

COUNCIL
16 January 2012
Item 8a) refers

Report of the Leader

As a *Golfer*. No! let me rephrase that. As a *person who tries to play golf* I have to remain ever the optimist. Seen through the eyes of 'the hacker', the world is getting better, has the potential for always being better, and will undoubtedly improve.

Not to believe this is to self-fulfil every downbeat prophecy.

Before Christmas the Government announced the definitive figures relating to local Government Formula Grant - the money we received from Government to "run the business" of the authority.

At Harborough District Council we now know that we have a cut of 14.2% in our funding from this source, representing about £588,000 in actual terms.

Last year we met an even bigger reduction of 16.2% in Government grant by cutting services and reducing staff.

This, then, is the background to what we are calling a Transformational Review of the Council, and it includes looking at staff structures, service delivery, the buildings we live in, and our major contracts, as well as consulting stakeholders about their expectations of our Council's ability to deliver services.

I have a vision for this Council which embraces efficient delivery of services focused on local requirements, and which protects front line services into the future, but costs less to run.

I know of only two councillors currently who would argue with that!

I believe passionately however, that this is the right way forward in order to "future-proof" as far as we possibly can, the delivery of services.

It will cost we calculate, up to £2million pounds from our reserves, which will be paid back over 5 years and then continue to add to the savings into the future. We simply cannot go on receiving year on year cut-backs in funding from Central Government and expect to survive to deliver the services demanded of us.

Transformation is not about spending our reserves to prop up inefficiencies, it is not the easy option in budgetary terms, and it will be tough to manage. However the risks can be defined, and the decisions can be challenged, and it involves a process in which all councillors do have a say.

We are in fact investing to save for a better future, and like the golfer in me, I ask that

you too maintain that inherent optimism that however tough the course, we can and will improve our game.

Cllr Michael Rook (Leader HDC)