

Budget Speech 2016

Introduction

This financial year has seen a number of exciting changes that sees this council moving forward in a more modern form to meet the changing realm of local government.

Within this budget speech, I would like to focus on how this has been accomplished by reminding you what we pledged we would do as a council last year, what we have achieved, and where we are going in the future.

I will then move on to explain the challenges I have set myself, as Leader of this Council, to:

- Ensure we contribute to the growth of our economy and prosperity of the people and businesses in the borough
- Deliver our services differently including seeking opportunities, wherever they exist, to work through new models of provision;
- Look at personalizing our services to meet our customer's requirements and also offering an enhanced service for those who wish to pay.

These services must be compatible with:

- a. being financially sustainable;**
- b. commensurate with the development of our organisation;**
- c. the growth of our economy;**
- d. and finally, to remain environmentally sustainable**

all of which are, I am sure you are fully aware, articulated in our Corporate Strategy,

a strategy that is continually focused on *our customers, our organisation, and working with others.*

Last Year

We said: We would consider how we would ensure our council services can continue to be **Financially Stable**, whilst taking into account the reduction in government grants, and remaining both affordable for our customers and financially sustainable for the Council.

We have: achieved this by continuing assisting our residents with a Council Tax freeze for the 7th consecutive year, and without lowering any significant level of service, despite facing a deficit in government funding (the Revenue Support Grant will have reduced from £3.2m in 2015 to Zero in 2020).

For example, we have worked hard on making the necessary decision to save money through Commissioning, Joint Ventures and Partnership Working.

Our Joint Venture Company – known as Norse South East - provides the continued delivery of our Operational Services to residents, whilst at the same time having the opportunity to generate additional income streams, allowing us to gain a 50% profit share.

We have also been a founding member of the Five Councils project, together with 4 other local district authorities. With this initiative there are savings to be made on the delivery of our HR, Finance & Payroll, IT, Customer Services, Procurement, Land Charges and Licensing Services with our preferred partner, Capita.

Another part of this project is looking at our Facilities Management, Property Services and Post Room services and our preferred partner for delivery of these services is Vinci. By entering these contracts the council could save the Borough £11.5m over an eight year period. Savings that will compensate for the Government's Grant Reduction plans.

Inevitably however, as the country's public finance situation comes under the sustained pressure in the future, some difficult decisions will need to be made, and I have to say, I will not shy away from making those decisions.

We will continue to explore new ways in which to provide services differently over the coming years to ensure the council remains **Financially Sustainable**

Turning now to the Development of our Organisation:

We said: We would enhance the **Organisational Development** of our Council by providing the tools, the practices and the leadership qualities to create a culture fit for the changing landscape of public services. This will deliver a modern, innovative employment package to attract future staff and motivate and retain our current staff in a working environment that is second to none.

We have: achieved this by providing a modern and effective employment package for our staff, with phase one of this already delivered during 2015/16. Phase two of our review of Terms and Conditions is currently being considered and we hope to implement during 2016/17.

In addition we are focusing on the changing culture within the Council, with staff culture champions working within the organisation to foster the values to enable delivery of our agreed Corporate Strategy.

I am determined that we continue to invest in our valuable staff and at the same time enhance Councillor Development. A key part of this investment has been through the Leadership Competency Framework and I have taken a personal interest in helping to develop this to meet the needs of a modern 21st Century local authority.

We said: We would focus on **Economic growth** through Prosperity Havant in forging ahead the transformation of our town and commercial centres to become the location for inward investors and high growth companies. Encouraging new and expanding businesses to create quality jobs for local people, in an area with an outstanding quality of life.

Turning to our third key strategic theme - Economic growth – this is going to be the main focus for 2016/2017 under the main banner of Prosperity Havant.

We have: accomplished some challenging ambitions already. We have secured funding for Market Parade in Havant Town Centre and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) funding for road infrastructure for Dunsbury Hill Business Gateway, with Fat-Face intending to relocate here in the near future. This will retain a major employer in the area as well as creating over 100 new jobs, with more jobs to come as other tenants see the benefits of this development.

Furthermore a bid has also been submitted to the LEP for infrastructure to support delivery of Brockhampton West and the Havant footbridge.

In raising our Borough's profile, we have the full support of our two local MP's – George Hollingbery and Alan Mak. Indeed, in the last month we have received visits from three Government Ministers, firstly Cabinet Minister Liz Truss, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (who likes Ice Cream, despite the poor weather conditions), James Wharton MP Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Brandon Lewis MP Secretary of State for Housing and Planning.

We continue to take every occasion in promoting key sites and development opportunities and as part of a Solent-wide partnership we attended the MIPIM UK conference held recently in London. This is the UK's largest exhibition and conference for property professionals, providing a market place for UK players and international investors to meet, discuss projects and opportunities, and of course, do business.

Locally, we continue to maintain the support we give to businesses in the borough by assisting them in gaining LEP funding. Indeed with our support one company has been able to access in excess of £350k for expansion.

As a council, we have the backing of over 60% of businesses in Waterlooville, Havant and Leigh Park town centres for the shop front improvement scheme and enhanced street cleaning programme, showing that we are all working together for our **Economic Growth Agenda**.

The delivery of major events is fast becoming one of our specialities, with Emsworth Food Fortnight, the National Windsurfing festival and the return of the Virgin Kitesurfing Armada. These events showcase the borough nationally, whilst engaging with the local community.

Not only this, we have also invested inwardly in our communities, by securing £1 million funding from The Big Lottery for the Wecock Farm area. The resident led group "WeBigLocal" continue to work with our Communities team to deliver against key elements of their business plan.

The Hayling Billy Heritage Project was selected as one of the Heritage Lottery funded projects, forming part of a showcase for local MP Alan Mak. Officers from the Heritage Lottery Fund, alongside members of the Partnership, spent time with the MP and met with volunteers who had been involved.

Under the Environmental Sustainability Banner.

We said: We will work with the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) to ensure **Environmental Sustainability** for the borough. We committed to take a leading role in the development and implementation of an Energy Strategy for the Solent region to help ensure energy security and resilience, reduce fuel poverty and maximise the economic benefits from the low-carbon economy across the south coast of Hampshire.

We have: developed an Energy Strategy for Havant Borough Council which provides a strategic framework to deliver energy projects across the borough until 2020. The Strategy has three clear energy principles, namely to:

- a. **improve energy efficiency;**
- b. **increase low carbon energy generation;**
- c. **and demonstrate council leadership.**

We continue to work with (PUSH), Future Solent and Solent LEP to deliver an Energy Strategy for the Solent region, enabling Havant to work more effectively with its partners and establish its own energy priorities within the sub-region.

As an example, the recent success from the take up of the 'Cosy Havant Scheme' to improve the energy efficiency of homes across the borough, shows that residents are also concerned with environmental sustainability, particularly in ensuring their homes are more energy efficient and warm.

So, that deals with our promise of delivery and our successes thus far.

Now, moving forward:

We will continue to build on our successes of the past years, and as the initiatives start to bed into the culture of the organisation, I will be asking the Council, the Cabinet and the Officers to start a new focus on 'Prosperity Havant'. This area is going to be our key priority during 2016-17. The prosperity of our residents is critical if we are to become a thriving local economy and ensure the continued success of public service delivery across this area.

We should be very pleased that through good financial management, focused governance and a clear drive to ensure that we spend our limited income and diminishing financial support from central Government, on areas that are within our agreed Core Strategy, we have been successful in this overall financial objective.

Public Service Excellence.

As Councillors we are in a privileged position to represent our residents and local businesses to the best of our ability. With the help of professional, effective and customer focused staff we will provide the best services that are based upon clear evidence of the needs and wants of our customers and managed within our financial constraints.

We will continue to strive for Public Service Excellence by investing in key projects, which will include a customer relationship management system that helps us to personalise services for our customers.

Now to focus on our Staff

As I have already said, the staff we have are professional, effective, dedicated and totally reliable. The positive and customer focused attitude in which all services are delivered must be applauded. Over the past year, our staff have had to endure uncertain times and their continued dedication, enthusiasm and commitment in moving forward with projects, ventures and contracts, under these changing circumstances, are second to none. I would publically like to thank each and every one of our staff for their exceptional contribution to the delivery of our overall programme.

Our Membership

We also have an effective, dedicated, keen and enthusiastic Membership of elected representatives here at the council across all political parties, and I would like to thank each and every one of you too.

Some of you have taken on extra duties following the very, very sad loss of our fellow Councillor Frida Edwards. Frida was a faithful Councillor, always bubbly and cheerful – we all knew when she was in the room. Bondfields Ward and Havant Borough as a whole will be much worse off for her passing – we will miss her very much indeed.

I would also like to thank our long standing Councillors for their experience and knowledge whilst at the same time welcoming our new members and acknowledge their marvelous fresh new ideas and support over the past year.

Together, across all political parties, we come collectively to strive to make this Borough better for the generations to come.

I am also determined to ensure we provide the best support and development opportunities that makes certain our elected Councillors can do their job to the optimum of effectiveness and efficiency, and I do look to each and every one of us to do whatever we can to achieve our overall Corporate Strategy.

The Working Plaza

We have the perfect working environment that we share with a number of important public, private and voluntary sector partners here at The Plaza. We continue to focus on this being a center of excellence for future co-location and more importantly, 'integration' of other public services.

Regarding Devolution and the Combined Authority Issue

Over the past months that this initiative has been on the Local agenda, I can absolutely reaffirm to you that Havant Borough Council is at the forefront of all discussions that involve the concept of Devolution and of Combined Authorities.

We are participating proactively in all of these debates on the devolution of power to local government, and how such powers will assist with the much needed growth of our local economy. I have made it my business to provide seminars that have been designed to keep each and every one of you updated as this issue moves on. I will continue to do so as things develop.

So Members In Conclusion

Just to remind ourselves once again this will be the 7th consecutive year that this council has frozen its share of the council tax bill for our residents at £192.78 for a band D property. We are the collection agency for a number of other public service organisations and unfortunately these have not been so successful in such an achievement. I urge these organisations who deliver services in our area to work with us to increase their efficiency and reduce duplication so that they might be more successful in future in freezing or reducing the burden on our 'tax payers'.

So, to reiterate, before you this evening you have a full and balanced budget that has been considered, scrutinised by the Scrutiny Board and approved by the Cabinet, and I therefore commend the Budget to this Council for final approval.

Thank you.