

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

16 February 2022

COUNTY COUNCILLOR GARETH DADD

Budget

Today sees the County Council consider its last ever Budget as a two-tier Council. I do not intend to re-run that issue here in my statement but I do want to reflect on past achievements for a moment.

Austerity has been hard for many councils. Covid has then made it even harder. This Council, however, grasped the challenges of austerity from the outset and has taken difficult decisions when it has needed to. While some councils have had well publicised difficulties with section 114 notices and the like, this Council has never been close to that position.

As I say each year though (with increasing commitment I'm afraid), the future looks more uncertain now than for all my time in this portfolio. That is inevitable following a global pandemic with the massive disruption to global economies. That is why we, and the new council for North Yorkshire, will need to avoid complacency and ensure that we remain in a good position to navigate through whatever storms are heading our way. I do believe, however, that as Councillors we can all be proud of what we bequeath to the new unitary North Yorkshire Council.

Pay

Council employees covered by NJC national negotiating arrangements will have their pay increased by 1.75% (2.75% for those on the lowest spinal point) in February, in line with the national employers' final pay offer, together with arrears back to April 2021. This is being implemented under a local agreement with Unison because the national negotiating sides have not yet reached an agreed pay award which is now over 10 months late. This means our staff remain without the usual cost of living increase at a time of rising inflation and household costs. In a challenging labour market the lack of a pay increase for 20/21 when other employers and sectors are increasing pay is exacerbating recruitment and retention difficulties. In the event that there is any improvement in the final national agreement, any additional payment due will be added to the increase paid in February.

Property

I am pleased to advise Members that work in respect of the demolition of East Block is progressing. It is expected that the main structure will be demolished by the middle of February, and that works to remove the foundations and temporarily landscape the area will be completed thereafter.

Members will recall that the demolition of East Block forms part of a wider rationalisation of the County Council's office space within Northallerton which, following the disposal of the office building at Morgan Hose in 2023, will result in annual revenue savings of over £180,000.

I am pleased to advise also, that progress continues to be made in reducing the carbon footprint of the County Council's property estate.

During 2020-21 we have successfully delivered a £1.9 m programme of window replacement in schools and corporate buildings utilising funds obtained from Phase 1 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. We have recently been advised that an application for £400,000 of funding from Phase 3 of the Scheme has also been successful. This funding will be utilised to

replace old and inefficient gas heating systems in 3 properties with more carbon efficient Air Source heat Pumps. This provides us with a valuable opportunity to discover for ourselves the advantages and disadvantages of this technology.

This programme forms just part of a wider programme of activity that is being undertaken across the property estate which includes the disposal of some properties – e.g. East Block, the installation of more efficient technology in others – e.g. LED lighting upgrades and programmes of communication with staff to encourage them to adopt more energy efficient practices.

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