

Statement by the Leader of the Council 19 February 2013

The saying goes “*there is more than one way of skinning a cat*”. With such financial uncertainty surrounding us today we must look at every opportunity to sustain the business of providing adequate services for our customers. Selling the “family silver” is not an option. By not rising Council Tax for the 3rd year with support from the Council Tax Freeze Grant Scheme, plus using some of our own reserves, we will help residents plan their family needs. The Council will make a small increased charge in some areas e.g. Leisure Centres. Although we encourage families to keep fit, these establishments come at a price. We receive no financial assistance to run them. They are known as “non statutory services”. Therefore, Hambleton Council must find other funding methods.

During the past 3 years the Council will have made approximate savings of £2.1m by restructuring and streamlining its approach to running an efficient business, not by making staff redundant, but using management skills to ensure the best use of resources. Budgets have been cut and staff leaving not replaced. This has resulted in surplus office space, allowing “commercial” possibilities to be explored.

During March, I will be pleased to welcome the Clinical Chief Officer and staff from the Clinical Commissioning Group (the PCT is being disbanded) to Stone Cross, as they move into what was formally the Finance wing of the building. Initially, they have entered into a 3 year rental agreement with the option to renew. For Hambleton this is sound business sense. Our property portfolio has been examined and other negotiations are taking place. I will report on these when in a position to do so. Remember my opening line “*there is more than one way.....*”

With the arrival of the Clinical Commissioning Group I thought we should find out their plans for the health of Hambleton. I have met the interim Lay Chairman and suggested it would be useful if the Clinical Chief Officer came and spoke to members. He agreed and a date is being arranged. For too long we have talked about cuts and efficiency savings. This is an example of introducing business thinking into the world of Local Government. There is much more to do.