

Statement by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Finance

13 December 2016

Dalton Bridge progress

- Orders are about to be placed for diversion of utilities alongside the commencement of the tender process.

Prison site progress

- The procurement process continues with final submissions expected mid-December.
- Demolition of the site is well underway which has included the safe removal of large amounts of asbestos; time lapse cameras are recording the process. Archaeological surveys will commence in the New Year with public engagement opportunities included as part of the study.

Vibrant Market Towns

- The Vibrant Market Towns Officer has been appointed and commenced his post in early December. The initial focus will be to draft an initial 12-month delivery programme and build engagement with businesses and communities in each of the market towns.
- The Northallerton BID proposal has been approved with the majority of Business ratepayers in the proposed BID area who voted, voting for the proposal. We will work with the BID group as part of the Vibrant Market Town strategy.

Business Support

- A number of established activities such as Lunch and Learns, Breakfast Briefings and Innovation Breakfasts continue to be delivered. Businesses engage very positively with these events and are proving so popular that certain events now have waiting lists for attendance.
- As part of a continuous review of what can be offered to support businesses, the Council now holds Business Surgeries across the District offering business and funding advice in the heart of the business community.

Graduates and Apprentices

- The Apprentice scheme continues to be popular with 37 applications received by the mid-year point, 25 of which have been approved.
- Business and Economy are providing a 6-week placement for a university graduate, who will experience opportunities throughout the Council as well as delivering a project within the Economic Development Strategy.

Autumn Statement

The Autumn Statement delivered by the Chancellor on 23rd November 2016 raised a number of issues that will impact on Local Government as a sector. However, until the statement is digested into policy the detail remains unclear. Some of the key points include:

- The government no longer seeks budget surplus by 2019-20.
- Departmental spending plans set out in 2015 are to remain unchanged, signalling no further reductions beyond those already envisaged.
- National Living Wage to be raised from £7.20 to £7.50 in April.
- No further cuts to welfare benefits for this parliament.
- £2.3bn housing infrastructure fund to be created to help build housing in areas of high need.
- £1.4bn to deliver 40,000 extra affordable homes.
- £1.8bn from local growth fund to English Regions, it is unclear as whether this will go to all LEP's or areas with Combined Authorities.
- 100% Rural Relief for small business in rural areas.

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Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Finance