

# A BETTER WAY

## HOW CANTERBURY LABOUR'S 2023 MANIFESTO SUPPORTS THE U.N. SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Labour believes that local government should work closely with the government to achieve its targets, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). We reject the timid ambitions of the current council to 'do the basics brilliantly' and believe we should have a council focussed on the ambitions that local people have for where they live.

Our experience is that the 17 SDG's better reflect what we believe are [the concerns local people are](#) and provide a guide for how we can rebuild our economy in a more resilient and sustainable way. They allow us to refocus our spending on the many not the few, focussing our efforts on solving big problems and not useless vanity projects.

In April 2023 we received a request from the Canterbury Society's SDG Working group to explain how our manifesto is working to achieve the SDG's. Our answers to their five questions are listed below.

### **1: What additional steps should Canterbury City Council take to reduce poverty in the district?** SDG 1: END POVERTY / SDG 2: END HUNGER

Labour welcomes the Canterbury Society's Report on [Poverty in Canterbury](#) and its recommendations for local government.

In the last four years this council has consistently cut RISE funding available for local charities ([-£25,000 between 19/20 and 22/23](#)) and funnelled money away from dealing with absolute poverty and deprivation to promoting community inclusion. It opposed Labour's calls to appoint a [Food Poverty Champion in 2020](#) and form an [emergency working group on the cost of living crisis](#) in October 2021.

If elected Labour would:

- **Make housing more affordable:** Labour would cap council rents at no more than a third of the lowest incomes rather than at 80% of the market rate. We would double the building of council housing by building on council owned land and force developers to deliver more affordable housing capped at £250,000 through the government's First Homes Initiative. We would double the homeless prevention fund and use a housing first model to support the homeless off our streets.
- **Support charities working in this space.** Labour would return RISE grants to pre-pandemic levels and offer council offices and buildings free of charge to people providing advice and information services.

- **Show leadership to reduce poverty in our district:** With council officers facilitating a forum of charities and providers to understand local needs and share information. Its approach would mimic the Whitstable Cares programme run by local Labour councillors in Whitstable which has produced an [online database of services](#), co-ordinated a network of Warm Hubs, persuaded schools to collectively fundraise in support of local foodbanks and [produced cost of living advice](#).
- **Create better paid and more stable jobs:** A Labour council would become an accredited living wage employers and encourage other businesses in its supply chain to do the same. It would only buy from local businesses to help anchor our economy.

## 2. How do you think that housing and transport needs can be met in a way which is genuinely sustainable, without destroying the natural environment? **SDG 11: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES AND CITIES**

[Labour's response to the Local Plan](#) is rightly concerned about the scale of house building in Canterbury and plans to build bypasses through our countryside. We support the Canterbury Society's call to reject the council's zoning model which would force people to drive further to help save the environment.

If elected Labour would:

- **Seek radical changes to the current draft local plan:** taking time to recalculate the plan in light of new government guidance which suggests housing targets are no longer mandatory and resident concerns. We would reconsider increasing urban density, actively reduce the prevalence of second homes (doubling their council tax) and better utilise brownfield sites owned by the council to reduce development on greenfield sites. When greenfield sites are used we would demand higher levels of affordable housing on site.
- **Scrap the zoning model and eastern bypass:** providing a new model for reducing congestion which includes free park and ride services, hopper buses between major transport hubs and introduction of the SWECO model on the ring road. We would improve walking and cycling routes before building new roads.
- **Make sure infrastructure is in place before development:** using Grampian conditions to ensure that water companies can cope with the additional load through municipal (and not private) drainage systems. We would introduce independent monitoring of surface run off on sites, force developers to publish sewage drainage plans on smaller sites and set higher standards for management and maintenance of drainage systems which the council would assess.

We believe the plan needs radical change, although many of its supporting documents including the new Open Spaces Strategy and policy recommendations brought forward through the bi-partisan biodiversity working group have real merit.

## 3. What do you see as the next steps for CCC to prioritise in implementing its climate action plan? **SDG 13: CLIMATE ACTION**

The current council has cut almost £150,000 from the budget of the council's climate change officer – leaving it without much of the dedicated resource it needs to successfully apply for government grants on reducing our carbon footprint. The council are currently without a climate change officer and the risk of us failing to achieve our own targets is very real.

If elected Labour would:

- **Appoint a local Climate Change Commission:** actively involving local environmental groups and activists in reviewing the plan and coming up with a robust way of monitoring progress on an annual basis. We would launch citizen science projects to monitor our seas, rivers and air.
- **Improve its own energy efficiency:** committing to **publish in the first year of office**
- a **forward** plan to retrofit and insulate our council housing stock and launch a green apprenticeship scheme to help deliver it.

- **Invest in open spaces;** actively linking together green spaces to limit urban sprawl and bringing forward plans for the council and not developers to manage green space on new developments.
- **Demand higher green standards for building:** Labour would go further than the standards published by the council on green housebuilding by demanding developers favour materials which sequest carbon, orientate buildings to maximise solar gain and disincentivise fossil fuel heating systems. We should be demanding hedges not fences on new sites.

#### 4. What actions should CCC take to restore the natural environment and halt species decline? **SDG 15: LIFE ON LAND**

In 2022 Labour councillors in Whitstable published a detailed plan for how the council could [improve rewilding](#) and improve biodiversity. Many of its plans have been taken forward by the [council's cross party working group on biodiversity](#), however there is still more to do and the proposals to generate a net biodiversity gain on new housing sites are just that.

If elected Labour would:

- **Carry out a review of its open space and public space management:** identifying opportunities to reduce mowing and improve wildflower growth in parks, introducing bee lines to its car parks and reducing the use of glyphosate pesticides. We would encourage communities to identify depaving projects and pilot No Mow May like Maidstone and Folkestone councils.
- **Build biodiversity into the planning process.** Developers should not be able to wiggle out of delivering biodiversity net gain by paying for projects elsewhere. All sites should show a biodiversity net gain of 20% and the council encourage people to use green roofs and hedges rather than fences.
- **Take a partner led approach to biodiversity:** running workshops on ways of encourage biodiversity in cemeteries and church yards, creating new guidance for allotment groups on how companion planting can reduce need for pesticides and encouraging residents to identify and seed bomb verges adopted from Kent County Council. We would develop a list of community groups interested in adopting green spaces and work with statutory organisations to identify a map of potential sites for future tree planting.

#### 5. What steps would you support to improve democratic decision-making at the local level? **SDG 16: PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

This council have shown a contempt for its residents, closing local forums where elected members were directly accountable to the public, removing planning powers from parish councils and then forcing through a Cabinet style of government where members **decisions** are made entirely by one party. Only three people in the district responded to the council's consultation on its 2023 budget – democracy is dying before our eyes.

Unfortunately, the new system of Cabinet government can't be changed by the incoming administration for at least four years but on being elected we would propose constitutional changes which would give stronger powers of oversight and scrutiny to opposition parties.

If elected Labour would:

- **Make decision making less Canterbury – centric.** We would close the Guildhall and move meetings around local community venues so that they were nearer to those people who they affected most. We would reintroduce regular local forums and use these to also help stakeholders speak directly to Kent Police and the local NHS.
- **Give the coastal towns a vote on town councils:** leading a Community Governance Review within our first two years in power. We would open council hubs in each of our three main towns.

- **Revolutionise how we make decisions:** appointing a Youth Forum to help explore the future of local youth forums and pilot public participation in the small grant decisions. We would not launch lengthy community consultations only to ignore the results.

If you want more detail about Canterbury Labour's vision for a Better Way you can visit [www.canterburylabour.co.uk](http://www.canterburylabour.co.uk) or email our Campaign Co-Ordinator Teresa Pearce at [info@canterburylabour.co.uk](mailto:info@canterburylabour.co.uk)