

Bromsgrove Labour Party

2019 District Election Manifesto



Vote  **Labour**

FOREWORD

Bromsgrove District Council has experienced years of neglect at the hands of the Conservative Party. The Tory Party's inability to manage the council's finances has resulted in the loss of countless services and assets that our community depended upon. Residents, sadly, have paid the price for this through increased taxes. It does not have to be this way. The May 2019 District Council election offers an opportunity for change. In opposition, the Labour Group has held the Tories accountable for their incompetence and fought to keep the services and assets you value. We now ask for the opportunity to serve you in power.

Bromsgrove Labour Party believes that you, the residents, should determine how you want the district to be run. We have, therefore, held regular street stalls and surgeries to understand how we, as a party, can put together a programme that will deliver what you want. Our manifesto, below, is guided by what you have told us. It describes how we would invest in your district to build a more prosperous, healthy and happy community.

Best wishes,

The Labour Group

AN EFFICIENT AND RESPONSIBLE COUNCIL

Since coming to power, the Conservative-led council has squandered £24 million of reserves with little, if anything, to show for it. From the multi-million pound move to the unfit-for-purpose Parkside, to the IT and communication systems that failed to deliver, your taxes have been wasted. The council is run by a £1 million a year senior management team who, this summer, failed even to collect household refuse, leaving Bromsgrove piled high for weeks with uncollected bins. We believe that, to afford and deliver the services you deserve, local government should be run efficiently and responsibly. We also believe that the council should set an example when it comes to fair employment.

Our pledges to you to improve the running of your council are to:

- ✓ Restructure the senior management of the council to a realistic and affordable level.
- ✓ Abolish our shared service programme, where your taxes are subsidising services in Redditch as well as our own.
- ✓ Make immediate and better commercial use of our assets (the disused old Burcot Lane council house, for example, is still costing over £100,000 a year to keep).
- ✓ Introduce an Employment Charter that abolishes zero-hour contracts, introduces a living-wage and commits the council to working only with partners who adopt the same values.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The health and well-being of the district, both physically and mentally, is everything. Our district, however, has seen an increase in obesity and high rates of early death compared to other areas. We wish to reinstate a culture of local concern, and to reduce loneliness and isolation. We believe that a thriving community - and economy - starts with healthy residents. We also believe in the responsibility of local government to lead the way in reducing obesity.

Our pledges to you to improve our health and well-being are to:

- ✓ Ban fast food chains outlets within 400 metres of schools.
- ✓ Restrict takeaway outlets in town centres to a maximum of 5% (of commercial units).
- ✓ Introduce a programme whereby the number of GP surgeries increases according to the rising population of the district (funded by developers who build in and profit from the district).
- ✓ Reintroduce air pollution monitoring.
- ✓ Work with Worcestershire County Council to expand, libraries, community centres and day centres.

TRANSPORT

The problems with the district's road infrastructure are well documented and experienced everyday by residents. Poor planning decisions have created gridlock, resulting in hour-long tailbacks across the town during rush hour. The needs of cyclists and users of public transport have also been neglected, despite the promise of money from central government. We believe that our road infrastructure is at breaking point. We also believe that our district should be as friendly to those who use bicycles and buses as it is to those who use cars.

Our pledges to you to relieve our traffic problems and improve our facilities for cyclists and users of public transport are to:

- ✓ Lobby Worcester County Council to build a Western Relief Road (partly funded by developers who build in and profit from the district).
- ✓ Lobby Worcester County Council for better pathways and cycle routes (particularly for a segregated cycle path from the town's bus station to the train station).
- ✓ Improve bus shelters to have quality seating and live timetables.
- ✓ Insist on the planning condition that all new private developments have adequate footpaths and segregated cycle lanes.

HOUSING

The district suffers from one of the worst housing crises in the country. Increases in house prices and private rent have forced many residents to leave the district to find cheaper accommodation or, worse still, to live on the street. We believe that everybody has the right to a home and the right to stay there should their needs change. We believe in building more social and affordable homes that can house families for life.

Our pledges to you to solve our housing crisis are to:

- ✓ Take advantage of government grants to reintroduce a social housing stock for the district.
- ✓ Abolish the cap on social housing and, instead, introduce a minimum quota of 60% affordable homes in all new developments, half of which should be reserved for social rent.
- ✓ Introduce a quota of 20% of design-for-life style houses in all new developments. These are houses that can be inexpensively adapted should residents' circumstances change (for example, need for disabled access).
- ✓ Insist that any variation on a planning agreement from a commercial developer is declared publicly, to stop developers backing out of affordable housing quotas.

LEISURE

Accessible sporting and leisure facilities are essential for healthy and happy living, both physically and mentally. The well documented closure of the council's leisure facilities, such as the town's sports hall, has broken apart community groups and businesses, affecting the livelihoods of those we are elected to protect. We believe that sport and leisure are the keystone to any thriving community and should not be the privilege of just those who can afford it.

Our pledges to you to improve access to the district's leisure facilities are to:

- ✓ Build a sports hall in the town centre.
- ✓ Bring the town's new leisure centre under the control of the council.
- ✓ Introduce free swimming for under-18s.
- ✓ Invest in free instructor-led fitness and sporting activities in public spaces.

ENVIRONMENT

Over the past decade air pollution in Bromsgrove has risen to critical levels. Worse still, several of the district's critical zones are where our children walk to school and our families gather at weekends. Despite this, in places such as Hagley and Rubery, monitoring of air pollution has been withdrawn. Furthermore, the council has failed to deal with increasing levels of litter and dog foul on our streets. We believe in collective responsibility when it comes to looking after our environment. This means leading the way in taking action in reducing emissions, as well as empowering others to do likewise.

Our pledges to you to improve our environment are to:

- ✓ Fit solar panels to the council's Parkside complex.
- ✓ Commit to purchasing an electric fleet of council vehicles (such as refuse trucks).
- ✓ Install electric charging points in all council carparks.
- ✓ Reintroduce air pollution monitoring.
- ✓ Work with Worcester County Council to take action to build more cycle routes and pathways.
- ✓ Install cycle-racks near all high streets to encourage travel by bicycle.
- ✓ Install water fountains in all council owned green areas, major bus stations and high streets.
- ✓ Create community gardens and green walls across the district.
- ✓ Employ dog wardens to monitor and clamp down on dog foul.
- ✓ Expand our allotment facilities to encourage grow-your-own initiatives.
- ✓ Subsidise the purchase of compost bins to allow families to recycle organic waste.

HIGH STREETS AND BUSINESS

High streets will always play a vital role in our community. Not only should they be attractive and interesting places to visit, but they should provide opportunity, employment and places where wealth is created. Our town centres, however, have been downgraded and neglected. The Conservative administration even returned money to central government that was intended to give rates relief to our businesses. In addition, unrealistic car parking prices and lack of bus services have discouraged visitors, who choose to shop elsewhere. Accordingly, our local economy suffers. We believe that well-run town centres and high streets should generate income for the district that can be used to fund our services, through business rates. We also believe that creating opportunities for local business and retail is crucial to attracting investment, wealth and employment to the district.

Our pledges to you to improve high streets and businesses are to:

- ✓ Introduce free parking for the first two hours in council owned car parks.
- ✓ Introduce free parking after 6.00 pm and on Sundays.
- ✓ Introduce free disabled parking in council owned car parks.
- ✓ Re-introduce the pensioners' parking pass.
- ✓ Franchise a shoppers' bus that links housing estates to the high street.
- ✓ Protect industry based parks from retail takeover.
- ✓ Improve and increase units designed for high-tech manufacturing in industrial parks.
- ✓ Invest in truck-stop parking to generate revenue and remove heavy vehicle parking from residential areas.

CANDIDATES

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We would love to hear from you, what you think of our manifesto and any further ideas you have for change in Bromsgrove.

Who do you usually vote for in national elections?

Labour

Conservative

Lib Dem

UKIP

None/other

Do you think the policies in our manifesto will improve the district?

Yes

No

Which parts of our manifesto are a priority to you?

Is there anything, within the district council's jurisdiction, that you believe we did not address in our manifesto?

Who are you likely to vote for in the local election this year?

Labour

Conservative

Lib Dem

UKIP

None/other

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email address: _____

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