

Calderdale, like most local authorities, has felt the impact of national austerity and funding reductions since the measures started in 2010. Despite these reductions and the continuous need to identify efficiency savings, we have only increased Council Tax by 2% in total in those 5 years, and, although our budget is still under pressure, I am delighted that we have been able to freeze Council Tax for a further year.

Our budget also reflects our priorities which continue to be growth, ambition, resilience, sustainability, fairness and efficiency in all that we do.

We have been able to include measures which will stimulate business growth, so vital to our local economy, through a £200,000 contribution to the Economic Investment Fund which will be used to promote local job opportunities in tourism and business development.

Halifax Borough Market and Todmorden Market Hall will receive an additional investment of £500,000.

On top of an ambitious target of reducing its energy use by 20% across its own buildings, the Council is to launch a £1.4 million affordable warmth scheme providing grants to improve heating and insulation to tackle the health related problems associated with cold homes.

We have also continued to protect those essential services which support the most vulnerable people in our community, for example, annual funding of £100,000 has been restored to provide short breaks for disabled children.

The Council has already consulted and agreed savings plans for the financial years 2015/16 and 2016/17 and although these are challenging targets we are confident of achieving them. Later this year the Council will begin an extensive public consultation to help understand what is important to you and to service users before drawing up more detailed budget proposals by the autumn 2015 to find the additional £9.6 million savings which must be made by 2017/18. This consultation will be based around seven key themes:-

- Income generation and being more entrepreneurial
- Different models of service delivery
- Better use of new technology
- Working more closely with others
- Managing demand
- Review of discretionary services
- A leaner and more agile council

The proposals also assume, at this stage, future increases in Council Tax of 1% but we intend to consult on whether you would be prepared to pay a further modest increase in Council Tax in order to protect the services the Council provides to you.

Councillor Stephen Baines



Leader