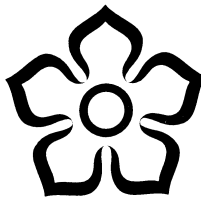


Thursday, 19 June 2014



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 JUNE 2014 duly convened for the business hereunder mentioned.

=====

BUSINESS

=====

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
5. **QUESTIONS**
 - From Members of the Public
 - From Councillors
6. **MATTERS RESERVED TO FULL COUNCIL**
 - 6.1 Adoption of Revised Core Strategy Policies for New Office Development and Employment and Training Opportunities
 - 6.2 Call-In of Executive Decision – Review of Community and Voluntary Sector
7. **REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**
 - 7.1 Corporate Compensation Policy
8. **EXECUTIVE AND 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:

JOHN THOMAS, LORD MAYOR
CHAIRMAN

SIR PETER SOULSBY – CITY MAYOR

Abbey Ward

ANNETTE BYRNE
VIJAY SINGH RIYAIT

Aylestone Ward

ADAM CLARKE
NIGEL CARL PORTER

Beaumont Leys Ward

VIOLET GEDDES GRAHAM DEMPSTER
SUNDIP MEGHANI

Belgrave Ward

RASHMIKANT JOSHI

Braunstone Park and Rowley Fields

MICHAEL ERNEST COOKE
ANNE GLOVER
WAYNE JAN NAYLOR

Castle Ward

NEIL CLAYTON
PATRICK JOSEPH KITTERICK
LYNN SENIOR

Charnwood Ward

PAUL DARREN NEWCOMBE
ABDUL RAZAK OSMAN

Coleman Ward

DEBORAH SANGSTER

Freemen Ward

ELLY CUTKELVIN

Humberstone and Hamilton Ward

RITA PATEL
BARBARA ANNE POTTER
GURINDER SINGH SANDHU

Knighton Ward

ROSS GRANT
INDERJIT SINGH GUGNANI
DR LYNN MOORE

Latimer Ward

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
SHOFIQL ISLAM CHOWDHURY
MOHAMMED DAWOOD

Stoneygate Ward

MUSTAFA KAMAL
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

LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Before the meeting formally commenced the Lord Mayor invited his Chaplain, Father Lally to say an appropriate prayer.

Council Meetings

The Lord Mayor noted that under the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 2b in the Council's Constitution an additional ordinary meeting of the Council would be held immediately following the meeting scheduled for 25 February 2015.

MP6 Event

The Lord Mayor was pleased to announce that on 27 June six young people from across Leicester schools would be taking part in a public speaking event.

The 'Member of Parliament 6' event was a competition that gave students an opportunity to emphasise that voice is power and also served as a platform for young people to speak about issues that concerned them directly to those in power. The Lord Mayor also explained that the event gave Members the opportunity to listen to the voices of young people and gain insight into their perspectives and ensured that young people knew that their voices were being heard.

As well as wishing the young people from Leicester well the Lord Mayor also strongly encouraged Members to watch the live feed of the competition at <https://new.livestream.com/L4L/mp614> and leave a comment regarding the speeches or the issues discussed.

Appeal Supper

The Lord Mayor reminded Members of one of the first events for his Appeal which was to be a charity supper evening at Bobby's Restaurant on Belgrave Road held on, 20 June 2014 at 7pm. Tickets would be £15 and supported three very good causes.

Members were asked to contact the Member & Civic Support Team on 0116 454 0020 as soon as possible to reserve their place.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor Sood declared a Declarable Personal Interest in item 6.2 on the agenda 'Call in of Executive Decision – Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) – Outcome of Consultation and Future Options' as Chair of the Leicestershire Council of Faiths.

Councillor Gugnani declared a Declarable Personal Interest in item 6.2 on the agenda 'Call in of Executive Decision – Supporting the Voluntary and Community

Sector (VCS) – Outcome of Consultation and Future Options’ as a member of the Leicestershire Council of Faiths.

Councillor Joshi declared a Declarable Personal Interest in item 6.2 on the agenda ‘Call in of Executive Decision – Supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) – Outcome of Consultation and Future Options’ as a member of the Leicestershire Council of Faiths.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

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

9. That the minutes of the Meeting of Council held on 20 March 2014 and the Annual Council Meeting held on 29 May 2014, having been 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

Ms Sally Skyrme presented a petition with 1,162 signatures in the following terms:

“We the undersigned respectfully request that the Council considers naming the new square due to be opened in April 2014 ‘Peace Square’ rather than ‘Jubilee Square’ for reasons given below:-

- We consider it to be far more appropriate in this year, the centenary of World War I, the ‘war to end all wars’, a war in which millions of ordinary people from all over the world died.
- Leicester is a City well known for different communities from all over the world living side by side peacefully – the name ‘Peace Square’ would celebrate this.
- The name ‘Peace Square’ would be a good contradiction to the hectic lifestyles people lead nowadays, especially in the town centre. The name ‘Peace Square’ would resonate well with people wanting to go there to get some peace.
- The elected Mayor of Leicester decided on the name ‘Jubilee Square’ because Leicester was the first city Queen Elizabeth II visited on her Diamond Jubilee tour two years ago. That visit cost the city £220,000 which is money that we could ill afford in these times of cuts to services and living standards. If the Queen contributed to the cost of the visit and the building of the square then there may be an argument for calling it Jubilee Square but she hasn’t.
- We believe that a Labour majority council should be naming a square in honour of ordinary people not the aristocracy.
- With regards to concern about duplicating the name Peace Walk in Victoria Park – there are also lots of other places in Leicester named ‘Jubilee’.”

PETITIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Councillor Willmott presented a petition with 128 signatures in the following terms:

“The members of Rushey Fields Residents Association and the residents of Rushey Mead and Belgrave would like to request Leicester City Council to have an outside gym and walking track in Rushey Mead Park, similar to that at Spinney Hill Park.”

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

QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

Question 1 – Councillor Dr. Barton: Thank you Lord Mayor. “Constituents are concerned that the government is ending the Independent Living Fund that helps people with disabilities to live independently. Provision will become the responsibility of local authorities. How will Leicester City Council be able to resource and deliver this and support people with disabilities to continue living independent lives in the future?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Patel to reply.

Councillor Patel: Thank you my Lord Mayor and thank you Councillor Barton for asking that question. Following a pause due to a legal challenge the Minister of State for Disabled People has now announced that the Independent Living Fund will formally close on 30th June 2015 in about a year’s time, and local authorities will take on the responsibility for meeting the care and support needs of this group of people. The ILF will transfer the funding being paid to people at the point of this change to the Council. Going forward the Council will meet their eligible needs of these individuals as we do with all other disabled people in the city with a focus on promoting their independence. Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Barton have you got a supplementary?

Councillor Barton: Yes, a supplementary question. Can we assure people in Leicester that people with disabilities will not be made to suffer hardship from this which for a lot of people fear is another cut by the government and attack on the most vulnerable.

Councillor Patel: I think we will work very hard to try and make sure that those who meet, who fulfil the eligibility criteria that we will be serving them just like we serve other disabled people. But the ILF at the moment are reviewing themselves the funding they give to the clients before they confirm the level of transfers to the Council. So really at this moment in time we are not sure how much money is going to be transferred over to us and what their review will come out with. The Council will be required to complete our own assessment of needs going forward for those people and therefore at this stage it is really not clear whether we will receive adequate funding and whether we will be able to monitor this as we move forward. We intend to but we can’t make or give any undertakings or make any promises at

this stage. Additionally we are not able to guarantee that the government's decision to close the scheme will not result in some people having a reduced service and that is because of the review that they are doing. The scheme has given a small number of people funding to meet a wide range of needs. Not all of these needs will be assessed as eligible needs in line with the Council's threshold for services and therefore would not be supported by the Council funding into the future. However, we are able to confirm that we will provide people with Council resources necessary to meet their eligible needs as we do for other disabled people.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Councillor Patel. Councillor Riyat, question 2.

Question 2 – Councillor Riyat: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "Would the City Council look at declaring the now daily foul smells from the Biffa Waste Management plant at Bursom a statutory nuisance following the independent reports it has commissioned fulfilling its obligations to investigate odours under Section 79 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990". And just to add this course of action is supported by the residents' local MP, Liz Kendall, as well. Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you my Lord Mayor. The main regulator for the odour from the Biffa plant at Bursom is the Environment Agency as they hold the permit for the site. The way the regulations work around environmental protection is that only one lead regulatory agency can take action over a particular issue at any one time. So two agencies, two different enforcement agencies, cannot be taking the same action against a business at the same time. Because the Environment Agency are investigating and requesting various actions from Biffa at this stage, what we have sought to do is ensure that there is as much independent verification to support the problems that we know residents are going through and to really force the Environment Agency's hand to take action against Biffa to resolve this problem once and for all.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Riyat have you got a supplementary?

Councillor Riyat: Yes thank you my Lord Mayor. Having discussed this issue with the Environment Agency that is not the information they have given me. The Environment Agency have quite clearly said to me why has the Council not declared this a statutory nuisance. I think there is a mismatch there and I would ask, because at the end of the day people are suffering daily there, and as the Assistant Mayor knows, and I have supported the action in terms of the independent reports that have been commissioned, but I think we need to have all options on the table at the moment so I would ask the Assistant Mayor really to look at this again because it really is blighting people's lives. It has gone on for a decade. We do have a responsibility because it went through our planning process. Again the Environment Agency said that they weren't happy with the site so I would ask her to reconsider please.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I have of course sought advice on the process and whether this is something we can take forward. Every piece of advice I have says that it is not at this stage. We won't rule it out. It is worth saying though that there is nothing to stop independent civil action being taken alongside the actions the Environment Agency are taking. Because anything that the Environment Agency or the Council can do, if the Council were the body acting, as

we are in other situations regarding smell where there is not an Environment Agency permit involved, we can only seek to prevent or to stop the smell continuing. I know that residents have been suffering year in year out, it is a foul smell and they should not have to suffer it and we are fully supportive of the residents being able to have this daily blight stopped which is why we have invested the money to back up what the residents have been saying. It is worth saying at this point my Lord Mayor that both the Environment Agency and Biffa this time last year said that there was not a problem with the smell when they went out and that the problems we vexatious. This led us to bring in independent consultants to both verify the complaints about the smell but also to look at the problems and the plant. Now I will be balanced in my response and say that Biffa over the last 3 years have spent over £800,000 in modification to the plant. Sadly it has not had the results that the residents need.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Councillor Russell. Councillor Dr. Moore, ask question three please.

Question 3 – Councillor Dr. Moore: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “Could the City Mayor bring us up to date with plans to restrict the speed of traffic in the city for example introduction of 20mph zones and restrictions on pavement parking?”

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I am very pleased to be able to respond to this and to let Council know that when they last counted it, which I understand was on the 18th March, we had a total of 421 streets across the city that were subject to 20 mph road restrictions. I have not converted this to miles but that is 86 kilometres of roads which is really quite a substantial amount that has been done. Obviously giving priority to those areas where residents have been asking for it, particularly areas around schools. We have got an extensive programme to continue that, 9 already in the current programme, some further 12 developer funded and a further 35 schemes have been identified by Members. I will be working with Members over the next few months to create a programme over the next 3-5 years to actually make sure that all of those areas where there is a need and demand are actually being met.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Dr. Moore do you have a supplementary?

Councillor Dr. Moore: Yes please I would like to ask one. Thank you very much that is good news, but I am particularly interested in what the plans are for Knighton because many of the constituents in the ward have complained to me about speeding traffic and we know that if cars are parked on the carriageway rather than the pavement that effectively narrows the road and does cause cars to slow down and it also encourages people to park sensibly rather than risk having the paintwork damaged on their car. Can I ask the City Mayor have you got any specific plans for Knighton in this respect.

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor, I am intending to meet with Councillor Moore and other colleagues over the next couple of weeks to talk about the specific plans that we have got and the priorities to be given to those plans and I can assure Members that there are proposals for the implementation of 20mph zones across the whole of the city.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Councillor Dr. Moore question 4.

Question 4 – Councillor Dr. Moore: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “The Assistant Mayor for Neighbourhood Services might like to know that the residents of Northcote Road in Knighton are again planning a street closure so that children can play freely without danger from traffic. That was very successful last year and at the time I suggested that it might be rather good to plan a programme of such closures throughout the summer in the city. Has there been any progress in this?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Dempster to reply.

Councillor Dempster: Right. I mean I am so pleased that after last year’s successful event that they are doing it again this year. That is absolutely brilliant news for those young people, and of course play is one of the things that we think is really fundamental for our young people and so one of the things that we are looking to do is to set up a play commission and that will be looking at best practice across the whole country. And so for example, I know that in London they actually have quite a programme of people being able to close the roads to allow the young people to play safely. Now I know that the Elected Mayor, Peter, has said to any Members that are involved in possible street closures over the summer that if they contact his office he will help them to get to the appropriate officers to get you know things moving. What I really want us to do you know for next summer is, that’s great for this year, but what we need for next summer is something that is much more concrete so that we have got a process that people feel confident in and that they won’t need outside help and they will be able to have those decisions made at Ward Community meetings and then perhaps you know just look at the book and see well what are the next steps. So it is about getting the play commission up and running, looking at best practice, making the whole process as simple as possible because we all know the benefits because you know there are quite a lot of us that were able when we were younger to play in the streets and the young people can’t do that now. So I think it is something that communities want and we need to help them deliver. Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Dr. Moore, you have no supplementary?. Go on to question 5 then. Councillor Waddington.

Question 5 – Councillor Waddington: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “Would the Assistant Mayor for Children and Young People tell us what lessons she thinks can be learnt by Leicester City Council, its schools, governors and parents from the recent problems that have been experienced by some Birmingham schools?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Dempster.

Councillor Dempster: Thank you Lord Mayor. Yes, I think that there are 2 key lessons and that is about the importance of relationships and about knowing our schools. If some of you will remember that, you know, 7-8 years ago standards were not good in this city, relationships were fragile and what we have done over the last 8 years is we have strengthened those relationships between schools and also between schools and the local authority. I think that is absolutely crucial. One of the things that we are continuing to do is to invest in our learning services. That is important if we are going to know our schools and to be able to support and appropriately challenge. And of course a lot of that again is based on relationships and the strength and the trust of that relationship. So because we are investing in our learning services they are able to lead on events every single term, events for chairs of governors to get together with officers from the Council and of course with

each other, Leicester Leaders meetings that brings Head Teachers together from across the city and of course we have a range of schools that attend those events. I have to say that I do think that there is one huge risk for the future and that is the issue of academies. At the end of the day academies are answerable to London and in fact they think nothing of telling our officers that they don't need to listen to us because they are only accountable to the Secretary of State and anybody who thinks that the Secretary of State in London has got the time or the interest even to take an interest in the thousands of academies across this country, is clearly mistaken. What is needed is that relationship, a trusting, respectful relationship that you get from local partnerships, that is what we have got at the current time in this city, and I would hate to see that being broken up by academies, academy chains, independent academies that will not actually be answerable to anybody in this chamber, they won't be answerable to local communities and I think that is an absolute and utter outrage. So I am very, very proud of the stance that we have taken in this City and that is not to say that we are anti-academy, that is far too simplistic. What we are saying is we have a system in this city of partnership, respectful, trusting open relationships that is delivering for children in this city. Let's not change that by going down the academy route where people are not actually accountable to anybody. Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Councillor Waddington, a supplementary? No supplementary thank you very much. Question 6 then, Councillor Riyait.

Question 6 – Councillor Riyait: Thank you Lord Mayor. “What is the Leicester City Council doing to help detect the issue of female genital mutilation within the city and to support the campaign to end it?” Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Sood.

Councillor Sood: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Thank you Councillor Riyait for asking the question again. My Lord Mayor a similar Council question was raised by Councillor Chaplin at the 21st November Council meeting regarding action that the Council has taken to raise the awareness of FGM and to help girls and women who experience this. My Lord Mayor, the Council has recently commissioned 3 new specialist services for people affected by sexual violence or abuse within the city. This includes women who experience or who could experience FGM. The new service provides an integrated service that caters for all people in any sort of way and it provides a central helpline number and it ensures that the services are easier to access and understand. It is a counselling service providing psychological care and support counselling. Recently my Lord Mayor one of the volunteers in the Sharma Women's Centre they have secured some funding and they have set up a project Women to Achievement and they will be providing counselling on this as well because it is a women organisation. And my Lord Mayor there is training and awareness and training programmes for front line specialist staff and one of the commission providers is Safe and this project is working with Reverent Bonnie Evans-Hill who is the Bishop's interfaith adviser and they have developed a woman's working group in the city which as part of its work looks at the issues of FGM. And safe project is also working with local community organisations on raising awareness and my Lord Mayor I would like to thank our City Council's Community Safety Team, Young and Children's Services and City Safeguarding Team for taking this issue seriously and they are really concerned about how we can gather more information. FGM is also a safeguarding issue for both children and adults. At Leicester University they have hosted already a conference on FGM and the first meeting last year was held at LGBT Centre because the Home Office is very keen to work with Leicester regarding FGM and in that meeting, I attended

that meeting, home Office representatives were there, school nurses, Bishop's interfaith adviser, UHL and voluntary sector. The NSPCC - they are making some referrals now to these organisations and it is very crucial that front line training is provided for all the health professionals and linked to this different agency is established and every year on 6th February has been established as a zero tolerance day for FGM. And my Lord Mayor professionally there has been some improvement. Two of the health professionals have been arrested in London who have been involved in this practice. Our safeguarding roles are raising awareness of the risk of FGM and a range of professionals are very keen to work together on integrating and how we can provide the best services for these victims. Awareness of this issue has been further raised nationally through the campaigning work of a little girl whose name is Fatima Mohamed and she has been targeting the Secretary of State for Education and the need for him to write to schools about the safeguarding issues. And my Lord Mayor the Home Office has also announced a poster campaign aimed at mothers and girls raising awareness of this violence and Leicester will be one of the Cities where this campaign will take place. I would like to thank Alpna who is here Lord Mayor from the Health and she has brought a poster as well and they are going to host a conference on 3rd October. I thank all Elected Members for their commitment to raising FGM awareness and all forms of violence against women and that Council will continue to build upon our work in the city and take the local actions aimed to prevent and support it.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Riyait, have you a supplementary?

Councillor Riyait: Thank you for that Assistant Mayor. As you rightly point out Alpna is here from the NHS who is leading on this issue and today she ran an event which 80 people attended and I just wondered if it would be worth maybe working with her to maybe have a briefing for Council sometime in the near future on this issue. Thank you.

Councillor Sood: Thank you my Lord Mayor I would be very happy to have a meeting with her and work in partnership with her.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Question 7, Councillor Singh.

Question 7 – Councillor Singh: Thank you Lord Mayor. "Could the Deputy Mayor inform this Council of the current problems in A&E admissions at Leicester Royal Infirmary in reference to its listing of being second worst national performing hospital?" Thank you.

City Mayor: Deputy City Mayor.

Deputy City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. A&E performance at Leicester hospitals continues to be at a level which in my view is concerning and unacceptable. What I want to do is assure Members and Council that from the local authority's point of view we are doing all we can to help that situation move to a better position. We have deployed additional social care resource, for example, will continue to hold to account the commissioners and the providers in the health service through the Health and Wellbeing Board. Average performance against the 4 hour target for the last quarter at UHL was just 85%. That is far from acceptable. We will continue to play our role as one partner amongst many in the local health system to address this complex problem and make sure that patients and the public in Leicester start to see a much better performing A&E sooner rather than later.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Councillor Singh have you a supplementary?

Councillor Singh: I do my Lord Mayor. Thank you to the Deputy Mayor for that answer. I am wondering would the Deputy Mayor agree that a more proactive examination and collaboration with UHL Trust Executive rather than their current retrospective reporting the Health and Wellbeing Board has may well be a option for the Health and Wellbeing Board to consider some better form of predictive form of analysis system could be instituted to resolve these issues and maintain the integrity of local health services. I am particularly referring to this because it is an option which the Deputy Mayor has mentioned and I was wondering if he will go along with that.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Deputy City Mayor.

Deputy City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Having spent a number of months looking at this problem and attending lots of meetings, lot of discussions, some in public in this chamber via the Health and Well-Being Board, others with various organisations in the local health system, one thing I am convinced of is that what we don't need is more meetings and more discussion. We need real solutions being enacted, real solutions that will work. What Leicester's A&E needs is more beds, more money and real solutions being mobilised on the ground. We don't need more analysis, we know what the problem is, it is a complex problem. If there was an easy solution to be found it would have been found by now, I am convinced of that. I am worried about introducing further opportunities for those partners to mull over discussing the problem and what we need them to be doing is finding the answers and putting their resources behind, and putting those solutions in place.

Lord Mayor: Question 8, Councillor Singh.

Question 8 – Councillor Singh: Thank you Lord Mayor. It is interesting mention of the word resources which leads me to the next question. "Is the Deputy City Mayor aware if the £40m deficit in the UHL budget, previously highlighted, has been supported through its budget process and that there is no risk to front line services?"

Lord Mayor: Deputy City Mayor.

Deputy City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. UHL have obviously accounted for the £40m deficit through their budget process, whether or not they have supported it or not I am not too sure. But look the UHL Trust faces a huge financial challenge at the moment. They are not alone in that and I think it is worth just understanding the wider context of this because at the moment for 2013/14 one in three acute trusts across the country are in financial deficit. At the time of the last general election it was one in ten and of course what we have seen since then is David Cammeron's top down chaotic reorganisation of the NHS that cost £3b, a reorganisation which nobody voted for, nobody wanted and has plunged part of the health service into total chaos. My fear is that we are seeing some of the consequences of that in Leicester at the moment. What we need to see happen are all the different organisations across our health economy working together to put in place a plan which gets the health economy back to financial balance and to do that in a way which continues to deliver services which are safe for patients and are of the quality we want to see and they are the reassurances I continue to seek from UHL and the commissioners as well.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Councillor Singh have you a supplementary?

Councillor Singh: Yes my Lord Mayor. Thank you for that answer from the Deputy Mayor. Can I request the Deputy Mayor that under his role as the lead for health and Leicester's very own tsar of local NHS services, that he maintains constant vigilance in any involvement in local NHS provision, be it through lack of funds, be it through national government instituting policies, but I think deficits in the order of £40m are at worst incredibly careless and at best are due to woeful mismanagement, you know, and that vigilance should continue Thank you.

Lord Mayor: thank you. Deputy City Mayor.

Deputy City Mayor: Thank you Lord Mayor. I am not sure our health system requires Tsars of any description at the moment, but I perhaps appreciate Councillor Singh's acknowledgement of the role of the Health and Well-Being Board and local authority can play here, but I will emphasise this again, we are one partner amongst many in the local health system. I think if we as a local authority could wave a magic wand and improve the NHS locally and get it to financial balance we would have done that a long, long time ago. We have to be realistic about our ability to influence and to hold the relevant levers that can actually initiate change in our health service. We will continue to do everything we can to make sure our health service returns to financial balance and as I say that happens in a way which sustains good quality of patient care and services on the front line. The local health partners are currently developing a five year plan, that's how long it will take we are told to get back to financial balance. I think it is really important that we play a role as a local authority in terms of understanding what that plan will mean, assuring ourselves that it is the right plan, that it does not put patient services and front line services unnecessarily at risks, and it gets the health service moving in the right direction. We will do that through the Health and Well-Being Board, but I will also invite the Health Scrutiny Committee to play an important role in doing that as well as another important check and balance that we have at our disposal in terms of holding health providers and commissioners to account. I will emphasise again we are one partner amongst many with fairly limited influence to drive forward the immediate change we want to see. That is not to say we are not ambitious for our health service, I think we need to be realistic in setting out what we can actually do as a local authority, as I said as one body amongst many in the local health authority.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Deputy City Mayor. Question 9, Councillor Singh.

Question 9 – Councillor Singh: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "Would the City Mayor agree that with the decision to confirm the final resting place of King Richard III will be Leicester which presents a unique opportunity to secure national recognition for the city and in that vein will he outline his vision which will now place the city on the culture and heritage map as the 'Heart of England'?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Thank you Lord Mayor and my thanks to Councillor Singh for this question because I think what we do have is a unique opportunity, not just to put Leicester on the map of the UK, but on the international map as well. It is very clear from the amount of interest that there has been in the discovery of King Richard's remains here in Leicester, not just across the country but across the world. I saw not so long ago a piece from the front of the Wall Street Journal, talking about Leicester, talking about the discovery itself. The interest has been enormous and it is an opportunity for us to seek to do as we set out to try to do, and it is very good fortune that it has happened during this time, but as we set out to do when we were

elected back just over 3 years ago, which was to make Leicester a proud and a self-confident city, and this is an opportunity to feed into that very important agenda for us, to make them proud of the city that we have today, the enormous strength that it has in its communities and the diversity of those communities but also in our unique 2,000 years of history of which the story of Richard, his death and Bosworth and subsequent discovery is an important part. It is also I think important that we do, as we have been doing, make sure that it is not just about Richard that people come to Leicester for, that we actually make an environment where, when they come to visitor centre as I am confident they will in their many, many thousands, that they also find a city where they want to do other things as well, to eat, shop, relax and indeed spend the weekend, and I think increasingly we are a city that is able to just not just make them welcome to learn about Richard but also make them welcome to stay.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Councillor Singh have you a supplementary?

Councillor Singh: Indeed Lord Mayor I do. Thank you City Mayor for that answer and it is good to know that there is a clear vision and planning in the item. Lord Mayor we have long been known as the heart of England.... but now plans for a final resting place of a English monarch in Leicester with much vindication. I have been lobbying my constituents in Evington, Lord Mayor, to request the City Mayor to continue his planning and in that endeavour he would have the support of the public and politicians alike.

Lord Mayor. Thank you Councillor Singh.

City Mayor: Can I thank Councillor Singh for that encouragement on behalf of his constituents and just say that amongst the strengths that we have got in Leicester and amongst the history that we have got in Leicester are actually our historic villages of which Evington is one and I do think when we look to recognise the strength of our history we also ought to recognise the strength of the villages such as Evington and the part they played in the history around the old town of Leicester and the part of course the important part they play as part of our modern city.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Question 10, Councillor Potter.

Question 10 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “How many buildings and properties/ lands have been sold for the price of £1 deals since the City Mayor took over the City?”

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Since May 2011 the Council has completed three £1 sales, being the sale of the former Saffron Velodrome, the Humberstone Depot, both for affordable housing and land at Wells Street for car parking.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: I certainly have my Lord Mayor. It must be the Leicester Mercury that have obviously got the story wrong because someone gave a story and Sir. Peter did answer and he did respond to the story that was printed in the Mercury and it was suspected that Sir Peter Soulsby was about to sell 20 properties/buildings within the city. There was a very large article and the story has been followed a couple of times in the Mercury, so have you changed your mind

from all the other buildings and lands for sale or have you withdrawn them.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter can you address your questions to me, the chair of the meeting.

Councillor Potter: OK sorry my Lord Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor I indicated when talking about the Council's asset disposal policy that as I have said a number of sales have already gone through. I also talked about the opportunities that the use of our assets present to enable us to help others to do things that we as ourselves as a Council might have done in previous times. And I was asked to speculate as to how many opportunities there might be in the coming period. I hazarded a guess that it could be as many as 20 but I was really doing little more than responding to the question and making a bit of an intelligent guess. I don't see it as something we would do very extensively but I do believe there are some very good opportunities for us to work with community groups to enable them to do things for the benefit of those that they serve but also for the benefit of the city.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Councillor Porter question 11 please.

Question 11 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Through the Lord Mayor. "Does the City Mayor or the mini Mayors know of any of the buyers personally in receipt of the £1 sales?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor of the three I have mentioned, it may well be probably not, but generally it would be very surprising if in a city the size of Leicester there were not some Council Members who did not know at least somebody involved in virtually every community group in the city.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter, any supplementary?

Councillor Potter: Yes, my Lord Mayor. Through the Lord Mayor once again. I would just like to ask whether any of those particular Members are members of the Labour party in the chamber this evening?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: I am puzzled my Lord Mayor, I think I have answered that question and I will repeat the point which was that we are a medium sized city, some 300,000 people, we are here as representatives from Wards that are communities across the city with many community groups within them. We as part of our day to day work representing those communities get to know and work with community groups across the city it would be very surprising indeed if there was not a significant community group somewhere across this city that one or other of us in this chamber did not know very well indeed.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter, any supplementary, sorry, sorry. I am not panicking I assure you. Councillor Potter, question 12 please.

Question 12 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "Has the City Mayor made his mind up regarding the selling of the Humberstone Golf Course?"

City Mayor: The short answer to that would be no Lord Mayor, but perhaps I will add a little bit to that. I met, as I think I have been on record as saying and Members will know with representatives of both the Western Park and the Humberstone Heights golf clubs who made very powerful cases on behalf of the facilities that they provide and the members of their clubs. I listened very carefully to them and put some questions back to them to follow up some of the issues that they made to me. They have written back to me again and I have given a bit of consideration to that. I have undertaken to both Humberstone Heights and Western Park before I come to a conclusion on the issue I will talk with them again and discuss the issues that they have raised and the responses that they have given. I think that is an appropriate and reasonable way to go forward for people who care passionately about their sport and the clubs in which they play them.

Lord Mayor: Thanks City Mayor. Councillor Potter any supplementary?

Councillor Potter: I certainly have my Lord Mayor. Just regarding the Humberstone Heights, unfortunately I am not able to speak regarding the other golf club. I speak on behalf of the Humberstone Heights my Lord Mayor because it is within my Ward that I represent. If Sir Peter does decide to sell off the land or put the land up for sale then it has been proposed that the club themselves would buy it for £1 today so there is another sale you could make for £1 if you wish. I also believe, through the Lord Mayor, that Sir Peter is quite right he has visited the golf course but he did not enter in the entrance he came through the back gates. He did not meet with the managers and the facilities that was using the place because they actually thought that I was with Sir Peter on one of these illegal visits jumping over the back fence. I just wanted to put it right on record my Lord Mayor that I have not been to Humberstone Heights with Sir Peter in the past and I am more than happy to go to the golf course with Sir Peter and his mini Mayor team to hopefully keep the facility within the Ward. It is the first time that this particular club has ever been in debt. This is the first time on record in the first year that the Humberstone Heights has actually reached debt this year and it is because the Council did not invest the money into the facility, my Lord Mayor, thank you.

Lord Mayor: A rather long supplementary. City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor I can assure Members of the Council that I have never, with or without Councillor Potter, climbed over the back fence of a golf course. What I can tell Members is that both golf courses over the years I have visited on a number of occasions but always through the front door and do know both golf courses very well indeed, as I said I was able therefore to understand very clearly what it was the representatives of the golf course were putting to me when they met with me. As I have undertaken to Members I will speak with them again before coming to any firm conclusion on that.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Question 13, Councillor Potter.

Question 13 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “What is the purpose of the City Hall take over clear out and how much has the move cost?”

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor the move to City Hall is necessitated because New Walk Centre is crumbling and the purpose of the move is to get out before it falls down around our ears, and it is an opportunity obviously for us also to rationalise some of our other accommodation needs, but I want to just remind Members that

the move to City Hall is very significantly less expensive than some of the original schemes that I inherited when I was elected to this post. I think it makes very good sense and is very good value for money to be investing in the refurbishment of a building we already own rather than buying a new one or creating something into a glass and marble palace that in the present climate I think people would quite rightly be very critical of.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: I certainly have my Lord Mayor because I don't think Sir Peter has actually answered the question. I did ask him for the costs and he explained that he liked fancy new furniture in the fancy new building across the road. Fortunately I am going to address the chambers tonight through the Lord Mayor and raise my concerns regarding the move and the actual costs that I have requested from Peter. I have been over to, you don't do the talk unless you do the walk, so I went over to the new building today and I entered the new building and it is full of all new expensive equipment. Each floor, each unit owns a washing machine, fridge freezers, all new laptops, all the staff have new laptops and I would like to know the overall costs in preparing the staff move, and that is the direct question I have asked my Lord Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor the costs of the accommodation strategy have been reported in full, they have been considered by Scrutiny and I would be happy to provide Councillor Potter with a copy of that.

Lord Mayor. Thank you. Councillor Potter, question 14.

Question 14 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I expect those copies to be sent this evening then Peter, thank you.

City Mayor: Tomorrow morning.

Councillor Potter: "How many personal laptops have been purchased for the members of staff for the move and what was the cost involved my Lord Mayor?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor in her supplementary to the previous question Councillor Potter referred to an assertion that everybody had a new one. In fact like most organisations the City Council is increasingly using laptops instead of desk tops as it gives considerably more flexibility, reduces printing costs and thereby is economic good sense as well as good sense in terms of methods of working. In fact associated with, at the time of the move, 53 new laptops had been purchased. That, if you think about it, is a very small proportion of the people who are moving over there, several hundred are moving in there. 53 have been purchased recently, all of those replace desk top devices and I am assured that desktops less than 5 years old will have been recycled into the organisation.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: Yes, thank you my Lord Mayor. The reason why I raise that is because I have had some staff raise their concerns towards myself Lord Mayor, and actually I have seen the new equipment. My eyes don't lie. It is hand held tablets that the staff have been given, the palm tops my colleague corrected me there, and they are hands free. It is going to be a paper free office. He wants a paper free

office it comes with a very high price because you are going to have to have very high technology to be able to store all the information. So the question still has not been answered again my Lord Mayor is how much has it cost for the new equipment to be used to be given to the staff and Members in the chambers did not get it neither. So it's just for the staff.

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Lord Mayor, not quite sure what different information there is to ask of me. I can just perhaps deal first of all with the paper free office. That was something that was first floated in the 1970's/1980's. It was a mirage then and it remains a mirage and I have certainly never been foolish enough then or now to believe that it was something that was achievable. I have talked about the 53 laptops that have been purchased. I think, I haven't actually got the figure, but yes that's right a typical laptop is between £400-£500. So you work it out 53 times say £500 is about £25,000 which, in the terms of the budget that we had for replacing IT, is a comparatively small proportion which is part of the routine.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Question 15, Councillor Potter.

Question 15 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “We notice a lot of the refurbishments are going on inside the Town Hall. How much is the cost and where is the money come from since the move over across?”

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor I have already told Councillor Potter that I will arrange for her to have another copy of the report that no doubt she will have had at the time which was the one that related to the accommodation strategy. I will get that in the post, not this evening, but I will put it as an email to her tomorrow morning. I don't know what has given her the impression that there is significant refurbishment taking place here at the Town Hall. In fact significant refurbishment took place here some few years ago now, and while inevitably there are a number of people moving out as part of the moves that are taking place, there are also far more people moving back in. It did occur to me that the question might have been prompted by the scaffolding that we have got around the door of the Town Hall at the minute which is of course not at all related to any of the moves that are taking place but just due to the fact that we have actually got problems with the crumbling stonework on the pediment and obviously they are having to replace that just as a matter of repairs to an historic building. But that is nothing at all to do with the move.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: I certainly have my Lord Mayor. It must be something wrong with my eyes then my Lord Mayor because I have not moved across to the new building. I come into this building every day and my office is based upstairs. Every day I cross the landings with decorators my Lord Mayor, several decorators. I am not talking about the framework on the outside of the building, I am talking about the new works that are going on up in the Member Support on our floor level at the moment. The second floor, each room has been stripped out, all the furniture has been slung out and each room has been decorated. I am also talking about at the disabled toilets my Lord Mayor there is new refurbishment of kitchens going in there. Very high tech equipment too. So they are the questions I am asking for the cost too my Lord Mayor.

City Mayor: Well my Lord Mayor I am very pleased indeed if they are actually bringing up to date some of the disabled facilities within the Town Hall and that is

something very much to be welcomed. As for painting of offices at a time when staff move, that is something that is done routinely in organisations. It is a very sensible thing to do rather than subsequently disrupting those people who have moved in and my guess is, and it is only that, because as you can understand I don't actually go around and monitor what is happening every day in every room in the Town Hall, but my guess is that is what is taking place on this occasion, and if that is what is taking place it sounds like good management to me.

Lord Mayor: Question 16, Councillor Potter.

Question 16 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. We must be on a different planet as far as I am concerned. Question 16, “Will the City Mayor confirm that the moves across to other building is his way of trying to keep control of people’s moves?”

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: I am tempted to respond to the other planet jibe but I think I probably won't.

Councillor Potter: Well you can do....

City Mayor: I probably won't, I'm trying to treat all questions with equal seriousness this evening. The move across to City Hall is a way of avoiding New Walk Centre crumbling around our ears. I think on balance that is a pretty powerful imperative.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: No I'll let Peter have that one because he thinks he's one up at the moment.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Councillor Potter, question 17.

Question 17 - Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “Will the City Mayor confirm that he has not consulted with the Members of opposition regarding access to officer’s support now all staff has been moved across to the other building, Town Hall, oh City Hall you are calling it aren't you?”

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor I can confirm that I have not personally talked to Members of the opposition on this issue but I know that officers have as is their job to ensure that all Members are served effectively and impartially, and what we are getting as a result of the move across to City Hall is all of the officers that do related work and provide services to Members being in a single place and thereby I think better able to provide a joined up support to Members in the vital work that you do.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: Certainly have my Lord Mayor. I just wanted with confirm with the City Mayor and agree with him that the staff that have been here to assist the Members of opposition have actually been fantastic. In fact myself and colleagues this side the bench would like to compliment and thank the staff most sincerely. If it was not for the staff we would not know whether we were coming or going. There

has been no consultation from the Members of the opposition or the Chief Whip. They are supposed to consult with everybody in the chambers – well you're not my Chief Whip obviously, but you are supposed to consult with all the Members in the chambers my Lord Mayor and up to date none of you lot on the opposite side of the chambers have actually consulted with any four of us this side so shame on you all.

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: I think it is probably best for me not to reply to that.

Lord Mayor: Question 18, Councillor Potter.

Question 18 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "Why have the civic officers been moved out of Town Hall when our Lord Mayor's office and his chambers is based here in the City Chambers?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Lord Mayor the excellent Civic Support Officers work as part of the administration of the Council and it is obviously convenient for them to be located with the rest of the administration of the Council, particularly with those colleagues with whom they have day to day contact and need to have close collaboration.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: I certainly have. I think it is more to the line that Sir Peter Soulsby wants to be the only City Mayor. Title Mayor. But we will fight the cause for the Lord Mayor's office through the Lord Mayor once again. There are a lot of people in this city that have great respect for the Lord Mayor's office and we this side of the chambers will endeavour to keep the facilities and the operations running correctly for the Lord Mayor's office disrespect of who is actually moving into the chair next time round.

Lord Mayor: Was that a question?

Councillor Potter: No it is just a response.

City Mayor: Then can I respond on this...

Lord Mayor: You are entitled as asked

City Mayor: No I just wanted an opportunity for a bit of flattery, if you don't mind I will flatter you Lord Mayor. I have great respect for the office of Lord Mayor and was particularly delighted Lord Mayor at the last Council meeting, the annual Council meeting to see you elected to that office and obviously I know you will fulfil with eminent dignity and as our First Citizen will do us proud following in the tradition of Lord Mayors who have done likewise in previous generations.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Question 19, Councillor Potter.

Question 19 – Councillor Potter: Oh nearly there my Lord Mayor. "City Mayor said he paid £1,100 for his trips to Cannes – can the City Mayor confirm how much was left to pay by the city purse?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor as far as I am aware the cost I paid covered the full cost of the visit and were paid of course from my own pocket.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: I do my Lord Mayor but I am actually going to reserve it and I am going to bring the same question back with further evidence to his previous answers because unfortunately I forgot to put it in my folder. So I am going to reserve my comment to the next full Council my Lord Mayor, thank you.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Question 20, Councillor Potter.

Question 20 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “How many Council tenants have been sent letters for late payment reminders regarding the council tax and rent arrears since 1st April 2014?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you Lord Mayor. 5,648 letters regarding council tax, 1,366 regarding rent.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: Well my supplementary answer my Lord Mayor is to say

Lord Mayor: Question.

Councillor Potter: Well question then, I will rephrase that don't worry. One rule for one and a different one for us this side obviously. Lord Mayor I hope you are going to be able to handle this because 5,600 Council tenants in the city have been sent out threatening letters. I hope all these Council tenants have actually been given our help and support. Yet the question is do you send out help and support first and at what stage do you start sending out your demand letters and that is related to the council tax and rent arrears.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you Lord Mayor. There are a series of letters that go out reminding people to make payments. All of those include advice and support lines you can call and we ran a very significant campaign last year to encourage people as soon as they get into any difficulties to come and talk to us and we will work with, not only our Council tenants but residents across the city to support them if they are in any financial difficulties.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Councillor Russell. Question 21, Councillor Potter.

Question 21 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “How many council tax arrears are related to the recent benefit cuts?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you Lord Mayor. Across the city, this is Council and non-Council tenants, we estimate that roughly a quarter of those that previously had received 100% council tax relief have had difficulties this time.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: I have my Lord Mayor. Thank you. I would just like to ask Councillor Russell what additional support are we giving these people. These people are normally in receipt of 100% benefit prior to the new taxes and slices that have come in as we know. I am very concerned that the people are paying extra council tax, extra bedroom tax and it is actually the choice of eating or heating, but now it is actually just surviving. So I understand and a lot of the constituents understand that there is sections of support, but low paid working class people they don't actually fit in them categories. It is not just people that are claiming benefits that are struggling it is actually low wage people too. So what additional support is being incorporated to prevent more evictions through to this benefit cut.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I am specifically looking at the council tax support side of it and I know there are further questions coming regarding evictions that Councillor Connelly is picking up. With regards to support for people who have previously had the 100% council tax relief, we introduced, unlike most Councils, a discretionary relief fund to be able to support the most vulnerable to ensure that they weren't put in dire situations that Councillor Potter describes and last year we paid out over £265,000 from that fund to support householders around the city.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Question 22, Councillor Potter.

Question 22 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "Can the Mayor explain why there are so many tenants and residents are in court for late payments to council tax – couldn't they pay the balance at the end or per quarter of the year to avoid extra charges and stress made by demanding officers monthly payments every month?"

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you Lord Mayor. We have a duty as a Council to collect council tax and what we try to do is ensure that people have the maximum opportunity to pay that and spread it as far as they possibly can. So we offer people a range of options. They can spread payments over 10 months or 12 months depending on what suits them best. Regarding quarterly or annual payments we would need to have these at the beginning rather than the end of that period, partly because of our ability to then be able to ensure we receive those collections but also with regard to annual payments, because of the overall cash flow of the Council. So currently if people want to make quarterly payments they can do so in April, in July, in October and in January ahead of that quarter that will follow, or they could pay everything in April.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: No, I would just like to say thank you very much to the Cabinet Lead for explaining in better detail. Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Thank you very much. Question 23, Councillor Potter.

Question 23 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "Not wanting to

know the personal reasons or causes but how many Council tenants are facing eviction in Leicester City Council and how many of them are effected by the bedroom tax?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Connelly.

Councillor Connelly: Thank you Lord Mayor. In Leicester we have nearly 22,000 tenants of which at the present moment unfortunately 17 of them are facing eviction as a result of rent arrears. Of those 17, three have some element of bedroom tax in their arrears, but the bedroom tax is not the reason that we are seeking eviction.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: Yes my Lord Mayor. I am just very concerned. I mean 22,000 Council tenants is a large amount for any city to be giving extra support to, but the 17 that are actually in arrears at the moment as Councillor has identified – has there been every help offered and support to prevent these single persons, or even young families being evicted because once they have been evicted by not being able to pay the bedroom tax they are going to be homeless which is going to cost the city a lot more money to support them and their childrens’ needs.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Connelly.

Councillor Connelly: Thank you my Lord Mayor. In respect of a response to that, one thing I am proud to say standing here in this Council chamber, is that we as an authority have evicted nobody as a result of the introduction of the bedroom tax. We introduced a policy of which there were numerous drafts which was finally endorsed by the Housing Scrutiny Commission, and my thanks to the Housing Scrutiny Commission for the work that they did, that whereby we determined as an authority that if tenants co-operated with us, applied for discretionary housing payment, went on to the housing register and sought alternative accommodation, then we would not seek to evict them, and that continues to be the policy. In respect of the position in respect of how much contact, I have a printout in respect of evictions the officers provide me with a list of those going to court. Going to court in itself does not necessarily result in eviction, but just to emphasise the point about how much assistance we try to give them, if I pick out a couple. On one of them we tried to contact them 15 times by phone, we visited them at their home, we texted them 5 times, we sent them 4 letters, we interviewed them 3 times in the local Housing Office. So we offer every assistance that we possibly can to our tenants to ensure that they don’t end up in the position of eviction, but if they don’t co-operate with us and make contact then there is very little choice that we have but to then proceed to take them to court. What I am pleased to say is that quite often taking them to court the tenants respond to that and arrangements are made for payment of the arrears that means that we don’t have to go ahead with eviction. Eviction is the very last stage of the process, it is not something we like doing and as I say I am proud in this city that we have not evicted anybody as a result of the introduction of the bedroom tax. I look forward to the return of a Labour government and them repealing that policy as soon as possible.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Councillor Connelly. Question 24, Councillor Potter.

Question 24 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “How many people are registered homeless in Leicester?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Connelly.

Councillor Connelly: As of the 17th June there are 29 households that are currently determined that they have been registered homeless in the city, of which we are actively seeking to rehouse all those 29 households.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Councillor Potter. Have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: Just a small one my Lord Mayor thank you. Out of the 29 that are actually homeless I hope they are not sleeping on the streets, I hope the YMCA or other forms of accommodation have been offered to these persons, and at the same time I was wondering whether Councillor Connelly could consider the amount of empty properties that are scattered across the city. Should we not be converting some of these empty homes for homeless people. In fact could we not stop the sales of any more further council houses for £1 and actually give these to the homeless people themselves.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Connelly.

Councillor Connelly: Thank you Lord Mayor. In response to that none of the 29 households are sleeping rough. All are in temporary accommodation. That may well be in a hostel, it may well be in temporary accommodation either in a Council property or in the private sector. Councillor Potter should be aware that we do have a policy in respect of bringing back empty properties into use and actually we increased the funding for that service to try and bring more properties back into use as soon as possible. As an authority we do not sell any of our Council properties for £1 and actually we are increasing our investment in affordable housing and we have delivered quite significantly a number of new affordable houses across the city and I agree the issue around homelessness can only be resolved by significant building of social housing which is what we are looking to do as an authority and again I would say to you the Labour Party has given a commitment if it gets returned to government which I hope it will, it has a policy of looking to build 200,000 houses a year to begin to resolve the issues of homelessness.

Lord Mayor: Question 25, Councillor Potter.

Question 25 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I did want to come back on that but I shall get him next at the next Full Council, it's OK. Thank you my Lord Mayor, question number 26 am I?

Lord Mayor: 25.

Councillor Potter: 25, I do apologise. "Many Councillors are aware there is an undercover review going on ahead regarding the housing offices and what is the purpose of the uncover reviews?"

Lord Mayor: Councillor Connelly.

Councillor Connelly: Firstly, we don't have an undercover review, if we did have an undercover review it is obviously not a very clever or good one if Councillor Potter has found out about it. I don't think those particular housing officers will become undercover policemen. In respect of the review, there are 2 reviews ongoing at the moment, there are a number of reviews ongoing at the moment. There is transforming neighbourhood services and when we looked at the south then one of the considerations was about Saffron Lane Housing Office and the view was that after debate and consultation that we would leave that where it is. In

respect of this year's budget the housing revenue account, we made savings of £2.5m with no impact in respect of our tenants, but we still have a further £1m savings to make and as part of those savings I have asked officers to look at the 9 housing offices that we have got to see if they are in the right location, how viable they are, what the footfall is, in respect of staffing levels etc etc. Obviously if anything comes of that review then there will be a report that will go to Housing Scrutiny Commission and we will consult with the Housing Scrutiny Commission and we will also consult clearly with tenants forums as well. Certainly I am not aware there is an undercover review, as I say if it has I am very disappointed in the officers that it got discovered.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. Well it isn't a very clever review you are quite right Councillor Connelly because your officers have actually been to us and told us about it. They are concerned through the Lord Mayor. Excuse me.

Lord Mayor: Can we have a little order please.

Councillor Potter: Thank you. You may well laugh but he who laughs last laughs the longest remember. Because when they close down your Council office on your Council estate and your Council tenants through the Lord Mayor can't get the help locally and they are going to have to travel into town to the new big fancy office that is going to be proposed very soon by the opposition administration over there, because that's what the talk is in the housing offices. They are going to be closing the housing offices locally and they are going to give you one hub in the city. That's what I have asked. He has refused, he has denied that that isn't going to happen, is that correct? Yes. Well I am assuming that you are denying that that is not going to happen so can you just confirm that what I said is not true or is it going to go ahead. Do you intend to close down the housing offices on the outside estates and have one running and operating from the city and make our Council tenants' lives more unacceptable and more unbearable. They cannot afford the bus fares for a start.

Lord Mayor: Can we have a question?

Councillor Potter: Yes my Lord Mayor.

Lord Mayor. You have put your question now, I want you to sit down. Councillor Connelly can you answer that please.

Councillor Potter: I don't think there is any need for that my Lord Mayor.

Lord Mayor: Well I thought there was.

Councillor Potter: Well I don't think so.

Councillor Connelly: The answer is no.

Lord Mayor: Question 26, Councillor Potter.

Question 26 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I am glad that we have got in on record that that is not going to happen. So I am sure the Housing staff are going to feel a lot more comfortable tonight going to sleep. Anyway, question number 6.

Lord Mayor: 26.

Councillor Potter: 26. “Does Leicester City Council intend to sell off our housing stock to private landlords or housing associations?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Connelly.

Councillor Connelly: No

Lord Mayor: Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: Thank you very much my Lord Mayor. I could go on but I am not going to at this occasion. I am going to reserve my comments once again when it comes up at a future Full Council meetings because I've got other evidence to prove that it was not going to be a no answer. But I accept your answer and welcome the answer that you have given us. Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Question 27, Councillor Potter.

Question 27 – Councillor Potter: My Lord Mayor. “Can the City Mayor find a better way of stamping out bullying in the workforce and in the city chambers?”

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Thank you Lord Mayor. Yes as an organisation and indeed as Members take accusations of bullying very seriously indeed. It is obviously a disciplinary matter within the workforce, one that managers are encouraged to deal with very, very firmly and to the best of my knowledge they do so.

Lord Mayor: Have you a supplementary Councillor Potter?

Councillor Potter: I have my Lord Mayor. I don't think the Elected Mayor actually answered the question in full as we expected from this side of the chambers as opposition Members. What I asked him is through the workforce, which he answered, and I also asked him regarding the chambers and the behaviour of Members. Thank you my Lord Mayor.

Lord Mayor: If that is a supplementary.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor if there are complaints about the behaviour of Members there is of course the Code of Conduct that relates to our behaviour generally in public life and our behaviour in this chamber and indeed as Members more generally, and of course if there are issues about misbehaviour of Members those are the ones that I would encourage Councillor Potter to take up with the Monitoring Officer who I know treats them very seriously and in turn takes them to the Council's Standards Committee where that is appropriate for their consideration and for their recommendations for action.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Question 28, Councillor Potter.

Question 28 – Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “Do we know of how many staff have taken early retirement and payments and then came back to work for the City Council?”

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor I have managed to get the figures together for the last 3 years and those are the ones during my period of administration. In 2011/12 there were 194 early retirements, of these 7 were re-employed in the Council. That's what, a very small proportion of the total. In 12/13 there were 100, of these 4 employees were re-employed elsewhere by the Council and in 13/14 there was only 74, none of whom were re-employed by the Council. So looking across those 3 years we are talking about a total of 11 employees out of over 250.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Councillor Potter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Potter: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I think I am slightly confused although I understand the answer that I have been given. But I think I actually personally know more than the Elected Mayor has let on in the numbers he has given out tonight, so I would like to have confirmation of how he has reached his targets, and even so if the figures do match my Lord Mayor to the City Mayor 11 persons have been re-employed. I have not got a problem with people working, I think it is fantastic for them to have a job to go to nowadays, obviously, but what I do find concerning is that the 11 that have been paid off have received a substantial amount of retirement money to leave the company. That is why the employment appeals pays them off to leave the company. So I would like to know whether Sir Peter would consider in the future that when our staff wish to retire, when they reach the age or if they wish to take early retirement, that there would be a new law or safety net for future employees within the city to give other people a chance to be employed by the Leicester City Council and to give new people a future in a new career rather than pay them out and then pay them to get them back. It does not make sense to me it must be very costly for the Leicester City Council. Thank you my Lord Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor. The figures of course were provided to me by Council officers and I have no reason to doubt their accuracy. I have just done the arithmetic. I was underestimating actually, it is 11 employees over those 3 years out of 368 retiring. It does not strike me as a problem that is of great significance, however, even if it was the situation is that we as an authority, as an employer, we cannot legally stop people from reapplying for posts within the Council. There is a legal requirement that there has to be at least a clear four week break between receiving a redundancy payment and being re-employed by an employer by the local authority and of course my expectation is that is precisely what has happened in all of these 11 cases and of course it is also our obligation to judge people who are applying for jobs on their merits regardless of their previous employment with us. We are obliged to offer them an interview if they are qualified for the post and then to make that appointment on merit choosing the person who is judged to be the best candidate on the day. So with it being 11 out of 360 odd that does not seem to be something that requires any action by us.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Question 29, Councillor Naylor.

Question 29 – Councillor Naylor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "For how many months have experts been 'sniffing the air' outside of the Biffa waste plant to accumulate a £35,000 bill?"

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you my Lord Mayor. The figure referred to in the press

covers both the independent consultants verifying residents' concerns about the smell and also covers the consultant that we brought in to look over the technical specification of the plant to identify any failings in the plant that were ending in the smell coming out. The smell consultants began in February 2013 following the suggestion that a number of the complaints were inaccurate or vexatious. We did not feel that this was the case and wanted to support our local residents.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Councillor Russell. Councillor Naylor have you a supplementary?

Councillor Naylor: No my Lord Mayor, not on that one.

Lord Mayor: Question 30, Councillor Naylor.

Question 30 - Councillor Naylor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "As fracking comes closer to us within the County, are we aware of any shale or oil deposits within the city boundary?"

Lord Mayor: Deputy City Mayor.

Deputy City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. The short answer at this point is no.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Naylor have you a supplementary?

Councillor Naylor: Yes I have. I know that this is a concern already within the County and I am pleased that as far as we know we don't know that there is anything here because that is actually something that would actually I think would be a real disaster for us in the area. Can we assure people that if anything was found within the city that we would quite frankly tell the companies that would look at this that they could quite frankly frack off.

Lord Mayor: Deputy City Mayor.

Deputy City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I mean I like many people have concerns about fracking, its geological impact, its environmental impacts of course. Should any company wish to seek permission for exploratory work relating to shale gas or oil in the city they would have to secure a government licence in the first instance which would be beyond our control to grant or refuse. They would then have to seek planning permission as well and it would not be appropriate for me at this stage to want to pre-judge what our Planning Committee may or may not say about any such forthcoming application.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Deputy City Mayor. Question 31, Councillor Naylor.

Question 31 – Councillor Naylor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "Is the inevitable cost of £85,900 to the Council's development contingency budget good value for money at a time when jobs and services are at risk?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Although it is not evident from the question, I assume that Councillor Naylor is referring to the costs of fighting the Judicial Review taken by the Plantagenet Alliance on the issue of Richard III. I see him nodding. If that is the case I would expect that he is not suggesting that we should not have fought that

case because quite clearly it was ill-founded as indeed the courts ultimately concluded and as was part of my response to Councillor Singh earlier on, it is very clear the outcome is something that has brought very considerable importance not just to the Council but to the city and the opportunities emerge from it to recognise our rich history. So, it is certainly my view that it was something that was a price that had to be paid. I use the word inevitable because when you fight court cases, as I believe it was right right to do in this instance, it is inevitable that lawyers will send you a bill and it is also fairly inevitable that you have to pay it.

Lord Mayor: Have you a supplementary Councillor Naylor?

Councillor Naylor: No, not for that one Lord Mayor. Thank you.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Naylor, question 32.

Question 32 – Councillor Naylor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “Do you feel justified in the rise in council tax when a large spike in residents within the city who cannot afford to pay?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you Lord Mayor. I am not quite sure Councillor Naylor’s written question refers to a 75% spike in residents. I am not quite sure what that refers to. Our council tax collection rates for 2013/14 were 94.81%. The previous year was 95.97% which is a drop of only 1.16%. Given the difficulties these people are facing I think residents have done what they can to be able to ensure that they are able to pay the council tax. In terms of the raise of that council tax that was in the face of massive government cuts to services to try and protect our local services and I believe Councillor Naylor also voted for it.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Naylor have you a supplementary?

Councillor Naylor: Yes my Lord Mayor. I am just referring to the Leicester Mercury article dated May 26th of this year where it said that the Leicester City Council is bringing legal proceedings against 3,506 residents and it said that previously last July more than 2,000 summonses were issued in one day, so that is a considerable 1,500 increase.

Lord Mayor: Is that a question?

Councillor Russell: I am happy to respond Lord Mayor. There are a number of court dates throughout the year. We have to sadly as it is very difficult to get a court date we do put a lot of them on to one particular date. Residents don’t have to attend and when we do send out those letters we always say please, please get in touch and talk to us if you are having any difficulties even at that very late stage and we will continue to look to support residents doing that. Across the year the numbers are not that dis-similar.

Lord Mayor: Thank you councillor Russell. Question 33, Councillor Naylor.

Question 33 – Councillor Naylor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “What budget will achieve the £150,000 used for underwriting the reburial plans of Richard III come from?”

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor, underwriting is not the same thing as funding. When an organisation underwrites another person's risk they are not doing that with the expectation that they will actually have to pay up. In this occasion the Dean of the Chapter, effectively the Trustees of the Cathedral, need to proceed to make all the necessary preparations and place the orders for the reinterment of the bones of the King and indeed the reordering of the interior of the Cathedral. Obviously those Members present who have been trustees will know that as a trustee you have to be very careful about the organisation on whose behalf you are acting, and particularly careful about liabilities or debts for that organisation. It was with that in mind that they turned to the County Council and ourselves to say would we provide this underwriting facility to give them the confidence that they needed and indeed to give their lawyers the confidence they needed to be able to go ahead with placing the orders. There is no expectation at all that we will need to provide that underwriting or to provide funding from public coffers. I have every confidence of the Cathedral's ability to raise the money and every trust in their assurance that they will do so.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Naylor have you a supplementary?

Councillor Naylor: Yes I do Lord Mayor. I would like to thank the City Mayor for the answer that he has just given, but I would still like to know, have the assurance, that should there be anything else goes wrong with the scenario around this because we have actually seen this with the Plantagenet alliance and if anything else was to go wrong what budget would this funding come from should we have to pay up for the underwriting.

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor. My Lord Mayor, there is no reason to expect that as I have already indicated that the Cathedral won't be able to raise the money involved and I am also pleased to be able to report to Council that the deadline for any appeal by the plantagenet alliance against their loss in the high court has now passed and there is no indication at all that there will be any further legal challenge or any further obstacle to the internment of the King here in Leicester early in the New Year.

Lord Mayor: Question 34, Councillor Naylor.

Question 34 – Councillor Naylor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. "Can you confirm whether any of our staff will be striking for better pay on the July 10th?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: The short answer to that is no of course I can't. Because of course whether members go on strike is a matter for a ballot that I understand has yet to be held and for the individual decision of the employees as a result of that ballot. I am afraid that this is something that is a question that Councillor Naylor will need to take up with the trade unions concerned and no doubt when they have the outcome of the ballot they will be able to answer.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Naylor have you a supplementary?

Councillor Naylor: Yes I have Lord Mayor. I would like to thank the City Mayor for that answer. Tonight we were going to present a motion but unfortunately it has not been accepted so I would like to ask would the City Mayor be prepared to support

the pay claim of £1 per hour to all staff members and are you prepared to lobby the LGA on behalf of the pay claim that would be made.

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor. My Lord Mayor I don't think it is a matter really for me to get involved in the negotiations of pay between the national Local Government Employers and the trade unions involved and I don't think even were I to do so that it would be in any way influential on either side involved in those discussions. I would just remark though that with regard to the motion that were the automaton. group to actually get their motions in on time, they might actually get them on the order paper.

Lord Mayor: Question 35, Councillor Naylor.

Question 35 – Councillor Naylor: Thank you Lord Mayor. “Will the Council be signing up for the “Space for Cycling” Campaign?”

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor the space for cycling campaign is particularly aimed at Councillors in the run up to the local election and it is very much to be welcomed that those involved in it are seeking to raise an awareness amongst the Elected Members both here and nationally of the importance of promoting cycling, and with that in mind last week I chaired the first meeting of the Cycle Forum that I have established in the city. Some 40 people attended representing some 20 different cycling groups, projects and organisations in the city and I think those involved who includes Sustrans, the cycle touring club, British Cycling, bike shops and many others. I think all of those involved felt it was a very worthwhile opportunity to have an interface between themselves and those of us who do care desperately to promote cycling from our perspective. We will during the summer be undertaking public consultation on a strategic approach to cycling. I hope Members will want to take part in that and to make their comments. I do intend as part of that process to have a cycle design workshop during July and Members if they would wish and are interested in cycling would be very welcome to attend.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Councillor Naylor have you a supplementary?

Councillor Naylor: Just a brief one my Lord Mayor. I would like to thank the City Mayor for that reply. I know I am looking at actually taking to cycling myself as I have a current health issue that I need to get on top of. I was just wondering whether the City Mayor is still using his bicycle around the city.

Lord Mayor: City Mayor you may wish to answer.

City Mayor: Indeed I am Lord Mayor and had the pleasure of revisiting the Great Central Way just last Sunday and did so both with pleasure personally but also with a degree of pride in the City Council for having invested so heavily in that and other valuable cycling assets in the city.

Lord Mayor: Question 36, Councillor Naylor.

Question 36 – Councillor Naylor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. “Are there any current plans to close any youth centres within the city?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Dempster.

Councillor Dempster: Sorry Lord Mayor. Well there are currently no plans to close any functioning youth centre across the city. I would want to remind the chamber however, that we do have a clear policy of wanting to co-locate services and to further improve services. So where there are opportunities then we will clearly look at them if by moving a service we can make a better service for the community.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Naylor have you a supplementary?

Councillor Naylor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I would like to thank the Assistant Mayor for her answer to that but it does not actually ring with what has been said to us by people who currently use the Watershed youth centre who have actually raised their concerns with us. So I would like to ask specifically about the Watershed youth project and what are the long terms outcomes being looked at for that.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Dempster.

Councillor Dempster: Yes, I mean thank you for that. In terms of the Watershed it is not actually currently a functioning youth centre. There are no youth work staff based in that centre and there are three projects I am right in saying, none of them are within that locality. One of them has already decided to move because they want to be nearer to where the vast majority of them actually live. That will leave two other organisations in it, so clearly we would want to work with the people who are currently in the Centre and make sure that what they have is appropriate and should they need somewhere else then we will be working with them and looking to the future of the building.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Councillor Dempster. Question 37, Councillor Grant, and as part of Councillor Grant's question he has made it clear to me that he wishes to give some public information regarding the flood risk assessment which I have accepted. Councillor Grant.

Question 37 – Councillor Grant: Thank you Lord Mayor for allowing a point of information. Just to put it in context in becoming so close to this issue I have submitted a question which has an acronym which I may have created personally and I do hope that the City Mayor has understood that I mean Surface Water Management Plan part 3 CDA, hotspot detail preview modelling for the Holbrook which I am aware of after he afforded me the opportunity of a personal briefing following previous questions to Council. "Will the City Mayor confirm that planning officers will use the latest flood risk assessment, namely the Surface Water Management Plan, rather than outdated information which understates the likelihood and scale of serious flooding?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: I thank Councillor Grant for that translation of the acronym. I did actually have to look it up myself and I had got it here and was going to give it to Members. I do thank Councillor Grant for this question because it has given me an opportunity to check that officers are indeed using the most up to date information. They assure me they are when they are assessing flood risk including a strategic flood risk assessment which does include, I understand, the findings of the Surface Water Management Plan study. Now they assure me of that and they also assure

me that they liaise closely with our drainage staff to ensure that potential flood risk from surface water is carefully considered as part of it. But what this has led me just to check is whether that is true of all of the staff within the planning section, and maybe I am pre-empting the supplementary, but I think it may well be the case that that message has not got through to all of them about the SWMP and as a result of having received this question I am going to make sure that it does.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Grant have you a supplementary?

Councillor Grant: Yes Lord Mayor, partially pre-empted as the City Mayor has indicated. I welcome that he is reviewing that all staff have done this because I do believe that a decision made at the Planning in relation to 72 Knighton Church Road was made without consideration of this information even though it was available to some of the planning officers and in the context of the three additional houses being requested under outline planning I would appreciate it if he could look at it with haste because the current officers looking at this still seem to be unaware of the Surface Water Management plan. Would he also look, in light of some of the objections made about the advice given by Highways in relation to them not objecting to the previous planning and the current one, as I believe there are also issues with that.

City Mayor: Can I again thank Councillor Grant for raising this issue. It is I know a matter of very genuine concern to him and to his constituents and as he says we have talked about some particular issues about Holbrook, but I think it does raise more general issues in the city. I know that the chair of Planning is listening intently to this discussion from an administrative point of view I will certainly raise it with officers but know he will wish to do so from the committee's perspective as well and to try and ensure that all of the officers concerned are aware of where they ought to be looking for the sort of information that they need to make judgments on these issues.

Lord mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Question 38, Councillor Grant.

Question 38 – Councillor Grant: “Will the City Mayor tell us where the public are supposed to post letters and correspondence out of opening hours of the customer service centre when the shutters are down and there is no letterbox?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you Lord Mayor. Outside new Walk Centre until the 30th June and then outside City Hall after that point, but we are also looking at whether we can have a solution on Granby Street as well. Having both metal shutters and glass everywhere else has made that a little more complicated than we would have otherwise hoped.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Grant any supplementary?

Councillor Grant: Yes, can she assure me that there is signage to inform the public where to go because I am aware of there being several people at times outside the customer service centre, desperately trying to deliver letters which they may have been told they have to deliver within a certain timescale and being unable to attend during the hours that they are open and also when you walk up to New Walk Centre there are now prominent signs saying it is closed and they have moved and that has directed people away. Would she also comment on the fact that some of the letters that people are getting sent out have addresses on where

people do attend they are being turned away because reception are telling them they will not accept letters and can we ensure that basically our communications that we send out, the letters that we send out tell people the appropriate place to take their letters to.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Yes to both of those.

Lord Mayor: Question 39, Councillor Grant.

Question 39 – Councillor Grant: “Can the Assistant Mayor responsible for revenues and benefits explain why people are being given numbers to ring in letters that do not connect?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you my Lord Mayor. We are not aware of any such issues. Councillor Grant has not as far as I am aware raised them with any of the officers which does cause me some concern given that we have had to change a large number of our telephone numbers for residents to ring following the change of the telephone system, and if there had been any administrative errors I would hope that Councillor Grant or actually any other Member that was aware of any problems would alert us to those as quickly as possible so that they could be rectified and I am happy to take the details of those afterwards from Councillor Grant.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Councillor Russell. Councillor Grant is there a supplementary?

Councillor Grant: Yes. I will have to check with the constituent. It was raised with me that the problem was subsequently solved but they raised it with me in the context of numbers beginning 454 on specific letters being sent out and I did actually check the number. I don't have it to hand, and they are just not connecting. So do you think it would be worthwhile just asking all departments to review the numbers that they are including in communications to the public are actually correct and working as it causes great distress when there are queries or people are given instructions to respond back within a certain time.

Lord Mayor. Thank you Councillor Grant. Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you my Lord Mayor. We will of course check the letters however I am sure that everybody understands that occasionally small administrative errors do take place and I would again urge not to delay in alerting us to those so that if there is a problem that we can solve it as quickly as possible and not wait to a subsequent Council meeting.

Lord Mayor: Thank you very much. Question 40, Councillor Grant.

Question 40 – Councillor Grant: Yes, I would like to just assure the Assistant Mayor that this was raised with me not within a few days of questions being required at Council. “How many calls have been lost as a result of the Council's phone system going down?”

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: This is quite a hard question to quantify in that we have had, as I am sure Members will be aware, had to change our phone system. The old phone system was physically located in New Walk Centre. It is a horrible mess of interchange of wires coming in and out and is physically impossible to move from there to new locations. We have had to look, and have been looking at now for a number of years, looking at the future of New Walk Centre for options to be able to ensure that the Council has telephony access going forward. It needed to be one that was able to be sustained financially. So the option of having a similar system replaced would have been far, far more expensive than the original one and we would have been looking at it costing over £1.5m a year to bring that in. We have instead gone for a solution enabled through the computers. It is called Lync and for those who are interested, and we have had some difficulties in the early change over period. There have been a couple of very small technical difficulties but we have also sadly had some major supply problems. One that impacted on 12 large organisations throughout the country that we have followed up with that supplier and have chased repeatedly. Sadly it came at the same time as us doing the changeover. In terms of numbers of calls lost we estimate around 400 but it is very, very difficult to know whether they were first calls or whether they were people repeatedly ringing back.

Lord Mayor: Thank you councillor Russell. Councillor Grant have you a supplementary?

Councillor Grant: Yes Lord Mayor. Obviously this is unfortunate given that if we were adopting a brand new system we would expect it to be kind of reliable and have the latest features and to provide a good service. In that context of this not necessarily being the case would the Assistant Mayor like to comment on whether she is confident that IT generally will work well when all officers have moved as part of the current transition to City Hall.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Russell.

Councillor Russell: Thank you my Lord Mayor. As I am sure both yourself and Members appreciate the amount of change to relocate all our staff, to change over our telephone system and crucially to relocate our service and data centre is significant. We are undergoing more change within our IT Services in this organisation of the coming six months and previous two years that most organisations go through in a 10 year period. I am confident in our IT Department's ability to deliver that change and I would hope that we would be able to work with them, identify problems if they did arise so that they could be resolved as quickly as possible.

Lord Mayor: Thank you Councillor Russell. Question 41, Councillor Porter.

Question 41 – Councillor Porter: Thank you. My question is "Are the bus lanes reducing congestion in the way that the Council had hoped?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I guess that the bus lanes that Councillor Porter is referring to are particularly the ones on the A426 rather than the other longer-standing bus lanes in the city that have already, I think, been demonstrated to be very successful. What we have is some journey time surveys that have been carried out at the end of this month and looking at other data such as passenger numbers that are being put together to see the impact. In the meantime I do know

that the bus users panel on Tuesday night, Steve Smith the manager of Arriva, noted that the breeze service is doing well and that Arriva had been encouraged by the success of the scheme so far to the extent that they are to improve the service by adding evening and Sundays services.

Lord Mayor: Councillor Porter, have you a supplementary?

Councillor Porter: Yes Lord Mayor I have. I am not sure if he said three or Arriva I just misheard that. My question really relates to the fact that clearly the bus lanes from my view and the people that live in my Ward, the bus lanes are not working because congestion is increasing and I think there was even a report in the newspaper saying that congestion in Leicester was pretty high and I think the Mayor in response to that dismissed it by saying that the sat navigation company who produced these figures were just trying to sell sat navigation equipment. But interestingly enough in January this year when the Nationwide produced a survey claiming that house prices had increased by 11% he was more than happy to take credit for that. So he really seems to want it both ways which he can't do. But in terms of the bus lanes certainly as I say, £5m spent on bus lanes in Aylestone has not worked and it is about time that the Council, if they were serious about reducing congestion on Aylestone Road and Lutterworth Road, started to work with the bus companies to try and reduce fares and also try and improve the situation where you are not currently driving from one set of red lights to the next set of red lights. My question is will the Mayor try and drop his anti-car policy which this Council currently has.

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Right I will deal with some of the other points before I come to the specifics of the question because Councillor Porter made a number of assertions there. First, I don't recall having taken any credit for house prices. I commented that it was both good news from one perspective of those who own houses and bad news for those who are trying to buy them. With regard to TomTom and the blatant attempt to sell sat navs I question their methodology. Well I did not question, the city like most urban areas in the UK, indeed other urban areas in the UK, is a pretty congested place to be, I did not question that. I questioned the methodology for making the comparisons that they were making. And again as I have done before I readily acknowledge Councillor Porter's implacable opposition to the improvements that have been made for all vehicle users and for pedestrians and for cyclists on the A426 corridor. But actually to turn to his actual question about his assertion that there is some form of anti-car policy, I have to say that is patently absurd. A number of measures have been taken to improve the position of motorists in the city, many highway improvements have taken place, filling in of pot holes, the improvement of junctions, the improvement and timing of traffic lights, a number of measures across the city making the city a better place for those who choose to come and will continue to choose to come in and out of the city by car. Indeed, I am currently in the process of undertaking a comprehensive review of car parking in the city which I know has been very warmly welcomed by impartial observers and particularly by motorists.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Question 42 Councillor Porter.

Question 42 – Councillor Porter: Yep. "Since the Council introduced bus lane enforcement how much has been paid to Nottingham City Council?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor just to give some of the context to this. Those will recall that we introduced bus lane enforcement in two particular areas, in Causeway Lane and in Charles Street, and they have been enormously successful. They have been enormously successful not by the revenue that has been raised but actually by the fact that the numbers of contraventions and therefore the number of fines has dramatically dropped. In the first month the contraventions and the fines were over £6,000 per month. They have now dropped to less than a quarter of that and that is the measure of success. Of course as a result of that the cost of administrative per fine is a higher proportion of the total revenue. The total revenue from the amount up to the end of March 2014 is £1.76m. But of course as I say this is falling off. Of that £558,000 has gone to the back office facilities that are provided by Nottingham City Council. I think that now that the levels of contraventions have fallen so dramatically there is an opportunity for us to review whether the much lower level of back office that is needed is something that can be provided in-house and that is part of what we are undertaking at the moment is seeing now whether initially having needed the established back office at Nottingham which was able to take the 6,000 whether now we are able to look at taking on 1,500 per month, actually less than that, that is, I hope, a low level that will continue to diminish. Whether that is something that is worth our while investing in, in the way it was not worth our while investing in the back office facilities during the first couple of years of the scheme.

Lord Mayor: Thanks City Mayor. Councillor Porter do you have a supplementary?

Councillor Porter: Yeh I have Lord Mayor. It is interesting really isn't it that he is saying that he is thinking of trying to get the Council to do this back office work when my understanding, and you can correct me if I am wrong, is that he entered into a contract with Nottingham City Council until I think for possibly five years or so and that contract stipulated that it would have to generate at least 35,000 penalty charge notices each year. No wonder this Council is in a complete and utter mess. We have a City Mayor who is complaining about government cuts, that he has not got any money, he alleges that £140m is being cut in government funding and spending each year every year for the five years from 2011 until 2016, but here we have him explaining that he is paying £500,000 every year or during the period of these enforcement notices, to Nottingham City Council. So my question to him is if he is now saying they are going to take on this back office work in the City Council, when is he talking about. Is he talking about in the next couple of weeks or are we talking years?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: I have explained to Members and am sure they have well understood the purpose of the scheme is not to make money. The purpose of this scheme is to enable buses to run freely through these significant areas and to ensure that we are able to offer quality public transport that runs to a reliable timetable. It has been successful in doing that as evidenced by the extent to which contraventions have diminished. Notwithstanding that of course it is important that we cover the cost of the scheme and we have covered the cost of the scheme in this city with some surplus in hand. All of which surplus has been put into other transport investment in the city which indeed it must be and all of which has benefited other transport users in the city, both bus users and private car users. Actually I think Members would rightly criticise me had we geared up this Council for a two year period with enough equipment and back office staff to be able to cope with the prospect as we had initially of 6,000 contraventions per month. That was necessary and it make very

good practical and economic sense to use an established organisation, Nottingham City Council, to cover that initial period when the level of activity was going to be high. It now makes sense given that the level of activity had dropped for us to review that situation. I don't know whether Councillor Porter has got his idea that this is a five year contract that cannot be terminated. Actually it is one that was very well negotiated with our colleagues and Nottingham and that enables us to give them 12 months' notice of termination following any outcome of a review that we take now, during which time if we do decide to do it in-house we will be able to gear up for it and to respond to the current level of demand. I think the way in which this has been handled is one that has achieved a good deal for the bus operators, a particularly good deal for the bus users who want a reliable timetable and also a very good deal for those who pay their council tax here in Leicester because the alternative would be very much more expensive.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. I will just give notice to the Council that after the last question I shall be calling a short break. Question 43, Councillor Porter.

Question 43 – Councillor Porter: Thank you. "Was the lease for the Haymarket up for sale for half a million pounds?"

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: My Lord Mayor when I saw this question I was convinced I had answered it before from Councillor Porter. In fact I looked back and I did not answer it because he was not here to ask it. It was tabled by him back in, or something very similar to it, was tabled by him back in January 2013. It is not an issue that he has actually returned to ask a specific question about although he has referred to it a number of times in passing. But I will tell him now what I would have told him had he been present to ask the question on the day that he tabled it in 2013, and it was as follows. The Theatre was marketed in August 2011 at an asking price of in excess of £500,000. Marketing involved advertisements in the local Leicester Mercury, boards on the premises and full details on the Council property website. In December 2012 the particulars were amended to remove the £500,000 asking price and I would have told him then and we are now seeking offers without any set parameters which I would have said would allow the Council more flexibility in considering more complex offers which may involve inducements from the Council. I am pleased to report again to Council that that approach adopted back in December 2012 has been very successful in bringing forward proposals for the Haymarket and as I have reported publicly and to the Council we have one particularly interesting offer and I have had the opportunity just in the week before last to visit the Haymarket to see what is being done on an interim basis by those who are putting forward that proposal and I have to say it is a very exciting, not just in terms of what it does with the building, which frankly I must admit is something of a liability to us, but also very exciting what it offers as a contribution towards already very rich cultural mix of our city.

Lord Mayor: Thank you. Councillor Porter have you a supplementary?

Councillor Porter: Thank you yep I am going to put my supplementary. It is interesting that he clarifies that it was actually up for sale, unfortunately I could not make that meeting because I was stuck in congestion I think trying to get here, but having said that it is interesting that he says it was up for sale because in May at another public meeting and I can quote his exact words, when I asked him if the building had been up for sale and the lease was up for sale he said and this is what he said "it was not ours to sell". Clearly it was ours to sell because he has just

confirmed that it was up for sale. In terms, if you don't understand the building, if you buy a building you buy a lease, we weren't talking about the freehold, the question was the lease.

Lord Mayor: Can we have order please.

Councillor Porter: The question I put was, was the lease for the Haymarket up for sale. So if you read it on the Council script you will see it says lease. But it is interesting that when I raised this a while ago he did say that it was not ours to sell and it clearly was ours and it was up for sale. The problem with this City Council is that a building like that which contains a huge number of liabilities, it is a very difficult building is up for sale for £500,000 half a million pounds, yet property which is residential development land in the city is sold for £10m under its real venue. Other land within the city which is worth in excess of £1m is sold for a £1 and none of these things have the liabilities that go with the Haymarket. So in terms of the Council's position on this particular building would he now accept that I was actually correct when I said that building was not worth half a million pounds and that he should try and get £1 for it because at least that way you are taking the liability off the council.

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: I am not quite sure from Councillor Porter's question whether he is complaining about selling assets for £1 or advocating.

Councillor Porter: No if there is a liability sell it for £1 but if it is not a liability don't.

City Mayor: it seems to me that he wants to sell some for £1 but not others.

Councillor Porter: if it is a liability sell it.

City Mayor: if I can return, just very briefly, because he keeps putting this sort of thing in about sale of land for low price. Just to remind him and other Members that as a result of the transfer of land for a nominal sum to some Housing Associations we are getting a significant number of affordable homes for people who are living in the city in overcrowded conditions many of whom are on the Council house waiting list. That is something that in previous generations we would have sought to do by providing those houses ourselves. We need to be more creative and that is what we are doing. We are seeking to find ways of ensuring that those desperately needed homes are provided despite the best efforts of this government from doing anything creative. If I can come to this particular thing, I mean other Members have sought to explain to Councillor Porter the difference between freehold and leasehold but the fact is that the freehold is not ours to sell, the leasehold is a liability, I have said that so many times, and other Members for the most part have understood the point. I do want to find, as I said earlier on, a productive use for that building, both to get the liability passed over to some other third party but also to get what ought to be an asset to the city back into use as such rather than costing us and indeed the council tax payers of Leicester, a very considerable amount of money.

Lord Mayor: Thank you City Mayor. Last question on the agenda, question 44, Councillor Grant.

Question 45 - Councillor Grant: Thank you Lord Mayor. "As the City Mayor has

scrapped his plan B cultural programme announced after his City of Culture bid failure due to lack of public interest he himself noted and reported in the Leicester Mercury, is he confident there is support for the investment plans he has for culture now”?

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Thank you my Lord Mayor. I'm not going to take too much issue with Councillor Grant whether that is an accurate quote of something that I have said. Although I did look at the Leicester Mercury and I have not been able to discover, perhaps he has, of where I might have been interpreted as saying there was a lack of public interest. What I did say, and what I would say again this evening is that after the initial response to the very considerable disappointment of the City of Culture, it is certainly my view and the view of many others that we needed somehow to be seen to replicate the events of the City of Culture in order to establish our credibility and to boost our morale as a city that cares about culture. I have subsequently included, and I have had a lot of discussions with a lot of people in what is broadly called the cultural sector about this, that actually putting a pot of money into a series of events is not actually what we need and is not what is going to do the job that we need to make sure that culture underlines all of our strategic approaches in the future of the city. That actually what we need to be doing is not having things that are one off and ephemeral. What we need to be doing is looking at ways of investing in cultural assets and in people in ways that ensure particularly young people to be inspired to do as so many are already doing and contribute to the city but also that they should have venues in which to do it. I do intend to bring forward a number of investment plans for the future of our cultural assets in the city over coming months to bring forward ideas as to how we can promote the engagement of young people in culture in our school with my colleague, Councillor Vi Dempster, but more generally in the city and I do anticipate and very much hope, given my answer to the previous question, that the Haymarket will be one of those assets that we are able to see developed and that we are able to promote and to see contributing to the culture of the city in years to come.

Lord Mayor: Do you have a supplementary Councillor Grant?

Councillor Grant: Yes Lord Mayor. Well my initial reaction is how did we get the initial assessment so wrong given that the reaction to the City of Culture bid result was that there was nothing wrong with the cultural offer in the city and it was all to do with other features and now we are being told that it is about gaps in our offer and the fact that we have got to invest. So, the question, how did we get it wrong in the first place and where are these gaps in the investment needed.

Lord Mayor: City Mayor.

City Mayor: Lord Mayor, that was not the point I was making. The point I was making was that the City of Culture proposal was about, essentially about a series of events over a 18 month period in our case which would have very significantly helped us with what we were talking about earlier on which was raising the profile of the city. Of course it would and that was one of the reasons that we wanted to bid for it and so much encouragement and so much enthusiasm from people across the city and particularly from the so called cultural community in the city. I think members will understand that once that initial disappointment had passed we all needed to stand back and take stock and to say well what can we do most usefully with our very limited resources. I have certainly concluded that promoting events is not what we can do most usefully, promoting people, promoting opportunities and

creating ways of making better use of our venues is a way in which we can be sure to embed culture as what many in the cultural community describe as the second strategy behind everything that we do and I very much welcome that and there has been a lot of discussion about this in the intervening period. I would just say that as I have said on previous occasions I don't believe there was anything wrong with our bid. I think it was a very strong bid and I think that it was very evident from the response of the judges when we talked to them and made a presentation to them that they too thought it was a very strong bid. As I have said before I am entirely convinced that at the end of the day they decided that Hull needed it more than we did.

Lord Mayor: Thank you very much City Mayor.

MATTERS RESERVED TO FULL COUNCIL

Adoption of Revised Core Strategy Policies for New Office Development and Employment and Training Opportunities

The City Mayor submitted a report to Council which gave details of revised wording which aimed to support the delivery of the Economic Action Plan. This was proposed through allowing, in principal, larger offices anywhere within the City Centre rather than concentrated in the New Business Quarter and require employment and training opportunities to be provided as a contractual obligation by the construction sector.

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

10. That Council formally adopts the changes to the Core Strategy as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report

Call-In of Executive Decision – Review of Community and Voluntary Sector

It was in accordance with Rule 12 of the City Mayor and Executive Procedure Rules, it was noted that Councillors Osman (Proposer), Dawood, Kitterick, Newcombe and Willmott (seconded) had objected to the decision of the City Mayor of 27 May 2014 with regard to the above matter under the grounds that:

“In view of the cross departmental corporate nature of our relationship with the VCS and the issue of Community Cohesion, that the Overview Select Committee should review and scrutinise this decision by way of a call-in’.”

A copy of the original decision together with the Executive report and minute of the Overview Select Committee on 12 June 2014 which had considered the matter had been sent to Members and were available at the meeting.

Moved by Councillor Dawood, seconded by Councillor Waddington and carried:

11. That Council ask the City Mayor to reconsider his decision on VCS funding.

REPORTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

Corporate Compensation Policy

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which sought the agreement of Council to the proposed Policy which sought to offer appropriate redress for actions taken by officers where injustice had been caused.

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

12. That Council approve the policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES

Moved by the City Mayor, seconded by Councillor Clayton to and carried:

13. That:

- 1) Councillor Dr Moore be appointed as Vice Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee;
- 2) That the size of the Audit and Risk Committee be increased by two majority group Members; and
- 3) That the Licensing Committee be re-named the Licensing and Public Safety Committee.

NOTICES OF MOTION

None.

ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

The Lord Mayor noted that the Highfields Festival was to be held on 21 June and that all Members were invited and would be welcome.

The Lord Mayor declared the meeting closed at 8.09pm.