

Labour



A Prosperous Swindon For All

*Swindon Labour
Manifesto 2011*

The Critical Agenda Swindon needs

Foreword from the Leader of the Swindon Labour Group

Since the 2010 General and Local elections, the political landscape of Swindon has changed. Both in Swindon's North and South Conservatives have been elected MPs and despite Labour gaining two seats from the Tories, the Conservative party still holds the lion's share of Council seats. Since the 2010 elections your Labour Councillors have reflected, they have helped facilitate local campaigns organised by local people against the Tory & Liberal Democrat cuts and they have listened to Swindon residents.

What we have found is that the vast majority of Swindon residents are uneasy about their job security and their children's futures, they are anxious about housing, they are concerned about the future of their town and its reputation and they are concerned that fairness is not at the heart of their government and their local Council.

Jobs, Housing, regeneration and fairness are all Labour values and the Swindon Labour Party pledges to address these concerns. With jobs, we will be trying to attract the jobs of the future, using Council-tax payers' money more efficiently in-house, rather than wasting Council-tax payers' money on external consultants and independent bodies outside of the town and we pledge to bring a university to the town. With housing, we aim to make homes in the town more affordable by pushing for further housing developments in conjunction with a Council-house building program. With regeneration, we will establish a clear, understandable plan and will not make the same mistakes of the past and build the white elephants of the future. And with fairness, we will be ensuring that Council-tax payers' money is spent on frontline services by driving out waste and inefficiency.

The Swindon Labour Party's 2011 manifesto is the critical agenda Swindon needs right now, delay would mean lost jobs, lost housing, lost regeneration and lost communities. This is something your Labour Councillors aren't prepared to accept.

The 4 Core Swindon Labour Priorities

- Jobs
- Housing
- Regeneration
- Fairness

Swindon's Economy

Defending Swindon against Thoughtless Cuts

With every job vacancy in Swindon being applied for by 10 unemployed people in certain sections of the town, it is becoming increasingly obvious that Swindon needs jobs not cuts.

However, instead of Swindon Borough Council mitigating the Conservative-led government's cuts to jobs for ordinary Swindon residents, like the scrapping of the Future Jobs Fund that brought 454 jobs to the town, Swindon Borough Council has continued to waste millions of pounds each year on external consultants, conference expenses, hospitality and bottled water.

What's worse is that while Tory-led Swindon Council has been shelling out on these luxuries, they have cut 238 Full-Time Equivalent employees, with cuts in excess of £6 million to its Adult Social Care Budget.

The Swindon Labour Party believes this neither meets the jobs nor fairness test.

A Labour-led Swindon Borough Council would:

1. Implement a line by line review of the Swindon Borough Council revenue budget before our first budget round in administration, treating every penny of Council-tax payers' money with the respect it needs
2. Freeze the Council-tax in the 2011/12 and 2012/13 financial years
3. Work with industry and commerce to represent Swindon's business community, in order to secure low prices of goods for the Council and greater funding to protect vulnerable people
4. Vociferously oppose Central Government cuts, which are costing jobs in the town and are disadvantaging the poor and the vulnerable

Swindon's Young

Training Swindon's Youth for the Jobs of the Future

Three of Central and Local Government's key priorities must be to train our town's young for the jobs of the future, ensure that there are jobs in our town for our current young people and support our vulnerable young people and families. The Tory-led government and Tory-led Council have failed in delivering any of these priorities.

They have failed to train our young for the jobs of the future, by cutting funding to 26 of Swindon's schools and failing to deliver apprenticeships to our town, with Swindon having one of the worst apprenticeship levels in the country.

The Tory-led Council and Tory-led government have failed with delivering jobs for our current youth, with Swindon having one of the worst levels of youth unemployment in the South West and our Future Jobs Fund being scrapped, which cost Swindon's youth 454 jobs.

And the Tory-led Council has failed to support vulnerable young people and families, by cutting Swindon's SureStart funding by 20% and hiking up fees of Council services, which are mostly relied on by Swindon's disadvantaged young people and families.

The Swindon Labour Party believes this neither meets the jobs nor fairness test.

A Labour-led Swindon Borough Council would:

1. Raise apprenticeships and vocational training up the Council's priority scale, working with both small and large companies in Swindon to ensure much higher levels of apprenticeships in the town than are currently available
2. Prioritise the establishment of a University for Swindon to unlock the talents of local young people
3. Mitigate any cuts being imposed by Central Government on Swindon's SureStart Children Centers
4. Protect vulnerable young people from hikes in charges for Council services, by piloting schemes like the rolling out of free Swindon Cards to all 11-16 year olds

Swindon's Transformation

Being Fair through Efficiency and Accountability

In order for Swindon Borough Council to be fair to its local residents and employees, it needs to prove it can be efficient in the way it spends Council-taxpayers money and fully accountable in the way it decides how Council-taxpayers money is spent.

Tory-led Swindon Council have failed to be efficient in the way it spends Council-taxpayers money, continuing to waste millions of pounds on external consultants, public relations, hospitality and conference expenses, despite Labour's calls to end such wasteful spending.

Tory-led Swindon Council have also failed to be accountable for the way it takes decisions, repeatedly failing to properly consult both the public and even Ward Councillors on key decisions.

A Labour-led Swindon Borough Council would:

1. Cut management expenditure by no less than 30% of current costs, in order to ensure frontline workers are as protected as possible from the Tory-led Government's imposed cuts
2. Support the One Swindon principle of the Council working in partnership with the town's other public sector organisations, in order to drive value for money and better outcomes across Swindon's public sector
3. Create a fully open and transparent Value for Money Committee, so that Council members and Swindon Council-taxpayers' can scrutinise Council spending
4. Look to find political consensus for taking the politics out of Councillors Allowances

Swindon's Care Service

Protecting the Vulnerable

Through Empowerment & Cooperation

When protecting Swindon's most vulnerable people, Swindon Borough Council needs to uphold three core values; Empowerment, Cooperation and quality of care over cost.

Tory-led Swindon Borough Council is failing to deliver any of these vital values.

Tory-led Swindon Borough Council has failed to sufficiently empower its vulnerable care users, by not delivering its personalisation agenda until now. This has meant that, while other local authorities implemented the personalisation agenda in social care when they were receiving funding increases, Swindon Borough Council have had to deliver the personalisation agenda at a time of widespread cuts, thus increasing risks in implementation.

The Tory-led Swindon Borough Council has also failed to properly cooperate and consult with care users in some of its most radical policies, including the formation of a new Social Enterprise.

And the Tory-led Swindon Borough Council continues to value cost and the handing over of social care to the private market, over quality of care. This was exemplified with the Conservative administration's proposed privatisation of the Council's Homecare service, which has been rated an excellent service.

The Swindon Labour Party believes this does not meet the fairness test for Swindon's vulnerable residents.

A Labour-led Swindon Borough Council would:

1. Support the personalised care agenda that the former Labour Government championed
2. Back Multi-stakeholder Care Cooperatives. This model will allow for the engaging of Swindon's Social Care service with users and with frontline staff
3. Support voluntary sector organisations like Dial a Ride and value quality of care over market reforms
4. Promote the Labour Party's *National Care Service*, which will provide home care to all those who need it

Swindon's Housing

Sustaining Swindon's Communities

And addressing the problem

Housing is one of the Swindon Labour Party's key priorities, as we know that this is one of the greatest concerns Swindon residents have.

A good local council and Central Government should be trying to ensure three things on housing. Firstly they should be trying to tackle the growing waiting list for social housing; secondly they should be ensuring that those communities with significant amounts of social housing are stable and cohesive, and, thirdly, they should be looking to make housing more affordable for first-time buyers.

The Tory-led government and Tory-led Swindon Council have failed in providing solutions to any of these challenges.

They have failed to provide sensible solutions to tackle Swindon's growing housing waiting list by cutting the social housing budget by 50%. They have increased anxieties for vulnerable social housing tenants through their housing benefits cuts and the introduction of fixed-term tenancies. And the Tory-led government and Tory-led Council have failed to do anything about the affordability of housing for first-time buyers.

The Swindon Labour Party believes more needs to be done to address Swindon's housing crisis.

A Labour-led Swindon Borough Council would:

1. Oppose the government's housing strategy; which will weaken communities by deregulating the use of HiMOs and introducing fixed-term tenancies; and hit families living in social housing by hiking up social housing rents to 80% of the market level
2. Address Swindon's housing crisis by retaining and increasing the housing stock, with at least 100 new Council houses being built per year, twice as many Council houses being built than currently
3. Address Swindon's housing crisis by introducing a 50% target for affordable housing on new housing developments

4. Help Swindon's struggling first-time buyers into the housing market by piloting schemes that will help reduce the burden on this group.

Such schemes could include; establishing a community land trust to enable private housing to remain affordable; working with housing developers to reduce the cost of housing by guaranteeing sales for those on the waiting list or current tenants with a good rent record and looking to introduce a scheme of mortgage guarantee, enabling the size of deposits to be reduced

Swindon's Regeneration

Bringing the public and Council together to make our town a better place to work, live and play

Regeneration is one of the Swindon Labour Party's key priorities, as we know it is one of the top local issues that residents feel needs to be addressed.

In order for Swindon Borough Council to succeed with regeneration, it needs to have a clear plan for developers on how it would like Swindon's town centre to be regenerated, it needs to make sure there is clear public accountability on how Swindon is being regenerated and it needs to encourage greater regeneration within communities.

Tory-led Swindon Borough Council has failed in delivering any of these points. They have failed to have a clear regeneration plan for the town centre, which has meant that regeneration still hasn't started in any meaningful way; they have failed to give clear public accountability on regeneration, funding an unelected and publicly unaccountable quango to the tune of £760,000 in the last financial year; and they have failed to embrace regeneration schemes that involve local communities.

The Swindon Labour Party believes more needs to be done to address regeneration in our town.

A Labour-led Swindon Borough Council would:

1. Develop a proper and credible plan for the Swindon town centre, providing a clear blueprint for regeneration, including greater consideration of Swindon's railway heritage
2. Review the effectiveness and value for money of the Forward Swindon Regeneration Company and assess the practicalities of Swindon Council having full autonomy over the borough's regeneration and town centre regeneration
3. Give communities a greater power over the regeneration of their areas and allow for smaller scale regeneration developments through initiatives such as a Council Local Development Order, where local business people would not have to immediately comply with planning regulations in order to takeover disused buildings
4. Support Swindon Town Football Club in its ambitions for a new football stadium in the town

Swindon's Transport & Environment

Turning the environmental crisis in to Swindon's economic advantage

In order for Swindon to succeed now and in the future, its local Council must have a high quality strategy on how to meet its local transport needs, it must ensure that the roads in Swindon are safe for motorists and pedestrians and it must develop an environmental strategy that will not only reduce the town's carbon footprint, but will also attract the green industries of the future, in order to bring jobs to the town.

Currently, Tory-led Swindon Borough Council is failing to deliver on all these fronts. They have failed to meet local transport needs, with them doing nothing to alleviate traffic pressures in particular areas, like on Thamesdown Drive; they have failed to ensure that Swindon's roads are safe for motorists and pedestrians, with more and more streets being turned in to rat runs and they have failed to develop any form of environmental strategy, which could bring the jobs of the future to Swindon.

The Swindon Labour Party believes this neither meets the jobs nor fairness test.

A Labour-led Swindon Borough Council would:

1. Support more environmentally ways of using business and household waste, such as through greater use of Waste2Energy plants that can create energy out of local waste, which can then be sold back to the electrical grid
2. Make Swindon a Green Hub for the UK, encouraging and incentivizing green businesses and social enterprises to settle in Swindon, which will bring jobs to the town

We will encourage green organisations to come to Swindon through the development of a "Green Industrial Development Board" and an "Eco Park"

3. Introduce 20mph zones in all communities that want them and on roads that are adjacent to schools in the town
4. Review Swindon Borough Council's road safety strategy to ensure that motorists and pedestrians are as safe as possible. The review will include the need for speed cameras in the town, as well as the prevention of rat runs and potholes

Swindon's Communities

Empowering communities and Building new ones

In order for Swindon Borough Council to be fair to all of its local residents, it needs to give them a greater say over how their Council-taxes are spent, it needs to find a way of attracting and encouraging voluntarism, while not expecting hard-working, Council-tax paying families to do the jobs they expect to be done by their local Council and they need to find new ways of encouraging local communities to improve the areas they live in.

Despite their "Big Society" rhetoric, Tory-led Swindon Borough Council has yet to address any of these points in any meaningful way. They have failed to give communities and families a greater say over how their Council-taxes are spent, with it still being unknown how the vast majority of developers money to the Council is spent; they have failed to encourage and incentivize greater voluntarism from local residents and they have failed to sufficiently engage with Swindon's local communities over ways they can improve their area.

A Labour-led Swindon Borough Council would:

1. Transfer community buildings to community ownership, with strong community support to help ensure trusts are maximising their potential and implementing sound financial management
2. Investigate the possibility of a Council Voluntary Credits Scheme that will reward volunteers through cheaper use of Council facilities and we would look at the feasibility of rewarding voluntarism through the reducing of Council taxes
3. Give loans to communities and community groups to purchase local land and/or derelict buildings, should they wish to
4. Invite community groups to turn in to trusts, so that it would be easier for them to receive grants and loans for community development

Four Swindon Labour Priorities

Jobs

1. Raise apprenticeships and vocational training up the Council's priority scale
2. Make Swindon a Green Hub for the UK, encouraging and incentivizing green businesses and social enterprises to settle in Swindon

Housing

1. Building at least 100 new Council houses per year
2. Helping Swindon's struggling first-time buyers into the housing market by piloting new schemes

Regeneration

1. Develop a proper and credible plan for the Swindon town centre
2. Review the effectiveness and value for money of the Forward Swindon Regeneration Company

Fairness

1. Mitigate any cuts being imposed by Central Government on Swindon's SureStart Children Centers
2. Cut senior management costs by no less than 30% of current costs.

Local Conservative Waste

Waste	Amount
Hospitality and Bottled Water	£51,000
Communications	£400,000
Local Government Bodies	£71,704
External Consultants	£446,039 between April & September 2010
Paid memberships with outside bodies	£110,000
Preventative measures to stop Street Traders trading in the town centre	£20K
Staff travelling, subsistence, conference expenses and other transport	£852,200