

LEADER'S STATEMENT 18 JULY 2011

This council has had a quiet start although it may not feel like it to new members who have had a huge amount to absorb. They will welcome the summer lull in August but behind the scenes there is a lot going on to fulfill some of the themes set out in the first leader statement of this Council. I refer in particular to the work on next year's budget, the further efficiency gains and opportunities to generate income needed as part of that budget, and options for service changes which members will need to consider. I refer also to the final changes, reflecting consultation responses, to the Local Development Framework which will come to Council for final decision on 1 September. Before then we may expect a formidable volume of technical reports which constitute the evidence base behind the LDF.

The last Edwardian-style Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, famously replied to a question about what was most difficult in government "events, dear boy, events". We've had an "event" – the decision of the Environment Agency not to proceed with the plan for bunds above Pickering, paid for largely by this council. This shocking decision was challenged by Ann McIntosh MP at a Westminster Hall debate and although the ministerial reply stuck closely to the Environment Agency line I am hopeful that after the usual huffing and puffing we will find a way forward. Somehow we seem to have institutionalized a lack of common sense and of genuine practical "know-how" within the over-complex government and administration of this country.

Other things coming up will include the results of the Malton and Norton governance review and the formal contractual commitment to Brambling Fields junction. We'll have plenty for members to get involved in this autumn. Finally, along with the leaders of some other North Yorkshire councils I have signed the Armed Forces Covenant which pledges that those who serve or have served in the armed forces will face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services, and may receive special consideration in some cases.

Keith Knaggs