

A Fresh Start

A new voice on the new council



May 2nd

Vote  Labour

LOCAL AUTHORITY MANIFESTO 100 LABOUR PLEDGES

A FRESH START

Introduction

Whilst the decision to merge Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole into one new Unitary Authority has not been universally welcomed across the area, Labour will make the new council work in the interests of the many, not the few. This programme offers real hope that we can end the one Party rule that has blighted the conurbation.

Over the years, the present Tory administrations in the three areas have become arrogant, complacent and tired – largely because they have not had to face any real, effective opposition. But this can change. If you think a new council needs a fresh start, then give Labour your vote and give a real voice to local people.

Encouraging economic growth, employment and skills

Labour is totally committed to attracting investment to bring well paid jobs and attract skilled people across the conurbation. The Tories may be content with low paid work and insecure jobs but Labour is not. Our plan for encouraging economic growth and investment in our infrastructure and the talents of local people will improve employment opportunities and raise skill levels to make the area a more desirable place to work and create. Labour also acknowledges that at a time of severe financial constraints and cuts to local services it could not support any plans to build a new council headquarters.

Labour will:

1. Create a new network to bring together employers, colleges, the university and trade unions to improve the skills of 16-24 year olds and provide employment opportunities.
2. Introduce a scheme to grant discretionary rate relief to small businesses setting up in the area and look at ways of improving our high streets. We will also ensure there is professional advice available to those wishing to start their own business and create local jobs, including those with plans for co-operatives and social enterprises.
3. Recognise that two ways of attracting new business into the area, and encouraging existing businesses to stay is the provision of superfast broadband and creative hubs. Labour will work with network providers to ensure every part of the conurbation benefits.

4. Pay the Real Living Wage to all council employees, end the use of zero-hour contracts for council jobs, and where possible enter into contracts with suppliers to adopt the same approach. Labour will also explore ways in which council services can be brought back in-house, to save local taxpayers money and improve the delivery and quality of important services.
5. Establish a Welfare Rights Service, providing a one-stop shop for those entitled to benefits, helping to bring money into the local economy and tackling financial hardship amongst local residents. This will include looking at ways to establish a conurbation-wide Credit Union.
6. Use planning powers for large developments to ensure skilled local job, apprenticeship and work experience opportunities are part of the conditions that developers must meet in order to gain planning permission, alongside signing up to Unite's Construction Charter.
7. Revise the council's procurement process so that more goods and services can be sourced locally, ethically and with priority given to local suppliers, along the lines of the Preston model.
8. Ensure apprenticeships and degree courses are valued equally, and work with local employers to guarantee that they offer appropriate minimum rates of pay. In addition, we will increase the current number of local apprenticeships for young, local residents directly with the council and with those organisations where the council has contracts. Target employment support for those who are homeless, have a disability or are aged over 50 who face barriers to finding employment. We will also ensure that any local resident applying for a job with the council who meets the essential criteria should expect an interview.
9. Help promote a prosperous and sustainable tourist industry to attract greater investment and more employment for local people. This is not just about beaches and picturesque countryside but also about the arts and culture. This will benefit not only tourists but also enrich the lives of our communities, improving health and wellbeing.
10. Support the creation of a "strategy for high streets" across all parts of the conurbation in line with that proposed by USDAW (Union of *Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers*), which can regenerate and revitalise the local economy and improve retail opportunities. As part of this strategy, we will encourage more market facilities across the conurbation and oppose plans to privatise any existing public spaces.

11. Recognise the growing evidence which shows that the Government's Universal Credit system is causing misery for two out of every five recipients. We will work with advice agencies and the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure local people are not penalised for the delays or other problems with the system, whilst using our position in the Local Government Association to press the Government to scrap the introduction of Universal Credit.

Housing for all

Our area suffers from having London style house prices, but south west levels of wages. Finding a place to live that is both secure and affordable poses a huge challenge for thousands of local people. The Tory record on tackling this crisis has been completely inadequate. In the last seven years, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole councils together have made less than 600 affordable homes available for rent. That is why there is an urgent need for more truly affordable homes to be built for local people to buy or rent.

Labour will:

12. Argue for 1000 new social and council houses to be built in the lifetime of the council to meet the needs of local communities. We will also encourage more truly affordable homes to be built for local people to buy or rent. Planning consent will not be granted unless developments can meet this commitment.
13. Campaign to ensure that new buildings are manufactured to BREEM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) specifications, and consider adherence to these regulations when assessing planning applications.
14. Ensure a unified and joined-up approach to planning across the conurbation that guarantees a common strategy, based on Labour's values and recognises the different needs of the different areas. We will also call for a review of brownfield sites and options of redesignation to increase housing development options, before any further building on flood plains or greenbelt.
15. Carry out an up to date strategic housing and health needs assessment to determine what provision is required to meet the housing and health needs of those who are homeless or at risk of becoming so.
16. Ensure all high-rise blocks are fitted with an effective sprinkler system and meet the inspection standards and recommendations made by the fire service. In line with the FBU (Fire Brigades Union), we believe there should also be a universal ban on flammable cladding.

17. Use legislation to make empty properties available for use and introduce a 'buy back' scheme to take back suitable housing and add it to the housing stock.
18. Raise council tax on empty second properties in the area and remove any discounts they may attract.
19. Work with local charities and other organisations to formulate a proposal for the use of empty homes and other public buildings that may be available as crisis accommodation for rough sleepers.
20. Continue to call for the withdrawal of punitive Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) which seek to criminalise those without a home. Instead we will introduce a Housing First Policy for housing people rough sleeping which will include working with the voluntary sector to create a one-stop shop for homelessness services, introducing training flats for former rough sleepers; outreach services; emergency short term crisis shelters; and supporting households affected by the move to universal credit to prevent them from becoming homeless.
21. Help young people leaving care to support their start into independent living by exempting them from paying council tax and provide other reductions for those on low incomes. Labour will also oppose the introduction of service charges on council tenants.
22. As a way of improving confidence in the rental market, consult on introducing a new Tenants' Charter to raise awareness of tenants' rights and encourage the formation of Tenants' Associations. These rights could include the availability of longer term tenancies, a requirement on landlords to register with the local authority to be granted a five year licence to rent out their property on the understanding that the property meets certain agreed quality standards and a transparent and agreed formula for rent increases.
23. Put pressure on the Government, through the Local Government Association to ensure that the Local Housing Allowance more accurately reflects the real market rents in our area.
24. Look at improving the provision of home adaptation grants to enable older residents to maintain their independence at home for as long as they wish.
25. Investigate introducing an insulation programme/boiler discount scheme to local residents to tackle fuel poverty.

Improving education and supporting children and young people

The Tory Government has interfered with education services as a way of introducing a business model into education and reducing the power of local councils to intervene and raise standards. A move to focus simply on exams and remove music and the arts from the curriculum has had a negative impact on our children's education. We recognise that access to these subjects support emotional well-being, self-discipline and social skills that are so important in later life and are proven to raise standards across the curriculum and reduce youth offending. We also know that many young people now feel under tremendous pressure and suffer greater levels of stress and anxiety than previous generations. Young people need our support and Labour will make that possible.

Labour will:

26. In acknowledging that the Government has removed the powers that councils have to intervene in education, work with schools to raise standards and review every aspect of schooling from nursery provision, breakfast clubs to longer school days, timing of school holidays, the cost of school uniforms and what additional support might be needed for parents who are working.
27. Work with schools and parents to introduce a fairer system, rather than fining parents for taking their children on holiday during term time which can hurt families on a budget.
28. Give all Reception children a library card to help improve literacy and greater educational attainment, and ensure existing Library services are maintained and where possible, improved and strengthen ongoing partnerships between schools and libraries.
29. Ensure children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) receive the highest quality services they deserve.
30. Explore ways of offering free bus passes for all under 25s and ensuring school transport is affordable to all.
31. Look at innovative ways in which youth services can be improved, and Youth Clubs and associated facilities can be provided to help provide meaningful interaction and a different type of learning for those who need it. We will also encourage schools to share their facilities (where they do not already) for local communities to use to come together and also decrease social isolation.
32. Appoint a Young Carers' Champion to be their voice in the area and to advocate for additional support.
33. Work with the NHS to support a properly funded Young People Emotional Wellbeing programme to tackle the growing mental health problems they face and ensure there are sufficient educational psychologists available to meet the demand across the conurbation.

34. Work with school admissions authorities to agree a criteria which leads to a more balanced pupil intake with schools having a much wider ability range of children and work with schools to develop a protocol for situations where a school has to exclude a pupil but retains responsibility for finding a better suited school place and for monitoring the child's progress there.
35. Work with local schools and a wide range of criminal justice agencies to promote restorative practice models to minimise avoidable exclusions and absences from schools and colleges.
36. Recognise the importance of early intervention services for families, by working to prevent any closure of children's centres, and re-open and invest in these wherever possible. We will also support an effective preventative 'Edge of Care' service providing intensive support where children (especially teenagers) are on the brink of coming into care.
37. Address the significant shift that has taken place in employment patterns, by improving continuing adult education services to enable people to adapt to the changing demands of the workplace and to acquire new skills throughout their lives. Labour will open discussions with further education colleges and the university to see how this might best be achieved.
38. Support families by setting up education in 'the basics' such as buying and cooking food, dealing with money/bills and using the internet.

Promoting health and wellbeing

Labour is the champion of the health service. We introduced it in 1948 and we want to strengthen what it can do rather than privatise it. We also recognise that one of the biggest challenges we face is the collapse of our social care system and the urgent need for additional funding from central government. The mark of a civilised society is how well it treats those who are unable to look after themselves. We will ensure the council steps up to that challenge.

Labour will:

39. Strengthen the NHS and social care system, not privatise it. We will call a summit of all interested organisations to discuss how to ensure we can provide the best quality care to the widest number of people.
40. Continue to oppose the downgrading of Poole A&E and closure of Christchurch Community Hospital and campaign for a full service there as well as at Bournemouth.
41. Work with the CCG and local GP practices to investigate ways in which waiting times can be reduced.
42. Commit the council to signing Unison's Ethical Care Charter, and as part of which we would only commission care services from companies paying the real living wage and ensuring the highest possible standards of staff training.

43. Expand a Deferred Payment Scheme to those facing residential and nursing home costs, which would recoup the cost of care fees after any property has been sold. This means no-one will pay for residential or nursing care while they are alive.
44. Review the entire social care system to look at widening the number of older and disabled people that are eligible for support, ensuring that services are strategically planned and organised to cut down on wasteful and unnecessary journeys. As part of this we will look to end the use of 15 minute (or less) visits for all home care services and consider the provision of a minimum package (of a set number of hours) of free home care support to all in need.
45. Carry out proper investigation to ensure care providers that bid for contracts are suitable in relation to quality of services and financial stability and bring back home care services into local authority control as and when contracts come up for renewal.
46. Sign the National Pensioners Convention's Dignity Code which outlines how older people should be treated in care and encourage all commissioned service providers to adopt its key principles.
47. Improve the support, advice and information given to all potential care users, and in particular self-funders who are currently overlooked by the local authority and investigate services for carers, with a view to providing more practical support - including respite services.
48. Look at expanding the trips and falls prevention service, meals on wheels provision and use of the Better Care Fund to expand the provision of equipment and adaptations to keep older and disabled people safely in their homes for as long as possible.
49. Work with local charities, social care providers and others to publish an action plan to ease loneliness.
50. Examine the benefits and feasibility of intergenerational care facilities with care being provided on the same site bringing older and younger people together,
51. Continue to press the Government, through the Local Government Association for additional ring-fenced funding for local government to provide vital social care services beyond short-term additional money through the council tax.
52. Support the integration of health and social care services at a local level and will work with the NHS and care providers to oversee a smooth transition.

53. Take the local authority's public health duties very seriously, and address economic, social and environmental health inequalities through programmes to tackle alcohol and drug misuse, obesity, unsafe communities, suicide and mental health, as well as encouraging greater levels of fitness among the population, improved child development and targeted support for young families and isolated older people.

Building stronger communities

Local residents have a right to feel safe and secure in their communities, but cuts to the police and fire services, along with the closure of many youth facilities and other services that support families in times of need put a greater strain on law and order. Labour supports a different approach; one that invests in communities and works with them to find solutions to the problems they face.

Labour will:

54. Support community policing and continue to oppose any further cuts to the number of police stations, police officers, Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) and civilian staff. In particular, we will look to target attention on the area's drug problem and its link to crime.
55. Fight any further cuts to local fire and rescue services.
56. Develop a Women's Safety Charter along with bars and nightclubs to ensure staff act in a responsible and supportive manner, including promoting the "Ask for Angela" initiative. Labour will also protect funding for victims of domestic abuse and change programmes for perpetrators of domestic abuse in order to break the cycle.
57. Draw up a programme of investment to encourage improved parks, sports facilities for all, and especially children's play areas.
58. In discussion with the Royal Mail, Communication Workers Union (CWU) and the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, open discussions to find the best ways of maintaining the existing number of Post Office outlets and serving those who need the services the most.
59. Work to overturn the current policy of closing the vast majority of public toilets in the area and ensure the provision of 24-hour conveniences.
60. Review the use of council owned beach huts to make sure they are available at affordable prices for local residents.
61. Create a dedicated arts centre with studio and workshop space, alongside hubs for those seeking to work in the creative industries.
62. Support the introduction of voting at 16 and seek to enfranchise voters using technology wherever possible. We will also look at the feasibility of webcasting council meetings to increase participation in democracy.

63. Guarantee that every one of our councillors will hold regular surgeries at least once a month, offer a pledge to answer constituents' queries within a set time limit and find alternative ways of communicating with local residents.
64. Establish new Community Panels open to all residents that build on the existing Community Area Forums/Committees across the area who can be asked for their views on the council's activities and wider public services. In particular, we will also look at ways to ensure that the council seeks the views of under-represented groups and those directly affected by any proposed measures they are seeking to introduce.
65. Encourage membership of trade unions in the area in recognition of the important role they play in improving services, benefitting the local economy and protecting livelihoods.
66. Support the development of a new stadium for AFC Bournemouth in conjunction with the proper involvement of the local community.

Towards a greener environment

Labour is concerned about climate change and the effect it is having on our local environment. We recognise that there is a need for the new council to commit to signing the Earth Charter and take a lead on these issues, especially in areas of recycling, the use of renewal energy and reducing the amount of plastics in key areas such as parks and beaches. Labour believes we all have a responsibility to protect and nurture what we have for future generations to enjoy.

Labour will:

67. Recognise that climate change means that sea levels could rise and there will be the erosion of beaches and other valuable coastal habitats. Without mitigating measures there will be changes to the beach which are likely to negatively affect tourism. Labour will address this.
68. Establish a local energy co-operative to obtain cheaper and the most sustainable energy for the people of this area.
69. Oppose any local plans for fracking.
70. Ensure the laws around marine diesel are strictly enforced to protect the harbours in Poole and Christchurch.
71. Look at improving food waste collection as a way of creating compost and reducing waste to landfill and carry out a financial assessment into the cost of reintroducing free garden waste green bin collections.
72. Prioritise and support locally based fishing that is small-scale and sustainable (such as the recent certification of a sustainable Manila Clam fishery in Poole harbour) and support Studland Bay becoming a Marine Protected Area.

73. Acknowledge that air pollution in many locations far exceeds recommended levels at many times of the day. Labour will find a solution that is more sustainable, including the use of greater public transport, dedicated cycle lanes and a long-term strategy of replacing diesel buses and Public Service Vehicles with clean alternatives such as electric or hydrogen ones.
74. Use solar and other forms of alternative energy to provide 100% renewable energy for all council buildings.
75. Introduce bee corridors, wild flower meadows and more tree planting to encourage populations to thrive.
76. Review the current scheme for the provision of allotments to make more available to local residents and open discussions with local residents regarding the provision and maintenance of community gardens.
77. Pilot a deposit based recycling schemes in beach-front outlets on cans, plastic bottles and other larger goods, as well as working with businesses to provide non-plastic alternatives to glasses and straws.
78. Introduce weekly food waste collections during the summer months.
79. Oppose potential damaging activities to the protected areas around Poole Bay and Purbeck – such as further oil exploitation (such as the Colter (98/11-E) Appraisal Well) or up-scaling of activities at Wytch Farm on the edge of Poole Harbour.
80. Ensure all public footpaths and rights of way are kept open and fully accessible to all.
81. Maintain bans on bloodsports that impact on any council owned land and oppose the culling of badgers, which is almost unanimously considered to be scientifically flawed.
82. Ensure restaurants and food outlets are held responsible for cleaning their external access.
83. Increase the number of dog bins available and work with responsible dog owners to campaign for zero tolerance of dog mess on our pavements.
84. Investigate creating a new re-use and repair outlet for local people to fix and maintain their appliances, furniture and other household items.
85. All areas within the conurbation must be treated with the same respect and high level of service in respect of their street environment, covering items such as street cleaning, lighting and the maintenance of green spaces.
86. Campaign to ensure all publicly invested money (including local-government pension schemes) are in ethical and environmentally sound funds, and ensure any future investment from local government also meets these standards. We will also ensure that all council decisions are subject to an environmental impact assessment before being introduced, to ensure action taken by the authority does not damage our local area.

Better transport services

Congestion, pollution and delay are now part of everyday life for anyone trying to travel around our conurbation. We need to find a solution that involves improved public transport, greener travel plans and an integrated transport system. This will mean working with the public and employers to encourage increased use of public transport, greater car sharing, and the development of more work hubs and home working.

Labour will:

87. Conduct a feasibility study to investigate alternative methods of transport across the conurbation; part of which will include holding a high level conference involving key players to look at how to improve the area's transport links.
88. Support a fully integrated public transport system and push for the retention of reasonably timed connecting rail/bus services by working with the two bus companies operating in the area to increase services in less served areas, develop new commuter routes, create a fairer fares policy and encourage more long-term use of the bus network. This will include having direct routes from one end of the council area to another.
89. Work towards ensuring that no major changes to rail or bus services are implemented without first seeking the opinion and consent of the very passengers affected by any proposed changes.
90. Recognise that the vast majority of roadworks are caused by utility companies and cause major disruption to local people going about their daily lives. Labour will therefore look at ways in which more stringent controls and fines can be placed on these private companies to keep transport disruption to a minimum. We will also encourage more work to be carried out at night to keep disruption to a minimum.
91. Secure an effective park and ride scheme to ease congestion across the conurbation.
92. Consult on extending the introduction of 20mph zones in residential areas to keep pedestrians safe.
93. Clamp down on suspect car parking operators, with a view to taking car park management services back into local authority control.
94. Remove additional local authority administrative charges on registered disabled drivers.
95. Support the continuation and improved frequency of train services through Hinton Admiral, Christchurch, Pokesdown, Bournemouth, Branksome, Parkstone, Poole and Hamworthy, as well as maintaining the frequency of Cross Country services that currently serve Bournemouth.

96. Labour also fully supports the principle of keeping a guard on all trains that serve our stations and through the Local Government Association we will press rail operators to remove any plans to reduce this provision.
97. Introduce an improved pavement and pothole repair service with a maximum time within which the work should take place.
98. Investigate installing more electric car charging points in the area and consider providing free parking spaces for electric or hybrid cars.
99. Oppose fare increases on the Poole-Swanage ferry and investigate ways in which the service can be better operated in the interests of local people and visiting tourists, rather than simply shareholders.
100. Appoint a new Cycling Champion, so that the views of cyclists can be heard and more people are encouraged to cycle safely and responsibly. We will also review the current provision of cycle lanes because some are neither safe nor appealing to new cyclists. We will work to identify areas for off road cycle paths, away from traffic, and separate to pedestrian areas, to ensure travelling by bicycle, or walking, are safe and environmentally sound ways to travel.