on 89 buses.

Lord Mayor: Supplementary Councillor Porter?

Councillor Porter: Yes, thank you Lord Mayor. At a previous Council meeting the Mayor said that the road, this is the Lutterworth Road, had to be closed for such a long period because it was not just being resurfaced, it was actually being rebuilt. So my question is Can the Mayor confirm that all the road was rebuilt and it was not just resurfaced?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: With respect Councillor Porter that is a very different question to the one you asked initially. But I am happy to do my best to answer it. In fact as Members will recall when I answered a question on this previously I explained that officers had initially considered closing parts of the road for parts of the time, but concluded that was going to be so disruptive over a long period of time that it is far better to try and concentrate the work during the school holidays when inevitably traffic is a bit lighter. They got it finished within time and during that time while it did cause disruption, of course it did, it was limited in its duration and I think that at the end of it most of those in the area and certainly from feedback from traders, felt that it had been handled as well as could be expected. Obviously there was disruption and that was not to be welcomed, but as well as could be expected and I think most were grateful it had been done in one chunk rather than in separate bits.

Lord Mayor: Question 25 Councillor Porter.

Question number 25 – Councillor Porter: Thank you again. Does the Council have any plans for a modern art gallery?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Well I can hear the supplementaries already coming from colleagues, because again it is not entirely clear what is being asked here. But I do know, and Members have heard me say this on many previous occasions members on this side were actually elected on a manifesto that has the aspiration to have more modern art gallery space in the City, whether that is an existing building or whether it is the conversion of another building and when we will be able to do it is of course a matter of continuing discussion. Indeed it was a matter of discussion at the last Scrutiny meeting when we were discussing the City of Culture bid which we will be coming to in a little while, and I did then say as I have said on previous occasions that when an opportunity arises I would very much wish to see us as a City having certainly more modern art gallery space in the City in one or more buildings.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Porter any supplementary?

Councillor Porter: Yes I have actually Lord Mayor. I understand that the gallery in Nottingham that they have opened recently now gets more visitors than the Space Centre. If the Council is really serious about winning the UK City of Culture bid, it is imperative I think that we do not neglect contemporary art and if the Council are not going to bring forward a serious plan for an art gallery then I suggest that they look at an alternative which I suggested some time ago that we go with a sculpture park.

Councillor Kitterick: Have you got a declaration of interest there Councillor Porter?

City Mayor: I have said that this is in response to the questions I was being asked at Scrutiny about but indeed it is my view that between now and 2017 if we are successful and indeed if we are not successful, I would hope that we can make progress in getting more and better space in the City for both contemporary and modern art and there is a distinction, but I would suggest that contemporary and modern art are more than just sculpture, as important as sculpture is, it is a part of the contribution towards art and there are other aspects of art in general, contemporary art in general, visual arts in particular, that deserve to have more space than we are able to give them at the moment. One of the things I have really found very interesting is the discussion that there has been about having at least in the short term some pop up galleries just using space on a fairly short term basis to fill the gap that we have undoubtedly got until we can find a longer term solution. I am really very interested in doing that, and I can see other members nodding as well because I think that for a comparatively modest cost we could produce something that really was quite exciting and interesting. And while it may be transient would nonetheless be very useful.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Porter, Question 26.

Question 26 – Councillor Porter: What is the market value of the greenfield site south of Conaglen Road and Franklyn Road?

City Mayor: Again my Lord Mayor can I take this opportunity to say how grateful I am to both Councillor Porter and Councillor Clarke for their discussions prior to the

launch of the marketing of this site and the way in which it helps to shape it prior to going out to the market. I don't think Councillor Porter will be surprised if I say that obviously the marketing of any site is something that is commercially sensitive and it would just not be sensible for me in this chamber to say what I think the reserve price ought to be on a piece of land like this and it would not be in the Council's interest, and certainly would not be in the City's interests, were I to do so. So if you will forgive me. I will answer his questions in so far as I can in a way that is open and frank as his colleague has encouraged me to do so but that is one issue that I think members will understand perhaps ought not to be revealed in public.

Councillor Porter: Thank you Lord Mayor. I think it is rather bizarre really because the last time the Council had proposals for this land they announced publicly what the value of the site was. I don't see the difference. If you are selling a house you have got to tell the potential buyers how much you think it is worth, but he seems to know best. Anyway following on from that Sir Peter does appear to be rather keen on selling Council owned assets and a number of people have said he wants to do this for his vanity schemes. So what assurances can we receive from him that we are getting best value for these assets that he is selling off, some people have said willy nilly. Can he confirm that the land that he recently sold in Beaumont Leys was sold for less than £30,000 a plot?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor forgive me but I have not got a clue on this occasion which particular plot of land and as the others are also equally baffled by the question. I would be happy to discuss with Councillor Porter the other sales across the City, but I can assure members that we are obviously always keeping the Council's assets under review and always looking at opportunities to use those assets to raise capital receipts that can be used elsewhere for investment in the City and to use them to promote regeneration across the City and when we can do both then I am obviously particularly keen to proactively market a particular site and to ensure that we do so vigorously. So, this particular site is one that I think will very much be dependent in terms of its valuation on the amount of market interest in it. I would expect actually to have quite significant market interest in it. I think it is an attractive place for housing development particularly the comparatively low density housing development that we are intending there and particularly the proximity to the very attractive Aylestone Village area and of course the outstanding area of natural beauty that we have that is the Aylestone Meadows site that I was so pleased that we were able to protect from development just a couple of years ago.

Councillor Porter: I think that was largely down to me but thank you.

Question 27 – Councillor Porter: My Lord Mayor. How many of the 54 Councillors benefit from the .13% total of the pensions figure?

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor I did earlier on say that it was easier to answer questions if you had clear questions, and the fact is that this one has shifted somewhat even if it is only the decimal point. My Lord Mayor, there are currently 15 members, I think this is what I am being asked about, there are currently 15 Councillors who are members of the local government pension scheme.

Councillor Porter: Thank you Lord Mayor. We have got 15 that is a good figure. At least he knows it this time because Lord Mayor if you turn to page 24 of the minutes from the previous meeting you will see that I asked Sir Peter how many,

what the figure was in terms of the contribution and he gave a rather rambling reply and he sort of alleged that the pension figure was buried somewhere within an email that he received at 1.35pm in the afternoon. Very odd. So, can the Mayor please confirm whether the truth is that the figure was not buried in that email at all but was clearly visible on that email?

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor, I am sure members will recall my response to Councillor Porter. I can assure you it was not rambling it was dismissive. Now I have subsequently resolved to treat Councillor Porter seriously, but Members will have observed this evening that it is not always easy. So treating him seriously and in that spirit I will say that I readily acknowledged that Councillor Porter was entitled to a full response to that question which is why I think the following morning, but certainly very shortly afterwards, I sent him the full response of what I have had, I think I copied it to other members.

Councillor Porter: Can I ask a supplementary question now?

City Mayor: Well it is my answer Lord Mayor, and rather than dialogue..... I will come to the point.....

Councillor Porter: yes or no. It's a bit rich coming from you lot.

Councillor Thomas: There is only one of you, you want to be careful.

Councillor Porter: Is that some sort of threat if so Lord Mayor I would like an apology. I'm sorry Lord Mayor I am refusing to take this sort of stuff as a joke I've had quite enough of it and I would like an apology.

Councillor Thomas: Councillor Porter if you are in any way offended or feel threatened by the joke I made then I unreservedly apologise. I think you are absolutely very, very sensitive and I think you ought to consider another form of occupation.

Councillor Porter: Lord Mayor that it not a heartfelt apology and that is what I am asking for. I don't see why I should have to go through this. We are all supposed to follow a code of conduct in this place. I have already had Labour members basically assaulting me in public and I will refuse to tolerate this anymore. Can you please act on this Lord Mayor.

Lord Mayor: I am aware we have to follow a code of conduct but sometimes you have got to have a bit of a laugh. This meeting has been going on for three hours plus. City Mayor are we finished?

City Mayor: Yes.

Lord Mayor: Question 28 Councillor Cole

Question 28 – Councillor Cole: On behalf of the Afro-Caribbean Centre Users can I say thanks for the Assistant Mayor for Neighbourhood for keeping the Centre open during the recent repairs following the flood damage to the Centre, and can I ask what is being done to prevent the flood from happening again given this is the second such flood in recent times?

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I think this will be a calmer dialogue than the previous question. Keeping services operational is always a key priority to ensure the least amount of impact is felt by our customers when unfortunate and unforeseen events like this occur. The flood was a result of significant rainfall which caused problems in a number of parts of the county and sadly caused some significant damage within the Centre. To ensure that as far as we possibly can that this does not happen again there is work underway to install an additional emergency water shoot to discharge water from the roof quickly and efficiently and to make water tight a faulty skylight on the first floor of the Centre where problems had come to light in between the previous incident and the most recent one.

Lord Mayor: Any supplementary Councillor Cole?

Councillor Cole: Just to say thank you Lord Mayor.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Cooke.

Councillor Cooke: My Lord Mayor my memory tells me that I was quite satisfied with Councillor Palmer's response to Councillor Singh's initial question, number 1, but I have to say that it is such a long while ago that I forgot what the detail is. But on that basis I am prepared not to pursue my question.

REPORTS OF EXECUTIVE

Review of Core Strategy Policies, to Enable New Office Development and Employment and Training Opportunities

A report was submitted which sought agreement to the City Mayor's recommendation in relation to Core Strategy Policy changes. A copy of the decision note detailing the recommendation of the City Mayor was attached to the report

Moved by Councillor Kitterick, seconded by the City Mayor and carried:-

18. That the proposed Core Strategy Policy changes, regarding new office development and employment and training opportunities shown in Appendix 1 to the report be agreed and incorporated to form the final 'submission documents, to be sent to the Planning Inspector to make a decision, after a further statutory 6 week 'Submission Consultation.

Bid for UK City of Culture 2017

A report was submitted which sought of support for a City of Culture bid.

Moved by the City Mayor, seconded by Councillor Clair and carried:

19. That Council:

- (i) endorse Leicester's bid to be UK City of Culture 2017 recognising the cultural, economic and social benefits to the city;

(ii) confirm the revenue and capital commitments made by the Council in support of the programme as detailed in section 3.1 of the report to Council, which will be factored in to the Council's medium term financial strategy and future years' revenue budget and capital programme;

(iii) note that the Council takes responsibility for the delivery of the programme, including underwriting key events and associated activities to ensure their successful delivery;

(iv) note the work to put in place robust delivery and governance mechanisms as detailed in section 4.6 of the report to Council; and

(v) note the emerging legacy proposals set out in the benefits section 4.4 of the report to Council.

REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

Revision to the Constitution for Leicester City Council

The Monitoring Officer and Director of Communications, Delivery and Political Governance was submitted which sought approval to amendments to the Council's Constitution and amendments to the size of Committees.

Moved by Councillor Clayton, seconded by City Mayor and carried:-

20. That Council:

- i. agree the changes to the constitution in line with the schedule attached to the report, noting that these include not only revisions to the existing text, but also completely re-written documents in Part 5 (Political Conventions; Planning Guidance; Petitions Scheme);
- ii. agree the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2013/14; and
- iii. in accordance with the Council Procedure Rule 35 (a), agrees;
 - the increase in size of Audit & Risk Committee by two further elected Members,
 - the increase in size of Standards Committee by one further elected Member,
 - the increase in size of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to include the Chairs of Audit & Risk Committee; Licensing Committee and Standards Committee where those Chairs are not otherwise represented.

Elected Member Absence from Meetings

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which sought approval to the granting of an extension of time.

Councillor Clayton, seconded by the City Mayor and carried:

21. That being prior to the expiry of six months since the last attendance by Councillor Glover at a Council meeting, due to the extenuating circumstances arising from Councillor Glover's illness, Council agree to an extension of time for Councillor Glover's membership of the Council, and that the position be reviewed prior to the expiry of a further 2 months (to tie in with Council meetings).

EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES

None notified.

NOTICES OF MOTION

None notified.

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None notified.

Close of Meeting

The Lord Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.38pm.