

Wiltshire Labour Manifesto

Wiltshire Council Elections

1st May 2025

Vote  Labour

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Wiltshire Labour Party Manifesto

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A Personal Message from the Labour Group Leader, Cllr Ricky Rogers

Wiltshire Residents Deserve Better

When I was first elected to the former Wiltshire County Council in 1989 the Council delivered many good, directly managed, essential public services, that have since been privatised, sold off or lost. After Local Government re-organisation in 1997 the controlling Lib-Dems and Conservatives began the push for more privatisation.

The aim was clear. to move the Council from being a “Provider” to becoming a “Commissioner” of public services regardless of the impact on the quality of the service, or the pay and conditions of the people providing the service.



The Lib-Dems already had a track record of selling off Council Housing stock and they continued on that path with Adult Social care, selling off Council Residential Care Homes and breaking-up the Council Home Care Service. The Conservatives took this political dogma relentlessly forward privatising Grounds Maintenance Services, Catering Services, Cleaning Services, Highway Management & Maintenance Services and more recently Refuse Collection Services and parts of Adult and Children’s Services.

By every available measure, the quality of those privatised public services has declined under that policy. Labour will end this political dogmatic agenda and assess each contract at the point of renewal to examine where the best value lies for Wiltshire residents and determine if the service - would be better brought back in-house.

Shamefully, last year Conservative-led Wiltshire Council was found GUILTY in court of Breaking the Law by sending threatening and intimidating emails to staff and have spent over a year delaying justice and gagging debate with a lame appeal that was never going to be heard. Finally, in February 2025, the appeal was dropped and over £100,000 was paid out in compensation and legal costs. The scandal has seen no Conservative apology for this shameful waste of public money.

Wiltshire Residents do Deserve Better.

Cllr Ricky Rogers
Wiltshire Council Labour Group Leader

INTRODUCTION

For fourteen years, successive Conservative/Lib-Dem and Conservative governments cut the funding of local government to the bone. This significantly reduced the ability of local authorities to provide much-needed local services and respond to crises such as the Coronavirus pandemic.

Nevertheless, Labour-run councils up and down the country have shown that by innovating they have been able to maintain and improve the services they provide to local communities.

We now have a national government which is intent on rebuilding our public services. There is a great opportunity for Wiltshire Council to work in partnership with national government on this programme of renewal.

Wiltshire Labour recognises that resources are scarce. In this manifesto, we have set out a programme that is ambitious about tackling the problems that people face, but also pragmatic with a strong emphasis on rebuilding our local economy and working in partnership with local businesses and the voluntary sector.

At the heart of our Manifesto for Wiltshire are five missions:

CREATING A DYNAMIC LOCAL ECONOMY - We aim to create a dynamic local economy providing good, secure jobs and enabling businesses to thrive.

MEETING LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS - We will use Wiltshire Council's powers to tackle Wiltshire's housing crisis once and for all.

DELIVERING THE GREEN TRANSITION - We will take on the climate emergency by moving Wiltshire towards carbon neutrality and reducing the costs of energy for local people.

REBUILDING LOCAL SERVICES - We will renew our essential public services – social care, public transport, highways, arts and leisure – essential to the quality of life of our residents.

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE - We will provide the best possible start for young people in Wiltshire to build successful lives

At the Wiltshire Council elections on Thursday 1st May 2025, the residents of Wiltshire have a choice – more of the same, or a council intent on delivering change and renewal.

CHAPTER ONE - CREATING A DYNAMIC LOCAL ECONOMY

We aim to create a dynamic local economy providing good, secure jobs and enabling businesses to thrive.

1. Boosting Investment – we will

- **Campaign for the Heart of Wessex to be included in the next tranche of devolution.** Formed from Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset and the Bournemouth conurbation, this combined authority with an elected mayor will unlock devolved powers and budgets from central government, with a focus on economic development.
- **Devolve decision-making down to local levels** as far as possible within the strategic authority.
- **Deliver investment into every town** in the region – no place should get left behind.

2. Creating the right infrastructure – we will

- **Develop small-scale enterprise centres, business parks and manufacturing hubs**, through the planning system backed by devolved investment funds.
- **Market land set aside for commercial use** energetically to prevent its transference to housing use.
- **Invest in education, training and skills** to support people, our key resource.

3. Supporting workers and businesses – we will

- **Roll out ultrafast broadband** to all parts of the county.
- **Set up a Heart of Wessex Investment Bank** to provide local capital and support community businesses and cooperatives.
- **Transfer the ownership of Wiltshire Council-owned retail units to Town Councils**, who understand better local letting strategies and how to support high streets, community and arts spaces.
- **Use rate relief and planning protection to support community assets** such as pubs and shops, and support the community's right to buy these assets if at risk.
- **Work towards living wage accreditation** for Wiltshire Council as an employer and progressively require the Council's contractors and suppliers to do the same.

4. Supporting key sectors – we will

- **Use planning and training to encourage growth** particularly in the sectors of **defence, digital, life science** and **clean energy**.
- **Develop the Green Economy by**
 - working with **GB Energy** and the **National Grid** to support renewable energy development.

- Supporting **community energy initiatives**
- Helping **homeowners** to access grants.
- Supporting suppliers with a **trusted trader scheme**.
- **Support food producers and farmers by**
 - Setting up a **Wiltshire Local Food Network**, working with local food producers and sharing costs.
 - Helping **farmers to diversify** through the planning system.
 - Supporting **farmers' markets, shops and milk stations** to deliver directly to consumers.
 - Encouraging **the use of local sources** by schools and employers.
- **Promote the Visitor Economy by**
 - **Restoring funding** to **VISIT WILTSHIRE** promoting tourism.
 - **Setting up a "Wiltshire Card" for visitors** giving free or discounted travel and entry to attractions.
 - **Expanding networks** of trails, footpaths and cycle routes to promote active leisure.
 - **Helping museums, festivals and the arts** with direct grant funding, support in bidding for funds and promotion.
 - Supporting **new attractions** through the planning process.
- **Recognise the economic role of the Ministry of Defence by**
 - **Working with the MOD** on their infrastructure needs.
 - **Building local supply chains** with the MOD.
 - **Helping new families** of military personnel settling in Wiltshire find schools and employment.
 - **Supporting veterans** through a guaranteed interview scheme for jobs with Wiltshire Council.

5. Boosting the local economy - we will

- **Support local suppliers** and help the local economy thrive through a procurement initiative to ensure that Wiltshire Council spends a higher proportion of its £527M budget locally.
- **Encourage other organisations** to do the same, e.g. **the Ministry of Defence** and **Wiltshire Police**.

CHAPTER TWO – MEETING LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS

We will use Wiltshire Council's powers to tackle Wiltshire's housing crisis once and for all.

1. We will use the planning system to deliver the new homes people need by:

- **providing new sites** to meet Wiltshire's Housing Target and **prioritising brownfield sites**.
- **preventing developers from 'banking' land** by compulsorily purchasing sites with planning approval which are not built on within 5 years.
- **reviewing the Council's levy on new developments** (the *Community Infrastructure Levy*): for instance it is currently 25-35% lower in Calne and Melksham than in the rest of the County.
- **ensuring that solid infrastructure is built into all new housing developments** including schools, health and community facilities.
- **piloting 'garden village' developments**, incorporating local employment and services, sustainable transport links and a mix of high quality housing.
- **showing clearly in the accounts what money is raised from developers** through the Community Infrastructure Levy and **how it is spent**.
- **making sure that the Council gets developers to deliver** their promised community improvements under the S106 scheme.
- **providing the skilled workforce to deliver housing** through training courses and apprenticeships, working in collaboration with colleges and employers and supported by the future Heart of Wessex Strategic Authority.
- **Implementing Wiltshire Council's Plan** to provide well designed sites in appropriate locations for **Gypsies, Roma and Travellers**.

2. We will provide genuinely affordable homes for local people by:

- **building new council homes:** we will increase the rate of delivery of these urgently needed homes, aiming to hit 500 new starts per year within four years.
- **ensuring at least 40% of affordable housing** is provided by new housing developments, including social rental and low-cost home ownership.
- **converting long-term empty properties** to socially rented homes, using the Council's powers of compulsory purchase.
- **supporting low-cost home ownership schemes** to help local people get on the housing ladder: using for instance shared ownership or the First Homes Scheme.
- **supporting community-led projects** to provide affordable and social housing, through for example community land trusts.

3. We will make new homes fit for the future by:

- **requiring all new homes to have solar** and be resilient to climate change.
- **ensuring that the design of new housing developments is innovative and of high quality** and that it includes access to green spaces and sustainable transport.

- **ensuring a mix of housing types** in all new housing developments.
- **enhancing standards of accessibility and adaptability** for all new homes.

4. We will support the private rented sector by:

- **establishing a Private Tenants' Charter**, detailing expected standards of accommodation and service, and an accreditation scheme - a **Register of Approved Landlords**.
- **providing private tenants with advice and support**, and following through with enforcement.
- **investigating and intervening in cases where landlords consistently provide poor housing**, to drive up standards.
- **helping landlords** access grants and advice to improve the energy efficiency of their properties.
- **providing advice and support for forces personnel** and their families in private rented accommodation.

5. We will work to end homelessness and rough sleeping in Wiltshire by:

- **providing supported accommodation** in each of the four former districts of the Wiltshire Council area, to provide a pathway out of rough sleeping. We will draw on Wiltshire's share of the £1B of additional funding being made available from central government.
- **coordinating support** for rough sleepers about to move into permanent accommodation through the *Housing First* model.
- **focussing on prevention using the team at Wiltshire Council and charities** like *Doorway Wiltshire*. They work through a framework of early identification, pre-crisis intervention and action to prevent homelessness recurring.

CHAPTER THREE – DELIVERING THE GREEN TRANSITION

We will take on the climate emergency by moving Wiltshire towards **carbon neutrality** and reducing the **costs of energy** for local people.

1. We will make Wiltshire's homes more energy-efficient by:

- **Creating a new framework** to help homeowners improve their home's energy efficiency (*insulation, heat pumps*) and retrofit renewable energy installations (*solar panels, batteries*). It will feature **technical advice, increased access to Labour's £6.6B fund** and a **trusted trader scheme** for local companies.
- Making Wiltshire's **council homes and properties** the most energy efficient in the country.
- Supporting **community buying schemes** like *Solar Together*.
- Requiring **all new homes** to be net zero operational carbon, using the planning framework.
- **Setting up skills training** with Wiltshire College and local companies to ensure vital courses and apprenticeships are in place.

2. We will boost the development of renewable energy by:

- **Developing small-scale renewable generation on council-owned sites** e.g. solar panels installed in car parks and leisure centres.
- Delivering a **threefold increase in renewable energy generation** capacity, in the right places to minimise visual impact and the use of good quality farmland.
- **Collaborating on new schemes** with GB Energy, the National Grid and landowners, including the MoD.
- Encouraging **community energy initiatives**.

3. We will step up decarbonising transport in Wiltshire by:

- **Focussing on public transport** to make it a real alternative to car use.
- **Helping bus and taxi operators** make the transition to electric and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles.
- Investing in **better pavements and safe routes** for walkers and cyclists to encourage active travel.
- Delivering access **to electric vehicle charging infrastructure**. We will drive this by:
 - Ensuring every **public carpark** has charging points.
 - Helping **village halls and pubs** to install electric vehicle chargers in their carparks.
 - Piloting solutions for **on-street parking** such as installing kerbside charging points or cable gullies (covered cable channels).³
 - Supporting **petrol stations** in installing rapid charging forecourts.
 - Requiring all **new homes** to provide EV charging points.
 - **Working with the National Grid** to ensure they address limitations in the electricity distribution network.
- **Using local contractors and UK products** where possible to reduce carbon footprint.

4. We will support the natural environment by:

- **Working with farmers and the NFU** help them make the transition to **Net Zero by 2040**: dedicating **one of Wiltshire's County Farms** to demonstrate best practice.
- **Promoting tree-planting** at scale across the county, by supporting landowners in accessing grant-funding and working with organisations such as the Great Western Forest, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Avon Needs Trees and town and parish councils.
- **Encouraging healthy eating** in schools and other Council premises, particularly focussing on fresh and local produce.
- **Creating plans for more biodiversity** for the Council's main sites and highway verges, and encouraging schools, town and parish councils to do the same, targeting a 20% increase in biodiversity.
- **Finding solutions to water pollution** in partnership with the Environment Agency, Wessex Water, farmers, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and the Rivers Trusts.
- **Including environmental solutions** in plans for flood protection.

5. We will make Wiltshire more resilient to climate change by:

- **Providing better flood protection** to at-risk locations in partnership with the Environment Agency.
- **Helping residents to access grants** to improve property resilience.
- Making sure that **town and parish councils have the resources** to meet extreme weather events - emergency plans, emergency hubs, trained volunteers, etc.
- Supporting **upland flood management** such as tree planting, hedgerow restoration and river re-wiggling.

CHAPTER FOUR – REBUILDING LOCAL SERVICES

We will renew our essential public services – social care, public transport, highways, arts and leisure – essential to the quality of life of our residents.

1. We will renew the model of adult social care provision in Wiltshire by:

- **Delivering a new Social Care Strategy** addressing how Wiltshire Council commissions services and how it can:
 - improve staff skills, qualifications, working conditions and staff retention;
 - provide support to unpaid carers;
 - tackle the mental health issues associated with loneliness and isolation among older people;
 - better integrate and collaborate with the health and voluntary sectors.
- **Piloting bringing services back in-house** and expanding this if successful.
- **Better integrating services with the health sector** to manage the care of older people more efficiently and sensitively.
- **Ensuring support for keyworkers** so that disabled people are able to live independently.
- **Improving the pathways for young disabled people** to move from education into employment and work experience, by collaborating with existing providers such as Fairfield College.

2. We will improve the skills and conditions of care workers and support unpaid carers by:

- **Paying care workers** at least the living wage, **ending zero-hour contracts** and **paying for travel time** between visits, making Wiltshire an Ethical Care Council.
- **Raising skills** for better integration with the health service (such as providing healthcare), delivering better outcomes for clients and improving staff retention.
- **Working with the voluntary sector to support unpaid carers** with advice, training, help accessing financial and wellbeing support, respite care, day-care centres and support groups.

3. We will improve and extend public transport to offer a real alternative to car use by:

- **Bringing local bus services back under Wiltshire Council's control**, using powers to be restored under Labour's **Better Buses Bill**, ending the chaos and inefficiency brought about by deregulation.
- **Establishing new routes and more frequent services**, particularly in rural areas: using both regular and demand-responsive services (such as the Pewsey Vale **Wiltshire Connect** service).
- **Providing a mobile phone App** through a Wiltshire Council IT platform as a simple one-stop service for: finding bus routes, getting real-time information on bus movements and booking demand-responsive services.
- **Establishing and supporting community transport options and link schemes** where regular services are not viable.

- **Supporting plans for combined bus and rail tickets** and pushing for pilot schemes to integrate ticketing.
4. **We will improve the condition and safety of the county's roads and pavements, for all users - motorists, pedestrians and cyclists by:**
- **Investing in properly scheduled road maintenance** to restore the road network to a steady state, enabling preventative maintenance rather than reactive and inefficient pothole repairs.
 - **Investing in road safety improvement schemes**, informed by local data and evidence.
 - **Developing more 20mph zones in residential areas** in consultation with local communities.
 - **Putting more resources into safety education**, training and publicity.
 - **Better maintaining pavements** and developing better access on frequently used pedestrian routes, including dropped kerbs and crossings, and tackling dangerous pavement parking.
5. **We will protect and develop arts and leisure facilities in Wiltshire by:**
- **Keeping all libraries open**, including mobile library services, and extending opening hours where possible. **Promoting libraries as wider facilities for our communities**, following the Community Hub model and encouraging them to organise promotional events, such as readings by authors.
 - **Investing in sports facilities**, using a proportion of the Community Infrastructure Levy money raised from new developments.
 - **Supporting music and arts venues**, theatres, museums, galleries, festivals and cultural events, with funding, publicity and promotion.
 - **Helping local applicants for grants** either directly from the Area Boards, or by mentoring them in applying to e.g. the Arts Council and National Lottery Fund.
 - **Promoting community arts projects**, particularly those that focus on community topics and schools/young people.

CHAPTER FIVE – PROVIDING OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We will provide the best possible start for young people in Wiltshire to build successful lives.

1. We will ensure that every student has access to post-16 education, training and skills by:

- Championing **further investment in Wiltshire College** through new funding, so they expand their range of courses and facilities, including degree-level courses.
- Delivering **more modern apprenticeships** by working with both Wiltshire College and employers.
- Put in place **early intervention** to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) by working with schools to provide pathways into post-16 education, training and employment, and using Risk of NEET Indicators to target intervention and support
- **Setting up a Young Person's bus pass**, offering discounted travel at all hours.
- Extending **support for travel costs for students from disadvantaged backgrounds**.
- Lobbying national government **to abolish VAT charges for post-16 colleges and sixth forms**: under existing rules, colleges, unlike schools and academies, are required to pay VAT on purchases.

2. We will rebuild youth services in Wiltshire by:

- **Rebuilding the network of youth clubs** in the County in partnership with the Government and voluntary sector through the **Young Futures Hubs** programme and providing spaces for young people with youth workers, health support and careers advice.
- **Maintaining existing support for youth projects** through Area Board Grants.
- **Supporting new or extended projects**, such as mentoring projects, with seed funding, use of buildings and facilities and assistance in applying for grant-funding.

3. We will ensure all children get the best out of school by:

- **Delivering the free breakfast clubs** in every primary school, funded by the Government's programme.
- Providing **every secondary school pupil on free school meals with a laptop** to address inequalities in access to ICT (Information & Communications Technology). We'll achieve this by refurbishing redundant laptops from local businesses and organisations and funding laptops to make up any shortfall.
- **Opposing the further academisation** of schools in Wiltshire, maintaining accountability to local communities.
- **Supporting the future of Pencelli Outdoor Education Centre** as an invaluable resource for Wiltshire Schools.

- **Extending the Affordable Schools Programme**, to make schools an affordable place for all pupils.
- **Extending the provision of mental health support in schools**, in partnership with the Government.
- **Promoting the provision of healthy food** in school canteens to combat child obesity.

4. We will provide access to high quality early education and childcare by:

- Delivering **additional preschool nurseries** in primary schools with Government support, to extend the government-funded hours families are entitled to.
- **Delivering more wraparound childcare places**, such as afterschool clubs, in primary schools.
- **Recruiting more childminders** and supporting them through the registration process, helping people to return to work.

5. We will support children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) by:

- **Improving SEND provision in Wiltshire** by using the County's share of the £1B of additional funding from the Budget. SEND children will be supported with the most appropriate environment for their needs, within mainstream schools or through local specialist schools.
- **Speeding up Wiltshire's process for setting up EHCPs** (Educational Health and Care Plans), at present significantly behind the national average.
- Encouraging **schools to share special facilities** such as Forest Schools.