

# NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

17 February 2021

## COUNTY COUNCILLOR GARETH DADD

### **Budget / Medium Term Financial Strategy**

One of the key items for County Council today is the budget for 2021/22 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy to 2023/24. I will not rehearse the Budget in this statement but it is worth noting that just 12 months ago we were awaiting a 3 year Spending Review and the introduction of a new funding formula for local government. A lot has happened since then.

Unprecedented levels of additional government funding have been made available to support residents, communities and businesses. The County Council alone has seen an extra £93m in government funding in 2020/21 – equivalent to an extra 24% of our total net revenue budget. This has been put to good use and is meant that we have been able to be at the forefront of the covid response.

I think it is fair to say that the next 12 months will be continue to be challenging and uncertain. However, we can be confident that the sound financial management that characterises North Yorkshire means that we are as well positioned as we can be. We will undoubtedly have more hard work to do but, while some councils will be grappling with emergency budgets, we will be able to continue to fund the vital services for the most vulnerable in North Yorkshire.

### **Property**

I am pleased to advise that the project to transform the County Hall campus to provide a modern, flexible working environment is now nearing completion. Following work to remodel and refurbish large areas of the Brierley Building the building was handed back to us by contractors on 8 January.

As members will be aware, the works have been planned for some considerable time and commenced on site in August 2019. They were initially expected to complete in the Autumn of 2020 but have been significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. As a consequence of the pandemic's impact some smaller elements of the project remain to be completed and this further work is being planned. I am pleased to advise, however, that the project has been delivered within the agreed budget despite the many challenges faced.

As Members will be aware only limited numbers are currently using the County Council's offices, including at County Hall, and this is expected to remain the case for some time. We are, therefore, arranging for the building to be reoccupied but expect that this will involve only minimal numbers of staff for some time yet.

In the longer term this project will ensure that the County Hall Campus will provide a modern and more efficient working environment to meet the post-Covid requirements which will undoubtedly look quite different to those pre-Covid. It also means that when Members are cleared to return to County Hall it will be to the main building rather than 3 Racecourse Lane. I am sure Members will welcome that and I thank you all for your understanding and cooperation while the works have been carried out.

## **COVID-Safe Compliance at NYCC Premises**

As part of ensuring that public buildings meet the requirements of legislation to be "Covid-safe", the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) have visited five NYCC corporate premises recently. The regulator gave us a clean bill of health for each.

We are also aware of visits to schools and in one case there were some minor recommendations issues relating to hygiene at the entrance, ventilation in certain classrooms and transport arrangements. These issues have been addressed.

It is clear that we need to operate safely in the interests of all our staff and customers but it is also clear that the HSE will be ensuring compliance.

GARETH DADD