

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

20 February 2019

COUNTY COUNCILLOR GARETH DADD

Budget / Medium Term Financial Strategy

As the Leader has already indicated, one of the key items for County Council today is the budget for 2019/20 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy which runs up to 2021/22. I do not propose to go through the detail of that budget in this statement but wanted to flag a number of related issues for Members attention.

Following this years budget local government will face some very significant changes to the way in which it is funded. We are eagerly awaiting a new Spending Review which will set out the quantum of funding for councils; the new formula for funding in line with the Fairer Funding Review is due to be implemented; and councils are set to retain a greater share of business rates as part of their core funding. All of this means that there are lots of external factors which are unknown but that is why it is even more important that we remain focussed on delivering a sound financial plan in the medium term.

As you would expect the Leader, myself and relevant officers are all making strong representations to the Government to ensure that the voice of rural councils like North Yorkshire receive a better deal.

Members will have noted that much greater effort has been given this year to consulting the public on the budget and where our priorities should be. The output is shared with Members in the budget papers but the response has been much greater than in previous years and we are keen to continue with that approach. A number of budget briefings were also provided at Constituency Area Committees and both the Leader and I attended those sessions and found them extremely helpful. All Members have been provided with the document that was used as the basis of the budget consultation – “Your Services, Your Say”. Feedback thus far has been positive but please let me know if you have further ideas as to how we engage with members of the public.

Property

Members will recollect that approval was previously given to carry out some significant changes to the County Hall campus. The aim is to make more efficient use of County Hall and to ultimately demolish the East Block which is beyond its economic life.

The construction works are currently being tendered. Following the appointment of a contractor detailed work will be undertaken to agree the arrangements for the safe delivery of works. Work is expected to commence in the summer and completion of the Brierley Building is expected to take 12 months.

Detailed plans are being finalised for the arrangements for staff and Members during the period of the works and will be being communicated once they are approved.

Commercial Investments

I am pleased to report that the County Council has now secured its 3rd commercial property investment. The Council has now acquired properties worth over £11m which delivers just over £600k of rent per annum. This return is significantly in excess of what the Council would earn from simply investing cash and the additional revenue therefore plays a welcome role in funding the essential frontline delivery.

I can assure Members that our investments are not funded by borrowing and you may find it interesting to note that the largest acquisition at just over £9m was the Royal Baths in Harrogate.

School Resource Management Advisor Contract

North Yorkshire County Council is one of only 9 organisations nationally to be awarded the accredited School Resource Management Advisor contract from the Department for Education. This sees the Council working with schools using integrated curriculum and financial planning to achieve value for money from their ever tightening resources. The award of the contract recognises the quality financial service that the County Council provides to schools and academies and should prove to be helpful in attracting further business opportunities.

GARETH DADD