

## Leaders Statement Budget Council 25th February 2016

Tonight I am restricting my statement to one topic - our revenue budget for the coming financial year. When we get to item 10, I shall be moving the first of two motions which arise from the officer recommendation which starts on page 45 of your agenda. You will see that motion 1 says that the recommendations from the Policy & Resources Committee be noted and received by council, and deals with agenda item 10 (i) revised as tabled. The remainder of that motion is as on page 45 of your agenda. The second motion deals with item 10 ii - v on our agenda and contains revised figures, as tabled, to reflect our final settlement.

As most of you will be aware - our final settlement arrived after the P&R meeting and held some surprises, not least of which is the ability to raise council tax by £5 - the equivalent of 9.5 pence per week for a band D property.

This has been a difficult decision for our group - given our manifesto commitment to low taxes. However we felt that we had to balance the need to continue to deliver the services that the residents of Ryedale want against ever decreasing grant support from the government. We are starting from a low tax base - therefore any % increase, although regrettable, will still result in a relatively low council tax.

An example of the benefits of our Community Grants, for instance, is that the 120k that we have put into grants over the last 2-3 years has levered in around £735k of additional investment in our community facilities. In addition, since 2011, we have attracted investment from the Arts Council of over 1million pounds into Ryedale.

It would be very easy to say that the task ahead of us for the next 4-5 years is too difficult - that we will just slash services or hand in the keys. But I do not think that is what the people of Ryedale would expect of us. We have a brilliant team of officers in RDC who have delivered savings for the district in the past and if members have the courage to play their part in the transformation of our council - then I have every confidence that we can manage the next 4-5 years and emerge a better and more efficient council whilst still delivering the services that our taxpayers value.

I believe that the ability to raise council tax by £5 and the additional Rural Services Delivery Grant that has been awarded over the next two years will ease the pain a little and is some recognition by our government of the scale of ongoing savings that rural councils have achieved. Make no mistake though, there is still a very difficult time ahead.