

## **REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET SPEECH:**

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

LORD PROVOST, THE BUDGET MEETING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT GATHERING OF ELECTED MEMBERS ON THE COUNCIL CALENDAR. WE'RE HERE TODAY TO SET OUR PRIORITIES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD AND TO PERFORM OUR LEGAL OBLIGATION TO SET A BALANCED BUDGET.

DECISIONS TAKEN IN THE CHAMBER TODAY MARK THE END OF AN INCREDIBLY COMPLEX PROCESS, NOT ON A SINGLE BUDGET BUT ON THE VARIOUS STRANDS THAT COME TOGETHER TO ACCOUNT FOR AROUND ONE-BILLION POUNDS OF SPEND BY ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL ANNUALLY.

BEFORE WE CONSIDER THOSE COMPLEXITIES, I WANT TO STRIP THIS YEAR'S BUDGET BACK TO JUST THREE WORDS: RESILIENCE. PRAGMATISM. DETERMINATION.

THOSE ARE ALL QUALITIES THAT AS A PROUD ABERDONIAN I WOULD SAY THE CITY HAS BUILT ITS SUCCESS UPON. MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY ARE QUALITIES WE ARE GOING TO HAVE TO DISPLAY MORE THAN EVER BEFORE AS WE FACE UP TO WHAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS A FINANCIAL CHALLENGE OF MOMENTOUS PROPORTIONS.

REDUCED FUNDING, RISING COST PRESSURES AND GROWING DEMAND ARE COMBINING TO CREATE A PERFECT STORM. AS LEADERS OF THE COUNCIL WE ARE COMMITTED TO WEATHERING THAT STORM, BUT ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE SCALE OF THE TASK IN FRONT OF US.

## **INCOME:**

ANY BUDGET HAS AT ITS HEART THE SIMPLE PRINCIPLE OF INCOME AGAINST EXPENDITURE. IT'S IMPORTANT WE SET THE CONTEXT FOR THE DEBATE AND DECISIONS THAT WILL FOLLOW BY FIRSTLY LOOKING AT THE FUNDS WE HAVE AT OUR DISPOSAL TO SUPPORT OUR AMBITIONS FOR THIS CITY. THOSE ARE SIGNIFICANT ASPIRATIONS TO CONTINUE THE JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION WE ARE ON AND ENSURE ABERDEEN IS A PLACE WHERE EVERYONE CAN PROSPER.

OUR DETERMINATION TO DELIVER ON THOSE AIMS WILL NOT BE DENTED, REGARDLESS OF THE HAMMER BLOWS THAT ARE BEING DELIVERED FROM OUTSIDE OF THE CITY FROM THE SNP GOVERNMENT IN HOLYROOD.

NON-DOMESTIC RATES ARE THE MAIN INCOME STREAM FOR ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL, FOLLOWED BY LOCAL FEES AND CHARGES, OUR GENERAL REVENUE GRANT FROM THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT AND COUNCIL TAX.

IN 2018/19 WE ANTICIPATE THE CITY'S RATES INCOME WILL BE £28M ABOVE THE FIGURE OUR SETTLEMENT FOR THE CURRENT YEAR IS BASED ON – YET ABERDEEN WILL NOT BENEFIT FROM THAT. WE MADE A REQUEST TO THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT TO RETAIN THAT EXTRA INCOME TO OFFSET A PORTION OF THE BUDGET GAP FOR 2019/20 BUT THAT HAS BEEN REJECTED.

IT'S IMPORTANT WE TAKE A STEP BACK AND CONSIDER THE UNIQUE POSITION IN ABERDEEN – WHERE LAST YEAR NON-DOMESTIC RATES ACCOUNTED FOR 33% OF OUR INCOME, DWARFING THE 13% COMING COURTESY OF OUR DIMINISHING GRANT FROM THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT.

COMBINED WITH LOCAL FEES AND CHARGES AND COUNCIL TAX, IN 2018/19 WE GENERATED 87% OF OUR INCOME IN THIS CITY – A COMPLETE CONTRAST TO OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES, WHO ARE IN NO WAY AS SELF-SUFFICIENT.

THE DISPARITY IS PARTICULARLY GALLING GIVEN THE WAY ABERDEEN HAS SERVED AND CONTINUES TO SERVE AS THE ECONOMIC ENGINE ROOM FOR THE COUNTRY. OUR INDUSTRIES MAKE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EXCHEQUER - YET WE HAVE A SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT WHICH ESSENTIALLY BITES THE HAND THAT FEEDS, THREATENING THE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN OUR CITY THAT SCOTLAND RELIES ON FOR ITS PROSPERITY.

AT THE SAME TIME AS OUR EXCESS RATES INCOME IN EFFECT GETS PULLED INTO THE CENTRAL POT, OUR GRANT FUNDING FROM THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT, EXCLUDING RINGFENCING, HAS BEEN REDUCED BY 2.1% - THAT IS 6.6 MILLION POUNDS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN SPENT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THOSE WE SERVE IN ABERDEEN BUT INSTEAD IS OFF THE TABLE.

THAT TELLS ONLY PART OF THE STORY – WHICH IS DOMINATED BY INCREASED RING-FENCING, DESIGNED TO DELIVER ON SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES WHILST ALL THE TIME STRIPPING AWAY OUR ABILITY AS A COUNCIL TO CATER FOR THE NEEDS OF THE RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES OF ABERDEEN.

THOSE FUNDING ISSUES COME AS WE FACE RISING COSTS IN ALMOST EVERY AREA OF OUR OPERATIONS AND FACTOR IN THE NATIONALLY NEGOTIATED LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY SETTLEMENT THAT WILL INCREASE OUR WAGE BILL CONSIDERABLY. ADD INTO THAT OUR NATIONALLY SET CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATION JOINT BOARD AND THE STRAIN IS EVIDENT.

THE NET RESULT IS A FUNDING GAP OF 41.2 MILLION POUNDS BASED ON OUR PREVIOUS BUDGET. IT'S WORTH REPEATING THAT FIGURE – 41.2 MILLION TO BE FOUND IN THE NEXT 12-MONTHS.

IT IS QUITE FRANKLY AN EYE-WATERING NUMBER AND A STARK ILLUSTRATION OF THE CONSTRAINTS THIS ORGANISATION IS FORCED TO WORK UNDER.

DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION. WE HAVE A CIVIC DUTY, A LEGAL OBLIGATION AND A RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR BOND HOLDERS TO FIND A SOLUTION TO WHAT IS A VERY REAL PROBLEM - A FUNDING CRISIS NOT OF OUR MAKING BUT ONE THAT WE FIND OURSELVES FIGHTING AGAINST. RESILIENCE WILL BE VITAL IN THE WEEKS, MONTHS AND YEARS AHEAD.

THERE ARE UNDOUBTEDLY UNPALATABLE OPTIONS THAT WILL HAVE TO BE RELUCTANTLY ACCEPTED.

I USE OPTIONS IN THE LOOSEST SENSE OF THE WORD – IN REALITY, AS ELECTED MEMBERS WE ARE FACING VERY LITTLE CHOICE BECAUSE OF THE MASSIVE FUNDING GAP WE FACE.



PRAGMATISM WILL HAVE TO COME TO THE FORE AND OUR FOCUS WILL BE ON USING DIMINISHING RESOURCES AS EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY AS POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THE MOST VULNERABLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES CONTINUE TO BE PROTECTED AND CARED FOR. WE WILL DO THAT BY ALIGNING OUR SPENDING MORE CLOSELY THAN EVER BEFORE TO THE LOCAL OUTCOME IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND GOING FORWARD WE ARE CLEAR THAT WE WILL HAVE TO WORK WITH OUR VALUED COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERS TO FIND A WAY FORWARD.

TRADITIONALLY EVERY GROUP ON THE COUNCIL WOULD CHOOSE FROM A RANGE OF OPTIONS – PUT FORWARD BY OFFICERS AND SELECT FROM THOSE TO MEET THE TARGET FIGURE.

THIS YEAR, THAT LOCAL DISCRETION HAS BEEN ALL BUT WIPED OUT BY A COMBINATION OF REDUCED FUNDING, INCREASED RING-FENCING AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES. ONLY AROUND 40% OF A COUNCIL'S BUDGET IS ACTUALLY ITS OWN – THE LION'S SHARE OF EXPENDITURE IS EITHER ALLOCATED TO STATUTORY DUTIES OR PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES DECREED BY THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT. IN RETURN, WE GET LIMITED AND UNWORKABLE REVENUE GENERATING POWERS – WITH THE TAX ON WORKPLACE PARKING AN EXAMPLE OF ONE OF THE 'GIFTS' OF THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT THAT WE CERTAINLY WILL NOT BE ACCEPTING.

THIS YEAR MORE THAN EVER IT HAS BEEN A RELENTLESS TASK TO PRESENT THE BUDGET REPORT WE ARE CONSIDERING TODAY AND THE THOUSANDS OF PERMUTATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN WORKED THROUGH BY OFFICERS TO BRING US TO THIS POINT.

ON BEHALF OF ELECTED MEMBERS, CAN I TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO THANK OFFICERS FOR THEIR DILIGENT AND COMPREHENSIVE EFFORTS. I MUST ALSO THANK MY COALITION COLLEAGUES, WHO HAVE WORKED TOGETHER WITH THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CITY AT HEART.

**PROTECTING SERVICES AND COMMITMENTS:**

THROUGH THAT COLLABORATIVE APPROACH I AM PLEASED IN MY DUAL ROLE AS CONVENER OF THE CITY GROWTH AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE AND CO-LEADER OF THE COUNCIL TO BE MOVING A BALANCED BUDGET WHICH HAS A POSITIVE OUTLOOK IN KEY AREAS.

IT HAS BECOME SOMETHING OF A TRADITION OF THE BUDGET MEETING FOR US TO FOCUS ON THE MANY THINGS WE WILL NOT BE DOING IN THE YEAR AHEAD – THE CUTS WE WON'T BE MAKING, THE SERVICES WE WON'T BE STOPPING AND THE SAVINGS OPTIONS WE WON'T BE ADOPTING.

I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT WE SINGLE OUT A FEW OF THOSE AREAS THAT WILL BE PROTECTED, TO ALLAY THE CONCERNS THAT THERE WILL INEVITABLY HAVE BEEN AFTER THEY WERE PUT FORWARD AS OPTIONS BY OFFICERS DURING THE BUDGET SETTING PROCESS.

WE WILL NOT, FOR EXAMPLE, BE STOPPING THE PROVISION OF SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLLERS – WE RECOGNISE THE ROLE OUR ARMY OF PATROLLERS PLAY IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND THE SAFETY OF OUR CHILDREN IS OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE.

THE NUMBER OF COMMUNITY WARDENS WILL ALSO BE PROTECTED AS WE VALUE THE WORK THEY DO. THEY ARE NOT JUST ABOUT ISSUING PARKING TICKETS, THEY ARE A VITAL PART OF OUR COMMUNITIES.

LIKEWISE, WE WON'T BE REDUCING LIBRARY PROVISION – CHOOSING TO PROTECT THE VALUABLE SERVICE PROVIDED BY OUR STAFF THROUGHOUT THE CITY AND ALL 17 OF THE FACILITIES WILL CONTINUE TO OPERATE.

WE WILL NOT BE CLOSING PUBLIC TOILETS, DESPITE SO MANY OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES TAKING THAT UNPOPULAR DECISION.

CRUCIALLY WE WON'T BE TAKING FORWARD PROPOSALS TO CLOSE COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTRES OR REDUCE FUNDING TO OUR LEASED COMMUNITY CENTRES.

TO QUOTE THE LETTER I RECEIVED FROM THE CHAIR OF THE CIVIC FORUM, "THESE INSTITUTIONS AND ACTIVITIES THEY FACILITATE SHOULD NOT SIMPLY BE SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF RUNNING COSTS BUT INSTEAD BE APPRECIATED FOR THE BENEFITS THAT THEY BRING THROUGH THE PROVISION AND FACILITATION OF A WEALTH OF COMMUNITY BASED AND COMMUNITY FOCUSED PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES". JONATHAN, WE AGREE.

FUNDING TO THE FAIRER ABERDEEN FUND WILL BE PRESERVED AND THERE WILL BE NO REDUCTION TO OUR CONTRIBUTION TO ABERDEEN INSPIRED AND ITS WORK ON BEHALF OF THE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT.

GRANITE NOIR AND THE TRUE NORTH FESTIVAL'S FUNDING WILL ALSO BE PRESERVED TO ENSURE THOSE VALUABLE EVENTS FLOURISH AND CONTINUE TO GROW.

PROPOSALS FOR A 2 MILLION POUND REDUCTION IN FUNDING TO SPORT ABERDEEN, WHICH WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE BROUGHT THE CLOSURE OF VITAL FACILITIES, HAVE ALSO BEEN REJECTED. I BELIEVE SPORT FACILITIES SHOULD BE ACCESSIBLE BY ALL AND NOT RESTRICTED TO THOSE WHO CAN AFFORD PRIVATE MEMBERSHIPS.

WE SHOULD TAKE PRIDE IN THE ABILITY WE HAVE SHOWN TO FIND WAYS TO SHIELD THESE AND MANY OTHER AREAS OF OUR OPERATIONS FROM THE IMPACT OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNDING REDUCTION.

## **FEES AND CHARGES:**

WHEN IT COMES TO COUNCIL BUDGETS, THE HEADLINES SO OFTEN FOCUS ON EXPENDITURE – OR CUTS, AS IT IS USUALLY PORTRAYED.

AS I TOUCHED UPON EARLIER, THE INCOME IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE EXPENDITURE AND WE HAVE BEEN CLEAR FROM THE OUTSET OF THIS PROCESS THAT WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LEAVE ANY STONE UNTURNED IN LOOKING AT OPTIONS TO INCREASE REVENUE TO SUPPORT COUNCIL SERVICES.

LOCAL FEES AND CHARGES REPRESENT ONE OF THE FEW AREAS WE HAVE CONTROL OVER IN TERMS OF INCOME AND FOR 2019/20 WE HAVE NO OPTION BUT TO REVISIT THESE.



ABERDEEN HAS A PROUD RECORD OF MAINTAINING LOW CHARGES ACROSS OUR OPERATIONS AND FOR MANY YEARS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FREEZE FEES AND CHARGES.

IN OUR BUDGET THIS YEAR WE HAVE RELUCTANTLY HAD TO MOVE ON THAT POSITION. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE BEEN VERY CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO BALANCE AFFORDABILITY FOR ALL THOSE WHO USE OUR FACILITIES AND SERVICES, THERE IS THE NECESSITY TO RAISE FEES AND CHARGES IN A NUMBER OF AREAS AS SET OUT IN OUR BUDGET.

THIS INCLUDES RAISING PARKING CHARGES AND INTRODUCING A NOMINAL £30 A YEAR CHARGE PER HOUSEHOLD FOR THE COLLECTION OF BROWN BINS, JUST TWO EXAMPLES OF THE SERVICES WE HAVE RELUCTANTLY HAD TO REVIEW TO SET A BALANCED BUDGET.

SIMILARLY, ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL WAS ONE OF THE LAST TO RESORT TO INCREASING COUNCIL TAX RATES OVER RECENT YEARS. THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT HAS INCREASED ITS CAP ON COUNCIL TAX RISES FROM 3% TO 4.79% THIS YEAR AND, LIKE MOST, IF NOT ALL LOCAL AUTHORITIES, WE HAVE TO CONSIDER THAT TO BALANCE THE BOOKS IN THE FACE OF GRANT FUNDING REDUCTIONS.

OUR BUDGET PROPOSES A COUNCIL TAX RISE OF 4.5%.

EVERY ONE PERCENT INCREASE BRINGS IN OVER ONE-MILLION POUNDS OF REVENUE AND WITHOUT THE RISE IN COUNCIL TAX WE WOULD BE FACING AN ADDITIONAL FUNDING GAP IN THE REGION OF FIVE-MILLION POUNDS.

OUR COUNCIL HAS A PROUD TRACK RECORD OF INNOVATION IN PUBLIC SECTOR FINANCE, THE SUCCESSION OF AWARDS IN RECENT YEARS BEARS TESTAMENT TO THAT.

WE MUST CONTINUE TO TAKE THAT PIONEERING APPROACH AND THIS YEAR'S BUDGET REFLECTS THE COURAGE WE HAVE TO THINK AND ACT DIFFERENTLY. FOR SEVERAL YEARS WE HAVE PUSHED FOR THE ABILITY TO CONSIDER A TRANSIENT VISITOR LEVY. IN RECENT WEEKS THE SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT HAS ACCEPTED THE MERIT OF THAT LOCAL DEBATE AND IT IS AN OPTION WE WILL BE EXAMINING IN GREATER DETAIL, TOGETHER WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SECTOR, WITH A VIEW TO MAKING A DECISION ON NEXT STEPS.

UNFORTUNATELY, THAT ACTION COMES TOO LATE TO HELP BRIDGE THE FUNDING GAP WE FACE THIS YEAR – EVEN NOW WE DON'T HAVE A CLEAR PARLIAMENTARY COMMITMENT TO ENABLE US TO PLAN. THE RESULT IS WE HAVE HAD NO OPTION BUT TO REDUCE INVESTMENT IN AREAS THAT WOULD HAVE SUPPORTED OUR MANY BUSINESS SECTORS, INCLUDING TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY.

REGARDLESS OF THE BARRIERS WE FACE IN LEGISLATION, WE WILL CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR WAYS TO ENSURE ABERDEEN PUSHES THE BOUNDARIES AND LEADS THE WAY.

### **TRANSFORMATION AND EFFICIENCY:**

I HAVE STRESSED THAT SETTING A BALANCED BUDGET RELIES AS MUCH ON MAXIMISING REVENUE AS IT DOES ON REDUCING SPENDING – BUT IT ALSO REVOLVES AROUND CONTINUING TO INNOVATE.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL IS A RAPIDLY EVOLVING PROCESS WHICH WE SET IN MOTION WITH THE APPROVAL OF THE TARGET OPERATING MODEL IN THIS CHAMBER LATE IN 2017.

IT IS ABOUT WORKING IN A SMARTER, MORE EFFICIENT WAY TO BETTER MEET THE NEEDS OF CUSTOMERS AND STAFF. CRUCIALLY IN THE CURRENT CLIMATE IT IS ALSO ABOUT THOSE EFFICIENCIES CREATING FINANCIAL BENEFITS. IN 2018/19 WE WERE ABLE TO SET A BALANCED BUDGET BECAUSE OF THAT INNOVATION – WITH MILLIONS OF POUNDS OF SAVINGS DUE TO THE WAY WE ARE CHANGING OUR WAYS OF WORKING.

THE PEOPLE WE SERVE ARE ALREADY SEEING THE ADVANTAGES IN VERY REAL TERMS – THE THOUSANDS OF PARENTS WHO WERE ABLE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, COMPLETE SCHOOL ADMISSIONS DIGITALLY AT THEIR LEISURE RATHER THAN WADING THROUGH PAPER FORMS AND HAVING TO REPORT TO SCHOOLS AT SET TIMES FOR THE P1 ENROLMENT PROCESS. ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL MADE NATIONAL HEADLINES AS THE FIRST AUTHORITY IN SCOTLAND TO LAUNCH AN END TO END ONLINE SYSTEM.

WELL OVER ONE HUNDRED PROCESSES ARE BEING TRANSFORMED IN THIS WAY – EVERYTHING FROM PARKING PERMIT RENEWALS AND APPLICATIONS THROUGH TO SOME OF THE MORE NICHE DUTIES WE AS A COUNCIL CARRY OUT. IF ANYONE HERE TODAY SHOULD WISH TO LICENCE A TIGER FOR EXAMPLE, THERE'S AN ONLINE PLATFORM FOR THAT!

ON A SERIOUS NOTE, THE PACE AT WHICH THIS COUNCIL IS ADAPTING AND EMBRACING THE BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY IS IMPRESSIVE AND I WOULD LIKE TO THANK STAFF FOR THEIR FORWARD-THINKING APPROACH AND THE CAN-DO ATTITUDE THAT IS SUPPORTING THE TRANSFORMATION.

IN 2017 WE DEALT WITH JUST UNDER 3000 CUSTOMER CONTACTS, PEOPLE ACCESSING OUR ONLINE SERVICES. IN 2018 THAT ROSE TO JUST SHORT OF 80,000 AND IN 2019 WE EXPECT THAT NUMBER TO RISE TO 120,000. IT'S INCREDIBLE PROGRESS.

THE DIGITAL FIRST APPROACH IS ALLOWING CUSTOMERS TO ACCESS SERVICES 24-7 FROM THE COMFORT OF THEIR HOME, AS WE ALL EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO DO AS TECH-SAVVY CONSUMERS.

IT IS ALSO ALLOWING COUNCIL RESOURCES, PARTICULARLY STAFF, TO BE USED IN A MORE TARGETED AND EFFICIENT WAY AND SUPPORTING THE CONTRACTION WE ARE GOING THROUGH IN TERMS OF EMPLOYEE NUMBERS. OUR WORKFORCE IS REDUCING – QUITE SIMPLY IT MUST, DUE TO THE FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS WE ARE WORKING UNDER.

HOWEVER, WE ARE DOING THAT IN A MANAGED WAY AND ARE MAINTAINING OUR COMMITMENT TO NO COMPULSORY REDUNDANCIES. THE REDUCTION IN STAFF NUMBERS HAS BEEN THROUGH THE VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE AND EARLY RETIREMENT REQUESTS WE HAVE RECEIVED AND THE MANAGEMENT OF VACANCIES. I'D LIKE TO GO ON RECORD TO EXPRESS MY THANKS TO ALL THOSE EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE ELECTED TO TAKE VSEER OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS. THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO THE COUNCIL HAS BEEN MUCH APPRECIATED AND WE WISH EVERYONE WELL FOR THE FUTURE.



IT IS IMPORTANT TO STRESS THAT IN THE BUDGET I AM MOVING TODAY, OPTIONS TO ALTER TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF STAFF TO REALISE SAVINGS HAVE BEEN REJECTED. WE VALUE OUR EMPLOYEES AND THE WAY THEY SERVE THE CITY.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO ENGAGE WITH STAFF, TRADE UNIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS IN THE MONTHS AHEAD TO ENSURE EVERYONE HAS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHAPE THE TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY WE'RE ON AND TO REALLY DRIVE THE PROGRESS WE'RE MAKING.

THE DISAPPOINTING THING IS THAT WE ARE NOT IN CONTROL OF OUR OWN DESTINY. I MAKE NO APOLOGIES FOR COMING BACK TO THE FACT THAT WE SIMPLY DO NOT HAVE THE FUNDING TO ENABLE US TO TAKE ALL THE STRIDES FORWARD THAT WE WANT TO.

RAISING REVENUE AND INCREASING EFFICIENCY ARE AT THE HEART OF THE BUDGET WE HAVE TABLED TODAY – BUT THERE IS NO ESCAPING THE FACT THAT EXPENDITURE WILL ALSO HAVE TO BE REDUCED TO BALANCE THE NUMBERS.

THE THEME RUNNING THROUGH THE BUDGET WE HAVE PRESENTED TODAY IS ABOUT MAKING THE VERY BEST OF WHAT WE HAVE AVAILABLE TO US. THERE ARE INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT AREAS OF SPEND THAT ARE BEING MAINTAINED AND IN SOME CASES INCREASED, DEMONSTRATING OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITIES AND THE CITY AS A WHOLE.

## **CAPITAL PROGRAMME:**

THAT'S DEMONSTRATED IN OUR CAPITAL PROGRAMME, WHERE WE ARE DETERMINED TO BUILD ON THE FANTASTIC PROGRESS ALREADY MADE. WE'RE WRITING THE NEXT CHAPTER FOR ABERDEEN AND GIVING GENERATIONS TO COME A CITY THEY ARE PROUD TO CALL HOME.

THE EVENT COMPLEX ABERDEEN AND THE ABERDEEN ART GALLERY REDEVELOPMENT ARE TWO PROJECTS THAT WILL PROVIDE FACILITIES THAT WILL CHANGE OUR OUTLOOK AS A CITY.

UNION TERRACE GARDENS, AN INTEGRAL PIECE OF THE CITY CENTRE MASTERPLAN JIGSAW, WILL FALL INTO PLACE THIS YEAR AS WE MAKE A LEAP FORWARD IN THE BOLD AND INSPIRING VISION FOR THE HEART OF ABERDEEN.

IN MOVING TODAY'S BUDGET I AM MAKING A PLEDGE ON UNION TERRACE GARDENS, COMMITTING THE FUNDING TO CREATE WHAT WILL BE A STUNNING ADDITION TO CENTRE OF ABERDEEN, AND LIKEWISE I AM DELIGHTED TO BE INCLUDING FUNDING TO TRANSFORM PROVOST SKENE'S HOUSE INTO A VISITOR ATTRACTION THAT WILL SHOWCASE ABERDEEN'S HALL OF HEROES.

ON A COMMUNITY LEVEL WE WILL CONTINUE TO INVEST IN THE PLACE AND PEOPLE, WITH THE TILLYDRONE COMMUNITY CAMPUS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF THE SIGNIFICANT FUNDING BEING USED TO IMPROVE LIVES AND BRING NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

THERE IS NO CLEARER DEMONSTRATION OF THAT COMMITMENT TO OUR COMMUNITIES AND THE NEXT GENERATION THAN THE 100 MILLION POUND SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAMME THAT WE HAVE IN PLACE – WITH MILLTIMBER, TORRY, TILLYDRONE AND COUNTESSWELLS PROJECTS PROGRESSING THROUGH THE PIPELINE.

I AM ALSO MOVING THE COMMON GOOD BUDGET ALONG WITH THE GENERAL REVENUE AND CAPITAL AS THIS YEAR MORE THAN EVER THEY ARE INTER TWINED. I KNOW THAT COUNCILLOR BOULTON WILL SPEAK ABOUT MANY OF THESE GOOD CAUSES THAT WE ARE LOOKING TO FUND BUT I MUST MENTION ONE OF THE PROPOSALS.

ONE OF THE KEY BENEFICIATORS OF COMMON GOOD FUNDING AGAIN THIS YEAR IS THE GORDON HIGHLANDER MUSEUM. I KNOW THAT COUNCILLOR COOKE AND COUNCILLOR IMRIE WILL BOTH WELCOME THIS CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR ONE OF THE BEST VISITOR ATTRACTIONS IN ABERDEEN AND WE CAN SEE THAT THE MONEY WILL BE USED FOR A MUSEUM EDUCATION OFFICER AND A VOLUNTEER CO-ORDINATOR. BOTH VITAL ROLES FOR SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY AND ALSO FOR SUPPORTING THE MANY VETERANS THAT HELP OUT AT THE GORDON HIGHLANDER MUSEUM.

## **SUMMARY:**

IN SUMMARY LORD PROVOST,

THROUGH CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND OUR REVENUE SPEND THE AIM, AND IT IS WORTH REPEATING, IS TO ENSURE ABERDEEN IS A CITY WHERE EVERYONE CAN PROSPER.

ONCE AGAIN CAN I THANK THE OFFICERS ACROSS THE COUNCIL WHO HAVE WORKED TIRELESSLY IN THE FACE OF VERY TESTING FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES TO SUPPORT US IN BRINGING THIS BUDGET TO THE TABLE.

LORD PROVOST, AS I BRING MY SPEECH TO A  
CLOSE, AND I KNOW THIS OF GREAT INTEREST TO  
THOSE OUTSIDE LET'S BE CLEAR –

LIBRARIES PROTECTED

SCHOOL CROSSING CONTROLLERS PROTECTED

PUBLIC TOILETS SAVED

COMMUNITY WARDENS- SAVED

COMMUNITY CENTRES AND COMMUNITY  
LEARNING CENTRES- SAVED

AT THE SAME TIME INVESTMENT IN OUR CITY  
CENTRE REMAINS AT RECORD HIGHS

WE WILL CONTINUE TO STAND UP FOR THE CITY  
OF ABERDEEN WHILE THE OPPOSITION SIMPLY  
NOD THROUGH A PROGRAMME OF HYPER  
AUSTERITY ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACROSS  
SCOTLAND, WITH ABERDEEN THE WORST HIT.



I COMMEND THIS BUDGET TO YOU AND HAVE EVERY CONFIDENCE THAT OUR CITY WILL CONTINUE TO BE RESILIENT, PRAGMATIC AND DETERMINED AS WE FACE UP TO THE CHALLENGES IMPOSED UPON US.

**ENDS**