

## **Council**

### **Agenda item 6 refers**

#### **Leader's Report - OCTOBER 2012**

Returning to my theme of last month, concerning the enormous weight of work coming forward, Members are feeling the pressures of difficult decision-making at a time of deep economic fallout.

I have made the point several times in previous Leader's Reports, that when it comes to the real issues that the District faces, it is imperative that we all understand these in some depth, and it has become particularly imperative to attend all Councillor Briefings, where we have the opportunity to discuss with officers the risks, issues, and opportunities, of the major decisions coming towards us..

Let's just reflect for a moment ourselves, about some of the decisions we have had to make in a period of intense cut backs on our income, in an era of unprecedented new legislation.

These range from developing a Core Strategy to monitoring control of transformational changes in service delivery and property, Brooklands Gardens, section 106s bonding, strategic savings on service delivery, sharing of services, new ways of handling customer requests, partnership arrangements with county and other districts, new ways of raising taxation, the impact of welfare savings, new models for museum and library working, contact changes with our holistic environmental contractor, the expectations of localism and neighborhood planning, plus a host of other big ticket issue still on the Work Plan, such as housing lettings and affordable housing policy.

A major problem for Members is that many of these issues have never been faced by them before. Most have not considered contract legislation in normal life, many find it very difficult to understand the effect of pooling NNDR on council income, still less understand the complexity of a 10% cut in localisation of council welfare benefits.

Life can be uncomfortable for an administration under these circumstances, but we have a responsibility to do our part to repair the worst financial crisis any of us have ever seen.

Communication and Member engagement throughout these processes of change are paramount of course. Some we do better than others, but of one thing I am sure, it takes courage to do what is right for everyone, not just sectional interest.

As they say, "There is no making an Omelette without cracking eggs". We can strive to be a proactive Council, or sit back and watch the District disintegrate.

So we move forward to three of the biggest issues we face as Members at Council tonight.

Officers have been working and briefing on all these items for many months now, and I have no doubt in my mind that the Council will make the right decisions in the light of full understanding of those items.

These decisions are not about politics in a run up to an election year, these are about the vision for a long term future and the stability of Harborough District, and it's about courage to do what's right for the whole community we serve.

**Cllr Michael Rook (Leader HDC)**