

Thank you Mr Mayor.

Just two weeks and one day after thanking members for their support on electing me as Leader here I am again to deliver another speech to you all. I'm proud and delighted to do so as this evening I am presenting a Budget, a plan and a record of achievement that we can all be very proud of.

As you would all expect the last two weeks have been a busy two weeks for me, but rest assured I offer no complaints about that fact because they have also been an invigorating and inspiring two weeks. During the last fortnight, I've held more conversations with people from across our community and council than I can keep count of and as a result I am more convinced than ever that here in Worthing we have a great story to tell and a fantastic future to look forward to. The Budget that we'll be discussing this evening is the key component to ensuring that this Council is in a fit state to carry us forward or to 'catch the wave'!

Despite having faced setbacks and challenges locally, nationally and globally I can't help but face the future with great optimism. Not just here in Worthing, but across the whole world, it's a self evident truth that in 2015 the vast majority of people are living longer, happier, healthier and safer lives than ever before. The rate of progress in these areas, particularly in the developing world but also in the developed world, has accelerated greatly since the triumph of modern conservative ideas over the past three decades. These great gains are a testament to the freedoms that have been unlocked by right of centre Leaders who have fought and won battles to open up democracy and freedom (or 'capitalism' to people who don't like freedom) both in their own countries and abroad. Here in Worthing we benefit every day from those great strides and we should, and will, greet the future with the positive, practical pragmatic policies that have served the area so well over recent years.

The 2015/16 budget seeks to catch and ride that wave and to take the borough on to new levels. Capitalising on past achievements and grasping new possibilities.

Regeneration

The budget aims to provide new impetus to the regeneration of the Borough that has been so successful in recent years. From the large projects such as Splashpoint Leisure Centre that is now fast approaching its second birthday and which has proven to be such a great asset to the town, to the smaller but no less important projects such as the new and improved playgrounds across the town, the improvements to Windsor Lawns, the new splash pad that my daughters love so much, and the conversion of the beach chalets to artist studios we are continuing to see regeneration all around us.

In the Budget for 2015/16 there will be an additional £245,000 courtesy of the Department for Communities and Local Government to fund a new Creative Hub in Worthing. This will convert the currently unoccupied offices in Colonnade House

into incubator spaces for small and medium sized arts based enterprises. The Creative Hub is set to be operational by the summer and will support 22 jobs in the town. It will also bring additional benefits to Worthing's all important cultural tourism offer.

Having worked in the tourism industry myself for many years I am an advocate of the sector and believe that here in Worthing we have a great product, some brilliant businesses and a supportive Council. We can and must improve though and with officers and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration I am driving forward the necessary changes.

From the 6th March, Visitor Information Points will be open in the Pavilion Theatre and Worthing Museum, staffed by a fully trained team and offering a complete range of information about the local area. We will also be working with Worthing's Town Centre Initiative to form partnerships with local businesses who are keen to display tourist information and contacting the Library to discuss increasing the information offer at various locations. Additionally, the three red telephone boxes owned by Adur and Worthing Councils will be transformed into mini tourist information kiosks, adding to the availability of information.

We are also looking at improving the tourism offer in partnership with the surrounding area to create a broader West Sussex offer. The Budget maintains our commitment to tourism.

It also makes provision for the recruitment of a new officer whose responsibility will be to support and drive forward the regeneration of sites such as Union Place, the Grafton Car park and Teville Gate that are in long overdue need of improvement.

We welcome the wonderful events that take place in the town and I am proud that the Council takes such a proactive role in supporting them. In 2014 there were numerous occasions organised to mark the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War and others such as the

- World of Words Festival
- Lions Festival
- Worthing Art trail
- Tide of Light
- Splash Point Mini Golf
- Food and Drink Festival
- Children's Parade
- Community Play
- Art on the Pier

- Town Centre Christmas Lights.

They all received some degree of support or assistance from the Council.

Over the first weekend in August, Worthing seafront will host the 5th round of the UK Street Velodrome Series, the only venue on the South Coast for this now hugely popular cycling sport.

In the Budget there is provision for the new Events Officer post through which we will provide enhanced and targeted support for more and even better events in Worthing.

Culture

Strongly linked to events and tourism is the magnificent cultural programme that we have in Worthing.

The Commit to Culture Partnership will encourage excellent and inclusive cultural activities, bringing together the energy, creativity and resources of individuals, organisations and businesses involved in delivering, or supporting cultural activity.

Worthing Theatres go from strength to strength and I find the improvement in the programme breath taking. In the past year there have been a record number of sold out shows. The Comedy programme has attracted many big name acts including Dawn French, Jimmy Carr, Lee Mack and Jo Brand. In 2015 celebrities such as Alan Carr, Alan Davies, Katherine Ryan and Ruby Wax are all visiting Worthing to perform in our theatres. The Christmas shows were a delight once again with Jack Frost's Frozen Christmas receiving exemplary reviews (not least from my daughters who particularly loved the snow at the end!) and Aladdin breaking all records to become the highest grossing pantomime in the history of the Connaught Theatre.

In July we have a week long run of the play Dead Simple by Peter James - Worthing Theatres currently has the highest advance ticket sales for the tour, proving that our venues are back on the creative map and the local community are proving their support by buying tickets.

We'll continue to support our theatres while challenging the management team to reduce the subsidy that Council Tax payers provide.

Similarly Worthing Museum is a credit to the town but must find more improvements. In that vein the management has managed to win a partnership agreement to work with the British Museum in developing links with hard to reach community groups.

Employment

In 2015 I look forward to seeing further progress on the regeneration of the town and its cultural offers. These improvements make Worthing the town that it is and encourage employers to create jobs here. Nationally the record of the Coalition Government on employment has been nothing short of astonishing and Iain Duncan

Smith's reforms have made a life changing difference to families and communities across the country. The record on employment in the Worthing is similarly excellent and this is a testament to the people and businesses of this town and the actions of both Worthing Borough Council and West Sussex County Council. Under Conservative leadership we know when and how to support and more importantly, when to get out of the way.

This has led to commitments from a number of companies to create new jobs in Worthing. GSK are bringing 200 new jobs to the Borough. **Rayner Intraocular Lens** are relocating 170 employees from Hove and creating an additional 30 new jobs. **Teledyne Oil & Gas** - are increasing their workforce by an additional 30 jobs.

Communities/Big Society

Here in Worthing we are home to truly vibrant and engaging communities. The Council plays a great and appropriate role in the community as do Councillors as the democratically elected representatives of the community.

We are one of the first Councils to have launched a Public Health Plan, which over the next few years will ensure that we can mobilise our workforce to help improve the health and wellbeing of our local communities.

We continue to offer value work experience placements for unemployed people through a variety of placements in the Councils and with local employers. An amazing 60% of these are then going on to find employment after these schemes.

Our Money Tree event in 2014 was both successful and, I'm assured by Cllr Yallop, entertaining, with inventive and engaging presentations becoming - song, dance & poetry were all performed at the presentation evening in 2014. We allocated £15,953 to 10 groups as a result of the scheme in 2014. Money Tree has become a regular feature of our work with the community sector and the time has come for a refresh. So this year we have been focussing the programme on the needs of young people in our communities.

The Government's Troubled Families Initiative, enacted here in Worthing as the Think Family programme goes from strength to strength. Our wellbeing team is turning around the lives of one thousand one hundred and sixty five families. Not just a remarkable achievement but one that will pay dividends for all families in our community.

The wellbeing team also continues its fantastic work with the Action Northbrook project. Targeting some of the most deprived parts of the Borough to reinvigorate and reconnect parts of our wider community who have not been successfully engaged in the past.

Last year Councillors agreed to this Council becoming a corporate member of the West Sussex Credit Union. I was proud to support this move to support an ethical reputable alternative to pay day loan companies and worse.

Technological advances

One of the key drivers of increased connectivity, productivity and innovation across the globe has been the rapid advance in technological change - principally in the field of information and communications technology. Historically this Council has not been as up to speed in this area as we could have been.

I have been delighted over the past few months with the furious rate at which this has been changing with the digital programme work being developed to bring this Council, not just up to speed with the rest of the public sector but to position us as sector leaders. We have made bold commitments in the budget to power this programme forward. With the launch of new and vastly improved platforms in the coming months both Councillors and members of the public will see fundamental changes. Additionally there will be significant savings to the Council's revenue budget.

Public services

We must not forget that one of the Council's most important roles is as a provider of key public services. Whether that is the issuing of benefits, collecting refuse and recycling, sweeping streets, maintaining our wonderful parks, foreshore and other open spaces or processing applications for businesses and residents we aim to provide the best level of service imaginable.

Unlike the majority of Councils in the country we continue to collect household waste every week and large numbers of additional houses have been absorbed into the service without incurring significant additional financial burden

The weekly garden refuse service goes from strength to strength with seventeen hundred new customers being signed up for garden waste bins during 2014-15.

Our Parks team has recently been awarded £100,000 of funding from the Department for Communities and Local Government's Transformation Challenge Award for our Rethinking Parks agenda. This is just one example of how our innovative thinking is enabling us to deliver more for less to our residents.

Sound finances

At the outset of this budget round, the council faced the challenging prospect of finding savings of around £0.5m - on top of the £3million of savings we had already been challenged to find over previous years. This challenge has been successfully met and the council is now in the position to balance the budget, freeze Council Tax and reinvest back into priority services to promote economic growth.

Nevertheless we must not forget that the austerity measures, made necessary by the shameless dereliction of duty that we saw from the last Labour Government, are set to continue in the next Parliament - even if the two Eds get the back the keys to the car that they crashed in the first place. This Council will face further reductions in government funding over the next five years.

So, the Council must continue to focus on finding ever more efficient ways of working if we are to continue to balance the budget and protect our front line services. We need to deliver more for less and we *will* deliver more for less.

Two final things that I'd like to mention Mr Mayor:

Eleven years ago this Council, under very different leadership, awarded a contract to run our car parks to a private company. That company proceeded to raise parking prices and for the ten year duration of the contract businesses and residents in the Borough felt that a very wrong decision had been taken.

Last year we took back control of our car parks and reduced the price of car parking in our multi-storey car parks to one pound an hour. Some Councillors, for reasons I've never really understood felt that they couldn't support that policy. There were even forecasts of financial disaster. We've seen the exact opposite. The number of people using the car parks has rocketed and the budget for running the car parks is currently heading for an underspend. This is the kind of bold policy making that Conservative Councillors are bringing to this Council and it is making a decisive difference to lives in Worthing.

The final thing that I must mention is Council Tax. Over the thirteen years during which this country was ruled by a Labour Government, Council Tax across the country **doubled!** Since 2011 that has changed remarkably. While over two thirds of Councils across the country have taken the opportunity to raise Council Tax, for the past four years this Council has resolutely stuck to a policy of freezing Council Tax. This is saving residents in Worthing hundreds of pounds and is a policy we should stick to which is why I have recommended a fifth successive Council Tax for this year.

I am convinced that the potential of the world around us and in particular the people who inhabit it is boundless. The levels of technological, scientific, social and economic advances that we seen in recent years and decades would have been unimaginable just a short while ago and the potential for future positive change is unimaginable to us now. That is the reality and the vision of the wave that we are now catching and which this budget is preparing us ride.

The future in Worthing is bright and we should be very excited, motivated and enthused to be a part of it.

Mr Mayor, I'd like to propose this Budget, the plans for the future that it contains, and of course, a fifth consecutive Council Tax freeze for the people of Worthing to this Council.