

Position Statement of the Leader of the Council
20 February 2014

Madam Mayor, fellow Councillors, Officers, Members of the Public and Media

The focus of much of tonight's meeting will be on financial matters - our budget for 2014/15 and 'freezing' the Council Tax for a fourth consecutive year. Without wishing to steal Keith Lynch's thunder, the financial papers he will introduce will be still further evidence of how well the Council's resources are managed, despite the continued reduction in funding from central government. We know that we now face a double threat from April 2015 - further cuts from Westminster, compounded by fairly significant reductions proposed by Leicestershire County Council to meet its need to find savings from 2015/16 and beyond. We know that these are likely to affect recycling, support to children and vulnerable adults and funding for the voluntary sector - but full details are not yet available as direct discussions with District Councils have been regrettably limited. Looking beyond the coming year, officers are continuing to plan for 2015/16 and a constructive dialogue has begun with the trade unions.

I can inform Members that the Borough's 'Fairtrade' status has been renewed very recently, which is a reflection of the hard work and dedication behind the scenes of Cllr Matthew Hulbert and Jane Neachell.

Since the last scheduled meeting of Council in December, the Business Improvement District for Hinckley has been re-elected with a substantial majority. This will enable the BID team to build on their considerable success of their first term and bodes very well for the next five years in the life of Hinckley and its businesses.

Having started this brief statement with finances, I will end on the same topic. Members should be pleased to note the officers are predicting that, yet again, we will have worked within our budgets for 2013/14 and will produce an underspend to put into reserves to help meet the significant further demands to which I referred earlier. I am sure that you will want me to thank all of the staff who have contributed to this continuing excellent performance.

Cllr Stuart Bray
Leader of the Council