

**The Contract for Sensible and Stable Change
in Worcestershire 2021-2025.**

**Worcestershire County Labour Group
Manifesto.**

“Run in Worcestershire not from Westminster”.

Foreword.

For the last 20 years, Worcestershire has been run by the Conservatives. In the last 11 years with a Conservative controlled government nationally. This period has seen the county stagnate and a significant reduction in services to all people in Worcestershire.

We wish to change things, to bring a more localised way of governing which works for Worcestershire and not just for Whitehall.

Labour wishes to see people in Social Care accommodation treated with dignity without having to change care homes due to lack of funding. We want the Care sector which could impact on the life of your mother, grandmother, father or grandfather properly funded by central government and freeing up resources for other areas of council investment and provision. In the wake of Covid, we want people to feel healthy and safe in Care Homes.

Labour wishes to see a less centralised way of running the council, with more emphasis put in our new remote way of working on local centres such as Evesham, Bromsgrove, Malvern, Redditch and the Wyre Forest. People in these areas ask, "What do we get from the County Council?" We will aim to provide them with a positive perspective of Local Government.

Labour wants a public transport system in Worcestershire that is effective and allows people to use it for school, work and pleasure.

We want education to be enhanced for people throughout life and the uses of our libraries with new books and computer facilities at the centre of this learning.

We wish to strengthen and expand our Environmental and Trading Standards team, to protect the people of Worcestershire from pollution and dangerous goods. We wish this service to become self funding.

Labour in Worcestershire will put the environment and a greener county at the centre of everything which we do and in our first Council Meeting after the election we will declare a "**Climate Emergency**" and put in place policies to make us carbon neutral by 2040.

Finally we want to ensure that nobody in Worcestershire goes hungry and would aim to create the conditions in our society which means that Foodbanks become a thing of the past.

Worcestershire needs sensible and stable change. Labour working with others can improve your lives and end the generation of austerity and inertia. Let the 2020's in our county be a time of recovery and renewal! Join us in bringing about these vital changes.

Robin Lunn. Leader of the Labour Group. Worcestershire County Council.

Economic Regeneration. “A more localised Worcestershire”.

Our ambition for the County is to build on the concept of keeping things local. This means that we want to keep the wealth generated by Worcestershire in Worcestershire, so it is used to benefit us all. This approach requires a significant change in how the council is run and what it seeks to do. The wealth and power Worcestershire County Council has, can be used to enable local people to fulfil their aspirations.

It means putting the people of Worcestershire at the heart of what we do, helping to achieve aspirations and ambitions and allowing people to help themselves. It means involving people in the decisions which impact upon their lives, not by token consultation at the end of a process, but real participation from the start.

Worcestershire people have talent and skills, local entrepreneurs, not for profit enterprises, local Co-Operatives will all be encouraged and supported using the influence, power and wealth of the council.

There will be challenges due to the devastating impact of Covid, national cutbacks and local Conservative inertia. The County Labour Party believes that it is possible to do more things and enable more to be done by managing the council differently instead of trying to do the same old things which the Conservative administration have been doing for 20 years with the same old predictable results.

It cannot be right, that places such as Redditch have a low wage economy the lowest in the West Midlands. Uptake of Universal Credit is high and post school academic attainment is the lowest in the region.

The Conservative party of so called enterprise, is now the party of business closures. Our towns and villages are becoming a wasteland of empty shops and businesses.

There is no reason why the average wage of a worker in Worcestershire should be on average £5,000 less than our neighbouring county of Warwickshire.

Worcestershire County Council cannot change the economy overnight, but what it can do is use your money differently and more creatively.

We will over the next 4 years.

- **Seek to narrow the gap between average salaries in Worcestershire and Warwickshire.**
- **Introduce a “Green New Deal” to support the economy of the 2020’s and beyond. All County Council economic policies will have this as its core principle.**
- **Promote Co-Operatives wherever possible run on firm business principles to run key council services.**
- **Support and encourage new business set ups.**

- **Support local not for profit organisations with a move towards contracts for work rather than just grants.**
- **Change the Council's procurement policy when existing contracts expire, so that it is a "Worcestershire First" whenever possible approach. If Worcestershire County Council are spending millions of pounds on work, then it should be done by local companies using local people.**
- **Use a Gold, Silver and Bronze approach for local businesses in awarding local contracts.**
- **Ensure that all those who work on behalf of the Council, meet the highest employment standards, doing everything they can to reduce their carbon footprint and promoting equal opportunities.**
- **Worcestershire Labour will promote and support family friendly businesses by encouraging inward investment and supporting businesses that offer local employment, the real living wage to their employees along with guaranteed working hours and trade union recognition.**

Adult Social Care.

As well as our planet and the economy, the other major challenge facing us is the provision of Adult Social Care. An area which the government for the last 10 years since the 2011 Dilnott report have manifestly failed to address in anything more than a sticking plaster approach. A mark of the challenge facing us, is that in 1981 there were less than 4000 people in the county above the age of 80. By 2036 it is estimated that there will be 38,000. Nearly a tenfold increase.

As the monies from central government have not kept track with this rise, it now accounts along with looked after children for nearly 70% of the councils overall budget. In time it will take all of our budget which leaves no room to do all of the other things and provide the services which we so care about.

Therefore, Labour's approach in this most challenging of areas would be as follows.

- **Lobby the national government to come up with a coherent way of funding this service nationally on a cross party basis.**
- **Implement all of the recommendations of the recent Scrutiny Report on Adult Social Care Provision.**
- **As there are many self funders of their own care in the county, we would work with Independent Financial Planners holding the appropriate Long Term Care qualification to provide fully independent advice to people so that their funds do not run out and the costs therefore picked up by the taxpayer.**
- **Promote working in the Care Sector as a profession to be aspired to.**
- **Worcestershire has a large amount of family run Care Homes. As individual owners retire, we would look to encourage the running of these homes as Co-operatives and ensure that they are run to the highest standards.**
- **Ensure that every person in care is treated with dignity and respect.**
- **Seek to improve where possible the salary packages of people who work in the sector.**
- **Social Care is not just about people in the twilight of their lives, but about people of all ages. Carers of adults who require care, desperately need respite care. Labour would seek to provide the care which is required by consulting with the people who need this care rather than imposing something.**
- **Work with families to ensure that loved ones don't have to move accommodation when they don't need to.**

- **Labour would ensure the closest possible working with the NHS to ensure that patients are discharged in a sensible organised manner.**

This area will be one of our greatest challenges, but the current position cannot carry on.

Children's Services.

Sadly, the Council no longer has the powers or the influence it once had in determining either the structure or what takes place within schools. However, it does still have some areas it is responsible for. Therefore, Labour would wish to do the following,

- **We would lobby to bring Worcestershire Children's First back under Worcestershire County Council control.**
- **Labour would use the Capital Fund to invest £25 million into upgrading school buildings to create an improved learning environment and boost educational attainment.**
- **We would provide better "Funding for Early Years Provision", as the 30 hours funding level provided by Central Government is not viable for many private nurseries to remain in business. We would actively support school-based nurseries with a qualified teacher-led provision.**
- **Reinstatement of the Careers Service to give updated advice to school leavers.**
- **Children and Young People encouraged to participate in Care planning reviews.**
- **The plans are comprehensive, updated regularly, and well matched to individual needs.**
- **Prioritised parents to encourage school placements.**
- **Labour will reinforce the message that attendance at school is part of vulnerable children support and protection and reinforce schools planning to ensure that it is a safe place.**
- **Encourage schools of all types to work more closely with their local County Councillors and be aware of their contact details.**
- **Labour would have greater support and quality control for Elective Home Schooling.**
- **Labour would promote and ensure heightened awareness of Child employment regulations.**

- **Labour would set the SACRE budget at £25,000 per annum and increase it per annum with inflation.**
- **Labour would work with all schools to promote community cohesion and understanding of all religious faiths and none.**

Worcestershire Youth Service.

Labour supports a statutory fully funded Youth Service.

Communities.

Labour believes that the current administration has split this service into too many Council Directorships.

We will create a new post of Director of Community Services who will manage all of the services below into a single Directorate.

Libraries.

- **A Labour County Council will ensure that the Library Service remains a publicly owned and accountable service. It will ensure libraries are professionally staffed by qualified librarians. We will seek funding for the service by sharing facilities with commercial organisations such as shops, cafes and Post Offices.**
- **Opening hours will be reviewed to ensure the libraries are open at times when they are most needed, including evenings and at weekends.**
- **Labour will ensure that the budget spent on new books and computer facilities within the library service, increases each year in line with inflation. This will encourage people of all ages to attend libraries.**
- **The Mobile Library Service will also work in partnership with providing other services including retail operations and the Post Office. Mobile Libraries will not just serve rural areas, but will also visit areas of urban social deprivation and need.**
- **All libraries will be linked to the Adult Education Service. They will become community centres, and we will encourage the active use of libraries as a community leisure facility. This will include full support for The Hive.**

- **We will use the experience gained during the 2020 floods and the Covid 19 outbreak to establish community advisors in large libraries, to help support and assist residents with problems and concerns such as welfare, benefits and consumer advice. We will work with the Citizens Advice Bureau to establish paid advisors in libraries.**

Country Parks.

- **Labour will retain all the Country Parks and explore ways to commercialise the venues for greater investment. Ideas such as outdoor theatre and concerts, car boot sales, wedding venues, exhibitions and Farmers Markets will be encouraged.**
- **Labour will investigate community orchards and allotments on the land owned by the Council and will allow commercial bookings and film producers to rent space.**
- **We will abolish all car parking charges on WCC which currently costs more money to collect on council owned land and ensure public access remains free of charge.**
- **Labour will investigate green energy opportunities on Country Parks, to see if wind and solar energy generation could be installed, generating an income which could be reinvested back into the service.**

Archaeology & Archives.

The Conservatives recently lost the right for the Worcestershire Archives to hold the famous Elgar Papers. We believe that this was no coincidence as at the same time, the Conservatives were cutting the budget and restricting public access to archives.

Labour believes this is a small but vital local service which needs radical reform and change to ensure we can preserve the history of the county.

- **Labour will commission an investigation into how the service can increase revenue, reduce costs and improve public access. This may mean significant change to how the service operates, but we are prepared to meet the challenges to make the changes and to protect the services from further cuts.**
- **Labour wants an Archive & Archology service which promotes history in Worcestershire.**

Trading Standards.

Trading standards has been brought back into Council control by the Conservatives. However it has reduced in size and importance in recent years.

- **Labour believes that we should champion the service and invest in it, so that it becomes a true friend of the consumer and self funding. Labour will reform the service to ensure we are meeting our statutory responsibilities, and will make the service more user friendly.**
- **Labour will aim to make the service self funding, which will provide better protections for the people of Worcestershire.**
- **Labour will undertake more investigations into age related sales and will proactively work with other agencies to make this an enforcement priority.**
- **We will request the service, particularly in view of Covid undertakes more inspections of food outlets.**
- **The illegal sale and storage of fireworks is dangerous but enforcement is under resourced. We will campaign to end the retail sale of fireworks and to restrict sales to licensed professional organised displays.**

Museums and Art Services.

- **Labour will re-establish a Worcestershire Arts Service which will provide an opportunity to promote and encourage local artists and producers.**
- **We will re-establish the “Skills on Show” event at County Hall.**
- **We will support local theatres with popular productions with support for artistic education and skills, making Worcestershire a centre for comedy and public performance.**
- **We will make more of our county links with Sir Edward Elgar. We will adopt “Land of Hope and Glory” as a county anthem.**
- **Labour will ensure that our social history is celebrated, including the industrial archaeology of the county remembering long lost industries like, carpet weaving, glove production, coal mining, needle works and salt. We will ensure the museums of the county celebrate all relevant history in the county.**

Gypsy and Traveller Service.

- **This is a small but important service, Labour will strengthen its resources to ensure the education and welfare of young people is protected.**
- **We will implement the recommendations of previous independent reports and invest in new transit camps to reduce illegal camps in the county.**
- **We will work to promote and protect the ancient cultures involved and will work to reduce prejudice and conflict between communities.**

Adult Education Service.

We have a good team providing adult education in Worcestershire, with some very good courses available, but take up and public awareness is very low.

- **Labour will undertake a major marketing campaign to make more people aware of what is available.**
- **We will work with large employers and providers of youth and community leisure to unlock potential.**
- **We will ensure Adult Education includes co-operative business education, which will provide opportunities for communities to work together to create new social enterprises.**

Registration Service.

The service works well and helps a lot of people. Labour will look to expand the service, support new venues and improve information about the services on offer, within the existing budget.

Agriculture and Farming.

Labour supports farming and agriculture; we will work with our farming and small holding tenants to provide new opportunities for young people to enter the industry.

- **We will work with agricultural colleges to provide new farming apprenticeships in Worcestershire.**
- **New tenancies will be created, priority will be given to help young people to enter the industry.**

- **Labour will support community orchards, allotments and farmers markets.**

We will encourage and assist our tenants to join forces to form buying and marketing co-operatives and will underwrite applications for loans for investment on tenant farms and small holdings.

Rural Life and Countryside Access.

- **Labour will campaign strongly for a Malvern Hills National Park, which will bring investment and more tourism into Worcestershire.**
- **Public Footpaths will be repaired in a more timely way and new route markers and styles suitable for the disabled will be installed.**
- **The Parish Lengthsman scheme will be expanded to widen the works they can carry out.**
- **New public footpath routes will be established, including an Elgar Route and blackberry picking routes.**
- **We will work with the Ramblers Association to ensure landlords keep our footpaths open and we will provide greater enforcement.**
- **Rural Bus Services will be reopened, linking town with country.**
- **Labour will establish a Rural Services Office which will work with rural communities to highlight service needs and establish new projects to create jobs and opportunities in rural Worcestershire to help it recover from Covid. The Office will work with Parish Councils to co-ordinate issues of mutual concern and to improve relationships and communication.**
- **Animal welfare will be a central part of our agenda, we will resist any attempt to introduce a badger cull in the county and we will ensure the animal welfare section of Trading Standards is fully equipped to investigate and prosecute any offenders.**

Co-operatives.

- **Worcestershire County Council under Labour will become a Co-operative Council; it will investigate ways to increase participation and public ownership of local services.**
- **The Council will establish a Co-operative Development Agency, to give aid and support to worker co-operatives, LET's Schemes and Credit Unions.**
- **It will investigate and encourage County Council employees to form co-operatives to tender for council controlled services.**
- **The formation of new community enterprises will be a priority; the Agency will help and encourage local communities to open community owned shops, pubs and other services.**
- **We will consider "Social Enterprise Mutuals" for Adult Social Care provision.**

Sport for All.

Labour welcomes the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games, but is keen to ensure that any legacy is not wasted. Many of the sports played at the games are out of reach of local children who have very few facilities.

- **Labour will invest in a Sports Legacy Fund, which will bring sport to the many and not just the few.**
- **Labour will also work with Worcester Warriors Community Foundation, who will be able to bring activities and all kinds of sport to Primary schools, estates and communities which currently have little access to sport.**
- **Restoring and expanding the funding which was cut by the Conservatives.**
- **Labour will expand the "Only Girls Allowed" exercise classes provided by Worcestershire Warriors, which allows women to join fun physical activity lessons with free childcare provided. Labour wish to expand the work in Dines Green county wide.**

Highways and Transportation.

The Conservative administration have shown themselves too be out of touch and out of time when it comes to encouraging people to travel in different environmentally friendly ways. Labour supports all methods of transport, but a Labour led council would do all it could to promote the use of fully electric and hybrid electric cars.

We recognise that many people both cycle, drive and walk. These are not mutually individual pursuits and need to be fully taken into account when making policy.

This is particularly true for a mother with two young children trying to get them to and from school or for a GP's appointment. Cycling for her is not an option in these circumstances and why a root and branch review of the bus services in Worcestershire will be at the centre of our policy. The Conservative government prevent us from implementing the policy which we would really like to implement, which is to run our own bus fleet to the areas that need it, making bus travel both affordable and desirable.

Despite these government imposed restrictions, a Labour run County Council would,

- **Labour will work with providers, so that reasonably priced bus services of adequate frequency are available so that people without constant access to cars or unable to drive or wishing to socialise in the evenings, or at weekends, can reach and get back from town and city centres, work places, hospitals and other health facilities and supermarkets.**
- **Only work with bus companies who are genuinely keen to market themselves to attract new passengers on their routes.**
- **Remove barriers which discourage people from walking and cycling short distances or impede users of personal disability vehicles. This includes increasing highway space for sustainable transport, improving crossings and dropped kerbs over main roads and providing more safe cycle parking places.**
- **In partnership with others, provide community charging points for electric vehicles in residential areas, so that residents unable to charge their cars at home, and other motorists driving in our county, can readily locate reliable, high speed electric vehicle charging points.**
- **We will encourage, but not compel, residents to become less reliant on their cars, for our better health, for a cleaner environment, and to improve the quality of life in our towns and cities.**
- **Labour will introduce a coherent policy to create more cycling lanes, and introduce more cycling proficiency instruction to encourage those who have not cycled for some years to return to it safely.**
- **We will closely work with district councils to make greater cycling a reality.**
- **Labour will improve the time of road and pavement repairs.**

- **Labour will end the monopoly of only One Council improved contractor being allowed to provide dropped kerbs. We will create a list of locally approved contractors who can carry out this work, along with more flexible ways to pay for the work.**
- **Labour will lobby central government for a full northern Worcester ring road.**
- **Labour will improve the safety of the junction near the Holiday Inn on the Bromsgrove to Kidderminster Rd.**

Labours Green New Deal.

One of the biggest challenges and indeed opportunities for sustainable jobs in the next 10 years is climate change. There are going to be massive challenges which the county will face. Labour will do the following.

- **At the first County Council meeting after the election, we will vote to declare a “Climate Emergency” in Worcestershire. This will heavily influence all future policies.**
- **We will set clear environmental targets for dealing with the climate emergency; the council must be open and accountable in their response to the climate emergency declaration demanded by the public.**
- **We will increase the amount of renewable energy generated by and used by the council. We will do this by installing more solar panels on council owned buildings and working towards a local green co-operative energy company.**
- **We will support the development of “Green Jobs” by encouraging start up companies and supporting local colleges to provide training and apprenticeship schemes.**
- **We will promote Worcestershire as a “Green Hub” to both attract companies and as part of our plans to boost the average Worcestershire wage. We will work with the LEP to help make this a reality.**
- **We will work in our recycling policies to make Worcestershire achieve Plastic Free status.**
- **We will make our Waste Collection sites more user friendly, so that people are not queuing for hours to use them, thereby increasing fly tipping.**
- **We will ensure in our environmental enforcement that developers comply with the highest standards when erecting new homes.**
- **County Council Highways policies will be amended to ensure that all developments which impact on local infrastructure are taken with the view of local residents in mind as a 2nd criteria after safety. Residents views should take precedence over developers.**

The Fire Authority.

Labour continue to actively support the current Fire Authority. We do not in any way agree with a take over by the Police Commissioner. We will do everything that we can to resist these two separate blue light service being stuck together in an unjustified power grab.

Worcestershire Fire Authority should remain independent!

Internal Worcestershire County Council Structures.

A package for sensible and stable reform, can only be brought about with the right structures within the council. As the council structure has been changed recently, we do not propose to spend a lot of time and your money on making further significant changes. However we do propose to make changes which will improve the delivery of service.

- **Reduce the number of Cabinet Members from 10 to 9 and save £18,500.**
- **Introduce a Creche at County Hall both for our work force and for visitors. This should soon be self funding, and will encourage family friendly policies.**
- **Make far greater use of the Council Chamber for private weekend events.**
- **Encourage the Covid induced working from home to continue where possible to both benefit friendly policies and the environment cutting down on needless journeys.**
- **Remove the artificial time limit on Motions at full County Council meetings to broaden democratic debate.**
- **Make maximum use of our buildings to raise revenue where possible.**
- **The Leader of the County Council to do 1 hour weekly online “face the public” question time.**
- **Set up a Rural Services Office to work with local communities.**
- **Ensure that 4 at least of the 9 Cabinet Members are women.**
- **Labour will set up a “Worcestershire Equal Rights Council” made up of representatives from our minority groups to ensure that everyone has an equal voice.**
- **Create a Director of Communities, linking many different areas together.**

Summary.

This manifesto sets out the sensible and stable plan to change Worcestershire for the better over the next 4 years. The road will be long and challenging, but with your support we can get there.

Run in Worcestershire and not Westminster, let us end the 20 years of drift and stagnation. Vote Labour on May 6th.
