

Leaders' Budget Speech to the Council (Thursday 14 February 2019)

Mr Chairman, Members of the Council, Members of the Public and Officers, it is my responsibility as Leader of the Council to present the proposed annual budget for the municipal year commencing on the 1 April 2019.

This budget has been compiled by Officers and reflects the policies of the Conservative Administration - taking into account future risks it is founded on a zero-based approach and is aligned to our new operating model which has been developed as part of the Administration's unwavering commitment to Full Council Transformation.

Since 2009/10 the Council has faced a reduction of just over £3m per year in Revenue Support Grant funding. The Council faces further uncertainty in the future as the Fairer Funding model is introduced and Business Rates are restructured.

As a result, during the past 12 months members have taken a number of significant decisions to safeguard the future of Maldon District Council by creating a sustainable operating model.

On the 9th August, Members made the decision to deliver Full Council Transformation. I am delighted to report that the Transformation programme is on time and to budget. The programme is being delivered under the scrutiny of Council via gateway reviews and a member led Transformation Board.

Full Council Transformation has been designed to deliver savings in excess of £1.5m per annum and will improve technology and self-service for customers.

I want to take this opportunity to assure residents that the first-class front-line services that we currently deliver will be maintained.

As a result of its prudence and policies the Conservative Administration has been able to take the decision not to increase our proportion of Council Tax by the maximum allowed by Government – The Conservative Administration has made this decision to protect and support our residents who are already facing significant increases in Council Tax from other preceptors including Essex County Council and the Police Crime and Fire Commissioner's Office.

In addition, we have only increased fees and charges where it has been absolutely necessary to do so.

Our new Corporate Plan is being presented tonight and sets out how we will deliver our visions and objectives over the next four years.

Changes to our Corporate Governance Structure are also being put forward. Without making any changes to the existing scheme of delegation these proposals will reduce costs and streamline the decision-making process.

I am pleased to report that through the courage and vision of the Conservative Administration -

the financial future of Maldon District Council will be assured.

And finally, I would like to thank Councillors Sismey and Dobson for their leadership of the Finance and Corporate Services Committee and for their input into this budget. I would also like to thank them for providing the necessary scrutiny and authority during the municipal year.

Chairman, I commend this budget to Council.