

LEADER'S STATEMENT**Council Tax**

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, has announced a freeze of Council Tax for the second year. He is to put an extra £805m into Council budgets for 2012/13. This equates to 2½% of Council Tax. This money is only available to Councils who freeze Council Tax levels and is potentially good news for the householders of North Yorkshire, subject to our decision making processes.

North Yorkshire and York Local Enterprise Partnership

The NY&Y LEP have now had three meetings and is progressing very effectively indeed. The first important initiative of the LEP is to promote a "Certificate of Business" aimed at young and start up businesses. The certificate is Bank approved and is designed to help new businesses access credit more readily. The LEP has also set up a number of workstreams with people with special expertises on each. These are:

- Agri Food
- Visitor Economy
- Broadband
- Small business support
- Networking
- Skills and Training
- Coastal Regeneration

Director of Health and Adult Services

It gives me great pleasure to welcome and introduce the new Director, Helen Taylor, to her first Council meeting. Helen only started two days ago and I am sure you would join with me to wish her success in her new role. North Yorkshire will be a very different challenge to her old role at Tower Hamlets.

Belle Vue Square, Skipton

I am pleased to inform Council that the new joint working with Craven District Council to share office accommodation in Skipton is now open with members of staff from both this Council and Craven District sharing the new accommodation at Belle Vue Square.

Future funding of Local Government

The plan to return Business Rate Revenue to Councils and for this revenue stream to replace the Revenue Support Grant has been announced and is becoming clearer. Whilst I support the principle of Council's being accountable to the local business community as well as the local electorate, I am concerned about the longer term finances of Councils in the North of England - in particularly in two tier areas. I believe that although in the short term protection by the imposition of Floors and Ceilings will help - the beneficiaries will be Councils in the South East who will be able to expand their economies at a faster rate than in the north. I believe there is a danger we will fall behind in terms of our funding and as a County we will not be able to increase income by way of the Planning system. We will be responding to the Governments Consultation and raising our issues of concern.