



Hastings Labour Manifesto for the 2021 Borough Council Elections

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Introduction

It has been three years since the last borough election as the pandemic has meant a delay of a year. I am proud to present our manifesto that puts the needs of our town and its people at its heart and which builds on our achievements as a Labour council.

We have been living through this pandemic for over a year now and it has been the most difficult year collectively for us all and there have been many sad times for people. As a Labour council we have stood with the people of our town as I pledged that we would do a year ago when I became leader of the council just as we went into lockdown.

Our community hub which we set up quickly in partnership with others ensured that those in need could be helped to have their essential needs met. We have worked collaboratively throughout this pandemic with our key local partners including the community and voluntary sector and will continue to do so. The work of our community and voluntary organisations and their many hundreds of volunteers who rallied round to help has been fantastic.

It has been a very challenging time responding to and adapting to government guidance, but we have kept all our essential services going throughout this pandemic and made some difficult decisions around when to open and close some of our amenities; of paramount importance has been the health and safety of our residents and the council officers. Most of the officers are still working from home and in this way, we are ensuring that our workforce is as resilient as possible.

We have offered ongoing support and advice to businesses and devised schemes and distributed government support grants to those eligible as quickly as possible.

Our messaging throughout this pandemic has been clear and consistent and over 37k people have signed up to our weekly e-newsletter, our website is refreshed and updated regularly, and we use all the main social media channels.

We remain optimistic for our town and our people and we have already agreed our priorities and actions for recovery and resilience and the themes which will form the basis of our work both at the council and with our partners.

A labour run local council will continue to put the needs of the most vulnerable at the heart of its decision making and seek the best possible outcomes for all our people and their communities as we move together towards a brighter future.

Kim Forward



Our Values

The policies and initiatives outlined in this manifesto can only cover a small part of what a council does in its day-to-day activities. Everything we do will be governed by a clear set of guiding socialist principles which will remain at the heart of everything the council does. We believe:

- equality of opportunity is paramount, and services to local people should be provided in a way that addresses their needs and reasonable expectations, regardless of gender, social class, race, disability, age, culture, sexuality, or philosophical beliefs, in as far as such beliefs do not oppress others;
- in a culture of co-operation, openness, fairness, and transparency in all it does, enabling local people to hold us to account and other agencies to work with us;
- all local people (including employees of the council) should be entitled to a high standard of education and decent jobs that pay a living wage, where they are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness;
- all local people have a right to a safe, secure, affordable home in an environment that enhances their health, quality of life and access to lifelong learning;

- the economic regeneration of Hastings should narrow the gap between the most deprived communities and those of the rest of the town, as well as between Hastings and the rest of the South East and that poorer people should not be excluded from the new opportunities that arise.

Within these values, we are proposing a set of priorities to be addressed through the commitments in this manifesto:

- Tackle climate change and increase biodiversity, aiming to make Hastings carbon neutral by 2030 and ensuring that the council shapes its actions and policies to achieve this;
- To develop and implement the best possible approach to the recovery from the pandemic, underpinned by our commitment to equalities;
- Ensure policies and funding applications are targeted to benefit the most deprived households and communities;
- Bring services back in house, to ensure they're run for public benefit rather than private profit;
- Maximise the supply of genuinely affordable rented housing available in Hastings;
- Support and promote projects that create well-paid, secure jobs as well as training opportunities to give local people the skills to benefit from them;
- Generate income, through ethical means, to ensure that a good level of services can still be provided, despite government funding cuts.



Our Achievements

Just to set our achievements into context, since 2010 council budgets have been cut dramatically, because of reductions in government grants. Hastings has suffered particularly badly, with our main government grant cut from over £9m in 2010 to just £1m in 2020. The council workforce has been cut by half. Overall, we've lost over £60m cumulatively in government funding. Many services have

been discontinued. If funding were to be restored to the levels under the last Labour government, before Conservative and Liberal Democrat cuts, we would be able to reinstate many of these services and develop new ones with additional income we've raised and efficiencies we've made since 2010. As we have elections every two years (although it has been three years since the last one) not everything in the manifesto is achieved within that timescale – some of our commitments are longer term, or are continuous commitments stating our broad approach to particular issues. In most cases, these have been 'carried over' to the 2021 manifesto but many of the specific commitments we made in 2018 have been achieved.

Some of our 2018 pledges and achievements:

- Use our housing company to provide fair rented housing and housing for sale, to both generate income and provide a supply of good-quality housing for local people, with security of tenure;
 - Because of government rule changes around borrowing, this has not been pursued, but instead the council has purchased housing directly for use as temporary accommodation for homeless households, reducing the dependency on bed and breakfast accommodation through a £5m programme. Twenty-six homes have now been purchased.
- Work with Optivo housing association on the Coastal Space programme to refurbish Leolyn House, a disused care home in St Leonards, providing 16 new social homes;
 - Leolyn House is completed and fully occupied.
- Continue to provide services to identify and assist rough sleepers, in partnership with voluntary agencies, offering help to secure and retain tenancies, working towards a 'housing first' model, where every Hastings resident who ended up on the street would be entitled to a home;
 - We have used many approaches including an 'assessment centre' to address specific needs of rough sleepers and help them into accommodation and have launched a Housing First programme as part of the Rough Sleeping Initiative. Our schemes have helped 60

rough sleepers into permanent homes over the years. During the pandemic 77 former rough sleepers have been accommodated. We continue to develop the Housing First and Next Steps programmes.

- **Develop different housing models, including modular temporary housing, as an alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people;**
 - We are purchasing existing homes across the borough for this purpose rather than modular temporary housing.
- **Work with Sussex Coast College to build their University Centre, while continuing to look for other universities to develop a presence in Hastings;**
 - Sussex Coast College (now East Sussex Colleges Group) has developed a university centre at its Station Plaza building, offering degree courses to many students. We continue to discuss university relocations via the Local Enterprise Partnership and other forums.
- **Play a prominent role in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, promoting the needs of the Hastings area;**
 - We have received additional funding for Hastings capital projects (for example, the Coastal Space scheme to refurbish derelict buildings to produce social rented housing and the new business start-up centre in Hollington.) We continue to promote the needs of Hastings through Team East Sussex for example and attend SELEP meetings even though we no longer have a seat on the board following their restructure.
- **Work with partners to develop a strategy to increase the number of high-quality tourist accommodation self-catering and serviced bed spaces in Hastings;**
 - We have signed a deal with Premier Inn to build a hotel on the Cornwallis car park site and are considering other proposals for new hotels elsewhere in town.
- **Support the provision of low-cost start-up units for new businesses, especially in the creative and cultural sectors;**

- We secured funding from the Local Enterprise Partnership to build a new business start-up centre in Hollington to create around 80 jobs and incorporating a business skills training centre.
- Lobby government ministers and shadow ministers to establish a fairer system of fishing quotas that properly recognises the under ten metre fleet and the importance of sustainable fisheries such as Hastings;
 - The council leader brought the Shadow Fisheries Minister to Hastings, where he committed a Labour government to significantly increasing the quota share for the under ten metre fleet. No such commitment has ever been made by a government minister.
- Use the funding achieved from the EU Community-Led Local Development programme to establish projects to address long-standing unemployment and income deprivation, as well as skills shortages, principally in the Hollington, Broomgrove, Farley Bank, Halton, and Downs Farm estates;
 - Several projects have now been approved, including 'Live, Work and Thrive', which will help people in the most deprived communities tackle poor health, insecure housing and unemployment, 'Invest for Life', a project run by Education Futures Trust to help local people gain the practical skills they need to get work and Work Smart supporting people over the age of 18 into work.
- Continue to fund the Council's Active Hastings team to take sports opportunities and street games into disadvantaged parts of the town and give the chance for young people to become accredited sports leaders;
 - Funding for this scheme has been protected.
- Do all we can to mitigate the impact of the Tory government's attack on welfare claimants, by continuing to provide full Council Tax reduction to the poorest in our communities;
 - A 100% Council Tax Reduction scheme has been retained, ensuring all those claimants in receipt of out-of-work benefits (70% of claimants) pay no council tax. We are one of only two councils (we believe) in the country to retain this scheme.

- Develop an Area Action Plan for White Rock Gardens and Hastings Town Centre, to determine new planning policies for this area;
 - Public consultation on the first draft of the AAP took place during autumn 2018. The AAP has now been incorporated into the broader Local Plan review which is in its consultation phase;
- Redevelop White Rock Gardens through a self-financing scheme to provide new leisure and entertainment facilities, as well as enhanced gardens and open spaces;
 - We undertook a feasibility study for a proposal for a combined new leisure centre and entertainment venue at White Rock Gardens. This demonstrated that the idea was feasible, but the work has been paused due to Covid and while we await the outcome of the town deal investment plan.
- Investigate proposals to redevelop West Marina as a mixed-use housing and leisure development, or, if these are not viable, develop medium-term temporary leisure uses for the site;
 - Leases not signed yet for this exciting development due to the pandemic and a change of financier but should be underway again soon.
- Complete the restoration of Pelham Arcade as a key heritage feature;
 - We continue to work on this scheme and have recently agreed additional funding to help restore the road.
- Redevelop the former Harold Place toilets as a new café-restaurant;
 - We are working with a national restaurant chain to redevelop this site as a new restaurant and plans for the new building will be drawn up shortly.
- Work with the Environment Agency and Southern Water to make sure water quality is further improved and Blue Flag status is maintained for St Leonards beach;

- Blue Flag status has been maintained for St Leonards beach, and the innovative natural filtration system installed through Alexandra Park stream and ponds has improved bathing water quality by removing bacteria from the stream outflow and Pelham Beach.
- Develop our programme of events such as the Seafood and Wine Festival, St Leonards Festival, Stade Saturdays, and the Herring Fair to maximise the variety and impact of the overall festival programme;
 - Until the pandemic hit the council's festival programme was delivered with festivals on council land free from single-use plastics for the first time in 2019. When Covid restrictions allow we will continue.
- Continue the successful Grotbusting programme to force owners to improve the appearance of land and property, achieving at least a further 100 improved properties by 2020;
 - Target achieved.
- Promote our online reporting system for rubbish, dog fouling and fly tipping to provide clear target times for when problems will be dealt with and use our street wardens to monitor 'hotspot' areas regularly;
 - The My Hastings system for online reporting has been developed and improved and has received tens of thousands of reports.
- Establish a new Direct Services Organisation (DSO) to bring street cleansing, bulky waste collection and fly tip clearance back 'in-house' when the current contract expires in 2019, and market these in-house services to other organisations;
 - The new DSO started operations in June 2019, resulting in a much-improved service for street cleaning and fly tip removals.
- Work with housing associations to make sure their housing estates are kept clean and tidy, investigating joint planning of services and potential use of enforcement powers where this is necessary;
 - A prosecution was prepared against Optivo housing association, to require them to keep their land clean. Although the prosecution was not pursued, this has resulted in significantly improved standards of

cleanliness on Optivo estates, with the council DSO working more closely with Optivo to make sure this is maintained.

- Enforce Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to prevent littering, street drinking and anti-social behaviour, while linking this to mental health and other support services that offer help to those with alcohol or drug addiction problems;
 - We reviewed and extended PSPOs to cover additional areas around the town centre and continue to work with the police to enforce these, with successful prosecutions of persistent offenders. Support services funded by the county council remain inadequate, however. We are a pilot area for Project Adder and are working in partnership with the police and other agencies to tackle the harm caused by the supply and use of drugs.
- Maintain 'Green Flag' award status for Alexandra Park and St Leonards Gardens, and maintain our Environmental Stewardship Programme with Natural England to protect habitats, encourage biodiversity and limit invasive species in the country park;
 - Green Flag status retained for our parks, with many biodiversity improvements at the country park. For example, removing gorse and other invasive species, restoring natural heather heathlands at Firehills.
- Build a new visitor centre at Hastings Country Park;
 - The new 'straw bale' construction visitor centre will open soon.
- Work towards the transfer of protected open space land in the Ore Valley from Sea Space (the former local regeneration company) to the Council and establish a local trust to maintain and enhance these spaces for local wildlife and for local people to enjoy.
 - The land has been transferred to the council – safety works are to be completed before advertising the land for a local community groups to take on its management.

- Pursue the Council's newly-adopted energy generation strategy to set up a local supply network to provide cheap, sustainable electricity for local businesses and households, supplied from seafront vertical-axis wind turbines and PV arrays on Council and other buildings, as well as examining potential other sustainable sources such as wave power and district heating systems;
 - Local supply networks are not technically possible yet, but the council has installed roof-mounted solar arrays on its seafront offices and Churchfields Business centre, and is investigating ground mounted solar arrays, where there are no adverse ecological consequences, additional roof-mounted solar on council-owned buildings, and solar arrays over car parks. We are also reviewing the local plan to identify sites for wind turbines.
- Install more electric vehicle charging points and pressure local supermarkets and leisure providers to provide charging points;
 - Three local supermarkets now have EV charging points. 14 new EV charging points are being installed in Priory Street car park and Carlisle Underground car park as well as 2 new chargers at Pelham Place car park.
- Continue to play our part in the programme to resettle Syrian refugees, offering to rehouse 100 refugees over the five-year life of the programme;
 - Hastings rehoused well over 100 Syrian refugees in Hastings, through the first phase of this government-funded programme.
- Continue to acquire local commercial properties to generate income for the Council and provide security for local jobs;
 - Our programme of purchasing commercial properties is now raising an additional £1m net revenue to fund council services.
- Take every possible opportunity to submit funding applications to the EU, Local Enterprise Partnership, central government, Heritage Lottery, and any other funding streams available, where these support the Council's priorities;

- Over £10 million in competitive external grant funding from all these sources, for a wide range of projects, was secured in the last two years.

Where the Money Comes from

During these times of austerity, there is far less money to provide new services and functions than there used to be. So, the council's efforts need to be focussed on providing existing services better, as well as raising as much money as we can from other sources.

Council spending is divided into two kinds: revenue spending and capital spending.

Revenue spending is what the council spends to cover its day-to-day expenses, providing services it must provide by law (statutory services), as well as additional services it chooses to provide (discretionary services).

Money for this comes from Council Tax, Business Rates, government grants, fees and charges, car parking, competitive grant programmes, rents on commercial properties, and other income generation.

The Hastings Council part of the Council Tax (about 16% of the total) only pays for about a sixth of council spending. Government grants used to be the largest contributor to council income but have been cut to almost nothing. Council Tax increases have been limited too, so much more has to be raised from local fees and charges, and other income generation.

The council cannot borrow money to pay for revenue spending and cannot end the financial year in deficit. If it can't balance the books, it must use money from reserves to cover the gap, cut its services, or raise more income.

The council bids to external competitive grant programmes wherever the grant can help the council to fund its priorities. These grants can only be used for a specific purpose, are time-limited, and are generally used to fund additional rather than mainstream services. Grant sources include the EU (but not for much longer), the Government, National Lottery Fund, Arts Council, and the South East Local Strategic Partnership.

Capital spending is the money the council spends on longer term projects – buildings or equipment that last beyond the current year. To fund this, the council is allowed to borrow money, usually from the Public Works Loan Board (which offers very low interest rates).

The council has to set its own limit for the amount it's going to borrow during the year, but there are no restrictions on this limit. As long as the council sticks to 'Prudential rules' (i.e. it can demonstrate that it can afford the loan repayments) it can borrow as much as it likes. However, as the repayments on loans come within the revenue budget, and because the revenue budget is so restricted now, borrowing can really only be done to pay for capital projects that will generate enough income to cover the loan repayments. For some capital projects, the costs can be covered by external grants. So, undertaking capital-funded projects makes no difference to the amount of money the council has for day-to-day revenue-funded services.

For clarity, we've divided our commitments into four categories:

- Day-to-day spending commitments for improved council services to be paid for from the council's revenue spending;
- Capital projects for new facilities to be funded from borrowing;
- Income generation and cost reduction schemes designed to generate additional revenue funding, or maximise existing resources;
- Influencing how government, healthcare providers, police, education services and others operate through the work of Labour councillors as well as broader campaigning commitments in the local Labour Party.

Providing Services Through Day-to-Day Spending

This is about how the council spends its revenue budget. These commitments don't cover all the council's day-to-day services but show some of the additional things beyond its core services that a Labour council will do.



Tackling Climate Change

- Work with public sector partners and local businesses to make Hastings carbon neutral by 2030;
- Further develop the council's strategy and action plan to make Hastings carbon neutral;
- Review our local plan to ensure our planning policies maximise energy efficiency in new developments, as well as maximising the opportunities for sustainable energy generation, biodiversity and sustainable transport solutions;
- Pursue the Council's energy generation strategy to install solar arrays and wind turbines, for example seafront vertical-axis wind turbines, as well as examining potential other sustainable sources such as wave and tidal power;
- Identify sites suitable for onshore wind energy generation in the Local Plan;
- Encourage and promote community energy generation schemes;
- Install rooftop solar energy on all possible council-owned buildings;
- Develop solar arrays mounted above suitable council car parks;
- Investigate sites for ground-mounted solar arrays, installing arrays at these only where there are no adverse ecological consequences;
- Work with Energise Sussex Coast to install solar arrays on commercial, domestic and community buildings throughout the borough, subject to the development of a workable feed-in tariff to make such projects viable;

- When the technology is available, link local energy generation projects to a local electricity network to provide cheap, sustainable electricity for local homes and businesses;
- Eliminate single-use plastics from all council activities;
- Ban single-use plastics from all events held on council land;
- Aim to protect existing wildlife habitats, and create new ones, to maximise biodiversity in our parks and open spaces;
- Maintain all our parks and open spaces in a way that promotes environmental sustainability, using natural methods to control invasive species while maximising biodiversity and protecting rare habitats;
- Develop a tree-planting programme for Hastings, and look for ways to fund it;
- Promote guidance on how local people can reduce their carbon footprint by home composting, reducing flying and car use, reducing single-use plastics, reducing energy consumption, and more;
- Establish a greenway cycling and walking link between Ore Station and Frederick Road, from the development of housing sites along the route, and seek ways to fund a greenway linked through to Hastings Town Centre;
- Ask the county council to allow closure of the A259 along Hastings seafront on two summer Sundays to promote the attractiveness of a car-free seafront;
- Develop policies and practices, with local businesses and other organisations, to reduce the harmful effects of plastics in our seas;
- Use this innovative and ground-breaking work to encourage green energy generation companies to relocate to Hastings;

- Install more electric vehicle charging points and pressure local supermarkets and leisure providers to provide charging points;
- Replace Council-owned vehicles with electric vehicles as they're renewed;
- Use the new Country Park Visitor centre to demonstrate and promote sustainable straw bale building techniques.

Tackling Poverty and Inequality

Hastings is the most deprived council area in South East England and has some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country. To tackle this, a Labour Council will:

- Continue to use the funding achieved from the EU Community-Led Local Development programme to establish projects to address long-standing unemployment and income deprivation, as well as skills shortages, principally in the Hollington, Broomgrove, Farley Bank, Halton, and Downs Farm estates;
- Consult with residents in appropriate communities as well as those from other under-represented or disadvantaged groups including ethnic minority groups, disabled groups, LGBTQ+ groups, refugee groups and women's groups.
- Participate in the Education Opportunity Area initiative and work to ensure that the funding is used to provide sustainable improvement to educational standards in Hastings;
- Continue to fund the Council's Active Hastings team to take sports opportunities and street games into disadvantaged parts of the town and give the chance for young people, especially girls, ethnic minority, LGBTQ+ and disabled young people, to become accredited sports leaders;

- Work closely with non-statutory organisations providing essential services to the most vulnerable people;
- Support the Foreshore Trust with their grants programme which commissions the non-statutory sector to provide services and advice;
- Actively engage with and support women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds and recognise that these groups are disproportionately affected by economic and social inequality;
- Continue to provide services to identify and assist rough sleepers, in partnership with voluntary agencies, offering help with associated problems such as addictions and mental health problems.
- Develop our 'housing first' model to make sure rough sleepers are given the support they need to get a home and sustain a tenancy;
- Identify and seek funds to improve the lives of the most vulnerable women and girls in Hastings and St Leonards upon whom austerity has had a disproportionately damaging impact;
- Work with organisations such as Little Gate Farm to take on young people with learning difficulties or with physical disabilities as apprentices in the council;
- Do all we can to mitigate the impact of the Tory government's attack on welfare claimants by continuing to provide full Council Tax reduction to the poorest in our communities.

Providing Decent Homes

Hastings has a large private rented sector which still has a significant number of poor-quality homes with bad landlords. We are also desperately short of genuinely affordable, social rented housing. To tackle this, a Labour Council will:

- Continue our programme of property purchases to house homeless families as an alternative to using bed & breakfast accommodation;
- Start building or acquiring council housing again by re-establishing a Housing Revenue Account, if this is financially viable within the government social housing grant regime;
- Ensure new housing built or acquired by the council meets the fully accessible 'Lifetime Homes' standard where possible, as well as good design and energy efficiency standards;
- Work in partnership with housing providers whose policies reflect the needs of those in greatest need in Hastings;
- Push for the renewal of the selective licensing scheme with the Secretary of State for Housing
- Use other statutory powers to crack down on rogue landlords who abuse tenants' rights and work to ensure that private rented housing and HMOs are maintained to a decent standard;
- Promote and enhance our homelessness prevention programme, to help people get rehoused before they become homeless;
- Bring all possible pressure on developers to comply with the 25% social housing requirement in the Local Plan for all qualifying developments;
- Investigate and encourage alternative models of housing provision, including community land trusts and housing co-operatives, especially for older people.

Promoting Healthy Lifestyles

Obesity, smoking and common life-limiting health problems such as stroke, high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes are all significantly higher in Hastings than the national average. These poor health outcomes lead to short life expectancies in some parts of town. To help tackle this, the Labour council will:

- Work with the Clinical Commissioning Group through its funding programme to develop initiatives that promote smoking cessation, healthy eating, and responsible drinking;
- Focus on improving play areas in the most deprived communities, as well as in our major parks and seafront;
- Continue our 'Sport for All' programme to get adults and children involved in sports;
- Develop opportunities for sport for disabled people through our funded sports programmes;
- Aim to develop new fully accessible sports and leisure facilities through the redevelopment of the Bohemia area;
- Continue our holiday play schemes for children in the most deprived parts of town, linked to a programme of exercise leading to healthier lifestyles;
- Promote cycling in Hastings, including the use of electric bicycles.



Boosting the Local Economy

Through its planning policies, external grant applications, and other interventions, the council can influence the local economy, promoting 'traditional' sectors such as tourism, as well as newer sectors such as the creative and cultural sector. To achieve this, a labour council will:

- Introduce a post-Covid business recovery scheme;
- Ensure the revised local plan holds new planning policies for the Bohemia area and Hastings Town Centre to pave the way for its redevelopment;

- Work with local community-based organisations to support them in developing regeneration projects (such as the Observer Building);
- Take every opportunity to provide economic advantage for young people, *working with others to help provide high skill training, jobs and homes, alongside a safe and exciting cultural and social experience:*
- Promote good quality apprenticeships for local young people, with the council 'setting a good example' by taking on apprentices in council services;
- Work to support the Town Deal Board if it is successful in its bid to gain £25m in funding for regeneration projects that help the poorest people in our communities, while recognising the need to tackle climate change and improve sustainable transport;
- Create a council task force to identify abandoned development land and investigate ways to bring it into use for housing or other development;
- Support the Hastings 'Music City' initiative, working with local music venues and event organisers to encourage and develop local musicians of all musical genres to develop a reputation for Hastings as a centre of excellence for contemporary and classical music;
- Work with partners to produce a strategic approach to marketing the town in a way that links the cultural, heritage and tourism sectors more closely;
- Increase the availability of good quality overnight accommodation, both through council developments to create new hotels and by encouraging other accommodation providers;
- Use the council's newly built business start-up centre at Churchfields to help those from our most deprived communities develop business skills and establish new businesses, especially co-operatives;

- Work with the County Council to achieve improvements to local roads, especially the seafront road and The Ridge following the completion of the Queensway Gateway road;
- Develop a 'Community Wealth Building' approach to local procurement, using our new procurement strategy and a simplified application processes to ensure more contracts and services are procured locally, keeping the money in the local economy;
- Encourage other public sector services providers to sign up to a community wealth building local procurement approach;
- Strengthen planning policies to protect and support local shopping areas;
- With other local authorities, investigate the possibility of establishing a community bank to provide loans to small and medium sized businesses.



Promoting Local Events and Attractions

Hastings has many attractions that benefit local people, tourism, and local businesses. Some of these are owned and maintained by the council, but others can be helped by the council too. Hastings-based groups have received over half a million pounds in the current financial year to date from the Arts Council alone. We will:

- Continue to support the Hastings cultural sector in general and, specifically, with leverage funding that can be applied to Arts Council applications;
- Work with the Environment Agency and Southern Water to make sure water quality is further improved and Blue Flag status is maintained for St Leonards beach;
- Maintain and develop wheelchair access routes on our beaches;

- Support and promote St Mary-in-the-Castle as a successful performance venue, working with the charitable trust that now runs it;
- Support the Hastings Contemporary gallery to establish a secure future and use its Arts Council National Portfolio Funding to enhance its outreach work with schools and local communities;
- Work to maintain and improve our programme of events (such as the Seafood and Wine Festival, St Leonards Festival) engaging with underrepresented, minority and disadvantaged local people to maximise the variety and impact of the overall festival programme;
- Continue to recognise the impact of local events on the community and the difference they make to people's lives, e.g. Pride for the LGBT community and International Women's Day for women and increase work with other groups including Disabled groups and BAME groups;
- Actively encourage and support work from minority and disadvantaged local people and where funding is available ring-fence some for work led by and including women, BAME, Disabled, LGBTQ+ and other underrepresented people;
- Actively promote and encourage inclusive and diverse arts projects, especially those led by underrepresented, minority and disadvantaged people living locally;
- Keep White Rock Theatre open until the new performance venue can be developed;
- Continue to support local groups to put on established cultural and heritage events and festivals, and encourage new ones;
- Work with Ore Community Land Trust and others to secure community ownership of Speckled Wood and establish the area as a Local Nature Reserve;
- Maintain 'Green Flag' award status for Alexandra Park, St Leonards Gardens and Hastings Country Park;
- Work with Natural England to protect habitats, encourage biodiversity and limit invasive species in the country park;

- Work to establish an electric 'mini-tram' or other sustainable bus service along the seafront, linking the Old Town, Hastings Pier, and St Leonards;
- Install a cycle route in Alexandra Park;
- Maintain and develop wheelchair access routes in our parks and open spaces;
- Use the new Country Park Visitor Centre to promote the country park to local people and visitors;
- Establish a local trust to maintain and enhance the Ore Valley protected open spaces for local wildlife and for local people to enjoy;
- Work with the county council to eventually develop a car-free seafront.



Enhancing the Appearance of our Borough

Improving the appearance of the town not only makes Hastings better for those who live here, but it also helps to attract visitors and new employers. To achieve this, a Labour council will:

- Continue the successful Grotbusting programme to force owners to improve the appearance of land and property;
- Use our compulsory purchase powers to bring more empty homes back into use;
- Use our new in-house street cleansing service to continue to improve street cleaning standards;
- Promote our online reporting system for rubbish, dog fouling and fly tipping to provide clear target times for when problems will be dealt with and use our street wardens to monitor 'hotspot' areas regularly;
- Use our new in-house fly tip removal service to develop new policies to deal with fly tipping, using CCTV and other methods to identify perpetrators and secure prosecutions;

- Work with housing associations to make sure their housing estates are kept clean and tidy, investigating joint planning of services and potential use of enforcement powers where this is necessary.

Keeping Hastings Safe

While tackling crime is primarily a police responsibility, there are powers the council has to tackle anti-social behaviour, street drinking, littering and other minor crimes, in collaboration with the police, helping people feel safer and more willing to visit our town centres. To make the most of these powers, a Labour council will:

- Work with other agencies to help reduce violent crime, especially knife crime;
- Continue to co-ordinate and participate in inter-agency community safety initiatives, including the Safer Hastings Partnership, Hate Crime Partnership, and Multi-Agency Task Teams;
- Use our Licensing Policy to restrict the proliferation of off-licences in town centres, while encouraging responsible licensees to develop the town's evening economy with good restaurants and other licensed premises;
- Continue the 'Reduce the Strength' campaign to encourage off-licences not to stock high-strength beers and cider;
- Expand our participation in White Ribbon Day and work with other agencies to highlight and prevent domestic violence and coercive control and lobby to provide more resources for women experiencing domestic violence;
- Work with the police to enforce Public Space Protection Orders to prevent littering, street drinking and anti-social behaviour, while linking this to mental health and other support services that offer help to those with alcohol or drug addiction problems;

- Ensure cycling and pedestrian provisions, especially in shared spaces, are safe and comply with recognised good practice to improve the experience for cyclists and pedestrians, especially in the Town Centre.

Promoting Inclusion and Diversity

We want to make sure all people, regardless of their ethnic origin, sexuality, gender, or disability, feel included in the local community, and we want to develop ways to include all sections of the community in our decision making. To this end, a labour council will:

- Actively seek out people from disadvantaged minority communities for consultation on how local groups and partners can effectively promote diversity and support underrepresented, disadvantaged and minority communities and ensure that any projects are led by those who are affected by them;
- Support and welcome refugees and groups working with refugees and will continue to work closely with the Refugee Buddy Project and others in our effort to create a culture of welcome;
- Continue to play our part if the programme to resettle Syrian refugees is reinstated offering to rehouse at least a further 20 refugees;
- Continue to support and welcome those seeking asylum and will promote the Lift the Ban campaign (including lobbying the government) which calls on the government to enable asylum seekers to work after six months whilst waiting for the result of their claim which would ease the skills shortage and increase the number of people with taxable income;
- Support local festivals that celebrate diversity and encourage all festivals to actively seek out the involvement of local minority groups and individuals;

- Work with the local Disability Forum to make sure disability access to Council services and structures is maintained and enhanced and that local retail and leisure services are encouraged to improve disability access;
- Ensure that all Council events and public meetings are held at fully accessible locations;
- Revise and relaunch our Animal Welfare Charter to do all we can to end the exploitation and cruel treatment of animals;
- Use the Town Deal process to develop a comprehensive community consultation and involvement scheme that can represent the views of all sections of the community and can be used to consult on other projects;
- Make a visible and tangible effort to include women, people from minority groups and disadvantaged communities in these consultations;
- Ensure that groups given council support and/or funding accept Hastings Borough Council's equalities values and actively promote inclusivity;
- Prioritise events which promote inclusivity to help prevent isolation and marginalisation;
- Encourage local festivals to commission and fund local artists and organisations;
- Consult with underrepresented, minority and disadvantaged local people on a working definition of "diversity."

Transforming Hastings Through Regeneration and Redevelopment Projects

These are 'self-funded' longer term development projects, financed by external grants or borrowing paid for by the income generated from the project itself. These projects provide essential new housing and other facilities, but if we didn't progress them, it would not increase the amount of money we have for day-to-day services.

A Labour Council will:

- Work to support the Town Deal bid and if it's successful help to maximise the opportunities it offers;
- Aim to redevelop White Rock Gardens and the 'Bohemia Quarter' through a self-financing scheme to provide new leisure and entertainment facilities, new homes, and enhanced gardens and open spaces;
- Redevelop West Marina as a mixed-use housing and leisure development, incorporating a slipway, artists' studios, holiday cottages, children's play, and cafes;
- Use a £6m Homes England grant to develop the 'lower tier' site off Bexhill Road to provide around 190 low-carbon homes (including at least 80 new social rented homes), new cycling and walking routes, enhanced sports facilities on the neighbouring sports pitches, and reducing the flood risk on this site and for neighbouring properties;
- Develop Cornwallis Street car park to create an 80-bed hotel to provide much needed quality tourist accommodation in the town centre;
- Work in partnership to complete the restoration of Pelham Arcade as a key heritage feature;
- Build a new café-restaurant in Harold Place to create a new landmark building and help boost the evening economy;
- Complete construction of the new Business Start-Up centre (to BREEAM standard) at Hollington, creating around 70 jobs.

Generating Income to Fund Day-to-Day Services

These are a mixture of day-to-day activities and investment projects funded from borrowing that generate a net income for the council as well as improving services, helping to offset the huge cuts in government funding over the last ten years.

A Labour council will:

- Continue our 'transformational change' programme, ensuring that all Council tasks and processes are carried out as efficiently as possible, and that all projects are properly planned and costed;
- Use sustainable electricity generation to raise income and reduce costs for the Council;
- Provide Council services online wherever possible, making it easier for people to apply and cheaper for the Council to provide them, while maintaining our telephone contact centre for people who are not able to use online services;
- Continue our path to 'entrepreneurial socialism', using commercial methods to raise money for public benefit rather than private profit, investigating every possibility for the Council to trade its services to generate income;
- Bring more council services back in-house and run them directly rather than through a contractor, for public benefit rather than private profit, focusing initially on grounds maintenance and building cleaning;
- Continue to acquire local commercial properties to generate income for the Council and provide security for local jobs;
- Take every possible opportunity to submit funding applications to the Local Enterprise Partnership, central government, Heritage Lottery, and any other funding streams available, where these support the Council's priorities.

Campaigning and Influencing Regional and National Policy

These are areas where the council has no direct powers but can use its influence either through the council itself or through individual councillors to lobby for improvements. It can also include campaigns conducted by the local Labour Party.

The Labour council and Labour councillors will:

- Lobby the government to continue to allow online and hybrid meetings to increase inclusivity;
- Address health inequalities through our representation on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health and Well-Being Board and work with the Clinical Commissioning Group to sponsor specific projects that address health inequalities;
- Continue to fight, wherever possible, government attacks on benefit claimants and work with organisations who want to develop fairer welfare policies;
- Represent the people of Hastings wherever possible in the health and education sector to argue for better resources, higher standards and a recognition of the pressing needs that face the more deprived communities in our town;
- Highlight the problems brought about by a local schools' sector dominated entirely by privately-run academies, and promote the excellence achieved at the remaining maintained schools;
- Put pressure on East Sussex County council to get potholes fixed and footways repaired properly, recognising that while the county council has suffered big funding cuts, its political leadership has consistently supported government policies that cut local government services;

- Demand that Sussex Police targets its substantial additional funding on reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in Hastings and significantly reduces the disproportionate use of stop and search of people from Black and Asian communities;
- Use the Hastings and Rother Transport Action Group to:
- work with the voluntary sector sustainable transport group to develop a sustainable transport policy;
- encourage walking and cycling;
- influence the County Council to develop new off-road walking and cycle routes;
- encourage transport providers to introduce integrated ticketing;
- recognise the needs of disabled people in transport provision.
- Work with bus companies and the County Council to promote an improved bus service and better information provided through electronic information boards at bus stops;
- Campaign for a comprehensive bus transport network within Hastings, operated by a local not-for-profit company;
- Lobby for affordable rail fares, particularly on local routes;
- Lobby for more limited-stop trains on the Hastings to Charing Cross and Cannon Street route;
- Participate in regional groups to lobby for road improvements, particularly in the east west A27/A259 route, and the A21.

- Demonstrate our commitment to the currently suspended Vulnerable Persons' Resettlement Programme by lobbying for its permanent reinstatement;
- Work with local and national groups to resist attacks on local government and fight for local government funding at sustainable and realistic levels, as well as giving councils the powers they need to do their job properly.

What does the Borough Council do?

In Hastings, there are two councils providing different local services. They are independent of each other, and make their decisions separately, with different councillors elected at different elections (the next county council elections will be in 2021). Hastings Borough Council is a district council, and is based in Muriel Matters House, on the seafront. East Sussex County Council is based in Lewes. Generally, county councils provide fewer, more expensive services, while district councils provide more, less expensive services.

Hastings Borough Council is responsible for:

Domestic waste collection and street cleaning
Licensing (pubs, off-licences, events, taxis etc)
Planning policy and planning applications
Economic development and regeneration
Homelessness, private sector housing regulation and housing advice
Social housing allocations policy and local housing strategy
Community grants
Arts and culture
Parks and gardens
Sport and recreation
Seafront services
Marketing, publicity, and tourism
Environmental health (including air quality and noise) and food safety
Dangerous structures

Off-street parking
Cemetery and crematorium
Housing benefits
Council tax and business rate collection
Health and safety at work in shops and some other businesses

East Sussex County Council is responsible for:

Highway maintenance, fixing potholes and on-street parking
Streetlighting
Economic Development
Public Health
Skills training (via colleges)
Strategic transport
Children's and youth services
Adult social care
Minerals planning (including fracking)
Waste disposal
Libraries
Education services and maintained schools

Councils are not responsible for:

Academy schools (all non-religious schools in Hastings are academies apart from Sandown Primary)
Social housing run by housing associations (all social housing in Hastings is run by housing associations)
Trade waste collections
Benefits (apart from housing benefit), tax credits, universal credit
Police and fire services
Further Education colleges
Drains, sewers and most waterways
Health and safety in factories, offices and building sites
Environmental pollution

New Powers for Local Government

Over the years, the powers available to councils to achieve real change have been taken away and centralised, reducing the council's ability to make comprehensive improvements to local facilities and services. Councils need real powers returned to them so they can make more of a difference locally. Powers we would like to see passed to Hastings Council include allowing the council to:

- Set up and run local bus services;
- Seize abandoned property and development land with reduced compensation to allow redevelopment and reuse;
- Ensure all developments include social rented housing, regardless of spurious 'affordability' arguments;
- Increase Council Tax on second homes and other underused properties;
- Decide the level of local business rates;
- Control the types of shops and businesses operating in an area;
- Regulate and licence homes used as holiday lets.

We would also like to see the creation of a Hastings (or Hastings and Bexhill) unitary council, so we could take on county council powers to maintain highways, fix potholes, provide education and social care services, and all the other county level services (see earlier list). We believe this would be less confusing for local people and allow efficiency savings by running better integrated services, as well as maintaining a council that was close to local people and responsive to their needs.

Thank you for taking the time to read our manifesto and it would be great to have your support on May 6th!

Kim Forward

Your Labour candidates for Hastings Borough Council are:

Sabina Arthur, Braybrooke; Claire Carr, Castle; **Antonia Berelson, St Helens;** Margi O'Callaghan, Silverhill; **Ali Roark, Tressell;** Alan Roberts, Wishing Tree; **Maya Evans, Hollington;** John Cannan, West St Leonards; **Anime Abdallah, Ore;** Steve Thorpe, Maze Hill; **Trevor Webb, Central St Leonards;** Heather Bishop, Gensing; **Anna Sabin, Old Hastings;** Warren Davies, Baird; **Brian Bostock, Conquest;** Liam Crowter, Ashdown