

LEADER'S STATEMENT – BUDGET COUNCIL, 24 FEBRUARY 2015

At item 10 on our agenda tonight I shall be moving the proposed revenue budget for 2015 -16 and the financial strategy for 2015 -2019.

Our financial strategy has been clear and very simple, savings through efficiencies, with as little reduction in service to the taxpayer as possible. That aim has been achieved through the dedication of the staff at RDC to their district – so I was particularly disappointed to see tonight yet another attempt at item 14 of our agenda by John Clark to undermine this Council

2015-16 will be the 6th year that there has been no council tax increase from this council. And yes John Clark will try to tell you that we have introduced stealth taxes via such things as the charges for collection of green waste and increases to fees and charges. But at least our taxpayers have a choice and those who don't have gardens no longer have to subsidise those who do. The alternative to the introduction of these charges would have been massive cuts in services.

At this stage I think it is worth looking at what we have achieved in this term of council.

The Growth Deal which has been awarded to the Y, NY & ER LEP has to be our best achievement ever. Some £322 million has been awarded to the area via the LEP and Department of Transport funding. But not just that – we have managed to achieve the infrastructure and major projects investment in Ryedale which were so necessary to help our future economic prosperity. This doesn't just happen by chance and I am going to use this opportunity to thank all our staff, the LEP staff and the board of the LEP for their dedication. It just shows what can be achieved when everybody pulls together.

On top of that we have recently been awarded funding to assess the feasibility of increases in employment land at Pickering and Kirkbymoorside.

But that is not all, our work with schools and employers continues to produce fantastic results – encouraging young people into apprenticeships. This years 4th Opportunity Knocks, held in November, was the biggest and best event to date – many thanks to the schools, employers and our staff who contribute to this.

We work with and support local businesses to grow employment in our district.

We continue to be one of the most successful authorities at delivering affordable homes. Coupled with the work that we do to prevent homelessness and to help people stay in their own homes, protecting vulnerable people, we are an exceptionally good housing authority. Again due in most part to the enthusiasm and dedication of our staff.

Our new leisure provider is only very recently appointed and is expected to produce substantial savings and improvements to the service.

I have been exceptionally pleased that councillors continued to support the provision of community grants in the Ryedale District. As a frequent user of village halls through my business – I see first hand the benefits of the money that we award to these community facilities and how much they are appreciated by the residents of what in some cases are very tiny communities.

The near completion of the flood defences at Pickering is a great achievement which without the support of this council would not have happened – a massive investment for a small authority – and thanks this time to the determination of the members of this council to make it happen.

This council continues to provide a good quality of life for our residents - reducing air pollution, protecting the landscape and the environment.

Last but not least I am particularly pleased that the Tour de Yorkshire is coming through our district. Cycling is an increasingly popular sport as well as a mode of transport. Work is underway on a feasibility study to develop a cycle route between Pickering and Malton – particularly relevant given the development that is to take place at Eden Camp. Another scheme is looking at opening cycle routes between all the market towns in Ryedale. Our National Park and the Forestry Commission are also looking to upgrade a section of the Moor to sea network of cycle routes in Ryedale.

Our policy of putting economic development, Housing and the environment as our priorities will continue to pay dividends.