

**Annual Council
14 May 2012
Agenda item 13 refers**

Leader's Report – May 2012

How quickly times flies when you are enjoying yourself!

Looking back through the eyes of my Leader's Reports over the past 12 months has been a sobering experience. But the one over-riding thought I take from doing that is, that *"when times is hard, creative solutions are essential and that there is plenty of evidence that we are really quite good at doing that"*.

In April last year we were just going into the Local Elections from which the Administration emerged with two extra Members. We had set ourselves a cracking pace of decision making in our new term.

An Interim Chief Executive had been recruited to investigate shared services, which later morphed into the Transformation Process. The prospect of moving to the St Luke's site was unviable, and the costs of staying put at Adam & Eve Street first emerged, along with a community demand that the Council stayed put.

By May, Localism was all the watch-word and a General Power of Competence discussed. The LDF core strategy was moving towards completion, 106s changes, CiL and New Homes Bonus all began to cross our radar, for which we later began developing policies.

In July the Examination in Public of our LDF was found acceptable (although subject to a second round of consultation) and the Comprehensive Spending Review confirmed a further £620K worth of cuts to be added to the £800K odd of the previous year. In that report I had announced a complete review of the way the Council might collect waste in the future. We put in place consultant advice on the evaluation of the offices, we began talks with LCC about asset sharing, and we managed to embark upon the upgrade of the wet-side Leisure Centre. Acquisition of Land at Welham Lane was bogged down with valuations and negotiations.

Against a background of increasingly desperate financial crisis on the Continent, September saw us hard into the meat of the Transformation Reviews, and I began to talk here of efficiency and savings redesign, as well as Member comprehension of what was going on around us, of Scrutiny redesign, and the need for a mature knowledge-based community dialogue.

November's report bought Members back to the financial imperatives for the "Future Options" review, just in case through all the pressures of decision making, Members had forgotten. I made mention too of the much improved working relationships with our Opposition on the strategic issues of the Transformation, which in spite of some later politicisation continues at senior levels at any rate, to hold respect. In this month too we

finalised the Council's Vision, which has gone on to educate most of our subsequent thinking and management structures.

January 2012 put the budget gap in prospective which Transformation sought to address as well as the costs of doing it over 5 years, the Prize being; a protection for essential services delivery, much sought-after over strategic budget-based cuts of the previous year. Employment however could not be guaranteed at all levels. And so in February I reported the budget for 2012/13 and the "sweating of our assets" for the betterment of all our taxpayers.

Finally to this year-end Leader's report, in which the comments on April's report are perhaps still fresh enough in your mind, to pass over and lead onto tonight's, in the knowledge that the main issues of Waste, Land Acquisition, and Property are now diared for decision, completion and action. Tough decisions all from which I know this Administration will not flinch.

I pay particular attention to the opening of the HIC and its 24 commercial and business enterprises now in place, I would remark too on the huge issue of strategic realignment of the funding of Local Government towards local provision from Growth, which has come through increasingly strongly throughout the year, to the progress on the Rev and Bens shared service, to the progress made in so many areas of Planning, and to the professionalism and loyalty of all members of Staff in some very unsettling times. I welcoming our new Shared Heads of Service and I thank all the Members of my Group for their advice, loyalty and support, and very considerable hard work throughout the past year.

Cllr Michael Rook (Leader HDC)