



# Stockton on Tees Borough Council Labour Group Manifesto 2023-2027

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

**Creating a Fairer Borough**



# A Fairer Stockton on Tees

Inequality is a challenge in the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees. Some members of our community have a poorer start, have more difficult lives and die earlier than others purely because of where they live, or the circumstances into which they are born. We have affluent areas alongside areas of deprivation. Nine of our wards are in the 10% most deprived wards in the country. There is a gap of 21 years in average life expectancy amongst men between the most and least deprived wards. We're committed to fighting this disparity and making sure more people enjoy a healthy and happy life here. We will develop a new approach to tackling inequality in the borough and to ensure that we deliver targeted support and help to those currently living in poverty to improve their outcomes, including around physical and emotional health and wellbeing, income, housing and education.

We have not just discovered this and have taken many measures to try and mitigate and remove these, not least by introducing a Fairer Stockton-on-Tees Strategy to provide focus to our actions and influencing those of our partners.

However, our local inequalities have been made worse by an accumulation of national Tory policies over the last 13 years, not least the loss of £73 million of annual funding to our Council. Also, the Covid pandemic had a greater impact on more disadvantaged people and widened the inequality gap.

As resources for services continue to fall in real terms as a direct result of Tory policies, we need to step up the gears and have a sharper focus on addressing these inequalities in all that we do as a Council. Whilst we need to do things for all our communities, we need to do more where it is most needed. This Manifesto provides the basis for how we will do this.

## 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 tackling inequality.

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

## How we will deliver our Vision: Manifesto 2023-2027

Our priorities are to:

- **Protect the most vulnerable**
- **Grow our economy and create prosperity for everyone**
- **Tackle inequality and help people to be healthier**
- **Provide a better and safer place and environment**

## **Protect the most vulnerable**

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 government and the government has continued to assault our quality of life and opportunity. More than £73 million has been cut from our annual funding by the Conservative Government since 2010. Despite this continued unfair attack on the people of Stockton on Tees, we will aim to make fairness central to all we do.

## **Growing our local economy to create prosperity for everyone**

Stockton and the North East as a whole has suffered most under the Tory 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 will ensure that residents of the borough have the opportunities to develop the skills, creativity and ambition required to fill the high value jobs growing investment will create.

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 Combined Authority.

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

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

## **Tackle inequality and help people to be healthier**

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.

## A Better and Safer 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.

### Our Key Pledges

1. Help those hardest hit by the Cost of Living crisis.
2. Campaign for more police on the street and work with partners to tackle drug and alcohol related crime and anti-social behaviour in the community.
3. Deliver more affordable and social housing.
4. Support the campaign for a new North Tees Hospital
5. Work with other Tees Valley Councils to provide better public transport
6. Complete the planned improvements to all our Town Centres/High Streets.

## **Our specific pledges**

### **Housing:**

- Develop the plans linked to the Fairer Stockton-on-Tees framework.
- Complete the redevelopment of the Sycamores estate.
- Strive to deliver more affordable and social housing.
- Seek opportunities to build Council housing.
- Implement selective licensing within Stockton Town Centre and Mandale & Victoria and focus on improving private sector housing standards throughout the borough.

### **Economic Growth:**

- Attract business investment into the borough through Place Branding Campaign and ensure the borough's residents benefit from such investment.
- Develop the Employment and Training Hub, including the establishment of Community facilities to support residents accessing employment opportunities and required skills.
- Increase the availability of employment land to support business investment and expansions.
- Promote social value responsibilities to our businesses and suppliers.

### **Regeneration:**

- Demolish the Castlegate Centre and create the Stockton Waterfront Development including a new leisure and library facility.
- Actively pursue funding opportunities to deliver redevelopment of Billingham Town Centre.
- Deliver improvements to Thornaby including demolishing derelict properties, delivering improvements to the Pavilion, and improving cycleways.
- Deliver improvements to Yarm Town Centre, Preston Park and cycleways in the south of the borough.
- Actively pursue further investment and development opportunities within all Town Centres.

### **Environment**

Using the Carbon reduction and sustainability strategy, we will

- Aim to be net zero for greenhouse gas emissions by 2032.
- Address the climate crisis issues.
- Protect and enhance the natural environment.
- Influence others where we can by setting an example.
- Improve air and water quality.
- Tackle/reduce fuel poverty by continuing to make many more homes warmer where funding allows.
- Improve recycling utilizing better receptacles.
- Commit to reducing carbon emissions in the borough.

### **Transport:**

- To continue to improve our road networks, cycleways and walkways.
- Work with other Tees Valley councils to continue provide better public transport.
- Increase the number of electric vehicles charging points around the borough.

## Adult Services

- We will work with partners to develop specialised housing and appropriate care and support to ensure that local people do not have to leave the borough.
- We will continue to work with shops and businesses across the borough to make our town centres Dementia Friendly.
- To enhance the New Deal for Carers including informal carers.
- Continue to drive up standards in Home Care and Care Homes in order that all providers are rated Good or Outstanding.

## Health

- Tackle health inequalities across the borough, particularly the issues of smoking, alcohol abuse & obesity.
- Deliver the action plan ensuing from the 2022-2028 Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- Address the impact of Long COVID on our residents.
- Reduce loneliness and improve emotional wellbeing in our communities.
- Ensure we have a strong voice in the new NHS bodies.
- Support the campaign for a new North Tees hospital.
- Work with the NHS to facilitate *Health on the High Street* facilities.

## Leisure

- Deliver new swimming pools & active leisure facilities in Stockton and Thornaby Town Centres.
- Create a new urban park with event space on the former Castlegate site.
- Continue to animate all our towns with a rich variety of events to suit all tastes.
- Host the Thrift Festival in Billingham
- Support the Forum Theatre.

## Culture

- Build a new exhibition space and improve visitor facilities at Preston Park Museum and Grounds.
- Celebrate the Stockton & Darlington Railway Bicentenary with events to be remembered.
- Maintain a network of libraries to provide access in all our townships and continue outreach via a new mobile library bus.
- Re-provide Stockton Central Library with an improved facility within Stockton Waterfront Development.

## Children and Young People

- School standards maintained and improved.
- Reducing the need for care.
- More local provision for children in care.
- Children with SEND in mainstream schools wherever possible.
- Better services for children with emotional health and wellbeing needs.
- Better early years communication.



## Access and Community Safety

- Prioritise allocating permanent funding for the current 12 temporary Civic Enforcement Officers to ensure an increased enforcement presence throughout the borough
- Work with the police and other key partners to support the multi-agency approach to reducing both serious violent crime and drug and alcohol related crime in our communities.
- Stand up for those hit hardest by benefits changes and the cost of living crisis by continuing to support Stockton District Advice & Information Service, the Council's Welfare Rights Unit and the work of the Community Partnerships and Infinity Partnership.
- Lend a helping hand and a friendly ear to those in our communities who are isolated or lonely.

## Key Achievements 2019-2023

- ✓ Supported residents, particularly the more vulnerable, and businesses during the COVID pandemic
- ✓ Maintained weekly household waste collection throughout
- ✓ Funding half term activity programmes and healthy meals for over 1150 children
- ✓ Providing significant investment in CCTV, safer streets work plus additional Enforcement Officers to combat crime and anti-social behaviour
- ✓ Supported the work of voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations to help people across the Borough
- ✓ Achieved the Ministry of Defence's Gold Award for our work in supporting those who serve or have served in the armed forces
- ✓ Maintained a network of 9 libraries across the Borough, including a new one within the new state of the art Ingleby Barwick Leisure Centre
- ✓ Opened the Globe in 2021, proving to be a big hit with varied audiences
- ✓ Reinstated SIRF, the riverside Fireworks Display, Stockton Sparkles and other events after lockdown
- ✓ Supported over 140 street parties for the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee
- ✓ Delivered affordable housing in brownfield sites of Alma Street, Queen's Park North and the Sycamores (ex Victoria Estate)
- ✓ Taking on over 100 apprentices in all sections of the Council
- ✓ Repurposing and redeveloping sites and buildings in all our Town Centres/High Streets for the benefit and enjoyment of all our township communities
- ✓ Provided Council Welfare Rights and funded SDAIS (CAB) advice and support to the many facing the cost of living crisis
- ✓ Introduced and extended a Local Council Tax Support Scheme resulting in over 10,000 of our poorest residents not paying any Council Tax
- ✓ Reduced and frozen Councillor Allowances since 2013/14 despite Independent Panel recommendations for increases.