

Putting **fairness** first

Local Labour's manifesto for a new term



Contents

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Local Labour's manifesto for a new term

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4

Labour local government
- putting fairness first

8

Local government
- the agent of change

18

Children and young people
- foundations for the future

26

Housing - building decent
homes and strong communities

38

Social care and public
health - enabling social
justice for those in need

44

The environment
- think global, act local

51

Acknowledgements

Labour local government – putting fairness first

By Sir Jeremy Beecham

By the time we won in 1997 Labour was in an unprecedentedly strong position in local government, with record numbers of councillors and record numbers of councils enjoying Labour control.



In May 2010, a new-term Labour Government - or, heaven forbid, an incoming Tory one - will face a dramatically different local government world. The attrition of years and the decline of Labour's national popularity have taken a heavy toll on our strength in the nation's council chambers, with the ranks of Labour councillors reduced by more than half and just over fifty councils Labour-led.

All the more reason, therefore, for the survivors of this dire reversal of fortunes to re-assert what values Labour local government embodies and what difference it seeks to make to the communities it serves. Hence this manifesto - the first to be produced by Labour local government - which is both an attempt at fashioning a blueprint, or red book if you like, for Labour councillors at a time of huge and complex challenges - economic, financial, demographic and environmental - and to influence Labour's national manifesto for a new term.

Next year's elections will pose a stark choice between two fundamentally different approaches to government. On the one hand Labour, deploying the leadership and resources of the state at both national and local levels to promote economic recovery, social justice and environmental well-being. On the other hand a Tory Party content, at best, to let the market lead and the individual and the voluntary sector take the strain, with scant regard to the social consequences.

Nye Bevan famously asked 'why look into the crystal ball when you can read the book?' so it's well to start by consulting a couple of volumes, on Labour and the Tories respectively. For all the inevitable disappointments, misjudgements and occasional downright failures that occur under any government, Labour's record since 1997

has been laudable. From the massive increases in the numbers of teachers, classroom assistants, police officers, nurses and doctors, to the hundreds of children's centres, improved exam results, entrants into further and higher education, apprenticeships, homes brought up to decent standards, children and pensioners lifted from poverty, through to free bus travel for the over 60s, free-eye tests for pensioners, homes insulation programmes, the minimum wage and much else besides, 'the book' tells a story of achievement in every community in line with Labour's enduring values.

And yet, for all the recognition the record has achieved it might as well have been written in invisible ink. People have either been oblivious to, or forgotten, and in any event have accorded no credit to what a Labour government - often in partnership with local Labour councils - has done. And Labour's failure to brand its achievements, compounded at times by its propensity to conceal its more redistributive policies for fear of antagonising The Sun and The Daily Mail has come at a heavy cost.

So the first chapter in the local government, and indeed the national, manifesto, must establish clearly in the public mind what has been achieved, at the level of the nation, the town or county, the constituency and the ward, preferably deploying unimpeachable statistics and third party endorsements in terms to which people can relate. We cannot expect gratitude, but must strive to make people aware of what's at stake.

For the second volume, the Tory story, is still being written. Harking back to the dark and dire days of Thatcher and Major will not be enough, but in any case it's unnecessary. The Tory outriders in local government, the Barnets and

“Now is the time for Labour to set out its local stall, in the context of a set of core national minimum entitlements around the key issues of housing, jobs, education, health, social care and youth provision.”

Hammersmith & Fulhams, give a clear indication of what the resurgent Tory right are capable of - the 'politics of Ryanair', the most basic service possible with any extras at high personal cost, cuts for the voluntary sector they profess to value, the decanting of council tenants and a freeze on affordable or social housing. And their talk of localism is entirely at odds with the diktats to Tory councillors issued by Eric Pickles, and Caroline Spelman's recent fatwa to Tory councils to delay all commercial and housing developments. Equally anathema to genuine localism are the proposal to foist elected mayors on places where the Tory writ doesn't run, and Cameron's misguided enthusiasm for directly elected police commissioners, fragmenting the essential cohesion of policing and local authority services.

Now is the time for Labour to set out its local stall, in the context of a set of core national minimum entitlements around the key issues of housing, jobs, education, health, social care, community safety and youth provision with policies tailored to the different needs of different areas and reflecting the aspirations of local communities, service users, carers, workers and employers and the voluntary sector. There are numerous examples of such policies in the pages that follow, but the key factor that is common to them is the lead role of local councils.

At times since 1997 it seems as if the Labour government has been seduced by siren voices urging the superiority of the private sector and the values of the market, blurring the distinction between 'choice' and personalisation, and between the consumer with rights, and the citizen with both rights and responsibilities. Councils, which received barely a mention in the 1997 manifesto, need to be providers as well as commissioners or regulators of services, and must be ambitious in bringing together partners,

“Taken as a complete package, the ideas in this manifesto could represent a key shift for the Labour Party, returning and re-emphasising our focus to the local design and delivery of services by local politicians for local people.”

local and national, to address the needs of their own communities in ways appropriate to local circumstances. Those needs necessarily transcend the traditional range of local authority services, and may well equally transcend traditional local government boundaries, but councils are uniquely well placed to forge the machinery required to meet the economic social and environmental challenges in ways which maximise the use of scarce financial resources. To paraphrase Bill Clinton's comments to annual conference in 2006, we are the change agents in our areas, with a knowledge and a legitimacy unmatched by anyone else.

So Labour in local government should be pursuing energetically a shared services agenda to drive down costs and improve outcomes across the public sector, including health, skills, justice, further and higher education. It should be demanding better representation, at least, in the governance of those services; lead the way in promoting the better take up of the scandalously underclaimed range of benefits which could make a huge difference to individuals, communities and the local economy; and it should use its trading powers to offer services to the private sector. It should build on the Total Place pilots and multi-area agreements to tackle the problems of planning, transport, waste and business support at the appropriate sub-regional level. And it should ensure that it engages local communities in debating local priorities not merely on the visible level of urban housekeeping, all too often the virtually exclusive focus of local politics, but of the big strategic issues of child and adult social care, climate change, policing, and health inequalities. It should ensure that the local scrutiny function is inclusive, involving other sectors and sections of the community, and is adequately resourced, and reaches out to the public and the local media.

Labour councils will be most anxious to tackle the growing crisis in housing with a greater emphasis on new build of affordable homes, preferably with something akin to the long regretted Parker Morris standards of space and facilities, updated to meet modern environmental concerns. In addition they should be tackling robustly the poorly managed elements in the private rented sector using the powers given by the Labour government, though here some easing of the bureaucratic formalities would be welcome. A major drive to insulate homes and buildings, including those without cavity walls should be rolled out across council areas, contributing to tackling fuel poverty and job creation, as would combined heat and power schemes. Special attention needs to be given, too, to the needs of the elderly through extra care housing schemes, and to releasing family housing now often occupied part year by students by providing purpose built or acquired accommodation for the latter or financial inducements for them to study in their home town.

There is a range of other issues where Labour local government could take a lead - closer collaboration with health to avoid cost-shunting and promote benefit sharing by early intervention in children's services or after care for hospital patients, or piloting alternatives to the expensive and ineffective youth custody system for example (why not councils running secure accommodation or commissioning it from the third sector rather than the prison service?). And apprenticeships and training of young people in local government must be given a high priority.

Taken as a complete package, the ideas in this manifesto could represent a key shift for the Labour Party, returning and re-emphasising our focus to the local design and

delivery of services by local politicians for local people. It seems clear to me that the moment has come for all of us to re-engage with our communities in ways that celebrate the organic link between local action and modern socialism. As we continually strive to define what we stand for into the 21st Century, it would be no bad thing to remember the defining goal of municipal socialists throughout the 19th and 20th centuries: to engage local communities and their representatives in a productive and worthwhile partnership in order to address specific local issues. For the faithful in Labour's ranks, localism has never been an end in itself - it has always been, and remains, a tool to deliver essential social democratic values, whose application quite rightly varies according to place and circumstance.

But whatever the local priorities local government requires a better relationship with central government. The 'central/local partnership' initiated by John Prescott and the 'concordat' signed by Hazel Blears need re-invigorating, and the civil service needs strong political direction to work with and not sideline local councils. John Denham's recent announcement of a joint Parliamentary committee to monitor the balance of power between central and local government is to be applauded; I hope that it is but the beginning of the road to enshrining local government as a legally defined pillar of a rejuvenated British constitution, protecting us from the future whims of bored local government ministers.

Above all, the local government finance system needs overhauling. Council tax benefit needs to be reformed, simplified, with financial eligibility limits updated, the tentative steps to supplement business rates need to be augmented by a phased repatriation of the national non-domestic rates to councils, and an element of assigned

income tax revenues introduced, though there will continue to be a need for an element of equalisation.

Almost all we ask for will cost money. The inevitably constrained condition of the public finances necessitates a debate about national priorities. That is why we have called this manifesto Putting fairness first - we think that this mantra must condition all of our spending proposals for the next parliament and beyond, ensuring that public money is only spent where it promotes social justice and encourages a better life for the overwhelming majority of people in the United Kingdom. Local government has too often in the past been expected to take too great a share of cuts. If virtually everything is up for discussion even lifelong anti-unilateralists like me will question whether billions should be invested in a replacement for Trident, or whether the introduction of ID cards (admittedly not a charge on the taxpayer but a cost to the citizen) could not be deferred.

The task ahead of us as we countdown to the next general election is great. The tasks we will have to undertake after the election will be greater still. Labour councils and councillors have compelling stories to tell about how we can overcome the challenges facing us.

Now is the time for Labour in local government to make its voice heard. 🗣️



Local government - the agent of change

If Labour politicians are to be the change agents of the 21st Century, then local government has to be the main agency of change in any local area.

Councils fulfill many important roles in their areas. They provide community leadership, champion the citizen, deliver and commission services, help create strong neighbourhoods, promote local democracy, and provide a legitimate forum for local political debate.

Councillors fulfill a crucial role in British politics, living and working, as they do, among the people who elect them. They do not spend the working week in Westminster, but in the same villages, towns and cities as their voters. As such, they share the day-to-day experiences of the people who vote for them – transforming local councils from arms of local administration into the vital organs of vibrant communities.

For more than a hundred years Labour local government has rolled out progressive, socialist, policies grounded in the desire to create security, dignity and opportunity for all. To put it crudely, protecting jobs and homes is why most Labour activists get involved with local politics in the first place.

Local Labour is committed to:

- Fairness and greater equality – the community-by-community promotion of social justice
- Collective action by the local state – worthwhile social and economic progress can only be delivered by and on behalf of the whole community
- Continuous economic development as a means of creating sustainable and prosperous communities across the United Kingdom;
- The sovereignty of local political institutions – even when it rubs us up against central government
- Local accountability as the main building block and the guarantor of an engaged and vibrant political system

Local Labour has been at the frontline of the day-to-day battle against recession over the past twelve months. We

have risen to this challenge – and used the opportunity to show how local Labour can meet the twin demands of stimulating the economy and safeguarding society, leading the way towards a more secure and equitable Britain.

We want to see strong, visible and accountable councils as the key drivers for greater devolution. We want to build on the record investment in local government, so that local people can expect first-class services, tailored to their own expectations and needs.

We believe that the solutions to many of the challenges facing our country can be found in the communities in which people live, working in partnership with public services, rather than an expanded central state.

We want to see Labour councils continue to do what they always have done when it comes to planning and prioritising investment and spending in their communities – putting fairness first.

The Labour record:

- Delivered guaranteed three-year funding settlements for all councils in England
- Reduced bureaucracy and red-tape, and removed ringfencing from vital funding – local authorities now negotiate only 35 targets with central government through their Local Area Agreements
- Given local authorities a more meaningful input into local economic expansion through the development of sub-regional partnerships
- Introduced Multi-Area Agreements to promote greater joined-up government across city regions;
- Given the green-light to councils to scrutinise all public money spent within their areas

Local government - the agent of change

Labour is working for Britain's future:

- We will support and develop the role of the local councillor, while seeking to encourage people from a more diverse range of backgrounds to get involved in civic life
- We will give a stronger voice to communities to help shape the places they live and local services
- We are strengthening Regional Development Agencies to produce single regional strategies to help end the disparity in economic development and growth between regions and within regions

1. Local leadership

Leadership of place

Much more so than at any time since before the Second World War, councillors are seen as the leaders of their communities. Councillors act as both place shapers and place shielders, determining the ethos and culture of their areas and influencing the nature of public service delivery within the council boundary. This shift in emphasis has coincided with a growing awareness across all arms of government that existing top-down, silo-bound ways of working cannot begin to provide the outcomes that our people and communities want – and that Labour aspires to.

If anything, the recession has accelerated this process. The onset of the credit crunch in 2008 placed serious financial burdens on the public sector. All public services face a dramatic and immediate drop in funding that is likely to stretch well into the next decade, forcing the public sector to think more strategically about how money is spent on an area-by-area basis.

In the 2009 budget, the Government announced the Total Place initiative, with the principal aim of forging links between public services and identifying where public money can be spent both more effectively and

strategically. Initial audits across the thirteen pilot areas suggest that billions of pounds could potentially be saved by the more effective pooling of resources.

With this incentive, Total Place has already succeeded in breaking down institutional barriers. Across thirteen pilot areas councils are striving to work more organically with the whole gamut of public agencies: the NHS, the Homes and Communities Agency, local home building federations, police authorities and local constabularies, schools, further education colleges, universities, fire & rescue services and regional development agencies.

If Total Place succeeds, then we will be well placed to radically recast local public services, offering joined-up delivery whilst cutting red tape and doing away with unnecessary duplication, with councillors acting as the lynch-pin in any local authority area.

The Labour councils involved in the Total Place pilots are leading the way in showing how political imperatives can be hot-wired into local priorities and delivery mechanisms:

- The Lewisham pilot is looking at how to minimise re-offending and improve work and training opportunities for young people;
- The Greater Manchester pilot is focusing on early intervention, and how greater health and wellbeing can be promoted across the city region;
- The South Tyneside, Gateshead and Sunderland pilot is aiming to deliver safer, stronger and healthier neighbourhoods with an emphasis on more focused youth services.

More effective local scrutiny

The logical next step from Total Place is towards a more effective 'Total Scrutiny' with local authorities given real influence and oversight over all public services operating within their areas. In *Strengthening local democracy* the Government has already proposed that councils' scrutiny

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functions should be beefed up in an attempt to meet its aspiration that 'councillors should become a local point of accountability: the place where citizens can go to question how public money is being spent, how decisions are being made and how services are being delivered.'

We whole-heartedly endorse this proposal. It will give citizens, working with their councillors, greater influence over how public money is spent. This will help broaden local authority scrutiny powers and extend the remit of the councillor as the champion of the local citizen to a wider range of organisations, so that they can better influence local decision making.

This would need to go beyond the simple monitoring of spending by other bodies – it would help solidify councils' place at the centre of local decision-making, challenging other services to improve, and ensuring that the light provided by democratic mandate is shone into every nook and cranny of local public service delivery.

Locally determined leadership

The Labour government has given all councils the choice between mayors and indirectly elected council leaders. It is up to councils to decide what form of leadership works best for them. As such – and unlike the Conservative Party – we will not seek to impose elected mayors on any authority.

2. Local accountability

Most of this manifesto is about the action we need to take, as Labour councillors, to improve the lives of the people we represent. We believe in public services, and in a government able to intervene to counterbalance the market, and to pursue progressive goals in our economy, environment and society.

However, if we are to entrust government with that scale

Local government - the agent of change

of responsibility, the politicians and public bodies involved must be properly accountable to the public. It is our duty to make government open and transparent, and to ensure that elected politicians are answerable for decisions made. Likewise, we want as many decisions as possible to be made with citizens, from individuals tailoring their own personal services, to getting neighbourhoods involved in collective decisions for their area.

The situation has evolved where local services differ significantly in to whom they are accountable. Some are the purview of local councillors, while others remain under the scrutiny of a Cabinet minister, or even an unelected quango. This knot of different, often conflicting, systems has led to a lack of public involvement and satisfaction in public services, and has contributed to a detachment between the governing and the governed.

Simply put, people don't know who to complain to, who to demand action from and who to ask for support. They know they vote for local councillors, but their councillor is often unable to help with a problem regarding, for example, the NHS, policing or increasingly, education. Indeed, each of those three examples have separate and different means of governance.

Why not have a unified system of accountability? Building on the idea of Total Place, it is our ambition to promote a broader, practical and unified idea of accountability that makes the system more accessible to the public and more efficient and effective for those designing and delivering services.

The three key levels of accountability

Any service delivered in a local area should be accountable to locally elected politicians. That doesn't mean exclusively accountable – many services have national as well as local responsibilities, but those elements delivered locally must be subject to local people and their representatives. That is both democratically sound, and practically far more

effective than our current system.

Our model has three levels of accountability – neighbourhood, local and strategic:

The **neighbourhood level** covers those collective services which make an impact on the whole community in a specific area. At this level, accountability is about being visible, asking residents their views, and working with them to improve the area. It could be a public meeting for people to share concerns about recent crimes with the police and their councillors, to demand better pedestrian crossings, or discuss how local green spaces can be improved. In some cases, action could be taken supported by specific ward or neighbourhood budgets, but while decisions to act would often be taken at a higher level, a powerful neighbourhood voice would give people confidence in the system.

The **local level** is where vital decisions are made about individual and collective needs, where local politicians make decisions about where resources are spent, and what the priorities are for an area. Accountability at this level is concerned with the responsibility of an elected member to make tough choices, and the importance of working with other public, private and third sector partners, developing local strategies through the LSP, and directing funding and action through the local area agreement.

While this model is well developed, it will remain restricted until elected councillors are not just allowed to ask questions of the PCT or the police service, but are empowered to demand that services change, as they do not reflect the needs of that place. Scrutiny of policy, performance and finance is vital, as is the involvement of the public and representative groups throughout these processes, and these must continue to be developed. Ultimately, however, if we are able to show the public that they can make a change by voting for local politicians, then those elected must have the power to demand that a public official, whether a chief constable, NHS director or any

other justifies their actions, or agrees to change them.

The local level is also the most appropriate place to consider individual cases, those involving potentially sensitive issues about health, housing or being the victim of crime, for example. Many of these cases are now passed on to MPs, whose combined load of casework has increased many times over in recent years, while many of the issues could be more easily resolved at the local level. What better example could there be of the confusion of local accountability, that so many people now circumvent local structures and contact their MP directly?

The **strategic level** exists to ensure that the actions of local areas add up to a coherent whole, especially with services that have regional or national responsibilities, or provide specialist services for a wider area. For example, at the police authority level, it is correct that the overall strategy of a force is examined, to ensure that local priorities are balanced with duties for serious & organised crime and national security which would not be appropriately considered at the local level. That is why we made a significant contribution to David Blunkett's review into police accountability, which accepted the three level solution.

In the NHS, we accept the need for strategic organisation, especially looking at highly specialised treatments that are not required in every area, but it cannot be right that such decisions are only accountable to the health secretary. We want to see a system for the NHS, and for other local services, including JobCentre Plus, the Probation Service and the Pensions Service that also follow the three layers set out above, and remove themselves from a single line of accountability to a Secretary of State.

A citizen-oriented constitution

Local Labour will continue to contribute to the debate on constitutional reform, as we did during the Communities & Local Government Committee's 'Balance of Power' report,

alongside our own pamphlet on constitutional affairs, 'Powers to the People' published last year.

We want more decisions to be taken locally, and to decrease the amount of times that Labour council leaders hear that a new body or quangos has X millions of pounds to spend in their area, that locally elected politicians have no influence or direction over, and that local people cannot contribute ideas to or question.

3. Local powers

A stronger local government power

In 2000, the power of well being was introduced to improve the ability of councils to act of behalf of their areas. It allows principal local authorities in England and Wales to do anything they consider likely to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area unless explicitly prohibited elsewhere in legislation.

Using the power of wellbeing to tackle the credit crunch

A number of Labour authorities have used the wellbeing power to help protect local jobs and safeguard local livelihoods:

- The London Borough of Greenwich used the power to tackle worklessness, creating an employment agency in support of the existing community training agency;
- In 2008, Nottinghamshire County Council reduced its carbon dioxide emissions by using the Wellbeing Power to create a non-profit renewable energy company;
- The London Borough of Newham used the Wellbeing power as an opportunity to invest in a partnership project with the local PCT. The Local Finance

Local government - the agent of change

Improvement Trust they created is building new premises and providing social care services across three London authorities;

- In Wakefield, families living on an estate blighted by crime and drug-abuse were given a lifeline by the wellbeing power. It allowed the houses to be bought by the Council without a lengthy Compulsory Purchase Order process. The families were able to move away from the area and get a fair price for their homes – and the Council was free to redevelop the estate.

As a rule, however, take up of the power has been low – and it is currently in doubt, having fallen foul of a recent judgment of the Court of Appeal, although the government has pledged to overturn this verdict. The Conservatives have also pledged to bring forward their own ‘power of general competence’ if elected, essentially duplicating the wellbeing power (and nearly thirty years after the Labour Party first called for a general power to be implemented).

We believe that local government should be given a strengthened general power of wellbeing or competence that gives councils the power to provide or commission any public service not explicitly ring-fenced by central government. The new power would be wider and create greater certainty for councils in England and Wales and encourage greater innovation. It would also allow councils to take the distinctive decisions needs to provide adequately for the needs of the place the council represents, and not simply to administer the decisions of central government – an important weapon in any council’s arsenal during a time of economic downturn.

The duty to promote equality

Local Labour is a staunch supporter of the public sector duty to tackle socio-economic disadvantage proposed in the Equalities Bill. Despite everything that we have achieved in government since 1997, inequality remains the

single biggest cause of social immobility. It also retains a pervasive influence over long-term patterns of health and educational attainment.

This new duty is even more important during a period of economic slowdown. As in the past, the economic fallout has a disproportionately high impact on poorer sections of society. Many parts of the country still live with the legacies of the recessions of the eighties and nineties when Mrs. Thatcher and her acolytes failed to provide adequate support for those hardest hit. Intergenerational unemployment and low ambitions are but two of the scars left on communities that were left to fend for themselves in the past.

Local Labour is ready to play its part – we must never again return to the indignities of mass-unemployment and social dereliction. Combined with a new, robust general local power, the duty to promote equality should help local Labour tackle the job at hand.

A duty to devolve?

Over the course of the next parliament, Labour local government will make the case for a duty to devolve – from central government to local government.

Such a duty would compel Whitehall to continuously devolve power to town halls – and would hopefully foster a more strategic and less interventionist role for central government departments.

4. Local jobs

One of the biggest goals of the Labour Party has always been the promotion of full employment. At a time of recession this goal becomes more of an imperative than ever – and local Labour is ready to help keep people in the jobs they want and need.

Leading the way

We live in unprecedented times – and unprecedented times call for unprecedented actions. From the part-nationalisation of the banks and the package of tax cuts announced in autumn 2008 to the accelerated programme of public investment and the announcement of the Future Jobs Fund in the spring of 2009, the Government has acted to ensure that Britain is best placed to weather the storm.

Labour local government has been at the forefront of the state’s help for families and businesses as economic times get tougher.

Clearly, an economic downturn affects different places in different ways. Local responses to economic pressures must be tailored to local circumstances. When things begin to go wrong, councils should be there to step in, both to help kick-start local economies and to provide a safety net for people in need.

Labour local government leading the way

As part of a wider package of support, Wakefield Council has started to help residents struggling to pay their monthly council tax bills by agreeing payments based on what they can afford. For some time, Wakefield has been sending out council tax reminders on a daily basis – a practice that has prompted residents to make early contact with the council before significant arrears have built up. Speaking at Christmas 2008, Cllr Peter Box, leader of the council, set out his view that ‘the global economic situation is affecting all of us. As a council, we want to help ease the impact on citizens and on local businesses. The reason for this is quite simple - we want to do as much as we can’.

If nothing else, Labour councils have used the economic situation to show their communities the positive role that can be played by expansive local government. In

Lewisham, Mayor Steve Bullock has co-ordinated the work of all local public services to ensure that those in need are provided with joined-up services and advice, working with the local voluntary sector on issues such as advice on debt and energy efficiency.

Working with North Herts College and the Stevenage Business Initiative, Stevenage Borough Council has provided advice and support to local people and local businesses facing redundancy. People who have lost their jobs or are at risk of losing their jobs, as well as employers considering redundancies, can call the Stevenage Rapid Response to Redundancy helpline for free information and advice. Cllr Sharon Taylor, the leader of the council, has been emphatic in her view that ‘Labour in Stevenage is fully committed to providing as much help and support as we possibly can to those people who through no fault of their own find themselves in difficulties and are considering their future options’.

Making the Future Jobs Fund work

The Future Jobs Fund is the most obvious expression of our commitment to maintaining jobs and security for all. The central aim of the fund – which pledges work or training to anyone under 25 who has been unemployed for more than one year – is to prevent a repeat of previous Tory recessions when whole generations were thrown onto the scrapheap. This fund will help to ensure that a large number of young people will not only have a job but also gain valuable skills and improve their employability for the future. It will help to generate jobs and get local economies moving.

So far, 117 local plans have been agreed – more than half of which are spear-headed by local authorities. In town halls up and down the country, Labour councillors are pushing forward their own plans to help safeguard jobs in their communities.

Local government - the agent of change

The Future Jobs Fund - the Labour way

Kirklees council has been awarded over £2.25 million to help create over 350 local jobs in a variety of sectors including construction, landscaping, leisure, tourism and IT, as well as providing opportunities for new teaching and library assistants. Kirklees is working in partnership with a range of organisations to provide real opportunities to help local people access real jobs and develop skills.

The **Redcar & Cleveland** Local Strategic Partnership made a successful bid for £9.5 million to help provide 145 jobs in recycling, sport and recreation. The first 45 jobs will come on-stream in October 2009, with an additional ten-per-month planned from January 2010.

In South Wales, **Neath Port Talbot's** successful bid will see 96 jobs created across a range of sectors, including construction, environmental management, care, leisure and hospitality, and recycling. All jobs will include six-month contracts pegged at the national minimum wage.

The LGA has already committed the local government sector to supplying 15,000 apprentices as part of the £1 billion scheme. Local Labour believes that we should go further, and endorses the proposal set out in the Houghton report calling for 50,000 apprenticeship places by 2011, plus 75,000 'worker taster' places to be made available to unemployed people, providing them with on-the-job experience.

If we are to truly banish the spectre of unemployment, however, we need to be bolder still. As such, building on our success with the fund, local Labour will push to extend it to all people aged 25-34 in long-term unemployment by the end of the next parliament.

Campaign for a living wage

In November 2008, Manchester City Council became the first local authority outside London to sanction a top-up to the minimum wage. The 'Manchester minimum wage' weighs in at £6.75 an hour - £1.01 more than the national minimum wage of £5.74. More than 850 employees benefit from the scheme - and the council intends to work closely with other public sector organisations to encourage take up across the city.

In April 2009, Manchester was followed by another Labour city, Oxford, which ushered in a local living wage at £7 an hour. The living wage has been taken up by NHS workers across Oxfordshire, as well as by the Oxford University Labour Club, which is campaigning to implement the living wage for all university and college staff.

We believe that where any Labour council is in a position to implement a locally-determined living wage it should do so.

Promoting economic development

What is local government's role in the economic life of the United Kingdom? Its main function should be to help create a more dynamic economy, but how can this be done? And how can we ensure that increased economic dynamism has a beneficial impact on the jobs and wages of average workers?

As we move out of recession, it is vitally important that councils help foster greater entrepreneurial spirit within their boundaries - we cannot, and will never be able to, boom on the back of the public sector alone. Much of the spadework has already been done, but there is still much more to do if we are to maximise the economic potential of communities and sub-regions across the country.

Labour local government wants to see more Multi Area Agreements - MAAs should be the primary vehicle for councils to come together and drive through local economic solutions that address particular regional problems.

5. Local co-operation

As we work our way through the recession, we believe that we have the opportunity to change the way we create and control wealth. We think that during a new term of government, Labour in Westminster, working hand in hand with local Labour, can stimulate a renaissance in co-operatives.

Mutually owned businesses and enterprises not only generate wealth and employment - their profits are retained in the community in order to benefit other local businesses and thereby boosting their local economies.

Local Labour can make sure that it provides a level playing field for co-ops and mutuals when it comes to local economic development. Councils can:

- Appoint a Co-operative Development Officer;
- Develop co-operative solutions to policy initiatives on economic development, community development, housing and child and social care;
- Ensure that co-op models and values are included in all business education models;
- Review procurement contracts to ensure that co-operatives and SMEs are not excluded by expensive and time-consuming processes; and
- Encourage secondary co-ops that enable small businesses to achieve economies of scale and secure procurement contracts.

Labour councillors can also help ensure that national co-operative agencies are given the space and support they need to help local businesses become co-operatives if they want to. For many small businesses - particularly in the current economic climate - such succession planning is vital. Planning ahead to sell the business to workers or employees avoids a hostile business takeover and redundancies.

Planning business succession with the Wales Co-operative Centre

Many businesses face problems when one or more of the owners want to leave the business. Without a new buyer, the business and jobs can be lost. The Wales Co-operative Centre's Business Succession service helps businesses survive by supporting a management buy-out or an employee buy-out - transferring business ownership to the workers.

Transferring business ownership to workers also ensures staff control and is the best way to guarantee that the business continues to prosper. The Centre can also install an Employee Share-Scheme so that ownership can be transferred gradually and in a structured way. It is the only agency in Wales with expertise in this area, and is the leading expert in the field within the UK

Transferring power to communities

Councils can still do more to deliver power and ownership of local services to the communities that depend upon them. Community-based and new mutual organisations have a vital role to play in shaping and running local services, supporting families, engaging young people and regenerating run-down neighbourhoods.

We agree with the principles outlined in the 2007 Quirke Review that councils should accelerate the process of asset transfer to communities - but we also believe that it is important that any assets transferred downwards remain in the public interest, accountable to the communities that they serve. The Co-operative Party has pioneered the Community Benefit Society as the best legal structure to enable community transfer.

Local government - the agent of change

Such societies are democratically accountable to a widely defined and open membership, thus encouraging community-based organisations to act in the public interest;

They also have an 'asset-lock' which guards against dissolution and ensures that resources can only be transferred to other organisations with a similar commitment to serving the community.

Credit unions

Across the United Kingdom, credit unions provide affordable credit and banking services to thousands of people who would otherwise find themselves denied banking services. Between 1995 and 2006 the number of credit union members in the UK more than tripled to approx. 500,000, with deposits growing almost nine times to just over £500 million.

Whilst credit unions can support the aims and objectives of councils' social and economic inclusion agendas, poor- and grant-dependent credit unions cannot help poor people. We must strive to help create strong, economically viable credit unions, ideally with mixed membership drawn from all sections of society. Such institutions will be able to offer increased, quality services and make a real difference to the communities that need them.

This requires adequate seed-funding for new credit unions plus continued support from existing credit unions in order to see them through the recession emerging on the other side stronger and more economically viable. Local Labour pledges to help encourage the development of strong, sustainable credit unions.

6. Local finances

If we are to move into a new environment where local government displays greater leadership across the whole gamut of public services within its area, then we need to grasp the nettle of local government finance reform once and for all. The Labour Party remains committed to reforming council tax, and as we enter the second decade of the 21 Century it becomes an even more pressing concern, as current tax brackets remain rooted in valuations set in 1991.

We think that:

- At the very least, the council tax needs rebanding. The addition of more bands at both the top and the bottom of the scale will help to make it a more genuinely progressive tax;
- The council tax cap should be scrapped – local councils have a right to decide what priorities local people want and need;
- Business rates should be further localised – we welcome the business rate supplement as a step in the right direction, but would prefer further progressive devolution of control over business rates. Further relocalisation would restore local government's link with the business community and give it a share of the growth of the business tax base, thus allowing it access to a more buoyant source of revenue. It would also support partnership working between business and local government. We would also welcome a review of business rate levels, which have remained static for more than twenty years.

Council tax rebate

Local Labour is in favour of the automatic take up of council tax benefit – in effect, turning the scheme into a Council Tax Rebate, along the lines outlined in the 2007 Lyons report into local government funding.

If all households currently entitled to council tax benefit were to take it up, council tax would be progressive to income overall for the poorest households. Unfortunately, only between 62% and 68% of households entitled to benefit actually claim and receive it. As such, for the poorest 10% of households council tax remains a large average burden relative to income.

We believe that the Government should look into the possibility of automatically providing CTB to those who are entitled. The ultimate extension of this approach should be that households could be billed for council tax net of any rebate entitlement, but with a responsibility to inform the Government if the details on which it was calculated were incorrect. Obviously, this would involve a step-change in how the Government shares data between departments and agencies – a step-change that would promote both greater social justice and effective public service delivery. 🇬🇧

“Local Labour is in favour of the automatic take up of council tax benefit – in effect, turning the scheme into a Council Tax Rebate...”



Children and young people – foundations for the future

Every young person deserves the best start in life, with opportunities to help them fulfil their potential. Every young person deserves an excellent education.

Labour's vision for children and young people is based on delivering greater fairness and opportunity for all – everyone should have the support to make the most of their talents, with extra help for those who need it most.

Local Labour should be at the forefront of championing the needs of children and young people in local areas and making sure services are shaped around their needs. In line with wider trends, it also means strengthening community involvement and expanding the influence of local democracy over local services. Everyone should be given the chance to participate and meaningful decision making should be brought within people's reach.

In 2007 the Children's Plan was published setting out Labour's ten year vision to make the UK the best place for children to grow up. The goals were ambitious: to enhance the wellbeing of every child and young person; to put every child on the road to success at school; to eradicate child poverty; to provide positive activities to engage all young people; and to ensure that parents have enough information about their child's education and progress.

The aims of the Children's Plan can only be achieved in partnership with local government. Local authorities have a significant role to play in helping children to achieve the best start in life, fulfil their educational potential and find routes into training and employment. Local authorities can drive the services that deliver for children and young people – linking together support around tackling child poverty; overseeing early years education; providing youth services; and vigorously challenging under performing schools in their areas.

We must be clear about the alternative - the Tories have opposed raising the school leaving age, the new diplomas, the Educational Maintenance Allowance and have proposed cuts to school building projects. Our priorities differ – 'fair chances for all' is at the heart of Labour's vision and purpose and it will be local government that helps to make

sure that children and young people are not held back by where they were born or their social background.

With their disregard for collective approaches and their mistrust of the local state, the Tories cannot be trusted to secure the best opportunities for children and young people in every neighbourhood across the country.

Local Labour is leading the way in services for children and young people. However, there is always more to do – further impetus is needed on early intervention; standards can always be improved in schools; persistent youth offending must be curbed; and youth services and activities for young people need to be revolutionised.

The Labour record:

- Over 3000 Children's Centres have been opened
- Universal childcare offer for all three and four year olds
- The number of schools in England where less than 30% of pupils achieve at least 5 GCSEs A*-C has fallen from one in 2 in 1997 to one in six today
- In 2008, 68,000 more pupils gained five or more good GCSEs than in 1997
- Since 1997, real terms funding per year has increased by 97%
- 15,000 schools now offer extended services
- The Education Maintenance Allowance – which has been successful in increasing the number of young people staying on in learning at 16
- There are over 36,000 more teachers in England and 174,000 more support staff and teaching assistants
- The number of higher education students has increased by 22% over the last 10 years

Children and young people – foundations for the future

Labour is working for Britain's future:

- Free childcare provision is being extended to disadvantaged 2 year olds
- By 2010 schools will be open from 8am-6pm offering a range of activities
- By 2013 there will be new entitlements to diplomas for all 14-16 year olds and an apprenticeship place for all suitably qualified 16 year olds
- By 2015 all young people under 18 will be required to participate in education and training
- Legislation is going through parliament to establish targets for the reduction of child poverty
- Continue to rebuild and refurbish every secondary school in the country

1. Early years

There has been a massive transformation in early years education under Labour. The value of helping and supporting parents as their children learn and develop; and providing sustained care and support in the early years cannot be underestimated. By intervening in early years and at primary school, the barriers of social disadvantage can be overcome. Sure Start has been one of our most successful policies in this respect.

Local authorities have a role to play in early years provision by monitoring, building networks of providers, and ensuring accessibility and communication – drawing on local information to target needs effectively and ensuring that parents and carers have a flexible service.

Early intervention in Nottingham

Nottingham's approach to Early Intervention has involved the whole LSP working together to see what

they and mainstream services can do differently to break the intergenerational cycle of deprivation and low achievement in Nottingham. Early intervention underpins all targets in the Local Area Agreement, and the aim is to involve all partners in a systematic way.

A whole range of initiatives are being considered in this context – better health visitor and midwifery services; drug and alcohol education; projects to tackle multi-generational family worklessness; Sure Start Children's Centres helping children with reading and writing; parenting programmes; and the social and emotional aspects of learning.

The approach has allowed Nottingham to produce interventions that are specific to their local problems.

Early years in Tower Hamlets

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets works through its LSP with schools, social services, the Primary Care Trust, parents, the voluntary sector and children and young people themselves to target early intervention and prevention work. Support is offered to those at risk of social exclusion through mainstream services, and information sharing and partnerships are at the core. This has resulted in the engagement of 35% of local families with Sure Start, GCSE results being amongst the fastest improving in the country and educational outcomes for children in care being amongst the best.

A Sure Start Approach: Lincoln and Burdett Children's Centre is in Tower Hamlets run by the Poplar Harca Housing association – alongside providing wrap around services for 0-5s, a key feature is a training and employment service for parents to access local jobs. Every new parent is given special advice, referral to training, and in-house services including financial advice, CV writing and motivational training.

“Children from the most disadvantaged families are the ones most likely to arrive at school with a low level of social skills so it is vital to get them involved with Sure Start...”

Building on the success of Sure Start

Labour authorities should be bold in their approach – widening the reach of Sure Start and involving the most disadvantaged families in their areas. This requires determination and resilience but we have to widen the pool of children reached through the service. Early years provision should involve a partnership with the local authority, voluntary sector and health services – with information shared between agencies to reach problem families that are in touch with other services.

Children from the most disadvantaged families are the ones most likely to arrive at school with a low level of social skills so it is vital to get them involved with Sure Start – managers of Sure Start Children's Centres must be required to take seriously their outreach role. Parenting skills should be taught in every Sure Start Children's Centre, and high quality staff are needed to address the needs of problem families, in particular building trust and relationships. Childcare provision has to recognise that needs differ – childcare is often required out of standard working hours – for example, if parents work night shifts.

It has also been suggested that Sure Start should expand to include a model for ages 5 and above. We support this idea, and believe local authorities should consider how to meet the needs of primary school children and their families in the hours outside schools. These could be based on estates, and provide spaces for homework clubs and places to work especially in areas where housing is overcrowded and poor quality.

The Co-operative Party have proposed that new stakeholder models should be introduced to Sure Start with ownership by parents, workers and members of the community to give a greater sense of involvement, satisfaction and loyalty – and ensuring that services are more responsive to the needs of users.

Child Poverty

We need a relentless focus on tackling child poverty

Children and young people – foundations for the future

– under the new Child Poverty Bill, local authorities will be required to produce a local child poverty strategy based on their local needs assessment. The Local Strategic Partnership will be responsible for implementation. This is an opportunity to bring together services and interventions around child poverty.

A good example for future trends in provision comes from across the Atlantic. In New York, the Harlem Children's Zone uses large-scale interventions to change the achievements and expectations of children in poor housing. Rather than unconnected interventions, the whole community is engaged in the transformation process – through parenting classes, support for every child in the zone, food co-ops, high quality teaching, lotteries for school admissions. Tackling child poverty in this country needs a rethink – how can we properly embed a sustained programme of care and support across neighbourhoods, communities and council boundaries?

Promoting play

Play is vital for children growing up – having spaces to play outdoors helps to keep children healthy and happy. The play pathfinder project is providing 3500 new play areas and adventure playgrounds. But for the Labour local authorities not in the pathfinder areas, there is still the opportunity to work locally in neighbourhoods to identify green spaces and areas that can be designated for play, as well as making existing areas more child friendly.

2. Schools

Since 1997 we have transformed the education system for the good, but we need to continue to raise the educational achievements of the most disadvantaged young people, and narrow the achievement gap based on social disadvantage, gender and ethnicity.

Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century

schools system sets out an ambitious programme of reform to improve the quality of schools. The white paper proposes a number of key measures to improve the quality of education that every child receives – ensuring that parents have more information about their child's education; strong discipline, order and safety in schools; a broad and flexible curriculum; one to one tuition and support for those falling behind; personal tutors and access to sport, play, homework clubs, PE, sport and healthy eating classes.

The paper sets out the role of local authorities as a strategic commissioner – ensuring that schools meet the needs and aspirations of those in their areas. There are proposals for improved powers of intervention where schools are failing – for example, through making changes to leadership, governance and structures to secure improvements. There is an emphasis on partnerships for schools – both to extend opportunities by offering services to the local community and through federations that can pool funds and work under an executive head to improve performance in a local area. Local authorities can play a role here in supporting and brokering partnership arrangements.

Beyond the basics at primary school

Primary schools play a crucial role in raising the aspirations of pupils. The investment in the Every Child a Reader, Every Child Counts and Every Child a Writer programmes, with one-to-one help and catch up support are welcome.

Rotherham's Imagination library

The Imagination Library in Rotherham is helping to improve literacy in the area by providing a free book each month for 0-5 year olds.

The issue of poor levels of communication, language and literacy amongst Rotherham children was identified,

and Cllr Roger Stone, the Leader of Rotherham council decided to try out the Imagination Library approach – based on Dolly Parton's work in Nashville.

The project is funded by the Dollywood Foundation, which brings the cost down to £2 per child per month. The Council is using midwives, health visitors, children's centres, libraries and schools to help register children. The aim is for children to be starting school with an enjoyment of reading and an improved vocabulary.

But we need to do more to make sure every child reaches their potential. The skills to succeed mean more than just literacy and numeracy (although these are obviously essential). At primary school age, young people need problem solving skills, creativity, and an appreciation of wider society. Citizenship should run through everything that a school does. Parents should be involved more closely in schools – for example, primary schools being explicit about how parents can help with education – through ensuring homework is completed, healthy eating, and helping with reading.

The LGA's own 'Narrowing the Gap' project has looked at how to increase equality in outcomes for children 3-13 years, and one of the early messages from the pilots was that more emphasis should be placed on the transition from primary to secondary. This could involve local authorities ensuring that extra support is in place for parents from more disadvantaged backgrounds who may need help in negotiating the admissions procedures. Narrowing the Gap has also reinforced the importance of catch up and supplementary help for those falling behind.

School improvement

Local authorities should take up the challenge of intervening in school improvement – being prepared to hold heads to account to deliver a high quality education.

School improvement in Salford

Thanks to a systematic and robust monitoring programme that checks and supports all mainstream and special secondary schools in the city, Salford has seen educational standards rise across the board over the past five years. In the five years up to 2009, the number of Salford pupils gaining at least five good GCSEs has risen from 45% to over 75%. Over the past 3 years there have been increases of at least 5% a year to bring the number of young people gaining five good GCSEs including English and maths closer to the national average of 47%.

Five years ago six high schools were in OFSTED categories that required significant improvement. Within three years of sustained school improvement strategy there were five outstanding schools and no schools in OFSTED categories that required significant improvement.

Schools for the community

We must ensure that the vision in the white paper becomes a reality – with a clear message that schools must collaborate with each other, with children's services and be part of local communities. Schools should be community hubs – their facilities available to the wider community. We should not be adverse to the voluntary sector coming into schools and providing opportunities for community and adult learning.

Free school meals

Ensuring that children have a healthy meal during their school career is vitally important. At the moment, only 43.6% of primary children sit down for meals at lunchtime.

Free School meals were trialled between 2007-09 in five local authorities in Scotland. The evaluation found that uptake increased from 41% to 69%. A pilot in Hull found

Children and young people – foundations for the future

that healthy meals at lunchtime improved concentration and behaviour in schools. In Newham and County Durham, the two year Free School meal pilot started in September 2009 and more than 60,000 children will receive healthy meals – extending eligibility to all pupils regardless of income. In other boroughs – most notably Bolton and Islington – Local Labour has taken the initiative to provide or pledge free school meals for all or some of its pupils.

Obviously the cost of rolling such a scheme out across the country would be enormous - but the difference that such a scheme might make on the lives of children across the country would be equally enormous. Should free school meals be standard across the country, or should we allow councils to decide the issue for themselves?

3. Youth services

In many areas, youth clubs are old and of a poor standard, and out of school activities are urgently needed. Aiming High for young people (2007) set out a 10 year vision for reforming youth services and, in particular, providing positive activities for young people in every local authority area. There is also a strong emphasis on giving young people direct influence over how funds are spent on activities for young people – at least 25% by 2018. The approach in Aiming High is welcome, recognising that young people require targeted and personalised provision, not imposed from above, but developed in consultation so they feel ownership over the decision making processes.

Innovative youth centres and youth provision
Variety is crucial for youth provision, and local authorities must be creative in their use of resources and facilities. Young people should be engaged and involved in the planning and commissioning of services so that activities are provided out in neighbourhoods where young people are, rather than relying on centralised youth club models. Local Labour has been at the forefront when involving

and engaging young people as the case studies below demonstrate.

Where youth centres exist, these can be used to host other services, such as access to job opportunities. The Make Space campaign argues that there needs to be a higher priority placed on health, and personal and social education in youth settings. They suggest the use of drop in sessions in youth centres, health promotion programmes and using the hook of the 2012 games to bring young people into sports activities.

The framework of Children's Trusts and the Children and Young People's Plans has helped to co-ordinate services around young people, but on the ground, multi agency working has yet to be embedded. We need to encourage innovation at a very local level, resourcing youth workers to reach out to young people in a variety of different youth settings – from clubs and centres to more detached forms of outreach work.

Tackling teenage pregnancy in Gateshead

Gateshead was one of the 20 authorities in England with the biggest decrease in the number of teenage pregnancies. The Gateshead approach to teenage pregnancy was to make it a core part of the Children and Young People's Service, and to ensure that young people have the knowledge and ability to reflect. There are a number of projects across agencies aiming to develop self esteem and educational attainment, improve relationships and advice, information and support. For example, young people's clinics branded 'Sorted' dealing with general health promotion and sexual health. There are targeted clinics in 'high rate neighbourhoods'.

Free swimming

Since April 2009, 259 councils have offered free swimming to those aged 16 and under. A £50 million capital fund has been

“A recent survey by YouthNet found that only one in five 16-25 year olds found Connexions useful.”

made available to councils to modernise existing facilities. All councils should offer free swimming for young people – promoting an interest in swimming and increasing participation.

Careers advice

Reform of careers advice is urgently needed. A recent survey by YouthNet found that only one in five 16-25 year olds found Connexions useful. The Unleashing Aspiration report on social mobility proposes giving schools direct responsibility for careers advice, working with local authorities to tender from a range of providers.

'a good school opens doors to a good career. The best schools give young people the right opportunities to learn about and choose careers... we want every school to have a culture of aspiration in which every child is helped and encouraged to fulfil their potential'

Political engagement

Young people have the potential to play a vital role in town halls, the positive effects of which extend across the community. There are highly innovative approaches to political engagement in Labour areas in London:

Finding the politicians of tomorrow in Lewisham and Lambeth

Lewisham has a Young Mayor who is in office for one year with a budget of £25,000 to spend on activities and services for young people in the borough. The Young Mayor is supported by a Youth Advisory Group, drawn from the community and youth groups. The Young Citizens Panel was also set up to allow the views of young people to be fed into local service providers.

The aim was to embed a culture of young people's involvement in forums and groups, feed the views of young people into policy changes and improve youth provision in the borough. The Young Mayor and advisers work closely with the elected Mayor.

Children and young people – foundations for the future

Lambeth's Youth Council regularly leads on consultations on youth issues, working with other local partners such as Scrutiny and the Executive. The Youth Council has done work on teenage pregnancy – lesson plans to convey appropriate messages to reduce teenage pregnancy rates; and Stop and Search – developing materials and workshops to train police officers how to talk to young people when conducting stop and searches. Youth Council peer inspectors also visit youth centres in Lambeth to see if they are run the way that young people want them to be.

The success of the Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund should be built on – this has been an excellent way of involving young people in making decisions in their local areas.

Wakefield's Youth Opportunity Fund

The Council decided to focus on engaging hard to reach young people on YOF grant giving panels and raise awareness of the opportunities in these funds. Groups of young people were invited to create a brick with a simple request on it – this formed a 'democracy wall' blocking off the town hall. The Leader met with the young people to hear their requests and the wall was 'knocked down' as councillors and officers discussed each issue. All the young people involved were then invited to join the grant giving panels. There was initial disbelief that young people could be involved in decision making, but from the original democracy wall through training, support and experience, a wide range of young people with different ethnic backgrounds, disabilities, behavioural problems all came together to award grants and have a direct impact on their local area.

A duty to provide youth services?

In order to ensure that there is some kind of strategic

provision of youth services across the country, should we impose a statutory duty on all local authorities to provide youth services? Such a move would ensure that 16 year olds would not fall off the map of council services and provide for a continuity of care from school through further education and training and into work, making it easier for councils to provide tailored services to those young adults looking for employment with the Future Jobs Fund.

4. Youth justice

A recent report by the IPPR has drawn attention to the fact that crime reduction is not at the heart of the youth justice system and the punitive approach has not worked. Rather than locking up young offenders, the approach suggested is based on preventing and dealing with offending – through local partnerships of services.

The Youth Crime Action Plan set out a comprehensive package of tough enforcement and intensive prevention measures as well as more support for parents to tackle offending and reduce re-offending. It includes an intensive programme of action for priority areas where the problem of youth crime is greatest.

Joined up services for support

We know that employment, stable housing, and education and training can help to reduce re-offending. The key to a successful transition from prison to living back in the community depends on councils, the health service, probation, police and job centre plus, housing associations and the third sector to ensure that individuals do not fall through the cracks.

LSPs should be used to deliver this through close joint working with partners beyond the criminal justice system, holding these agencies to account. Resources should also be targeted at early interventions with young people

– literacy, numeracy and training for prisoners to help their chances of finding work on release.

The Youth Crime Action Plan does involve giving Children's Trusts a more formal role in preventing re-offending, and proposes that local authorities should have a named officer responsible for resettlement. It also recognises that more can be done to set up training opportunities for those coming out of custody and local authorities can help to get local employers engaged with this.

Restorative justice

We would also like to see community sentences made more effective – restorative justice is a way of making the criminal justice system more visible to the community and giving law abiding citizens a say in how justice systems should work. Offenders sentenced in community courts makes justice more visible to community and victims. This should be combined with additional support for offenders, assisting rehabilitation and the reduction of future offending.

Local Labour should support and lead on this approach – in particular the expansion of restorative justice. These approaches help to empower the community, provides a diversionary approach from a life of offending and are a more visible way to deal with non serious offending. Co-location and close collaboration of services gives the community quick payback from offenders.

Preventing reoffending in the Wirral

The 'In From The Cold' project targeted young people at risk of offending. In the Wirral, many of the resident young people are not engaged with any services and are at risk of anti social behaviour.

The outreach service decided to focus on developing and maintaining sustainable relationships with young people and agencies working in the community. An

outreach worker set up a regular session with a group of young drug and alcohol users in their local park. The young people were told about the YOF and YCF and began to be engaged in improvements to their park involving councillors, schools, council officials, the grant panel, youth forums and area forums in their plan. The negative lifestyles were overcome, and the youth services supported the young people in their engagement with the local community. 📸



Housing - building decent homes and strong communities

Labour councillors and the people who elect us recognise the right of every individual - and every family - to a decent home. We know from our communities the harm that is caused by poor quality accommodation, overcrowding, and the threat of eviction or repossession. We believe that ordinary working people shouldn't have to move from the areas where they were born and grew up because of a shortage of homes. We understand the links between poor housing, ill-health and low educational attainment: if a family household is overcrowded, parents come under greater pressure, illness in the children is more likely, and the children will not have the space to concentrate on their homework. Tackling this is a key mission for every Labour councillor.



Recent research by Shelter indicates that there is a backlog of 500,000 units of social housing needed for those who are overcrowded, homeless, or in temporary or unsuitable accommodation; the charity stated that Gordon Brown's target of 240,000 homes a year was 'roughly equal' to the number needed, although it argued for a higher proportion of new homes to be 'affordable housing'.

The contrast between Labour in government, both locally and nationally, and the Tories and Liberal Democrats is stark. Whereas we committed £1.5 billion to building new homes, as part of Building Britain's Future, the Conservatives have attacked the extra investment and want to remove all house-building targets, allowing NIMBY Tory councils to duck their responsibilities. Liberal Democrats also oppose this investment. Labour local government is putting forward innovative plans to build new homes, while Conservatives and Liberal Democrats rip up these plans for new affordable housing. For instance, one of Boris Johnson's first acts as Mayor of London was to reduce Labour's affordable housing target.

Labour also recognises that simply providing roofs over families' heads, while important, isn't enough: we need to build strong, sustainable communities. In 2006/7, average incomes in social housing were around £12,000, compared to £30,000 across all types of housing. Levels of unemployment for those in social housing are higher, whilst levels of educational attainment and life expectancy are lower. Rather than decimating country's social housing stock, and concentrating those on low incomes in the privately rented sector, as the Tory leader of Hammersmith & Fulham recently urged, we believe in building strong, mixed communities, focusing services on the need to combat deprivation and poverty, and ensuring all public services are focused on meeting the needs of least well off.

Housing is a crucial issue for Labour. The right to a decent home should be as fundamental a pillar of the welfare state as the right to healthcare. For many, one of the

defining images of the Conservative years was the legion of cardboard-box dwellers, and families forced to endure months in poor-quality 'bed and breakfast' accommodation. Recent Conservative publications on Housing and Planning have made it clear that there has been no change in Tory attitudes: the Conservatives remain on the side of those who oppose the building of new homes and landlords who don't meet their obligations to their tenants, and the Tories continue to stigmatise social housing tenants.

We have made great progress in building new homes, strengthening communities, and improving the quality of housing across the board. However, there is still a huge amount to do: we need a step change in housing supply, to meet the challenge of ensuring new homes are zero-carbon, and to ensure that everyone has access to a safe, supportive and welcoming community. Labour councils will be at the forefront of this mission and build on the achievements we have seen in recent years in places as diverse as Newham, Wigan and Stevenage. Because the choice could not now be starker: to build the future with Labour, or watch it crumble with the Tories committed to abolishing housing targets and any regional approach to housing and infrastructure, a return to the dark days of the 1980's.

The Labour record:

- We have overseen a massive reduction in the number of people are sleeping rough – now homelessness is at its lowest level since the early 1980s
- The number of households living in non-decent social homes has fallen by over a million – people's homes have been modernised and made more energy efficient
- Worked to ensure that house-building picks up rapidly in a recovery, investing an extra £1.2 billion this year on housing, including £500 million of new money to support housing construction in local communities

Housing - building decent homes and strong communities

- Introduced a stamp duty holiday on property sold for £175,000 or less to help boost the housing market in the recession.

Labour is working for Britain's future:

- All new homes to be zero carbon by 2016
- Three million more homes in England by 2020 which will include more affordable homes to rent or buy, committing an additional £1.5 billion of investment over the next 2 years to deliver 20,000 new affordable homes, creating 45,000 jobs in the construction and related sectors
- Renewed investment in social housing, providing £100 million for councils to deliver new social housing projects

1. Building new homes

Our starting point is that new homes are good news, and should be regarded as an opportunity, and not as a burden. We need to recognise that the pressing need to build adequate housing for current and future generations is more important than appeasing a handful of vocal objectors to new housing developments.

This is something our political opponents have failed to grasp. In the 2008 Henley by-election, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats tried to out-bid each other on who would be better able to oppose new housing developments (typically for the Liberal Democrats, even opposing houses supported by Liberal Democrats a mile up the road!). Boris Johnson expressed a willingness to lie down in front of bull-dozers, displaying a passion he has never shown for supporting those in housing need.

Labour in government is delivering significant additional

investment for affordable housing. In 2007, Yvette Cooper, as Housing Minister, announced that £8.4 billion would be invested in new social housing, with each region getting a 5% increase in funding. The new Homes and Communities Agency, established by Labour to bring together investment in homes and infrastructure, has an annual budget of over £5 billion. More recently, Gordon Brown announced £1.5 billion extra housing investment as part of Building Britain's Future. On top of this, £1 billion of Kickstart funding has been made available to local authorities to bring housing schemes which had been stalled by the economic situation back on track.

'Kickstart' in Sunderland

With backing from Sunderland City Council, Gentoo, a Sunderland based social housing builder, has received £40million of support from the Government's Kickstart project. With this financial backing now in place, Gentoo aims to build 515 new homes over the next 18 months.

A not-for-profit firm, Gentoo relies on selling a percentage of its properties to subsidise those it lets to social housing tenants. It received the most money of any Housing Association that applied for government cash under this scheme.

As well as giving Wearside's house building sector a much-needed boost, the grant will also help address the acute shortage of housing in the city.

Local government needs to support the delivery of new homes, not hinder it, as Conservative and Liberal Democrat councils so often want to do. Labour councils will invest their own resources, as far as they are able, in new-build housing. This can deliver savings for councils on the cost of temporary accommodation, as well as being enormously beneficial for those in housing need.

“Labour councils are willing to act proactively and flexibly in order to keep development on track.”

Building in partnership in Kirklees

Kirklees Council is undertaking a major regeneration project in the Fieldhead Estate. It is working with the Kirklees Community Association and has agreed to transfer council land at no cost. The project will deliver 140 new houses, out of which 78 will be affordable and 62 for sale.

£4.5 million is being invested into the project by the Kirklees Community Association, £4 million from the Homes and Communities Agency, plus further investment from a private sector partner to deliver a mix of new housing for sale and rent. Kirklees Community Association will own the new built homes that will be managed by the local ALMO.

The planning process plays an essential role in delivering new homes – in the right location and at the right price. The Conservative Party proposes abolishing this system which promotes and steers housing development, instead allowing a local 'free for all', with local authorities able to duck out of building new homes if they fancy, or agree sites for development without any of the necessary infrastructure in place. This is a NIMBY's charter, giving extra power to the elbow of those determined to obstruct development. The Conservatives say they will 'incentivise' councils to build new homes by matching the council tax income from those properties. This is misconceived: the money is not new, but is being taken from local authorities which currently receive Housing and Planning Delivery Grant. In two-tier areas, the lion's share of extra council tax income would go to the county council, whereas the district council would in fact be the one taking the decision on whether to give new homes the green light. The venom with which new housing is often opposed by Conservative councillors is in any event unlikely to be overcome by a modest financial incentive.

Housing - building decent homes and strong communities

Labour councils are willing to act proactively and flexibly in order to keep development on track. This can involve, for instance, delaying when planning contributions become necessary, assessing those contributions in the light of what a developer can genuinely afford, or basing contributions on the sale price of homes, thus sharing risk with the developer. We believe there is further scope for such risk-sharing between public and private sectors on the part of the Homes and Communities Agency.

Ripping up the regional planning apparatus would also remove a key mechanism by which co-operation on infrastructure delivery is achieved. Allowing more than 350 different councils the ability to do entirely their own thing, without any reference either to the level of housing need they face, the impact upon the economy of not providing homes, or the infrastructure which might be needed is a recipe for chaos.

Over the course of a new term of government we will also lobby for a return to the Parker Morris standard for all newbuild housing in the UK.

2. Supporting council housing

Following intensive lobbying by Labour councillors through the LGA, 2009 has seen some important steps forward for council housing.

In the 2009 budget, the Chancellor announced some £100 million of support for new-build council housing. This was increased as part of Building Britain's Future to more than £350 million. Additionally, the government has confirmed that local authorities will be able to keep all of the rental income from these new homes, as they will sit outside the National Housing Revenue Account (HRA) subsidy system. Labour councils will react positively to this announcement, and are at the forefront of those taking advantage of this funding.

We believe, though, that in order to enable local authorities to take full advantage of the possibility of building new council homes, the system whereby council borrowing to fund new homes counts as a cost to the public purse, even though it is repaid in full, needs to be changed. Otherwise new-build housing will face an inbuilt disadvantage compared to developments proposed by housing associations. As we pull through the recession, councils will often be better able to access affordable borrowing than housing associations, and so it is the right time to encourage the building of new council homes.

Secondly, for those local authorities who have retained their housing stock, the decision to allow councils to keep all the rental income and capital receipts from their properties is welcome indeed. It will allow councils to improve the services they provide to their tenants, enhancing the quality of homes and local areas.

However, we want the government to go further and cancel, rather than redistribute, historic housing debt. This has already happened for those authorities whose stock transferred to housing associations, and we believe it would mean that councils had, at last, a truly level playing field. Redistributing historic debt might even place some councils in a worse position than prior to the review. Social housing is an asset, so we do not agree with the government's consultation paper that it would be inappropriate to support the write-off of housing debt with public funds.

The fulfilment of these aspirations will at long last provide councils with a level playing field when it comes to the provision of future social housing needs. Along with our colleagues in the trade unions and supporters across the wider movement, local Labour has long argued for a rejuvenated, national, programme of municipal house-building.

It is with great pride that we declare that in a new term of government, Labour will build council and social housing for those members of the community that need it.

“As we pull through the recession, councils will often be better able to access affordable borrowing than housing associations, and so it is the right time to encourage the building of new council homes.”

Leading the way on council building

There is already great appetite amongst local Labour to build new council houses, with Labour councils at the forefront of local authorities bidding for Homes and Communities Agency money to help fund new build projects:

- In July 2009 Oxford City Council bid for more than £12 million in order to help build a mixture of new sheltered accommodation sites and mixed tenure housing on brownfield sites across the city;
- Greenwich Borough Council in south London has bid for money to help it build 47 new homes across eight sites. There is a strong demand for family houses in the borough and given the current difficulties in progressing private market developments and the knock-on impact on delivery of affordable homes on mixed tenure sites, the opportunity to deliver affordable larger family homes within council ownership has had particular resonance and significance;
- In the West Midlands, Sandwell has submitted a bid to build 28 new affordable Council homes in Smethwick for a cost of over £3million. There is a clearly established demand for affordable housing for younger people and larger families in Smethwick that this new development aims to address.

Other funding options

Is it now time to take a serious look at the potential for extra housing funding to be raised through bonds? If such a policy can be implemented, the council's assets and capital investment (or that of the dedicated housing vehicle or group of councils/vehicles on a council-by-council or a regional basis) would be financed by bonds and retained financial surpluses from rental streams. There have been two notable precedents of bond funding since 2000:

Housing - building decent homes and strong communities

- *Glas Cymru* was established in 2000 as a single purpose company formed to own, finance and manage Welsh Water. A company 'limited by guarantee' it has no shareholders and all profits are ploughed back into the company, whilst major capital projects are funded by prudential borrowing on the bond market. If this line is followed, ALMOs might have to reform their articles of association in order to make them even more legally distinct from their parent authorities – otherwise, they would likely fall foul of the PSBR rules. Perhaps the more encouraging precedent would be -
- *Transport for London*. Since the end of 2004, TfL bonds have proved to be popular in the City because insurance companies have been happy to buy long-term debt to match their increasing pension liabilities. The cash raised by TfL has been used to reinvest in transport infrastructure over-and above money pumped into the tube by fares and the DfT.

A number of councils, including Labour-run Barking & Dagenham and Tory-run Croydon are looking at bond models (though these are predicated on using a significant proportion of capital raised to buy the authority out of the current subsidy system). If other remedies – such as the cancellation of debt and the phased abolition of the current HRA scheme – are implemented, then bond financing could become a much more attractive proposition, allowing councils to make structured, long-term funding decisions. Opting for bond-financing of the social sector is not a fail-safe option. Any such shift in policy would throw up a number of legal and financial headaches, but the Treasury's decision to allow TfL to borrow prudentially in order to invest (and categorically not in order to shore up existing deficits) is a precedent that housing providers should look at with great interest as a means of funding long-term housing strategies (maybe on a multi-local authority basis as a means of increasing collateral).

Opting for mutual ownership?

Another solution would be for local authorities to adopt

a mutual home ownership model for building affordable homes. Such a model would separate the cost of land from the purchase price, by taking it out of the marketplace through a Community Land Trust. It would also ensure affordability through flexible monthly payments that are based on an affordable (e.g. 35 %) percentage of income.

Unlike individual home ownership, where residents have a personal mortgage loan to buy a home, the homes are financed by a corporate loan borrowed by the co-operative. The value of the buildings are divided into shares and when members leave the co-operative, they are entitled to take the equity that they have built up with them. The net value of the shares is calculated by reference to a fair valuation formula in the occupancy agreement or release, so the more you earn the more you pay and the more equity shares you own and finance.

Rather than viewing a home as a speculative capital investment, the value of which rises and falls in line with unpredictable market cycles, it will see a home as a consumer durable, just like a car, or a fridge. This formula will not give mutual home owners high risk speculative growth, but it will mean that they will also be at far less risk of negative equity.

The 'New Foundations' model, as promoted by the Co-operative Party, has the potential to develop mixed tenure housing. There is no reason why a resident in a mutual home ownership development could not start on a standard rented tenancy with the right to buy equity shares as and when their income permitted them to do so. The 'right to buy equity' would enable social housing tenants to accumulate equity in their homes without the property moving to the open housing market and becoming unaffordable for future generations of occupants. The trading of equity shares within the mutual would mean that when a member leaves, some of the outgoing member's shares can be sold to other resident members whose incomes have risen, allowing a smaller portfolio of shares

to be transferred with the right to occupy a home to a new member on a lower income. This should help to create a cycle of permanent affordability from one generation to the next.

The model is dependent on land being made available at nil or reduced cost as a capital subsidy. However, there is an expectation that as a 'New Foundations' community becomes wealthier (as can be expected in any stable sustainable community), initial capital subsidy is released over time as member's incomes rise and they buy more equity shares. This means that the capital subsidy is, in effect, an equity loan that is returned with asset growth, if any, at the date it is sold. This capital subsidy could be used by the Community Land Trust to provide more affordable homes, or it could be returned to local authorities as a redeemed equity loan.

With both bond and mutual models, there is the possibility to provide steady investment opportunities for life assurance and pension scheme managers – opportunities likely to become more attractive as the economic downturn continues. Because of the way the mortgage repayment profile is structured, it guarantees an annual real yield investment, secured on quality housing assets for which there is a high demand.

Excellent homes and services for all tenants

Labour nationally and locally has been at the forefront of providing decent homes to tenants. The target to ensure all social rented stock meets decent homes standard by 2010, with over £25 million of funding provided for the modernisation of the 1.7 million non-decent social rented homes, has already improved the lives of millions of tenants.

We also support the right to a decent, responsive landlord. The creation of the Tenant Services Authority is a step in the right direction. Labour councils will aim to deal with repair requests quickly, and will also seek to hold housing associations in their area to account. One mechanism for

doing this may be to utilise the reforms to the scrutiny process recently proposed by our Secretary of State, John Denham.

Labour councillors remain passionate about promoting the involvement of tenants in decisions about the management of their stock, and there are many great examples of councils harnessing the passion of local people for improving their area. We will also try to ensure that a cross-section of tenants is involved – for instance, that meetings are accessible to those with childcare needs or a disability.

Tenant involvement in Neath Port Talbot

Neath Port Talbot publishes a magazine – The Tenants' News – three times a year, to keep residents informed about what's happening in the council's housing department. Residents are actively encouraged to get involved in the writing of the magazine.

Regular 'Fun and Information days' are held across the borough, the purpose of which is to communicate with tenants and listen to their concerns and suggestions about housing. Childcare is provided for the day to encourage attendance.

The council provides many access points for tenants to air their concerns and have their queries answered. The resident participation team communicates with tenants on the doorstep, over the phone and through postal surveys included in the tenant newsletter.

The council runs a 'Borough in Bloom' competition which encourages residents and local businesses to plant and maintain flowers, making the borough more attractive. The competition offers cash prizes and trophies in eighteen categories. In a similar vein, a recent 'rent bonanza' gave tenants who have paid their bills on time the opportunity of receiving £250 to help towards their bills.

Housing - building decent homes and strong communities

Labour councils will now look to go beyond the decent homes standard, and will encourage housing associations to do likewise. In particular, more attention will be paid to improving the quality of communal areas and grounds maintenance, which are essential in generating real pride in a community. We also need to make sure that homes remain decent – the decent homes standard is a moving target, and the expectation, for instance, that tenants have a new bathroom every 30 years and a new kitchen every 20, and are adequately insulated against noise is completely reasonable.

3. Improving the private rented sector

Millions of people – singles and families – rent a home. The privately rented sector can provide flexible accommodation for the longer term – as well as for shorter periods. With the greater difficulty in obtaining a mortgage following the banking crisis, more people are likely to need to rent a property (and the fall in house prices means that a growing number of people are choosing to rent out their property rather than sell it).

For some time, action has been overdue to ensure that landlords meet their responsibilities to their tenants and the wider community. Some important improvements – such as new environmental regulations and licensing of larger Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) were delivered by the Housing Act 2004, and these have been used by Labour locally.

The government's decision to commission a review into the private rented sector by Julie Rugg in 2007 was welcome, as was the government's response. In particular, licensing of letting agents and the establishment of a national register of landlords are welcome steps. This could go further – for instance by ensuring that all landlords applying to go on the register meet the criterion of being a 'fit and proper' person – it is unacceptable that those with convictions

for violent offences and fraud, for example, can still rent out a property. We strongly support measures to give protection to tenants in cases where their home is repossessed as the landlord has defaulted on their mortgage, and believe tough action against 'retaliatory eviction' is needed.

Nonetheless, there are still too many privately rented properties which don't meet decent homes standard, or which attain only very poor levels of energy efficiency (although the requirement to publish an energy performance certificate is a welcome step in informing potential tenants about a property's energy efficiency). Local Labour will respond positively to improve this – for instance by requiring better standards of landlords in receipt of public funds from deposit schemes to meet minimum standards. The government could explore ways of using access to the local housing allowance as a 'lever' here too.

Labour in government introduced licensing of the private rented sector in low demand areas, and we believe it should be possible to extend licensing to other areas. In areas of high demand, landlords may face less of an incentive to take care of their properties as they will not have difficulty finding tenants, even if a property is poorly maintained, making regulation more important.

The Gateshead licensing scheme

Gateshead Council lobbied the government to give powers to councils to demand that landlords hold a license before they can rent out a property. The council rolled out the licensing scheme in particular areas where there had been persistent and serious anti-social behaviour, in some instances so bad that long-term residents were forced to move out. The licensing scheme has helped to reduce this problem and has already led to the successful prosecution and fining of unlicensed landlords.

The requirement to license HMOs of three or more storeys and with five or more occupants has been effective in raising standards. We believe this could go further in areas where councils are supportive – and Labour councils will lead the way in improving the quality of HMOs through additional licensing. We urge the government to be supportive, rather than obstructive, of councils seeking to do this. Local authorities are best placed to judge the exact way in which HMOs in their area are regulated.

There are clear dividing lines between Labour – both in Westminster and in our local councils – on regulating the privately rented sector. In their Housing Green Paper, the Conservatives devoted just half a page to the topic, concluding that the sector is over-regulated and more encouragement to landlords was needed, without expressing any interest in improving the quality of provision in the sector, or containing any reference to the rights of tenants, instead just fretting about the 'uncertainty' faced by landlords. Sarah Teather MP, for the Liberal Democrats, worried about the danger of 'over-regulation' of the private rented sector. The picture these parties paint of the sector is one unrecognisable to both tenants and to communities suffering from poor quality privately rented accommodation.

4. Promoting energy efficiency, reducing our carbon footprint

Improving the energy efficiency of Britain's housing stock is essential – both in order to reduce Britain's carbon footprint, and at the same time to reduce fuel bills and combat fuel poverty. Measures to improve energy efficiency have a particularly large impact upon those on lower incomes, who spend a higher proportion of their income on the cost of heat.

The government has invested strongly in improving the energy efficiency of housing, rightly targeted at those on low and fixed incomes; total grants for this have been over

£1 billion per year. Local Labour will continue to publicise grants such as Warm Front, and ensure they are accessible to those on the lowest incomes. Where possible, we will also contribute councils' financial resources to combating fuel poverty and supplementing such programmes. Further investment in retro-fitting existing housing stock remains a priority for Labour in local government and in Westminster. Over time, too, the definition of a decent home could be made more exacting to deliver further improvements to the energy efficiency of properties, although the first priority must be to deal with the worst standards.

It is right that the standards of energy efficiency of new-build housing are demanding – and we support the requirement that new affordable homes meet Sustainable Homes code level 3. Local Labour will use its powers to ensure that all new housing is as sustainable as possible, supporting the government's target, announced in 2007, that new homes will emit 25% less carbon from 2010 and that from 2016 all new homes will be zero-carbon. Any failure to build sustainably now will exact a high price from future generations.

We welcome the proposal to introduce 'Smart Meters' to all homes by 2020, and Labour councils will work with energy companies to meet, or beat, this target. At the same time, we need the government to ensure domestic energy is affordable, in particular by clamping down on unacceptable pricing, focused at the poorest in our communities, through slot meters. Those on lower incomes should not be forced to pay a higher price for their energy than the rest of our population.

5. Tackling poverty, building strong communities

Local Labour believes that, alongside providing decent housing, we need to build strong communities. We see local government as playing a vital part in Labour's mission

Housing - building decent homes and strong communities

against poverty, in particular child poverty. That is why it is vital alongside any new housing we have decent schools, good healthcare and efficient and affordable local transport systems. Then we will have communities where people feel safe, at ease, encouraged and supported to fulfil their potential.

The Conservatives appear to see residence in social housing as a problem, talking about the 'effect that long-term residence in social housing can have' and are on the search for ways to encourage people to move out of it. This analysis is mistaken and insulting, confusing housing tenure with wider issues of deprivation. The answer to the problem of too many people in social housing being in poverty is not to encourage people to leave social housing, decimating our national stock of this precious resource, as the Tories argue, but to tackle the roots of that poverty.

We believe that it is the duty of social landlords – both councils and housing associations – to help tackle poverty. There are many ways this can be achieved, and Labour councils are providing leadership. For instance, enhanced housing options services, whereby people are able to get advice on work and benefits as well as housing, are an important innovation. Landlords can also point tenants towards money advice, supporting credit unions, in doing so tackling the scourge of loan-sharks. The service helps people to access training and support in finding employment. In the future, landlords might get involved in providing or procuring childcare, too, as a concrete way of supporting tenants into work.

We also believe that communities need to include the right mix of people in order to create safe, supportive neighbourhoods; concentrations of deprivation should be tackled, both through active combating of poverty but also at the stage of housing design and allocation. For instance, in new developments it is not acceptable for market housing to be concentrated and obviously identifiable, with small housing association flats to be squirreled out of the

way. We welcome the new housing allocations guidance announced by John Healey in July 2009, which will give local authorities additional flexibility, so that they can ensure that existing communities are supported and new ones are not set up to fail. At the same time, local Labour is strongly opposed to any idea of restricting security of tenure in social housing. The idea of ending the tenancies of those perceived not be doing enough to look for work risks adding to the instability of vulnerable families, especially those with children, and making them worse off, as well as moving those on benefits out of social housing and into the private rented sector, which increases the housing benefit bill. At the same time, increasing the rents or ending the social tenancies of those whose circumstances have improved would be hugely unpopular, would create a mass of obvious perverse incentives and would send out an appalling message about the attitude to social mobility by social tenants, as well as making social housing estates far less balanced communities.

Following pressure from Labour councils and Labour MPs, the government has consulted on restrictions on Houses in Multiple Occupation, and the possible introduction of measures to reduce the concentration of HMOs in areas which already have a significant number. This is welcome. Areas subject to a high number of students, and also those deprived areas subject to a high number of placements by statutory agencies, have seen their character fundamentally changed due to the increasing density of HMOs. In these areas, the sense of community has been significantly undermined and the local infrastructure is often unable to cope. Current planning controls are clearly inadequate to deal with this – and new measures giving councils the power to create a better balance will be welcome, and will be used by Labour councils. We also need to use planning policies to ensure that new housing is of the right mix: in particular, there is a risk that an unregulated market will lead to a proliferation of flats, rather than houses.

“We also believe that communities need to include the right mix of people in order to create safe, supportive neighbourhoods...”

The government announced in the 2009 budget that it would look to rein in the housing benefit bill, while at the same time increasing incentives to work, and acknowledged that doing this will be a challenge. Local Labour recognises the importance of housing benefit in ensuring that everyone has access to a decent home and will not support measures which undermine this (for instance by driving benefit levels so low that recipients have to travel miles from their local area to access somewhere they can afford, or so they can only afford the lowest quality properties). There is a real risk, too, in depressing housing benefit levels so that recipients are concentrated in only the areas with the lowest rental levels, thus creating new concentrations of deprivation (often on existing social housing estates). We also recognise that, at the moment, in areas with high rents, work sometimes doesn't pay for those on housing benefit who are looking to move into low-paid employment, as the benefit 'tapers away' at too low a level. Innovative improvements to housing benefit, such as the Chartered Institute of Housing's idea of a Housing tax credit, need to be examined, and it is essential that the experience of Labour in local government is brought into this review.

The introduction of the 'Local Housing Allowance' to replace housing benefit in the private rented sector has brought some flexibility for tenants. At the same time, we believe more opportunity should be given to allow direct payment of the benefit to landlords, if this is requested by tenants. Especially in current circumstances, there is a real risk of LHA money being taken by banks to pay off overdrafts or credit cards, rather than paid to the landlord, and thus threatening the tenant's security of tenure. 🚫



Social care and public health – enabling social justice for those in need

How we think about and provide adult social care and support services is a fundamental part of our commitment to social justice. This commitment is crucial in today's world as our population changes.

When the welfare state was inaugurated in 1948 a baby boy could expect to live to 66. A baby boy born today can expect to live to over 78. The increased prosperity and progress in medical science that have helped achieve this radical improvement are cause for celebration. But as older and disabled people and their carers live longer we must ensure that these additional years of life are quality years. And where people develop care and support needs we must ensure our care services support that quality of life, with local government at the forefront, promoting services which bring people together and take account of all the elements of well-being. A decent and civilised society needs to recognise that all of its citizens should be enabled to live as full and fulfilling a life as possible.

Social justice brings social inclusion. Older and disabled people and their carers should be able to access all the public services that the majority of the population take for granted. This will include enabling younger adults who are disabled or have significant health needs to continue to work and study, with access to cultural and leisure facilities in their free time.

That's why we fully support the personalisation agenda. 'Personalisation' – it's a term that's used more and more when we talk about adult social care but one that means different things to different people. For us it's about empowering people to live their lives to the full, enabling them to do what they want to do and go where they want to go safely and with appropriate support. It's about people being active participants in their care, not passive recipients of it. Such an approach has nothing to do with the Tories' devotion to the cult of the individual: quite the reverse. It is all about social justice; acknowledging the value and contribution of every individual to society and supporting those with care needs to realise a more equitable society which enriches us all.

The Labour record:

- The introduction of Pension Credit and the Minimum Income Guarantee ensures that no pensioner lives on less than £130 per week
- The Winter Fuel Allowance of £200 (£300 for over 80s) to tackle fuel poverty
- Free TV licences for over 75s;
- Help with heating bills through Warm Front grants, upgrading central heating and insulating homes and providing energy-efficiency help for the over 70s
- Beginning this year, an increase in the capital allowance for Housing and Council Tax Benefits from £6000 to £10,000;
- Free eye tests and increasing numbers of day case operations have allowed many older people to continue to enjoy active lives; and

1. The future of adult social care

Although we have done much to empower more vulnerable adults to live independent and fulfilled lives, the challenge for the future remains significant. Our current adult care and support system is under great pressure and with demand for services increasing year on year reform is needed. The Government's adult care Green Paper Shaping the Future of Care Together is a key step on the road to reform, and the national 'Big Care Debate' is an important chance for individuals and communities to have their say on an issue that we must face up to.

The vision for the future

The Green Paper proposes a National Care Service, with a universal entitlement for everyone including:

- Prevention services,
- Information, advice and signposting,
- More personalised and joined-up care services based

Social care and public health - enabling social justice for those in need

on personal need and circumstances,

- The right to an assessment of need that applies anywhere in England,
- Fairer funding arrangements.

Funding

The Green Paper opens up a wider debate, following a six month engagement process with carers and people who use, provide and commission care services, on how a fairer funding system could be agreed. It is on the basis of consensus that this must be developed.

Three proposals to increase the amount of money for adult care and support are put forward:

- A partnership scheme in which a proportion of care costs would be met by the public purse with a sliding scale of contributions with the least well-off receiving free care;
- A social insurance scheme to supplement such a partnership model with any additional contributions covered through an voluntary insurance scheme;
- A comprehensive insurance scheme whereby everyone over retirement age who has the ability to pay would contribute to the costs of care which would then provide universal free care.

A further debate now needs to take place on whether any such system should be operated locally or nationally. Local Labour believes that the local perspective must not be lost in this debate. We also believe that we should not characterise local variation as a 'postcode lottery'. Rather, we believe that differences in what's available locally reflects local preference, local resources and local decisions. This is local democracy in action.

Councils already provide nearly 40% (or £5.3bn) of national adult social care expenditure and we firmly believe in local diversity and local discretion to assure quality provision, address local

challenges and utilise local opportunities. The role of councils with responsibility for social services will be to ensure that the right range of services are available in communities, that they are of appropriate quality and that safeguarding systems are in place for all vulnerable adults. A National Care Service must not allow the lowest common denominator to prevail, but instead must continue to allow for the pursuit of excellence.

Providing versus commissioning?

The cost of directly-provided local authority care is increasing, but that should not prevent councils from using in-house services to set high standards, trial innovation, promote and pump-prime a whole range of associated community-based services, provide higher-level intensive care, focus on and champion the needs of the service users and carers. As with all services, we believe that councils should have the choice to provide or commission services as they see fit.

In the mixed economy of health and social care, it is vital, however, that we speed up the integration of Health and Social Care commissioning and delivery, promoting strong partnership between strategic and in house services to meet the needs of local people.

2. Working together

Councils need to develop a wider vision for social care, working to shape places where vulnerable adults live so that they can remain involved in their communities. Tackling these particular challenges – such as geographical isolation, high levels of deprivation, or serving hard-to-reach groups – builds and strengthens communities for the whole population.

If we are to meet and overcome these challenges, councils must work hand-in-hand with their local partners. We therefore need to empower communities: individuals, voluntary and community groups, Churches and faith groups, clubs, residents' associations, Parish and community councils, and trade union branches. All these groups – and

many others – can widen our perspective and open their arms to the vulnerable adults living next door.

The most important relationship remains with the NHS. Working together we must develop prevention and re-enablement services that allow people to live as long as possible in the community. We need further operational integration with Primary Care Trusts in order to provide seamless services along care pathways. We also need to promote the importance of safeguarding adults – working with national government to move towards giving adult protection the same status as child protection.

Working together in the community

Tameside is meeting the challenge of catering for its older population by ensuring that necessary services are in place and are easily accessible. Central to this work is the availability of high quality information to support older people in making informed decisions and choices that impact on their quality of life. Through one-stop shops and a dedicated website for older people the council is providing relevant, quality information (based on consultation with older residents) on a range of diverse issues including bereavement, volunteering, legal advice and social opportunities.

Across the border, **Manchester** has developed an adult social care web-based information service that provides information about services and community groups across the city and enables identification of support and services at a local level through a postcode or ward search.

Working together: care and housing

Local Labour is fully committed to the concept of the 'lifetime home' which allows people to remain independent. Exercising their choice to live in their own home brings health benefits too. The move away from the residential care mode, based on the 1948 National Assistance Act, has allowed councils to provide individual support for people with

care needs. For example, in Staffordshire – and many other local authorities – money that would have been spent on maintaining residential care homes is now providing stair lifts and walk-in showers for people in their own homes through enhancements to Disabled Facilities Grants. The use of assistive technology is enabling people, such as those in the early stages of dementia, to stay safe and happy at home.

Helping people stay at home in Sunderland

Sunderland City Council is maximising the use of technology and with its focus on prevention and early intervention has extended telecare services to over 23,000 residents. Telecare is providing 24-hour support for users and with a rapid response team in place, backed up by a monitoring centre, the city's elderly and vulnerable residents are able to remain at home, confident and safe.

In many areas councils and housing associations are continuing to invest in Extra Care Housing where people with care needs – along with their husbands, wives, partners, pets and their own belongings – retain the privacy and independence of having their own front door but have twenty-four hour care support, along with other services such as hairdressing, fitness suites, and maintained gardens.

For younger adults with physical or learning disabilities, or with mental health problems, properly supported housing based in their own communities has been a long time coming but, under Labour, is now fast becoming the norm with the move away from institutionalised care. This is not a replication of the Tories' Care in the Community, which took people away from institutions where many had lived for most of their lives and put them into uncaring settings. This is about allowing those with disabilities and chronic conditions to enjoy the freedom and independence that the majority of the population takes for granted. It is about seeing people as individuals, with individual needs and interests and entitlements, rather than simply putting a roof over someone's head.

Social care and public health - enabling social justice for those in need

Working together: care and leisure

Councils provide many of the services which bind all members of our communities together. Rather than segregating people with care needs into specialist day centres, libraries and leisure centres can provide opportunities for people to meet others, socialise and enjoy life – with the focus being on the activity rather than care support. Such activities also improve health and wellbeing, enhance self-worth and prevent the slide into poorer health and greater dependency.

For example Hackney council have made significant progress in joining needs based services with universal services with a well developed community library service. The council has been keen to promote the use of leisure centres with free swimming for the over 60's and has adapted swimming facilities for disabled people.

Working together: care and transport

Labour's introduction of free bus travel for the over 60s and eligible disabled people has opened up new travel opportunities for millions. It has brought social, and health benefits to many people, preventing isolation and promoting emotional well-being. Social inclusion is dependent upon adequate and appropriate transport for those with mobility problems.

Rather than spending funds simply on segregated specialised transport local Labour has introduced low-floor, fully accessible buses well ahead of the rest of the country opening up mainstream public transport to many who had previously relied on specialised services.

But mobility is more than providing bus passes and accessible buses – it is also about joining up journeys: better pavements, pedestrian crossings where people want to cross roads, better interchanges and better bus stops. The extension of the Disability Discrimination Act in 2005 to cover highways authorities will mean disability needs must be considered in all that local authorities do. Labour will ensure that in planning the physical regeneration of areas we prioritise the mobility needs of older people and the disabled.

Working together: care and access to education and training

Labour's equalities agenda has given older people the option to continue working after the state retirement age, continuing to exercise the skills they have learned over a lifetime in the workplace. Both the economic and the individual well-being outcomes of this have been obvious. But older people should not be forgotten when it comes to further training and education. Lifelong learning is hugely beneficial for the individual and society in general and Labour's continuing investment is paying dividends.

Our vision needs to extend to encouraging employers to maintain older people in employment with more opportunities for part-time and part-year work. There must be a national push on connecting volunteering and health and social care services – creating opportunities to retrain people who are workless in the current market as well as address their personal health and well being issues

The 'New Age Games' in Hackney

As a host borough for the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics Games, Hackney council are maximising the volunteering and employment opportunities for older people. Through the 'New Age Games', Hackney is encouraging older people to participate in physical activities and reach their 'personal best'. The scheme gives those participating the opportunities of gaining NVQ 1 in volunteering and working with the council to deliver cultural activities.

For younger adults with disabilities or chronic health problems, the financial independence that wider employment opportunities brings is clear. Access to further and higher education and to skills training needs to continue to grow, and work experience and work placement opportunities provided by public services should continue to show the way for business in general. A wider understanding that vulnerable adults in the workplace may need additional support and periods of leave because of health needs is vital.

Working together: care and health

Across the country, NHS Trusts and local councils are seeking new and innovative joint working opportunities for the benefit of the populations they serve and to the benefit of vulnerable adults, in particular.

Joining up services in Salford

In Salford the council has taken a public health approach to improve health, promote healthy eating, stopping smoking and getting fit. The council works with the local Primary Care Trust to provide a Health Trainers service to work with individuals to set out personal action plans to achieve the goals and encourage healthy lifestyles in the borough. Salford also has a 'rapid response' service that integrates health and social care. It operates pooled budget arrangements and involves staff from different agencies to support those members of the community who have been through a health or social care crisis. It is successfully preventing unnecessary admission to hospital or residential care.

The models of integrated working range from Social Care Trusts, through joint commissioning and providing arrangements to innovative local schemes meeting local challenges and exploiting local opportunities.

Working together: care and carers

The launch of A new deal for carers has done much to raise awareness of the almost unquantifiable contribution of carers to the health, care and wellbeing of vulnerable adults. Often elderly themselves, or with responsibility for family members, carers save the state approximately £87 billion a year and yet have not been central to the way services are arranged or provided.

Recent legislation has addressed the needs of carers in recognising that demands of caring often deny carers a life of their own. The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004 addresses these needs specifically. Carers now have the

rights to a Carers Needs Assessment and the assessment should consider their wishes to access work, training, leisure and a life of their own.


Both central and local government need to continue their support for carers. In Bolton – for example – the council recognises the work of carers by providing them with a strong support network to make their work more manageable. This is done through working in partnership with the local voluntary and community sector to ensure support for carers is everyone's responsibility. In Wigan more appropriate and flexible respite for carers has been prioritised for carers from 'holidays' to 'sitting services'. Other examples from across the country include direct payments, a carers' register to include young carers and discount cards to enable greater access to universal services.

Training the workforce

A well-trained and well-paid workforce is essential to delivering a health and social care service for the future. The workforce accounts for 80% of all social care expenditure. In the UK, there are 957,000 care workers providing formal care to older people. 83% are women and 50.4 % work part time.

Local councils need to work with trade unions and training establishments to address the need for clear national strategies around recruiting, training and retaining. We need a skilled social care workforce to be trained to provide a personal service that appreciates individuals' needs. This training is just as important as their medical and technical training.

Helping to kick the habit in Wirral

Wirral council staff have been trained in One stop shops, pharmacies, community and leisure centres to offer assistance and advice to help people stop smoking and better understand the effects of smoking. 

The environment – think global, act Local

Labour believes there can be no social and economic justice without environmental justice. Across the globe, it is poor countries that fare, and will continue to fare, worst as a result of climate change, caused in large part by the actions and habits of the world's richest nations. Locally, it is the UK's most deprived who live in poor air quality areas, and yet have the lowest access to motor vehicles; it is the poor who suffer fuel poverty, but pay the most for their energy needs.

Labour's National Strategy for Climate and Energy combines our commitment to helping out those who have been hit by the recession with our ongoing commitment to tackling climate change. The strategy combines a series of initiatives with the aim of seeing 1.2 million people employed in green jobs by 2015. The government plans to double the percentage of electricity that comes from renewables, nuclear and clean coal by 2020, providing a substantial boost to the number of jobs available within the green sector.

We have also acted to improve our physical environment: improving our railways and bus services, increasing recycling rates and improving energy standards in public, private and planned housing. We have invested in cycling and walking and promoted better streets designed around people - not motor vehicles. It was under our watch that the Sustainable Communities Act was passed, which gives local people more of a say over how to tackle sustainability issues locally.

But we still have much to do and local Labour has to be at the forefront of our efforts: making the case for change and delivering change locally.

By 2050 we will have transformed the way we live, dramatically reducing our carbon footprint and successfully adapting to a climate which will have changed. All our buildings - housing, commercial and public, existing and planned - will be highly energy efficient. Much more energy production will be local, much more from renewable sources. This will result in less transmission losses and the use of hitherto wasted heat energy being used locally. Many more

trips will be by bike, foot, bus or rail, many fewer by private car. There will be widespread use of electric and shared vehicles. Waste will no longer be something to be disposed of, but will instead be used as a resource. Labour's ambitious targets to build on brownfield will be extended further from 60% to 75% and planning law strengthened further to protect important wildlife habitat. The inevitable impacts of global warming – higher sea levels and more variable weather among them – will be anticipated at all levels of government.

This section of our manifesto for a new term describes how local Labour can tackle climate change and protect the environment – in ways that promote social justice both locally and globally.

The Labour record:

- The UK was the first country to make cuts legally binding, providing international leadership
- We created DECC, showing our commitment to tackling climate change by providing a dedicated place at the Cabinet table for it
- We have supported renewable energy, creating jobs and securing a low-carbon future. The UK is now first in the world for operating offshore windfarms, with the sector growing year-on-year and supporting nearly 6000 jobs
- We introduced the car scrappage scheme stimulating up to 300,000 new car purchases, taking less efficient old cars off the road
- We have ensured that the country is making progress: our CO2 emissions fell by 10.8 million tonnes last year

Labour is working for Britain's future:

- We have announced a £1.1 billion programme of rail electrification, helping the environment and creating green jobs

- We have committed a further £10.4 billion of low carbon and energy investment over the next three years, employ around 20,000 people in construction and installation;
- We are investing £250 million to help the UK to become a world leader in ultra-low carbon vehicle technology;
- We are drawing up plans for up to 1,000 additional wind turbines on and offshore

1. Tackling climate change

Climate change is happening now. The Labour government has acted fast, enshrining legally binding carbon reduction targets into law. The imperative is to dramatically reduce CO2 emissions – to decarbonise the UK economy and to mitigate the effects of a rise in global temperature.

Local Labour action on climate change

Labour local government has acted strongly on climate change, but must go further still if the UK is to meet its targets. Improved energy efficiency in homes and workplaces will be delivered and decentralised energy production must necessarily be planned and delivered locally. We need to help residents change the way they travel, moving towards public transport, cycling and walking, and away from using the private car. We need to reduce waste, reuse, recycle and compost more, but also align waste management with carbon efficiency – we have to collect waste materials and recyclables in a form that can be used by the new and developing technologies and processes such as closed-loop recycling. To mitigate the effects of climate change we need to reduce water consumption, plan for sea level rises and the impact of more variable weather conditions, and further protect important wildlife habitats.

Tackling climate change fairly

Labour is not a single issue party. It is a political party with fairness and equity as core values recognising its international obligations to assist less developed nations and believing that by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone. As such, we will tackle climate change in a fair way. The most carbon wasteful must take a lead; those in energy poverty, the transport poor and those that consume least and therefore waste least, should benefit.

We will use social marketing campaigns, environmental regulation and green taxation to support our policies and to meet our climate change targets. Fairness will be our guiding principle; regulation will mean all play their part, the majority not let down by others who fail to do their bit. 'Green' taxes will be directly related to rewarding carbon efficient behaviour.

Local Labour will lead in tackling climate change, linking environmental policy with the promotion of social justice, better health and green jobs.

Encouraging residents to act on Climate Change through innovative engagement

South Tyneside is providing leadership on the environment in its local area. The council hosts an annual 'Enviro fayre', which helps residents find out about climate change, saving energy, renewable energy and a whole host of other environmental issues.

Now in its third year, the fayre offers:

- free bike health checks;
- free low energy light bulbs;
- free seeds and compost vouchers;
- a farmers and craft market; and
- an organised bike ride to introduce people to cycling in the borough and help them rediscover the fun of cycling

The environment - think global, act Local

2. Energy and fuel poverty

Over the course of a new term, Labour should lead the way in producing local plans and mechanisms to tackle fuel poverty. Using existing powers to trade and the more robust proposed general power, local Labour can:

- Establish local energy efficiency companies, working in partnership with energy suppliers, social enterprises and local co-operatives to deliver energy advice and retrofit energy efficiency measures into all buildings;
- Use planning powers to establish local land-use energy plans in order to allocate land for decentralised energy production;
- Ensure that all new buildings paid for by the public purse will have the highest energy efficiency standards and existing publicly owned buildings will be retrofitted to improve their energy efficiency;
- Construct an exemplar 'zero carbon' home and 'decentralised' energy plant;
- Ensure that the majority of homes will have been retrofitted with roof and cavity wall insulation – and also ensure that local business premises will have received energy efficiency audits resulting in plans to reduce the impact that businesses have on the local environment;
- Ensure that the current confusing array of supplier and energy efficiency schemes are poured into a single funding pot, with councils given the responsibility to deliver results locally; and
- Review local development plans to support renewable energy schemes outside nature conservation areas.

Key facts

- Around 50% of the heat lost in an average home is lost through the walls and loft;
- If everyone in the UK installed loft insulation up to 270mm thickness, the equivalent financial saving

would pay the energy bills of over 640,000 families for a year;

- Loft insulation takes about two hours to install and costs around £250 (for an average house);
- If cavity wall installation was fitted into every possible house in the UK, it would cut carbon dioxide emissions by 7 million tonnes. That would be enough carbon dioxide to fill nearly 40 million double-decker buses, or the new Wembley stadium 900 times;
- Cavity wall insulation costs around £500 per house and can be installed in most homes in three hours
- If half the houses in the UK had combined heat and power technology, this would generate as much electricity as current nuclear power plants. It would also save householders on average £50 a year; and
- Holland meets 40% of national electricity demand through the provision of decentralised energy.

The largest reductions in carbon will be accomplished by changing the way we generate and utilise energy in homes, business premises and public buildings. Labour's priority must be to reduce the consumption of energy by increasing levels of insulation and encouraging smart uses of new technologies.

The number of households in fuel poverty – those that spend more than 10% of their income on heating bills – has reduced in the UK under Labour through a combination of measures including greater entitlement to additional and significantly increased winter fuel payments to the elderly, and targeted insulation programmes, but still remains an issue for too many households.

Since 2001 Labour has made huge progress improving energy efficiency in social housing with its decent homes programme, the largest investment in social housing for decades. The Warm Front and CERT initiatives have been targeted at low income housing to provide investment in energy efficiency programmes for people in their

own homes who cannot afford the upfront investment. National government has implemented new building regulations to improve energy efficiency with a target of zero carbon new homes by 2016.

Councils have promoted energy efficiency programmes locally and used its planning powers to promote higher standards in new homes. Local government has worked to improve the energy efficiency of its own buildings.

Tackling Climate Change in council buildings

Leicester City Council has worked with other councils to co-ordinate 'The Big Switch Off', a week in October where residents and businesses are encouraged to work with the council to reduce their energy consumption, switching off appliances when they are not in use. This was in partnership with energy suppliers who monitored the energy use across the participating areas and compare it with a similar period last year, noting any difference. This information can then be used as a campaign tool by the council.

South Tyneside is also taking a leading role in ensuring day-to-day efficiencies in council buildings, using low energy lighting and encouraging staff to turn off all non essential equipment when not in use. The council has also installed a wind turbine at one of its sites.

Council staff are encouraged to travel to work in more environmentally friendly ways through a cycle to work scheme and a car share scheme. An Affordable Warmth Strategy works to alleviate fuel poverty in the borough and makes some of the poorest houses more environmentally friendly.

Towards low carbon homes

New building regulations and requirements for low carbon homes are already challenging the design and construction industries to build more energy efficient homes. Local Labour

will use its planning powers to build on this and insist on still higher standards of new buildings – higher standards of thermal insulation, and local energy generations such as solar thermal heating, living roofs and rain water harvesting.

However, most homes are already built. Retrofitting energy efficiency can mean large initial capital costs with long-term benefits. But improving the carbon efficiency of all housing must be a priority for both local and national government. Local energy efficiency companies will provide direct investment where households are unable to themselves and will also set up framework agreements with the private sector or social enterprise to offer energy efficiency improvements to not only individual householders but also whole streets and estates.

Towards low carbon public, industrial and commercial buildings

New public, industrial and commercial buildings should be built with the highest standards of energy efficiency and Labour in local government will use its planning powers to ensure this. However, merely relying on improving the energy efficiency of new build will not deliver reductions in carbon required. The newly established local energy efficiency companies must also facilitate energy efficiency in the existing public, industrial and commercial building stock.

Towards a low carbon energy supply

One of the most significant contributions to carbon reductions will be decentralised energy – locally generated energy that uses excess heat to meet the heating needs of the local community. Some decentralised energy plants will use renewable resources. Local generation of electricity is already being developed in larger new build schemes. However, at present this is happening on an opportunistic basis – such as on large housing projects – not in a systematic way across towns and cities.

Local Labour will transform the focus of the current Local Development Frameworks to ensure that the decarbonisation of new and existing buildings, and

The environment - think global, act Local

local energy generation, are central to them. The new frameworks should also support and encourage greater understanding and use by residents of micro energy opportunities that are currently available and being developed. This would be achieved by incentivising the creation of excess energy – which would be transferred to a supplier – by automatically offsetting against annual council tax charge.

3. Greening transport

How we travel clearly has an impact on the local and global environment, but an efficient transport system, moving both goods and people is also vital to an efficient economy. We have an obesity crisis in the UK; we have high levels of premature death and ill health linked to air quality and sedentary, car dependent lifestyles. This health crisis can be tackled, in part, by more active travel – more cycling and walking.

There are links too, to falling community cohesion: car dependent travel and streets designed around motor vehicles have led to isolation – we no longer share the same public spaces with our neighbours and communities, youngsters are unable to play in their street, in part, because of parental fear of traffic. However we should not forget that many of our streets and roads were constructed before the onset of the car and certainly before the mass ownership of the car.

Key Facts

- Transport is the fastest growing source of climate change gases in the UK; road transport alone now accounts for 26% of emissions.
- The Government is providing over £120 million to support research, development and demonstration of key technologies for lower carbon vehicles, including electric vehicle options.

In London Labour has led the way on tackling transport issues. The introduction of congestion charging, a significant improvement in bus services and a huge increase in cycling has meant London has been one of the few cities in the world that has seen a shift from car use to public transport, cycling and walking against a trend, nationally, of rising car dependency. In contrast the Boris Johnson, as Mayor of London has replaced action with rhetoric and back pedalling: raising bus fares, weakening the congestion charge and reversing Labour's plans to discourage the use of gas guzzlers in central London.

Labour controlled Nottingham City Council has promoted and introduced a brand new tram service and is creating great spaces for people to walk, work, rest and play – its town centre square is award winning. It has transformed Maid Marian Way, an ugly urban dual carriageway road once voted the worst in Europe, into a much more pleasant and pedestrian friendly street.

Nationally, Labour has recently enacted the Local Transport Act 2008 which allows local government outside London to plan and manage its local bus services removing reliance on the whims and commercial decisions of bus companies. The Act has also given integrated transport powers to six metropolitan local government areas similar to those in London allowing other areas to promote themselves as an Integrated Transport Authorities. Labour has introduced free local bus travel in England for the over 60s.

The Labour Government has for the first time introduced standards for residential street design in the Manual for Streets. Where in the past streets have been designed primarily for motor vehicles, in future they will be increasingly designed around sustainable transport – cycling and walking.

Labour will not duck the issue of road pricing in congested urban areas, in doing so freeing up our town and city centres. But we have to take people with us. Any revenue

will be used to promote quality, sustainable transport alternatives to private motoring.

Towards lower carbon transport

We have to change the way we travel if we are to meet climate change targets. Local Labour will emulate the best. In the most congested towns and cities we will use road pricing in concert with a step change in bus services, cycling and walking.

If we are to encourage a step change in cycling and walking we have to design our streets, towns and cities around these modes. We have to develop our streets, towns and cities so that they are not dominated by motor vehicles and communities can live, work and play happily and safely – our streets should be for living in, not just driving through. We will invest in our streets and public places to create safer cycling and walking environments, increasing access for cyclists and removing unnecessary street clutter and traffic management schemes that make walking difficult and unpleasant. We will move towards a 20mph speed limit on all residential streets and most urban roads.

We will go further than the simple provision of cycle lanes in creating a cycling infrastructure. Cycling infrastructures will include the maintenance of cycle lanes, secure cycle sheds and lock up facilities in public spaces and at places of employment. Employment sites will also receive greater incentives to reduce car parking spaces and to provide showers and lockers for cyclists. By eleven all school children will have had to pass a cycle proficiency exam.

Towards a better bus network

Under Labour, the number of people using buses continues to increase year-on-year, reversing a trend that dates back to the 1950s. Locally, we will use the new powers contained in the Local Transport Act 2008 to plan local bus services and networks. Simply increasing bus services on their own will not provide a real alternative to the private car. We will re-allocate road space for bus priority in our

towns and cities so that improved bus services can operate efficiently.

We are empowering local authorities to meet local transport needs in the light of local circumstances. In a new term, we want the government to give councils the power to enter into more meaningful partnerships with bus operators, with greater flexibility to implement 'quality contracts' schemes in areas we need to take greater control over bus services in order to ensure a more reliable service.

We support the government's plan to give councils the power to review and propose their own arrangements for local transport governance to support more coherent planning, management and delivery of services. This will give all local authorities the powers to improve bus services through voluntary partnerships, statutory partnerships or quality contracts.

Concessionary fares

Concessionary fares should be a great vote-winner for Labour – as long as the system is correctly financed and facilitated. Labour local government is justly proud of the first wave of the scheme – championed by Labour local government in 2004 – despite problems arising from the funding of the scheme.

Local Labour will continue to work to ensure that an equitable funding system is put in place, enabling as many people as possible to make use of free bus transport.

The ongoing aim of a national concessionary fares scheme should be to maximise citizen mobility. To this end, whilst protecting the existing schemes for pensioners and disabled people, we would welcome the extension of national schemes for all students in full-time education (or equivalent) up to the age of 18, as well as all jobseekers.

The environment - think global, act Local



4. Recycling

We are using the planet's material resources as though we had three planets – this is clearly unsustainable and inequitable. Over the last decade the focus of waste management has turned from simply land-filling and burning waste to reducing, reusing and recycling. Packaging has been engineered to use less virgin material. Local authorities and industry recycle more now than ever before, but absolute levels of waste are still rising and valuable resources are wasted.

Some collection systems mean the quality of material collected is so poor only developing nations, with low wage economies, can process it at all. At the same time UK processors are short of material. Kerbside sorting of recyclables increases the efficiency of the recycling process, increasing value for money and reducing the amount of waste in comparison to mixed recycling. Mixed recycling – sorted after collection – results in rejection of 10% of the recyclables due to contamination during transit.

The Labour led Welsh Assembly is leading the UK in how it proposes to manage waste. Its new strategy treats waste as a resource, adopting the principle of 'zero waste'. Waste is not simply something to be disposed of - it is a resource to be utilised. The Assembly proposes to genuinely recycle not to downgrade material, and use any residual material to generate energy in modern energy to waste plants.

Labour has done much to promote recycling, setting tough recycling targets, and also funding local authorities to meet those targets. It has consistently raised the landfill tax to incentivise recycling, introducing landfill allowance trading credits to encourage the diversion of biodegradable material from landfill. We need to do more to align its targets with the outcomes required for 'zero waste'. Whilst local authorities have successfully focussed on household waste recycling there is still not enough incentive in the system to ensure commercial waste is diverted from landfill.

Whilst householders are keen on recycling, not all materials are recyclable in a genuine sense – the recycling of drinks cartons is often promoted, but due to their complex multi-material composition they are not readily recycled, similarly not all plastics can be recycled, though they bear recycling symbols! Government needs to act to regulate the types of materials used by manufactures with genuine recyclability as a goal.

The community sector has pioneered and provided much of the innovation in waste management and recycling over the past decades. Often they have competed well with the commercial sector and outperformed them on cost and service. We need to make sure we continue to build on that work.

We know that residents are concerned about rising waste volumes and want to do their bit so we will constantly strive to make it easier for more of our residents to reduce, reuse and recycle more of their waste.

To the consternation of all involved in waste management in the UK - community, public and private sectors - the Tories have sought to trash the initiatives of local government to tackle waste management. This has been simply to gain headlines and short term electoral advantage. Local Labour will take the lead on zero waste.

Towards low carbon waste management

Over the course of the next parliament, Labour local government will strive to adopt a 'zero waste' strategy. We will continue to move the focus away from dealing with residual waste in the black bin and towards waste as a resource.

We will align our waste management practices with low carbon objectives to deliver the highest standards of material quality so that it can be processed in the UK. Where materials are exported they will be of high quality and we will assure that the working conditions of those processing the materials are good.

If we are to meet our targets then all householders must play their part. The majority cannot be let down by a minority who choose to present waste in a manner that simply cannot be sensibly recycled. We will use both financial incentives and our regulatory powers to ensure that all do their bit when presenting materials for collection.

We have to operate services efficiently and deliver good value for money. As the focus of collections moves from primarily collecting residual waste (black bag collections) to collecting materials for recycling it makes sense to modify collection frequencies for different materials. We recognise that in order to do this we need to collect kitchen waste weekly.

Targets for packaging reduction

Labour will introduce, with the backing of financial penalties and incentives, tougher targets for the reduction of packaging in the retail sector and set a deadline for the ending of the use of the single use plastic bags. 🗑️

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Nathan Yeowell, September 2009

The LGA Labour Group

The LGA Labour Group exists to fight the corner for Labour councillors at a national level, both within the cross-party Local Government Association (LGA), and across Westminster and Whitehall. The Group provides a strong voice for Labour councillors and activists, and acts as a platform for ideas and argument for all of those committed to an effective localist element to Labour politics and policies.

If you would like to know more about the Group, please write to:

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