

Leader's Statement

Budget

At the time of writing this statement we are still awaiting from Government the details of our draft financial settlement. We are bracing ourselves for some potentially difficult news for when we eventually do get details of our financial settlement. We now know from the Chancellor's Autumn Statement that Local Government will have an additional cut of 2% in 2014/15 on top of all of our other assumptions, which will be very difficult to find. A considerable amount of my time has been spent over recent weeks looking at different scenarios and in preparation for pulling together a budget to present to County Council at our next meeting. Part of this preparation will involve a series of consultation meetings which will take place through December and the early part of January. The late production of financial information to Councils from Government is very much to be regretted and will undoubtedly mean that our own budget process will be more rushed than I would usually expect it to be. I will of course let Council know the details of our financial settlement as soon as I have the information.

A1 Upgrade

The Chancellor's Autumn Statement did include a significant item of good news for North Yorkshire with the announcement of the upgrading of the A1 from Leeming to Barton. This follows strong lobbying from the County Council and represents a major boost to the county's road infrastructure and long term economic prospects.

Superfast Broadband

The 13th December has been a significant milestone in the County Council's superfast North Yorkshire project. This project will see a major enhancement of broadband capability across North Yorkshire with at least 90% of the county being able to receive superfast broadband and the other remaining 10% being able to have broadband in excess of 2 Mbs. This milestone has been the first live Cabinet to be enabled at Ainderby Steeple which will allow this community to receive broadband of speeds up to 76 Mbs.

The County Council is working with its technology partner, BT, and our own broadband company NYnet, to deliver this major infrastructure project for the county. This is only the first step and the delivery phase for the remainder of North Yorkshire will stretch across the next two years. I am aware that there is a real appetite amongst the public of North Yorkshire to be a part of this project and we are currently working with BT to establish a delivery programme. This will be split into number of phases covering next year and then the year after. It is expected that we will be able to make public the details of those communities that will receive superfast broadband early in the new year.

The rollout of such a major project is a substantial undertaking. Whilst I am pleased that North Yorkshire is the first Council to move forward under the latest Government initiative. I am fully aware that the next two years will appear to be a long journey for many of our communities who are keen to make use of the many opportunities that superfast broadband will bring to both households and businesses.

John Weighell.