



Stockton Council Labour Group Manifesto 2015-2019

*Working hard for the people of Stockton, Billingham, Thornaby
Yarm, Norton, Eaglescliffe, Ingleby Barwick and the Villages*

Opportunity and fairness for all



Labour Manifesto for the Local Elections in the Borough of Stockton on Tees 2015 - 2019



Labour Group Manifesto for Stockton-on-Tees Council 2015-2019

Vision

Our vision is for the people of Stockton on Tees to enjoy a local economy providing jobs for everyone; a better quality of life; better health and well-being; and a great place to live. We are committed to leading a council that provides quality services, with good financial management to ensure value for money; and strongly supports the most vulnerable in our society, while delivering opportunity and fairness for all.

How we will deliver our Vision: Manifesto 2015-2019

This manifesto sets out our priorities and the key pledges a Labour council will make to the nearly 200,000 people living in the borough of Stockton on Tees.

Our priorities are:

- **Jobs, regeneration and a local economy that works for everyone**
- **A better place and environment**
- **Good health, well-being and opportunities for everyone**
- **Fairness for all**

Our key pledges

The following pages set out what we will do to achieve this. Our key pledges include:

- Create more than 1,000 new jobs through more businesses locating to Northshore and Stockton Town Centre
- Secure 2,500 jobs including a major apprenticeship programme for young people, attracting new green tech businesses, continuing to regenerate town and neighbourhood centres, and supporting the decarbonisation of our vital petro-chemical and process sectors
- Provide more and better homes including working with housing providers to build 2,500 new homes over the next four years including 100 affordable homes each year; extra care for older residents; bring 300 empty properties back into use; and improve the private rented sector
- Deliver our Green Vision including continued weekly general refuse collections while improving recycling; providing great parks and green spaces; and reducing council, domestic and industrial carbon emissions
- Put Stockton on the map as an outstanding place for arts, cultural and sporting activities and opportunities, and for people to enjoy year-round exciting events and festivals
- Safeguard our vulnerable adults and children in our borough from harm, and give them opportunities for a better future by investing and targeting resources to help those most in need
- Develop more services to meet the changing needs of our residents including for those with dementia, autism, and mental health problems; people leaving hospital after treatment; carers and those experiencing or at risk of domestic abuse
- Improve public health, life expectancy and physical exercise rates and reduce inequalities across our borough by targeted and early intervention activity and affordable active leisure and sports opportunities
- Tackle poverty including reducing fuel poverty by making more homes warmer; providing alternative finance and emergency support options to loan sharks and payday loan companies; and supporting communities to play a bigger role in improving their local areas
- Value the public sector and its workforce and lead a council that delivers quality services, manages its finances well, pays a Living Wage, and provides real value for money

What we have achieved.....delivering on our aims 2011-2015

The Labour-led Stockton Council has strived to make a real difference to the people we serve since elected in 2011.

Our annual budget has been cut by £52 million a year by the Conservative-LibDem government. That's £270 less per person, per year, we can spend on delivering quality services to residents; working to improve the economy; and protecting the most vulnerable.

People of all ages in our borough have been hit hard by many Tory policies which have targeted us in the North East and those most in need. They include the hated Bedroom Tax; the unfair benefits sanctions; end of Education Maintenance Allowance and trebling of university tuition fees. The North East suffers the highest unemployment rate in the UK; and 19.4% of the region's 16-24 year olds are not in education, employment or training.

Tory-Libdem Coalition decisions have affected people's quality of life, with real-terms cuts to the NHS, Police, education, social care and many other public service budgets.

Despite these massive cuts, we have worked hard to deliver the priorities we identified in 2011. By managing the finances effectively, we have been able to continue to invest for the future and deliver high quality services that people value.

During the past five years we have delivered on our aims including:

- Transforming our town centres through private-public partnerships to regenerate Billingham town centre and Stockton High Street, following the success of Thornaby town centre
- Fighting fuel poverty by securing £15 million investment to provide free external wall insulation to 2,500+ homes through the GoWarm partnership
- Making Stockton a safer place with a 7% reduction in overall crime from 2010 – 2014
- Regenerating areas including Mandale, Hardwick, Parkfield, Town Centre and Swainby Road and developing more than 640 affordable new homes for rent or sale since May 2011
- Developing new, better Council facilities for residents including customer service centres and keeping our libraries open and improving them
- Better care for older people including building two new Extra Care homes in Thornaby and Billingham ; and transforming the Halcyon Centre in Thornaby to include modern services for people living with dementia
- Investing in the arts and leisure and sports facilities - including festivals, events and our parks - to give local people outstanding culture on their doorstep, and attract visitors to boost our economy

- Achieving even greater value for money including £11m+ savings by sharing administrative services - and keeping them in the public sector
- Bringing looked after children back into their home borough, where they belong, to give them the best start in life we can

Jobs, regeneration and a local economy that works for everyone

Stockton and the North East as a whole has suffered most under the Tory-led government, with dramatic cuts in jobs and real wages, and rises in unemployment amongst our young people and unfair zero-hour contracts.

A Labour council for Stockton on Tees will continue to fight for local people. We will work with businesses and other bodies to attract new employers and make the case for our borough as the place to invest.

We must fight to keep and grow our powerhouse industrial sector in the face of global competition. A skilled workforce, good conditions to do business and live, and local authorities that are committed to the sector are vital. We know that the region as a whole must work together to make the case for the Tees Valley to these multinational companies and we will do that as a council, through Tees Valley Unlimited and a Combined Authority.

At the same time, we know Stockton needs more small businesses and we must help local people start up and expand here.

And we must fight to give our young people the decent opportunities to learn and work that the Coalition government is cruelly denying them.

We pledge to:

- Create more than 1,000 new jobs through more businesses locating to Northshore and Stockton Town Centre
- Secure 2,500 jobs including a major apprenticeship programme for young people, attracting new green tech businesses, continuing to regenerate town and neighbourhood centres, and supporting the decarbonisation of our vital petro-chemical and process sectors
- Create more than 400 proper apprenticeships and traineeships in local industry and businesses, within Stockton Council and other employers, to give young people more opportunities and essential skills for their futures
- Further develop Stockton Town Centre, including bringing The Globe back into use as one of the most important live venues in the region; attracting a new hotel; supporting new businesses by continuing the 50% business rate reduction for previously empty properties; and helping start-up retailers through the Enterprise Arcade
- Embrace new technologies and opportunities by supportive planning and economic development policies

- Develop a potential large-scale industrial heating network that is unique in the UK, to cut energy costs in large buildings and factories, by using waste heat and energy from our energy-intensive industries
- Continue to improve all our town centres and work with partners to rejuvenate neighbourhood shopping centres
- Ensure all council contracts and permitted housing development includes a minimum of 20% local people employed to deliver the work
- Help develop and grow more new small businesses especially in the technology and service sectors through dedicated Economic Development support from Stockton Council and developing facilities such as the new Innovation Centre on Northshore
- Bring business, FE and Sixth Form colleges, universities and schools together so education and training on offer to people of all ages matches what local industry needs and gives young people the chance to flourish in good local jobs
- Open and support the new Skills Academy in Billingham, giving young people the chance to learn vocational skills and gain qualifications leading to jobs and long term careers
- Support Tees Valley Unlimited in its role of attracting new employers into the area, and winning major government, European and private sector investment
- Use the powers of a new Combined Authority to provide better transport, including options for train travel around, to, and from, the Tees Valley

A better place and environment

We want Stockton on Tees to be a borough where the environment makes a difference to people's quality of life, drives green business growth and helps deliver social justice.

Continuing to regenerate the borough will provide better housing and give people more options to buy or rent affordable homes. We will improve standards in the private rented sector, tackling rogue landlords and nuisance tenants. We will develop housing where there is increased demand - for older people, single, and young people – and also family homes, as our population continues to grow.

We are committed to reducing carbon emissions alongside helping our powerhouse petrochemicals, process and other industries. Stockton can become a centre for attracting investment in new, low-carbon sectors, renewable energy, and other green-tech industries and jobs

Great parks and green spaces, highly-valued refuse and recycling services and innovative community energy solutions are also high on our list.

We will continue to focus council teams on tackling antisocial behaviour so people can live in safe and cohesive communities.

We pledge to:

- Continue weekly general refuse collections - as requested by a large number of residents - while improving recycling and sending less than 1% of household waste to landfill
- Focus our teams on areas suffering the most antisocial behavior, and work with residents and other agencies to intervene
- Continue to regenerate neighbourhoods across the borough including Victoria estate
- Bring 300 empty homes back into use
- Work with partners to build 2500+ new homes - including more than 500 affordable homes for local people - prioritising 'brownfield' sites and doing all we can to encourage developers to build on them
- Improve private rented housing; making landlords more accountable and work with public services, and improving living conditions for tenants
- Work with housing associations to provide more one bedroom accommodation and specialist Extra Care homes for older people

- Maintain the Safer Stockton Partnership and continue working closely with the Police to ensure Stockton remains the safest place in the Tees Valley
- Build a crematorium and memorial facilities so local peoples' loved ones can be cremated in our Borough
- Work with partner agencies to build flood defences for communities affected by Lustrum Beck flooding and tidal flooding at the Clarences
- Improve our road networks including turning Myton Way in Ingleby Barwick into a dual carriageway
- Deliver our Green Vision
- Maintain our great parks - such as John Whitehead, Preston and Ropner - and green spaces, improve Littleboy Park in Thornaby, and involve local communities in developing and caring for these and our countryside parks
- Cut the Council's own carbon emissions by a further 5% by the end of 2016 and 21% by 2020, including replacing street lights with low energy LED lighting - aiming to save £1.8 million per year and cut energy use
- Help reduce domestic and industrial carbon emissions across the borough
- Lead a council that delivers quality services, manages its finances well and provides real value for money

Good health, well-being and opportunities for everyone

We believe Stockton Council and its partners can make a real, positive difference to people's lives. This means closing the gaps in people's health across different parts of the borough, and giving everyone the chance to enjoy the best health, well-being and opportunities possible.

By striving for the best services for everyone, and targeting work on those most in need, we will make best use of council resources. We aim to be innovative and focused on helping our residents achieve their potential. Stockton on Tees offers many great things to people and we want to do more.

We want people to be able to enjoy the best arts, leisure and sporting activities on their own doorstep. And at the same time we will provide outstanding events for residents to enjoy, and to attract visitors into our borough.

- Recognise our changing demographics and ensure older people receive the attention and services they need, including specialist support for people with dementia
- Support our outstanding cultural and leisure organisations in the borough, such as ARC, SIRF, Tees Active and Preston Park Museum to provide great arts, sports and leisure opportunities for all
- Develop more opportunities for those with learning and physical disabilities and mental health problems
- Build a brand new community facility including a library and swimming pool in Ingleby Barwick
- Keep our children's centres open and make sure NHS health visitors are based in them to bring health services and support closer to communities
- Give people including older people the opportunity to retain their independence through housing, use of personal budgets, and support tailored to their needs
- Open more small, local children's homes so our most vulnerable children can have the care and support they deserve and the opportunities that through no fault of their own they have been denied
- Increase participation in arts, sports and leisure activities, reaching out to people who find it hardest to access opportunities
- Support cultural events and activities and develop exciting new opportunities that bring national recognition to Stockton, enabling local people to enjoy world class experiences
- Continue to ensure cultural activity helps achieve our goals around health and wellbeing for all ages, learning and skills development and a vibrant local economy

- Work with voluntary and community groups and social enterprises to develop high quality support services that meet local needs
- Introduce a new, enhanced school nursing service
- Fight for a new 21st century hospital bringing the best healthcare facilities to the people of Stockton on Tees
- Work with all our schools through Campus Stockton to raise standards
- Support local food growing and community gardening projects
- Encourage walking and cycling with better connections and access between our green spaces and programmes to boost physical activity

Fairness for all

We believe in equal opportunity for everyone in our borough. There are many diverse areas within Stockton on Tees and it's our aim to give everyone the best services, life chances and opportunities possible.

Local people have been hit unfairly by the Tory-LibDem government. And the government is continued to assault our quality of life and opportunity. Stockton Council is suffering the second biggest percentage cut to its budget of any area in England in 2015-16. The council has been handed a 16.2% drop in funds from government. More than £50 million has been cut from our annual funding by the Coalition since 2011.

Despite this continued unfair attack on the people of Stockton on Tees, we will aim to make fairness central to all we do. We pledge to:

- Reduce poverty by taking action in our most disadvantaged wards including improving housing, continuing our 'Troubled Families' scheme, public health initiatives and more personalised support
- Support the borough's Tees Credit Union including opening an office in the centre of Stockton to offer an alternative to payday lenders and loan sharks
- Continue our work against fuel poverty by insulating more people's homes to make them warmer and reduce their energy bills
- Tackle rogue landlords to give people in private rented accommodation better living conditions
- Help those people hit hardest by Tory 'welfare reform' through targeted help including emergency funding and access to benefits they are entitled to, including those working, unemployed and with disabilities
- Stand against domestic abuse in all its forms and provide more support and services for those experiencing it, and help the Police prosecute perpetrators
- Work with our diverse communities to meet their needs and promote an equal, multi-cultural society that recognises our values of fairness and opportunities for all
- Provide better local services for those of all ages with autism
- Reduce health inequalities with targeted support in the most disadvantaged areas such as the Fairer Start scheme to boost 0-3 year olds' development and diet, working in partnership with the local NHS
- Continue to run high quality early years and family support services so pre-school children get the best start in life

- Recognise the vital work of carers and give them the breaks and opportunities to improve their own independence, careers and quality of life
- Work hard to constantly improve education for all children, regardless of the type of school, and attempts by the Tory government to create a 'two tier' system that leaves some children behind
- Give people a real voice in what Stockton Council does, including children and young people through our Youth Parliament, and introducing new ways of listening to our residents and their concerns
- Commit Stockton Council to being a Living Wage employer and encourage other public and private sector organisations to do the same
- Reward the unique contribution of our Armed Forces and ensure they can access the services and support they deserve
- Value the work our voluntary, community and social enterprise sector does to help people across the borough, and continue to invest to help sustain a vibrant third sector