

TIMES AND CITIZEN

MARCH 2010

As the year marches on, and those who plan their budgets both in Bedford's businesses and Borough Hall reach their conclusions for the new financial year, the chill winds of the financial crisis are just beginning to become clearer to the public. The headline news this week that all over the country many thousands of local government jobs are under threat were not scare stories, but the realisation that a splurge in public sector spending was now coming to an end.

How did we get here? In 1997 this country had the 4th largest economy in the world but within five years we are forecast to be 11th. We were 7th for competitiveness, and now 13th. We were 4th for tax and regulation, now an astonishing 84th and 86th.

I think we got here through Government carelessness and Gordon Brown squandering the legacy left by Ken Clarke after years of hard work, building not on his prudence but on debt.

As well as pointing out where the country has gone wrong, I know I owe a duty to say what would change, and how my Conservative colleagues and I would get things moving again. We cannot simply leave the highest debt in the developed world to look after itself; we must begin to tackle it straightway. We will abolish the jobs tax on newly created jobs in new businesses, and we would introduce our National Loan Guarantee Scheme to get taxpayers cash moving to business again. Only by giving people the confidence that we can drive recovery of the economy can we expect people to have hope that a new more solid foundation for business and public services can be built.

The time is quickly approaching when the public will get their choice of alternative futures. Gordon Brown demands a second look, but his record does not deserve a second chance.