

## **Leader's Statement**

Our district faces a number of significant economic challenges: low wages, high house prices and poor connectivity. We must step up our action against these issues by attracting investment, securing jobs and ensuring our district stays affordable for future generations. Four months into this council, we're already making progress:

### **Economic development**

Under the leadership of our new programme director, we are assembling a dedicated economic development team of five (its four new posts) officers who will work to support business, attract tourists, shape our arts offer and boost our market towns. This extra resource will hopefully pay almost immediate dividends, with projects expected to come forward very shortly.

### **LEP**

We have secured a seat on the Board of the Local Enterprise Partnership for the first time. The challenge is, as always, to identify key schemes and prepare 'shovel ready' bids for consideration. We've already successfully received funding in recent years, but we can do better by being more ambitious.

### **A64**

Dualling the A64 is the key infrastructure priority for Ryedale. The Government unveiled last month a £22m upgrade including safety improvements at Crambeck and Rillington. But there is still no decision yet on the dualling between Hopgrove and Barton Hill. Tom Paul, CEO of Kingspan, is the new chair of the A64 Growth Partnership and we're working closely together to make the strongest possible case along with councillors, businessmen and representatives of our tourist industry.

### **Housing**

Our Local Plan is now sealed, and we are lucky as an authority to have a plan stretching to 2027. Work begins now on reviewing our Plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose into the future. Ryedale District Council is also expanding its own housing stock, with the former Railway Tavern in Norton to be transformed into seven self-contained flats. We need to decide if this is a project we wish to emulate elsewhere, and exactly what this council's role in housing supply should be in the future.

### **Our staff**

The council is working to set the highest standard as an employer in its own right. We are seeking to 'grow our own', with our HR manager developing policies and procedures aimed at attracting and retaining talent, recruiting a cohort of graduate trainees and providing a new package of benefits to our employees.

There is still more to do, and I welcome the input from all members as we work to ensure Ryedale is a great place to live, visit and do business.