

Aspiring for Kingston



**Labour's manifesto for Kingston's
local elections, 22 May 2014**

Foreword

Kingston is a vibrant borough with a strong cultural history but it is now nested in the wider London economy. It has lost most of its industrial base and is now losing the administrative economy that grew in the wake of that industrial decline.

Kingston has a strong retail centre but has failed to create a vibrant base of small industries.

It is a university borough with a large proportion of students with the potential to create a dynamic cultural, research and innovative economy. However, it has failed to harness and utilise the potential of the university.

There are areas of great wealth and large pockets of relative poverty. There are enormous houses with spare bedrooms galore but there are rented council-owned houses where the ruling administration, in contrast to neighbouring boroughs, has failed to meet the 2010 decency standards and where repairs and renovation are a disgrace.

Kingston's schools have achieved well for some, but it has one of the biggest attainment gaps in the country between those eligible for free school meals and those who have a more advantaged socio-economic background.

It has a theatre and a flourishing night club economy. But it needs a wider leisure and cultural base than this to offer satisfaction and fulfilment for all.

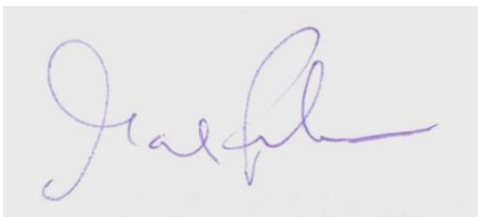
Kingston has the highest council tax in London – a regressive tax which fall disproportionately on the less affluent – but cannot claim to be at the forefront of change and development in any sphere of Council responsibility.

Kingston voters have a choice. They can choose to continue the drift into suburban dependency with a complacent "laissez faire" attitude to the future, characterised by the policies of the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives.

Alternatively, they can vote for a dynamic new model of outer London vibrancy, working to attract, nourish and grow talent, culture and development, providing opportunities equally for all Kingston's residents.

Labour is wedded to this strong self-determining vision for Kingston's future. This vision is of a vibrant Kingston where all have an equal opportunity for fulfilment educationally, culturally, and economically within the community.

This manifesto is shaped and informed by this vision for Kingston and includes practical policies to help Kingston realise this vision.



Max Freedman,
Chair of Kingston Borough Labour Party



Laurie South,
Chair of Kingston & Surbiton Constituency
Labour Party

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Ending 12 years of Lib Dem misrule

The Liberal Democrat years of control have been a catalogue of failure.

Council tax

Under the Liberal Democrats, Kingston has been notorious for demanding the highest council tax of any London borough and the fourth highest in the country.

Labour will aim to keep council tax bill rises no higher than the rate of inflation.

Protecting children

OFSTED, the independent inspector, found the council's child protection services to be inadequate in two consecutive recent reports. As a result, the borough's most vulnerable children were exposed to unacceptable levels of risk. Child protection services have now been taken out of Kingston's direct control.

Labour will ensure that the borough's safeguarding services make rapid progress towards acceptable performance, and that all lessons from the recent failures are learned.

Rewarding failure

The former director of children's services, who resigned days before the first damning child protection report was made public, was given a year's salary as a payoff.

When staff leave the council's service because of poor performance, Labour will ensure that they do not get "Golden Handshakes" – pay-offs over and above any contractual obligations.

He was paid £128,000 after his resignation, despite the claim of the then Kingston Council leader, Liberal Democrat Councillor Derek Osbourne, that "final responsibility" for the failures lay with the director.

Roads and pavements

At the current rate of repair and reconstruction under the Liberal Democrats, carriageways will only be resurfaced *once every 25 years* and footways reconstructed *once every 50 years*.

Labour will give a high priority to spending on road and pavement maintenance.

Housing

There are already over 6,000 households on the council's housing waiting list. At the current rate, *it would take over 15 years to house them*.

Working with housing associations, a Labour council will build new affordable homes. We will ensure that new developments include their quota of affordable homes according to the council's existing policies (50% in larger developments). Planning applications that contrive to avoid building affordable homes will be refused.

Under-performance in education

In 2010, it was reported that the charity Save the Children had described the gap in GCSE results between the borough's poorest and better-off children as "scandalous".

Labour will focus on standards in all Kingston's schools so that every parent can be confident their child will receive an excellent education in the borough. We will work with all schools to raise standards and encourage collaboration between schools, so that the best performing schools pass on their knowledge to those that need extra help.

In 2014, the gap has widened. Kingston is now the tenth worst authority in England and second worst in London.

Creating a fairer Kingston

1. The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is a vibrant and diverse place with a long and proud history. However, too many of our borough's residents struggle to gain all the advantages of living and working here.
2. Labour's goal is to make our borough a fairer place so that everyone can share in its success. This goal inspires our four priorities for 2014-18:
 - **Tackling Kingston's housing crisis** – by building more new homes for social rent, with local people getting priority, and setting up a non-profit lettings agency to provide an affordable alternative for private renters
 - **Creating opportunities for Kingston's children** – by ensuring that there is adequate affordable pre-school and wrap-around school provision, a focus on attainment for all, and that schools are built near the young people they will serve
 - **Bringing down the cost of living** – by cutting energy bills through insulation programmes and local power generation
 - **Raising employment** – by helping to ensure every young person in the borough has an offer of a job, a college place, or an apprenticeship and by developing council-led enterprise support
3. As well as working towards these important goals, we aim to run an efficient and effective council. Delivering vital services such as weekly recycling collections and street cleanliness will be priorities.
4. The job is made much harder by the Liberal Democrat–Tory Coalition government. Kingston council has had a ten per cent cut in its government funding for 2014/15 – the fourth consecutive year of government cuts. The Coalition government has cut Kingston's funding by £21.7 million since 2010/11 and we face estimated future cuts of £16.1 million up to 2017/18. Meanwhile, the budget of David Cameron's West Oxfordshire council has increased by 3%.
5. At the same time, many residents are facing stagnating wages and cuts to benefits while the cost of living soars. Energy bills, rents and childcare costs are all rising faster than incomes, squeezing living standards – not just for the poorest but for people on low and middle incomes across the borough.
6. We will fight government policies that damage Kingston while providing practical support for residents. A Labour council will work with other local organisations to make Kingston a fairer place despite the cuts imposed by the Coalition government.
7. Labour has campaigned to protect essential services, such as those at Kingston Hospital. We will continue campaigning in the years ahead. Under Labour, the council will challenge government policy that is detrimental to Kingston – in the courts, if need be.
8. We will work with others to help people in Kingston affected by the Coalition government's damaging policies. With the planned budget cuts, it is vital that the council works with other organisations in the borough – including local charities, community groups, businesses and public sector bodies – to make sure our residents get the support they need. Kingston gains from an active and vibrant voluntary sector, who often serve our most vulnerable residents and harness the time and talents of local volunteers. Under Labour, the council will support this vital work.
9. In difficult times, there is a risk that people look for others to blame for their problems or turn against one another. Labour will work to promote community cohesion and inclusion, and oppose those who seek to spread blame and division. We will listen to residents and involve them in the difficult decisions we may have to take in the years ahead.

Boosting Kingston's economy

Investment in Kingston

10. As the capital grows, major investment is needed in transport and other infrastructure. Labour will campaign to secure the best deal for Kingston residents from projects such as Crossrail 2 to make sure they provide apprenticeships and decent jobs for local people and deliver advantages for the whole community, including disabled people. We will work with other London councils to get London the funding it needs to support economic growth.
11. Kingston's small businesses provide thousands of jobs for local people and play an important role our local economy. Times are tough for small businesses and we will work with their owners to make sure they have the support they need. Kingston Labour supports the Labour Party's plans to cut business rates in 2015 and freeze them in 2016; this will be paid for by not going ahead with another cut in corporation tax planned by the Liberal Democrat–Tory government. Cutting business rates provides extra support for struggling small businesses. We will also make it easier for small firms employing local people to win council contracts.
12. Labour will seek to make the council more responsive to the ideas and concerns of local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) seeking assistance, as one way of promoting the local economy. In particular, we will consult them about ways of making their dealings with the council less onerous, so that regulation is necessary rather than time-consuming or duplicative.
13. A Labour council will work with Kingston University's 'incubator', to help create more SMEs. We will look at developing a business support agency as other local authorities have done.
14. We will encourage businesses to invest in our towns and our district centres and to employ local people. We will encourage owners of empty office space to bring it back into use, particularly for new enterprise and business start-up units.
15. A Labour council will work with providers to make Kingston a fully Wi-Fi-enabled borough. We want everyone to be able to connect to the web for free in main shopping and business areas. We want to ensure the borough has the best connectivity for companies that are already based here, as well as for those we want to encourage to move here.
16. We will aim to improve development opportunities and to attract investment by promoting the borough at every opportunity, both at home and abroad.
17. We will encourage the growth of the co-operative economy. Mutuels, co-operatives and social enterprises are ideal vehicles for local economic development. They generate wealth and employment, while income is often retained locally to the advantage of local communities.

Retail centres in the borough

18. By any measure, Kingston town centre is an important and successful retail centre. A Labour council will grow Kingston town centre with its mix of shopping, hotels, entertainment and culture, all helping to generate employment.
19. Labour supports the Ancient Market and the Fairfield Monday Market. We will also support regular visiting markets throughout the borough.
20. A Labour council will bring forward development and regeneration plans for our other town centres, such as Surbiton, New Malden, and Tolworth.
21. We will encourage the retention of neighbourhood shopping parades and individual shops. These can be vital for older people and others without easy access to transport.

Getting people back to work

22. Getting more of Kingston's residents into a decent job is one of our top priorities. Kingston's unemployment rate has increased markedly since the international financial crisis. Within Kingston, there are wide variations between areas.
23. Our goal is to reduce the unemployment rate in the borough. We will work to boost employment including working with businesses in and around Kingston to match local unemployed people with vacancies. We will work with local employers to expand employment opportunities for Kingston's residents. We will ensure that firms offering jobs and apprenticeships to local people are prioritised when the council offers contracts.
24. We are particularly keen to tackle the barriers to employment faced by disabled people and parents (especially mothers) with young children. The lack of affordable and flexible childcare can make it hard for parents to work. We will make sure there is more support for childcare outside of standard working hours, to help parents who take a job working in the evenings or at weekends, and we will invest in childcare for disabled children. We will also consider how the council can promote more flexible working opportunities for parents, older people, carers and disabled people, and encourage local employers to pay the London Living Wage so that work is a real route out of poverty.
25. Much of the public money spent supporting people back to work in Kingston is not effective for residents – such as the government's failing Work Programme, which is not doing enough to help unemployed people find a job. Services to help people find work are more effective when they are coordinated at a local level and draw on the expertise of local organisations, rather than seeing millions of pounds of public money going to big business. We will campaign for more power and resources over back to work services to be handed to Kingston.
26. A Labour council will work with local employers to build confidence about employing disabled people. We will increase awareness of the Access to Work scheme and promote evidence-based programmes such as Individual Placement and Support and Supported Employment, which are particularly successful in enabling people with mental health problems and learning disabilities into fulfilling work.

Training for work

27. Youth unemployment in Kingston is over double the overall rate and therefore one of the biggest issues in Kingston. We want our young people to have the best possible start in life, whether going to university, going into apprenticeships or training, or joining the workforce. Compared with other parts of the country, London's job market has a much higher proportion of jobs requiring high-level qualifications. It is vital that all our children do well in school in order to ensure the best possible opportunity of employment.
28. The Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was abolished by the Liberal Democrat–Tory government. The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is a poor replacement. Nonetheless, we will make sure Kingston parents, pupils, and students are fully informed about the Bursary Fund. We will also expand mentoring and work experience programmes for Kingston's young people so that they have the skills and confidence to move into work when they leave education.
29. People need the right skills to get into work. We will work with Jobcentre Plus, employers and our educational partners to ensure that people can get the training they need to find a job. We will prioritise helping people to improve their IT skills as these are now essential for many jobs in Kingston.
30. We will support all young people in finding suitable education, training or apprenticeships – in particular by ensuring appropriate apprenticeship places are offered by Kingston Council, targeting those young people who do not have Level 3 qualifications.

31. We will seek to increase apprenticeship opportunities for 18-25 year olds within the borough. Under Labour, when the council funds or procures a new service, building or development, we will ensure training and apprenticeship opportunities are given to local people. We will encourage this through the planning process and by working with local businesses and other public sector bodies. We will actively encourage employers to pay apprentices a decent wage.

Affordable homes for everyone

32. Kingston has a housing crisis and Labour will make tackling this a priority. Housing policy is not just about putting a roof over people's heads. It is about giving our children the best start in life, by tackling inequality and poverty, and by increasing life chances and improving health. If we want a borough where big business invests and smaller businesses are given the opportunity to start up and grow, then we must provide decent homes, whether to rent or to buy, that are affordable for all.
33. We want to build new homes to rent and buy to help tackle Kingston's housing crisis. There are already over 6,000 households on the council's housing waiting list. At the current rate, it would take over 15 years to house them. The Government's changes to local housing allowances and housing benefits have restricted access to housing in the private sector for many of our lowest income residents.

Building affordable homes

34. Working with housing associations, a Labour council will build new affordable homes. We will ensure that, when we work in partnership with developers, they will provide apprenticeships that deliver real training for real jobs and a decent wage.
35. To protect communities and make sure that local people benefit when new homes are built, we will give priority for all new social housing to local people. People living in the ward where a development takes place, and who need a better home, will get the first chance at new homes for social rent.
36. For new council homes on existing estates, we will give priority to current tenants. New council homes will be offered first to households who need a better home, such as those living in overcrowded properties, and then to other residents on the estate on a like-for-like basis.
37. Labour will build mixed sustainable communities. By working alongside social housing providers and housing developers, we will ensure not only a decent mix of housing but also the infrastructure that goes with it. We will ensure that every major new development has a fair share of homes that local people can afford to rent or buy.
38. We will ensure that new developments include their quota of affordable homes according to the council's existing policies (50% in larger developments). Planning applications that contrive to avoid building affordable homes will be refused.
39. We will explore co-operative housing solutions and tenant self-management, where appropriate.

Keeping social housing rents affordable

40. The Lib Dem–Tory government and Tory Mayor of London want to increase rents in social housing so that London is no longer affordable for people on low incomes. Labour will ensure that people on low incomes can still afford to live here. We will protect social rents for Kingston's council tenants and fight to keep rents genuinely affordable for housing association tenants.

Bedroom tax

41. We will support people who want to downsize into a more manageable property and free up a home for a family suffering overcrowding. But we oppose the government's pernicious Bedroom Tax, which takes no account of people's personal circumstances, local connections, or the availability of smaller homes. We will assist those affected by the Bedroom Tax until it is repealed by a Labour government.

Managing council homes

42. We will aim for management of council homes and for housing repairs to be done in-house. Running services ourselves gives the council more control and makes it easier for residents to get involved. It also means we can offer more good jobs and apprenticeships to local people. We will drive up the standards of housing repairs to ensure tenants get the best possible service.
43. We will ensure contracts for maintaining council houses deliver better value for money, as well as fair pay and apprenticeships for local people. Under Labour, contractors will not get paid twice for doing a job not completed properly in the first instance and they will be responsible for ensuring that any repairs are cost-effective in the long run.
44. We will make sure that leaseholder service charges are fair and transparent.
45. We will encourage tenants and residents to be actively involved in running their estates by strengthening our residents' involvement activities. We will encourage people to attend local tenants' and residents' panels, and support people to set up new tenants' and residents' associations, and other local organisations on estates.
46. We will ensure that all our tenants abide by their agreements and will take action against those who make their neighbours' lives a misery.
47. We will strengthen the council's work to improve the housing situation of women, including ensuring that women who are victims of domestic violence have the housing support that is right for them.
48. We will undertake a fundamental asset review of Kingston's housing stock to ensure all housing opportunities are identified.
49. We will have allocations and homelessness procedures that treat people with respect.
50. The last Labour Government's policy on decent homes brought huge benefits to the council and its social housing tenants but this work must be continued, both in the social housing and the private sector. We will ensure our council homes have modern kitchens, bathrooms and central heating systems that meet the highest standards of energy efficiency. We will also ensure that such works are used as an opportunity to increase the accessibility of all council homes, in the light of national demographic trends.
51. We will promote independent living and high-quality affordable homes for disabled and older residents.
52. We will make sure our housing policies help young people, including young disabled people, move on to independent living and adulthood.
53. We will campaign for much tighter restrictions on the sale and future letting of right-to-buy properties, recognising that, once sold, many council properties are then privately rented at much higher rents.

Working for private tenants

54. Private rented accommodation has a part to play in providing housing in the borough. However, rents are soaring and tenants have little protection against exploitative or unprofessional landlords.

55. While there are many excellent landlords, others rent out accommodation that is not fit to live in and fail to manage their properties. This causes distress to the tenants and affects the lives of others.
56. Private tenants often have to pay extortionate fees to lettings agencies simply to secure a property. We will work with local organisations and other boroughs to establish a not-for-profit lettings agency so that Kingston's private tenants and landlords have a trusted and affordable alternative to expensive or rogue lettings agents.
57. We will work with private tenants in the borough to provide advice and campaign for decency, affordability and security in the private rented sector. We aim to establish a dedicated advice line for private tenants, making it easier for them to get information and support.
58. We will work with decent landlords and lettings agents in the borough. But we will also stand up for Kingston's private renters by taking tough action against landlords and lettings agents who fail to come up to the mark. Working with other boroughs, we will introduce a registration scheme for landlords so they are accountable for their properties. The best landlords can only gain from this.
59. We will make landlords responsible when old furniture and mattresses are simply discarded in front gardens or dumped in the street.
60. This package of measures will improve life for private tenants in Kingston, but national legislation is needed to stabilise rents and create more secure tenancies. We will campaign to make this a reality.

Empty homes

61. More than 300 homes are lying empty in Kingston, around 86 per cent of which are owned privately. Labour wants to help bring them back into use by offering a combination of loans and grants for building works. Compulsory purchase is an option. We will continue to press the Government for stronger powers to tackle the problem of overseas buyers who leave properties empty but, if a property does remain unlive in for more than six months, we will charge owners a higher rate of Council Tax for it.

Building standards

62. The environmental impact of new homes is important to us. We will insist that all developments achieve the highest feasible level of sustainability. We will ensure that new council homes are built to the highest energy standards, and promote exemplar schemes such as those built to *Passivhaus* standards.
63. All new homes shall meet the Lifetime Homes standard, including private market housing. We will also prioritise the provision of wheelchair-accessible housing, of which there is currently very little in the borough, across all tenures.

Houseboats

64. The houseboats on the Thames add colour and variety to the riverside scene. We support the retention of permanent moorings.

Student accommodation

65. The current Core Strategy identifies a need for 1,700 student rooms and other estimates calculate a demand for up to 5,600 student rooms. Whilst the prospect of student accommodation can be unpopular, the alternative is often that students occupy housing built for families, often ex-council housing. Kingston University leases around 150 houses (circa 600 bedspaces) from private landlords.
66. Labour supports the idea that any purpose-built student accommodation should be based on the University's preferred 'cluster' model, not just corridors of studio flats.

67. Any student accommodation should be built in partnership with Kingston University and Kingston College. They should have first refusal on any purpose-built student accommodation: student rooms built in Kingston should not be used for students commuting to central London whilst students studying in Kingston are often commuting in from miles away.
68. We will ensure that all new student accommodation includes appropriate provision for disabled students.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

69. A House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a house or flat occupied by 3 or more unrelated people who rent a property and share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet. Such property is classed under a Use Class C4.
70. In the borough, the character of some streets has already changed. Many former council houses that were family homes 15 years ago are now let to students and other HMO tenants. As the tenants are transient, they have little interest in the upkeep of the area, which can become blighted. In particular, roads in Grove, St. Mark's, and Berrylands are affected by the spread of HMOs.
71. Kingston's current policy is that planning permission is not required to change from Use Class C3 (a dwelling) to Use Class C4. Portsmouth and other councils have introduced a policy to slow the spread of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and so preserve the character of an area. In Kingston, Labour will follow their example: all changes of use from Class C3 to Class C4 will require planning permission.

Bringing down the cost of living

72. Kingston residents are being hit by increases in the cost of living while average wages are stagnating. To help people in tough times, a Labour-run council will work hard to cut residents' costs and raise incomes.
73. The economic circumstances over the next four years are unpredictable. However, we will aim to keep council tax bill rises no higher than the rate of inflation.
74. We will maintain Kingston's free school meals programme.
75. As big energy companies continue to rip off customers, we want to see Kingston follow the examples of Woking, Islington, and Birmingham in generating more of its own energy so that residents start to have a real alternative. We want to see schemes in Kingston to cut bills and emissions.
76. We will expand the council's home insulation programme to help residents save money on their energy bills, keep their homes warm in winter and lower their carbon emissions. We will also continue to support the Big London Energy Switch, a collective switching scheme that helps residents club together to get the best energy deals.
77. The cost of travel in London is a major burden on people on low and middle incomes. We will continue to campaign against unfair increases in public transport fares.
78. Kingston residents can fall prey to rip-off payday lenders. People on low incomes may need get credit but not at any cost. Labour will support the work of the SurreySave and other Credit Unions, so more people can get affordable loans.
79. We will stop access to payday lender web sites from council-owned computers (for instance, in libraries). We will campaign against payday lenders operating in the borough, while using our planning, licensing and other powers to limit the spread of payday lenders.
80. We will work to limit the spread of betting shops and amusement arcades in our neighbourhoods and actively campaign for changes in the law to enable the council to make decisions about improving local areas and allowing a diversity of shops to flourish.

81. In the face of this Liberal Democrat–Tory government's cuts to benefits and rising levels of debt, we will support the Citizens Advice Bureau, a vital resource for Kingston's residents. We will also support other sources of welfare and debt advice in the borough.
82. Labour is appalled by the Liberal Democrat–Tory government's benefit cuts, which are pushing many of the borough's vulnerable residents into hardship. We will campaign against these changes while offering practical support to people who have been affected, including helping people hit by the Bedroom Tax.
83. Kingston Foodbank has seen a sharp rise in demand and now distributes up to 1.7 tonnes of food a month to clients referred to them. We will support the work of the Foodbank but seek to use the policy levers available to us to reduce the need for residents to turn to foodbanks.

Learning throughout life

84. The current Lib Dem–Conservative Coalition government has reduced the role of local councils in education – for example by its dogmatic insistence that all new schools should be "free schools" or "academies", by removal of council powers and responsibilities, and by cuts in funding.
85. Kingston Council's own performance under Liberal Democrat leadership has been mixed. We commend the Education Kingston partnership as a means of maintaining and building on local expertise in supporting and improving local schools. On the other hand, the council's record in planning for increases in demand for places at local schools has been poor, with many new classrooms being built on existing school sites, so expanding them to the limits of their capacity.
86. We will prioritise partnership working between the council, local communities and education providers to ensure that local needs are met and local people's views are heard.

Schools

87. Following the massive investment in school buildings from the previous Labour government, we now have some good school buildings. We will work with schools and local charities to open up more school facilities for community use so that more of Kingston's residents can take advantage of this investment.
88. We will not encourage any more of Kingston's schools to convert to academy status and call for parental ballots where schools are considering this step.
89. Every child should feel safe at school. We will take a tough approach to bullying, including online bullying. We will work closely with schools to ensure that children learn that bullying and discrimination are not acceptable.

Tackling the shortage in schools places

90. While local representatives of the Coalition parties have rushed to take credit for the forthcoming new secondary school in North Kingston, we should remember that one of the first acts of the Lib Dem–Conservative Coalition was to withdraw the funding allocated for building the school by the last Labour government – which has meant two years of delay and worry for local parents.
91. We will ensure that all stakeholders are properly consulted about proposals for new school sites and buildings, and encourage community use of school facilities.
92. We will identify new sites for new schools, and ensure that there are enough school places for all local children. We will ensure that all new and refurbished school buildings are designed to be accessible to disabled pupils, including those who need full changing and hoisting facilities to participate in mainstream education.

93. We are opposed to the creation of new free schools providing mainstream education in Kingston. However, free schools may be the only way that a new school can be financed under the current Liberal Democrat–Tory government.
94. An attainment gap has been allowed to develop in Kingston. The gap between attainment by those eligible for free school meals and by all other students is one of the biggest in the country. Labour will aim to narrow this attainment gap as has been achieved in other London boroughs. Labour will focus on standards in all of Kingston's schools so that every parent can be confident their child will receive an excellent education in the borough. We will work with all schools to raise standards and encourage collaboration between schools, so that the best performing schools pass on their knowledge to those that need extra help.
95. Alongside supporting academic achievement, we will expand schemes to raise young peoples' aspirations and confidence through sport and debating competitions across Kingston's schools. We will roll out music programmes to more of Kingston's schools so that children from all backgrounds get the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument.

Early years

96. The early years so often shape people's life chances and that is why we support Sure Start (Children's Centres) and early years' provision. There is strong evidence that this leads to better social mobility and costs savings as children progress through life. Families with young children often need extra support. Kingston's network of Sure Start children's centres help parents to avoid isolation and get the support and services they need. We aim to keep every children's centre in the borough open and will fight hard to protect this vital community service despite any cuts imposed on the council's budget. We will maintain the funding for the health visiting service when this transfers to the Public Health Department in 2015.
97. We will defend Extended School provision and Children's Centres.
98. We will develop nursery education, with a range of provision to meet needs in each part of the borough.
99. We believe that classroom support staff and teaching assistants are vital professionals in the modern school environment and should be recognised as such. We know the difference teaching assistants make every single day, whether it's supporting a teacher, helping a child, or working with students with greater needs. We will campaign to defend teaching assistants from cuts by central government.

Tackling inequality

100. We will give priority to raising attainment for children from Kingston's poorest families, and ensure that all Pupil Premium funding is used effectively for this purpose.
101. We will ensure high-quality support for children and families whose first language is not English.
102. We will review provision for Special Educational Needs to ensure this meets current requirements.

Preparing for employment

103. Employers continue to report a rise in skill shortages among school, college and university leavers, and the Coalition government has no clear, long term vision for the kind of skills and knowledge our young people need for the future. Its policies run counter to the need to establish greater affinity between vocational training and more traditional academic education. We believe that local people look to the council as an advocate and enabler for meeting the borough's real needs for high-quality education and training.

104. We will encourage local schools to fulfil their responsibilities to provide careers and employment advice.
105. We will review the Youth Service with a view to ensuring there is a range of youth provision across the borough, integrated with other services, to meet all local needs.
106. We will work with all borough contractors, local businesses, Kingston College and the council's departments to expand the provision of apprenticeships for local people.

And beyond school

107. Young people themselves often know best what services they need. We will encourage the Kingston Youth Council to influence decisions affecting young people in the borough. Youth services are important in providing opportunities for young people through sport, drama, music and other activities. We will work with the borough's voluntary organisations to attract new funding for youth services in the borough in order to protect them from the cuts imposed by the Liberal Democrat–Tory government.
108. Literacy is important: we will support campaigns and festivals to promote reading and books.
109. We will look after our parks, adventure playgrounds and other open spaces so that children have safe places to play.

Lifelong learning

110. We will ensure that Adult Education meets the needs of local people of all ages, and is available at a range of locations throughout the borough.

Supporting older people, disabled people and their carers

111. Labour will help Kingston residents to live long, independent lives in their own homes, and we will seek to provide care and support where needed. We will work with the third sector, co-operatives, mutual and social enterprises to provide high-quality self-directed care, which maximises autonomy and independence and goes beyond a basic "feed and clean" service to enable disabled people to participate fully in their community.
112. We will work with the Kingston Pensioners Forum and other organisations in the borough to tackle fuel poverty and call for more action from the government. We will work with the NHS so that older people get advice about health, staying warm and getting the benefits they are entitled to.
113. Our goal is that new-build houses will be 'life-time' homes, adaptable to support people's changing needs throughout their lives. We will also ensure that at least 10% of all new housing is built to full wheelchair standard, with the council's housing officers, occupational therapists and planners working closely with registered social landlords to ensure the detailed design is appropriate for the end user.

Care and carers

114. Labour will aim to provide social care for residents with moderate care needs, not just those with substantial needs. Providing for moderate care needs means that people are supported to stay independent rather than waiting until problems escalate and cost more to deal with.

115. Linking up social care with the NHS is vital for making sure people can stay independent for longer, as well making the best use of scarce resources. We will pioneer new work with local NHS services to join up social care and health care so that services are coordinated around the needs of the individual. We will strengthen our reablement and intermediate care services to help avoid expensive and unnecessary stays in hospital. This will also mean that people can leave hospital quickly knowing that they will have the help they need when they get home.
116. Homecare services are better when they are delivered by well-trained and motivated staff on a decent wage. Extending the London Living Wage to all homecare workers on council contracts, and funding personal budgets to enable disabled people to pay a decent wage to their Personal Assistants, will help to raise wages among the workforce. We will work with social care providers to improve the pay and working conditions of care workers. This includes fighting to secure a living wage for residential care workers and to reduce the number of people on zero-hours contracts.
117. Unpaid carers make a huge contribution to life in Kingston and our community relies heavily on the support they offer to family and friends. Caring is a tough job and carers themselves need support, including the chance to have a break, catch up with friends and do things that interest them. We will take further steps to identify and support unpaid carers in Kingston, regardless of whether those they care for are no longer eligible for local authority support, under central government criteria. We will work with charities and support groups in the borough.
118. A Labour council will look at adopting *UNISON's ethical care charter* and implementing it in stages as far as practicable.

Dealing with loneliness

119. Isolation and loneliness create negative health outcomes, particularly for our older residents, leading to expensive dependency. Connecting older people to the outside world can reduce these problems. Labour will look at ways of improving all forms of social interactions for our older residents, disabled people, and people with learning difficulties.
120. We will campaign to protect the Freedom Pass so that older people can get out and about. We will ensure that any disabled people who lose their entitlement to the Motability scheme following reassessment for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are supported to identify alternative ways of remaining mobile.
121. We will work with local voluntary organisations to reach out to older people in Kingston and connect them to local social activities or make sure they are getting the help they need. We will work with a range of local befriending schemes to help tackle isolation and loneliness in Kingston. We will provide day centres for those who need and want them.

Improving health

122. Under the Liberal Democrat–Tory government, the National Health Service is at risk of privatisation and fragmentation. Labour will do everything we can to mitigate the worst effects of this policy. Labour is dedicated to a National Health Service as a comprehensive health service, open to all and free at the point of use. Labour fought to protect essential services at Kingston Hospital and to secure the hospital's future. We will fight to safeguard NHS services in the borough. We will work with the NHS to get the best services, but we will ensure that it is held to account.
123. Our NHS Pledge is to:
 - Protect NHS founding values
 - Prevent postcode lotteries
 - Guard against longer waits
 - Promote collaboration over competition

- Put patients before profits
124. We will use our powers through the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel to make sure that NHS services meet the needs of Kingston's residents. We will seek to address the inequalities that blight our borough, including inequalities in access to dental care and poor care delivered to people with learning disabilities. We aim to prevent 'postcode lotteries'.
125. Under Labour, the council will work closely with the Kingston Clinical Commissioning Group (who decide what health services the borough's residents need) to ensure that residents get the best possible healthcare and a full range of treatments. We will work with local GPs to make sure GP services are accessible to all, including looking at more evening and weekend surgeries.
126. The prevalence of mental ill health among Kingston's residents is too high. We will use all our powers to strive to enhance mental health services in the borough, both voluntary and statutory, and press for the restoration of funding.

Preventing ill-health

127. A Labour council will work on preventing ill-health by enabling people to take more control of their lives. Under Labour, all council departments will be expected to consider how they can deliver services to improve the health of residents.
128. We will use the council's new responsibilities for public health to tackle health problems early and promote healthy lifestyles. For example, we will use our public health funding to invest in stronger health services for young children and new parents, and to support sports programmes for young people.
129. We will work with local GPs and the Health and Wellbeing Board to improve the advice given to avoid and prevent conditions such as obesity, diabetes, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse and to also encourage people to give up smoking.
130. We will seek to improve services to reduce the effects of alcohol, tobacco and substance abuse. We will review Kingston's licensing strategy to reduce the harm done by excessive consumption of alcohol.
131. A Labour council will aim to reduce, and then end, any council investment in the tobacco industry.
132. We will review our planning and licensing guidelines to stop the spread of fast food outlets on our streets, particularly close to our schools, and we will work with existing outlets to promote healthy eating.

Safeguarding children and older people

133. OFSTED, the independent inspector, has found the council's child protection services to be inadequate in two consecutive recent inspections. As a result, the borough's most vulnerable children have been exposed to unacceptable levels of risk. We will ensure that the borough's safeguarding services make rapid progress towards acceptable performance, and that all lessons from recent failures are learned.
134. Labour will work to strengthen the council's safeguarding processes and collaborate with the police, voluntary organisations, hospitals and GPs, to make every effort to prevent incidents of child abuse taking place in our community.
135. Council budgets have been slashed by the Liberal Democrat–Tory government, putting unacceptable pressure on child protection agencies. Social workers and social work departments are straining to maintain services. In 2015, we hope to work with a Labour government to ensure resources are allocated to this crucial area to strengthen child protection further.

136. In the wake of the many reported cases around the country of neglect and abuse of older people and people with learning disabilities, a Labour council will ensure that adult safeguarding, despite government cuts, is strengthened. As with children's safeguarding, we will work closely with external agencies to ensure this area is a priority.
137. We will make every effort to safeguard against violence and abuse (physical, mental or financial) being inflicted upon our older and most vulnerable people, but equally as important, we must guard against simple indifference, which so often leads to neglect. Labour will strengthen the council's safeguarding processes, and through our scrutiny role, we will make other involved agencies responsible and accountable.

Early intervention

138. We know that if they don't get the right help as early as possible, some families' difficulties can grow, resulting in costly consequences for both the family and their community. Labour will invest in services to help local families at an early stage; this is the right thing to do for the families and avoids much more expensive work later.
139. This means working with a family in difficulties and not waiting until the only option is to take children into care. We will work with young people who are starting to get into trouble to try to help them. We must not wait until they end up in the youth offending system.

Planning

Keeping communities alive

140. Kingston University with its 20,000 students is a resource with immense untapped potential. Labour will discuss with the University how it and its students can be better integrated into Kingston community and play a more pro-active role in the community in a range of educational, environmental, enterprise, cultural, sporting and research spheres.
141. We will promote and protect community 'hubs' in our neighbourhoods. These are the places where people traditionally meet – whether in their church or community hall, a pub or a club, the post office or a local shop – all places that are vital for thriving communities.
142. We will encourage communities to nominate valued facilities such as pubs as "assets of community value" under the Localism Act.

Public lavatories

143. We will maintain existing public lavatories and look at reopening those that have been closed. We will seek to introduce a Community Toilet scheme (such as the one in Richmond) in those parts of the borough that are poorly served by public lavatories.
144. We will encourage all new large scale community facilities to have toilets built to the Changing Places standard.

Improving our local environment

Global warming

145. Labour takes the challenge of global warming and pollution seriously because they have the biggest impact on the most vulnerable. Taking action to reduce carbon emissions also helps residents struggling to cope with the rising cost of living, by cutting energy bills.

146. We aim to cut energy bills and reduce emissions by replacing old boilers and insulating homes. We will expand the programme of home insulation. We will encourage the highest standards of energy and water efficiency in new-build homes in the borough.
147. Unpredictable weather patterns are a consequence of global warming. We will review the council's emergency planning procedures for extreme weather conditions, such as flooding and heavy snow.

Air pollution

148. Public Health England estimates that air pollution causes 68 deaths a year in Kingston. Poor air quality is a major health risk as it can cause childhood asthma and other respiratory problems. Air quality in Kingston is still not good enough, particularly along our main roads, such as the A3 and Fairfield North. We will campaign for the Mayor of London to take action to improve air quality in the borough, for example by tightening up emissions standards for taxis, HGVs, and buses.
149. Diesel vehicles are the greatest single cause of air pollution. We aim to reduce vehicle use through improving public transport and encouraging walking and cycling.
150. We will encourage the use of low emission vehicles, with the council taking the lead in its own fleet.
151. We will support the expansion of any future Ultra Low Emission Zone in central London.
152. We will improve air quality through planting street trees and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.

Improving our streets

153. A Labour council will aim to improve our local environment and make Kingston a more pleasant place in which to live, work, shop and visit. Labour is determined to make Kingston one of the cleanest and greenest boroughs in the capital.
154. We will increase the frequency of street cleaning in areas where the need is greatest.
155. Many residents have told us that they are unhappy with the state of their street, with problems such as fly-tipping and dog-fouling. These problems can spoil someone's quality of life and a Labour council will tackle them.
156. We will target the minority of dog owners who let their dogs foul our streets and estates, and issue significant fines when we catch people.
157. Urinating in public is antisocial and disgusting. A Labour council will make it an offence punishable by an on-the-spot fixed penalty notice. We will also adopt the same approach to spitting in public places.
158. Fly-tipping is a problem in some parts of the borough. Where possible, we will use fixed or mobile CCTV to identify offenders. We will work with the police to pursue large-scale fly-tipping through the courts and press for the maximum penalties in addition to seeking compensation. We will require council employees to report incidents and also aim to establish a dedicated fly-tipping and litter hotline to make it easier for people to report offences. We will name and shame offenders.
159. We will aim for graffiti to be removed speedily.
160. A Labour council will empower enforcement officers to issue a fixed penalty notice for a wide range of environmental offences and make enforcement activity more effective. We will also make it easier for environmental crime to be reported so that incidents can be resolved more quickly.
161. Labour's new approach will ensure that many more offenders are caught and punished. This will send a clear message that fly-tipping and other antisocial behaviour in Kingston will no longer be tolerated.

162. Residents often raise concerns about littered, overgrown and untidy areas. We will launch projects involving local people in days of action to tackle these areas.

Waste, recycling, and reuse

163. Despite the cuts to the council's budget, we will aim to undertake essential environmental services well, such as collecting waste and recycling. We will protect weekly recycling collections as well as look for ways to make it easier for residents to recycle, and drive up the borough's recycling rate.
164. A Labour council will work with households and businesses to reduce the amount that is sent to landfill sites by doing more to reduce waste, encourage re-use and increase recycling.
165. We will ensure that households have containers and recycling bins that adequately meet their needs. We will tackle the problem of recycling for flats, particularly those over shops. We will increase the frequency of waste collection in areas where need is greatest.
166. We will improve the provision of public bins for on-street recycling. These will make it easier for people to recycle rather than to put recyclable material into non-recyclable bins.
167. We will work in partnership with our contractors to ensure our recycling and waste is collected efficiently. We will take firm action against contractors who do not keep our streets clean.
168. We will work with charities and recycling companies to do more to reuse or recycle old clothes, shoes, bedding, white goods, furniture, and any other recyclable items.
169. We will examine abolishing the charge for the bulky waste collection service for poor households and households headed by a disabled person.

Transport

Roads

170. Our roads have been neglected by the Liberal Democrats. At the current rate of repair/reconstruction, carriageways would only be resurfaced once every 25 years and footways reconstructed once every 50 years. We will give high priority to spending on road maintenance, to help all road users, especially bus passengers and cyclists, and to reduce noise and vibrations from traffic. We will set targets that reward only those contractors who complete the work on time and to a high standard – not to a standard that needs repair within a year.
171. Some 36% of roads in Kingston currently have 20 mph speed limits. This makes our roads safer for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists and brings both health and environmental benefits. We will install more 20 mph zones and limits with residents' support. We will also hold a consultation on making 20 mph the default speed limit on roads throughout the borough. We will work with local police to ensure that speed limits are observed throughout the borough.
172. Transport for London controls the A3 and the A240 and A243 south of the A3. These roads are where accidents often occur and also where air quality is particularly poor. We will lobby Transport for London to introduce appropriate speed limits on their roads in Kingston and improve cycle safety on the roads they manage. We will work with Transport for London to review the operation of A3 interchanges to make sure they are working as well as they can for Kingston's residents, including cyclists and pedestrians.
173. We will reduce congestion and improve air quality by promoting walking, cycling, public transport, home working and video conferencing, school and workplace travel plans.
174. We will introduce more car club bays to help reduce congestion and parking pressure.

175. Following accidents, including at least one fatality, Labour councillors campaigned for the barriers in Tolworth Broadway. They were installed in 1969. We will monitor the Tolworth 'Greenway' for its safety and make adjustments to its design if necessary.

Buses

176. We will work with Transport for London (TfL), bus operators, developers and neighbouring authorities to improve services to poorly served areas, especially social housing estates, at evenings and weekends, and cross-border services to and from Surrey to reduce driving into Kingston.
177. We will work with TfL to put more real-time information for bus passengers at bus stops, particularly on routes where this would add the greatest value.
178. We will work with TfL for improvements to local bus stations, including step-free access.
179. We will work with TfL and the bus companies to ensure that disabled people can use buses, unimpeded by broken ramps or wheelchair spaces occupied by pushchairs.
180. We will protect the Freedom Pass.

Railways

181. We will work with South West Trains, Network Rail and Transport for London to:
- Make all stations in the borough accessible to disabled people and those with buggies, heavy luggage, and suchlike;
 - Increase the frequency of services on the Chessington South and Hampton Court (Berrylands) lines, especially at evenings and weekends;
 - Secure early implementation of the Crossrail 2 Regional Option.

Walking

182. Encouraging more people to walk and cycle will help improve residents' health, cut emissions and improve air quality. We will make sure that new developments do not generate disproportionate traffic problems (for example, by providing parking spaces for car clubs). New developments will have more bike stands and stores to encourage their residents to cycle.
183. We will make walking and cycling in the borough safer so that residents have the confidence to leave their cars behind. However, we will take steps to ensure pedestrians, especially older or disabled people, do not feel intimidated by cyclists on non-vehicular routes.
184. We will install more 20mph zones (see 171).
185. We will revive our shopping areas by implementing high quality urban realm schemes.
186. We will ensure that footways are properly maintained and that crossings meet accessibility and safety standards, with adequate lighting.
187. Cluttered streets can be difficult for walkers to negotiate, especially for people who are blind or disabled. We will look for opportunities to remove *unnecessary* signs, guard railings, and bollards – for example, by moving a road sign to an existing lighting column rather than it having its own pole. We will restrict other forms of clutter, such as unlicensed A-boards. These steps should make the pavements clearer and more spacious for pedestrians.
188. We will ensure that street lighting is of high quality and high energy efficiency.
189. We will work with neighbourhood police to reduce street crime and the fear of street crime.

Cycling

190. We will seek to establish cycle hubs in Kingston and Surbiton town centres, offering secure bike parking.
191. We will continue the council's courses in cycle training and maintenance.
192. We will seek to establish an automatic cycle hire scheme in the borough.
193. We will work with partners to provide cycle parking, particularly in residential areas and estates.
194. We will progressively fill the gaps in the borough's cycle network.
195. About 50% of cyclists' deaths in London are caused by Heavy Goods Vehicles, even though HGVs are only 5% of the traffic. We will sign the London Cycling Campaign's "Safer Lorries, Safer Cycling" pledge.
196. We will ensure that all the council's own HGV drivers will have to attend 'safe urban driving' training and we will require all major new council contractors and major developers operating in the borough to do the same. We will aim to achieve bronze accreditation under the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (which sets out safety requirements beyond the legal minimum for the council's own vehicles), followed by action to achieve silver and gold status.

Air transport

197. We do not support the closure of Heathrow Airport because of its importance to West London's economy. However, its continued expansion would have detrimental effects on people who live under the flight path. We support the HACAN vision of "A Better Heathrow, Not a Bigger One" with a sophisticated mix of specialist use of different airports, demand management, and substitution of some trips by High Speed Rail.

Green spaces

Green belt and Metropolitan Open Land

198. Our borough benefits enormously from its Metropolitan Open Land and Green belt. Labour seeks to preserve these areas. Our predisposition is that new developments will be on 'brownfield' sites.
199. **Seething Wells filter beds site:** The Friends of Seething Wells have produced outline proposals to turn the site into a riverside park at their estimated cost of £2.62 million. Sources of funding for these proposals are highly uncertain. Labour wishes to see the restoration of the site, while maintaining its historical features and wildlife habitats with appropriate public access.
200. We will support initiatives, such as the Hogsmill Community Garden, to make waste land more ecologically diverse.

Parks

201. As the capital's smallest borough, we are fortunate to have many public parks in Kingston. They are invaluable green spaces where people and children can relax, play and escape the pressures of daily life. They can also support the local economy, provide opportunities for exercise and sport and help to mitigate global warming.
202. In partnership with local people, a Labour council will seek to ensure that our parks are of the highest quality, and in which all our communities can take pride. A Labour council will set higher expectations of our parks and open spaces and view them as key assets for the local community.

203. A Labour council will work to make our parks and open spaces safe for all. Current mobile maintenance and security teams are inadequate. We will increase patrols in parks with known problems. We will look at having some parks permanently staffed during working hours.
204. A Labour council will work with local communities to enable them to take the decisions that affect their parks and open spaces, identifying priorities and developing them to reflect the needs of residents and support nature conservation.
205. We will look at parks as a resource to give young people and the unemployed opportunities to learn new skills and that enable disabled young and unemployed people to take part.
206. A Labour council will not sell off buildings in parks and open spaces, but will work with residents to find new uses for them where their original use is no longer appropriate.

Sourcing materials for parks and open spaces

207. We will continue the council's policy of using predominantly native species of trees and shrubs in general planting areas. However, problems can arise when importing strains of native species of trees and plants from abroad. There is a danger of importing plant diseases and pests to which indigenous strains have no resistance. Therefore, a Labour council will procure trees and plants from British sources unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise.
208. We will continue the council's policy of not using peat-based composts.

Reducing light pollution

209. Inefficient street lighting is still the main contributor to light pollution, wastefully shining into people's homes and into the sky, causing the orange haze that hangs over urban areas and can be seen for many miles. Wasted light is wasted money – approximately £1 billion per annum is wasted by inefficient lighting in the UK alone.
210. We believe that lights should shine only where and when needed.
- Lights should always shine downward, towards their targets.
 - Lights should be shielded from shining into neighbouring homes, to avoid causing nuisance.
 - Lights should not shine onto people's property without their permission.

Fracking

211. New Malden and Worcester Park are already in part of a concession block granted for exploration of fossil fuels. In December 2013, the rest of Kingston borough was put in an area under consideration for new licences. However, the London area is not thought to have any shale gas or oil present. In the event that fracking in the borough were applied for, the exploration company would need council planning permission to start drilling. In that instance, Labour would insist on six safeguards, set out below.
- Baseline conditions should be assessed prior to any exploratory work with microseismic monitoring, in order to discriminate natural from artificially induced seismic events once the drilling begins. An early warning detection system should also be implemented, similar to that used in the Netherlands and Germany, which would allow measures to be taken before seismic activity has a noticeable impact.
 - Chemicals used must be restricted to those that are proven to be non-hazardous. Further, there should be mandated disclosure of all the chemicals to be used in fracking, including their toxicity levels.

- The integrity of each shale gas well must be assured to prevent water contamination. An independent assessment of the well design, the cement bond between the casing and well bore, in addition to the composition of the casing to determine its ability to resist corrosion, is essential.
- The level of methane in groundwater should also be assessed prior to any drilling. Methane can occur naturally in groundwater, but there is concern from the experience in the USA that it may occur as a result of fracking. In each case, that needs to be assessed prior to any activity, so there is robust baseline information to monitor against.
- All potential shale exploration sites should be subject to screening for an environmental impact assessment – at present, those below one hectare do not need to undertake such an assessment. This assessment should include the level of water used, how much can be recycled and the availability of water in each case.
- All of the monitoring activity referred to above should take place over a twelve month period, to allow sufficient time to gather all of the evidence required to make an informed decision on whether to proceed with exploration.

Promoting animal welfare

212. Kingston Labour believes that all animals are sentient creatures, capable of enjoying a state of well being and equally capable of suffering. We believe that, in a civilised society, people should advocate the welfare of animals and take whatever action is within their power to protect them from abuse and cruelty. We support the view that all animals have the right to enjoy five basic freedoms:

- freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition
- freedom from physical discomfort and pain
- freedom from injury or disease
- freedom from fear and distress
- freedom to express their normal behavioural needs.

213. It was Labour councillor Jean England who led the way in getting Kingston Council to ban the use of large performing animals, such as elephants, in circuses held on council land.

214. A Labour council will follow the example of other councils and develop an Animal Welfare Charter. This will be based on the Labour Animal Welfare Society's *Local Authority Charter for the Welfare of Animals* but adapting it for the situation in Kingston.

Making Kingston a safer place to live

Tackling crime

215. Our goal is to make Kingston one of the safest boroughs in the capital. Overall, the number of crimes is falling. However, we know that crime and antisocial behaviour can blight some residents' lives and disproportionately hurts those who are less well-off. We aim to reduce crime and the perception of crime. We will work with local police and other organisations in the borough to act against perpetrators and to tackle the underlying causes of crime and antisocial behaviour.

216. We will work to build public trust in the police and to strengthen our residents' confidence to report crime and antisocial behaviour. We will maintain CCTV around the borough to deter criminals and make it easier to bring offenders to justice.

217. Neighbourhood policing is at the forefront of our fight against crime and antisocial behaviour, a visible presence on our streets that reassures residents and helps the police to build relationships in our communities. We will campaign to maintain police numbers in every ward in the borough, despite the cuts to police numbers imposed by the Tory Mayor of London.
218. We will work with the Metropolitan Police Service to safeguard the successful Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs) and urge local police to respond to residents' priorities. We will campaign to ensure that, where appropriate, Safer Neighbourhood Teams operate from local bases in the borough, making them community-based and easily accessible. SNTs should not waste precious time travelling from far off offices; they should be based in our communities.
219. We will also work with the police and other organisations in the borough to tackle hate crime in all its forms.
220. It is vital that Kingston's residents feel safe in public places. We will ensure that our streets, estates and urban open spaces are well-designed and properly lit at night.
221. Kingston's lively nightlife attracts many people to our borough. However, we must protect residents from the excesses of the night-time economy and make sure that local businesses behave responsibly. Under Labour, the council will have a tough licensing policy, including strict rules on closing times and new 'saturation zones' throughout the borough to make it harder for new outlets selling alcohol to open in areas that already have lots of bars, pubs and off-licences. We will monitor the impacts of this approach and use all the council's regulatory powers to address problem drinking.

Tackling domestic violence

222. Although crime is falling overall, domestic violence remains a problem, with women and children overwhelmingly the victims. We will make challenging domestic violence a priority, with the continuation of Domestic and Sexual Violence Team based at the council to make sure organisations in Kingston are working together to tackle this devastating crime. We will encourage prosecutions against the perpetrators of domestic violence and do more to support those fleeing a violent partner or relative.
223. The housing service will work to ensure that victims of domestic violence can get the housing support that is right for them.
224. Child violence against parents is a growing and disturbing area of domestic violence. A Labour council will work against this trend by highlighting the problem, by encouraging abused parents to come forward, and working closely with schools, GPs, hospitals, and the police.

Leisure

Culture

225. Kingston has a rich history of artists, authors, and musicians. Labour aims to further this. Even in times of financial constraint, we believe it is important that the council does what it can do to promote art and cultural events.
226. Labour will ensure that our libraries are run directly by the council using professional staff. We will not close libraries.
227. We will fulfil current contractual obligations to the Rose Theatre. Before they expire, we will carry out a thorough review before deciding the appropriate level of any future funding. In the interim, we will seek greater transparency and accountability in the Rose's governance, management, and financial reporting, in keeping with its status as a community asset and a recipient of subsidy from council funds.

- 228. We are dedicated to maintaining local artistic venues. We will work with local residents in support of a wider variety of venues, together with greater participation in the arts in our borough.
- 229. We will work with voluntary organisations to make it easier for community-led, community-run arts and cultural events to take place in the borough.
- 230. We will work with community groups, the voluntary sector and investors to support festivals in Kingston.
- 231. Our cultural heritage informs us of who we are and what we can become. It is our duty to safeguard it for the future. A Labour council will value our cultural heritage and maintain our museum service, the Local History Room and archives.

Sport

- 232. A Labour council will use sport to improve health and well-being across our communities. We will work with volunteer sports clubs and organisations to increase participation and strengthen communities.
- 233. A Labour council will showcase the wealth of volunteer-led sports clubs, commercial sports providers and council-provided facilities through co-ordinated "open house" style weekends that encourage people to try out different sports or activities, or to volunteer in the running of them.
- 234. A Labour council will actively manage our leisure centres and promote their use. We aim to develop the use of leisure centres and make them accessible to more people and affordably priced.
- 235. A Labour council will set out to help its sportspeople, the coaches, officials and other volunteers, to recruit, train and retain new members; to foster stronger links between schools and sports clubs and to offer more sporting opportunities and better sporting events in the borough.
- 236. We will carry out a detailed survey of all the sporting facilities in the borough and their states of repair. This will determine the facilities' availability for public use. With the athletics World Championships being staged in London in 2017 and other elite global sports events being staged at the Olympic Park, there will be opportunities to offer training bases in the borough for international teams. To do this, we must offer a range of first-class facilities.
- 237. Well-staged sporting events promote Kingston, as well as bringing many visitors to the borough to participate or spectate. They in turn visit our shops, cafes, bars, pubs, and restaurants. We will work with sporting organisations and the voluntary sector to develop Kingston as a place of choice for staging a range of sporting events.
- 238. We will work AFC Wimbledon and Kingstonian F. C. to secure the future of Kingsmeadow should AFC Wimbledon relocate as they plan to do.
- 239. A Labour council will retain the existing sports development staff to help unlock available funding to help our local sports clubs and schools.

Running a good council

An efficient council

- 240. As the smallest borough in London, we must ensure that the council's budget is well-managed and prudently spent. Against the backdrop of cuts to the budget, we will ensure Kingston council is efficient and effective. Labour believes that the council owes residents the duty to be efficient and provide value for money. Under the Liberal Democrats, Kingston has been notorious for demanding the highest council tax of any London borough, despite the cynical decision to freeze council tax in this election year.

241. In these tough times, it is more important than ever that public money is spent wisely. We will draw on the experience of Labour-led councils in innovations that deliver better services at lower costs. We will take a fresh look at everything the council spends and where staff are allocated. This means that we can ensure that resources are deployed where they are most needed. This is not only good for residents but saves money in the long run.
242. We will look rigorously at current budgets to strip out waste, and reduce costs. We will energetically explore ways to reduce unnecessary costs, and continue to develop ways to share appropriate services and administration with other local authorities and public sector bodies. Any such arrangements would retain accountability to councillors and enable Freedom of Information requests. We will review the council's advertising and PR teams for savings.
243. We will continually strive to improve services and get the best value for every pound the council spends. Labour strongly prefers the provision of council services through a directly-employed workforce. This makes staff more accountable, gives the council more control and saves money on expensive contractors. We will seek to bring services back in-house where it can be demonstrated that this will benefit residents.
244. We will make it easier for residents to use council services, by enabling them to do simple tasks online. This will save money that can be reinvested back into the services residents want.
245. Labour supports the principle of Neighbourhood Committees as a means of engaging with residents at a local level, and of making decisions on appropriate local matters. We would look for ways enhancing their effectiveness in these functions.
246. The council has a large asset base of land, buildings, and other assets. Some may be under-used. We will look at all assets to see how they can be better used. We cannot allow council premises to be wastefully under-used or left empty.
247. Our staff are our most valuable asset: we will review council structures to enable greater efficiency, rapid decision-making, and more effective front-line services. We will ensure all staff can undertake Continuing Professional Development.
248. We will make sure the council's overall salary bill for senior staff does not grow further. When staff leave the council's service because of poor performance, we will ensure that they do not get "Golden Handshakes" – pay-offs over and above any contractual obligations.

Managing suppliers and procuring services

249. We believe that there are significant savings to be made in procurement by exercising the council's power as a large scale purchaser. For example, RBK has been paying over £10,000 for windows in each council flat that it refurbishes; bulk savings must be possible.
250. Where the council uses contractors, we will ensure that they are held to account for the quality of the work they do. Suppliers will be properly managed and not allowed to get away with poor service or be paid to fix their own mistakes.
251. Our suppliers must be made to work together, rather than residents having to contact the council multiple times just because of the way in which the council gives out its contracts.
252. We will work with our suppliers to further our wider objectives, such as local apprenticeships, jobs with decent wages, and the employment of disabled people, including through engagement with local, specialist programmes that support both employers and disabled job-seekers.
253. In addition to providing good value for money and services closer to communities, we will encourage local businesses or consortia of local businesses to bid for council contracts.

254. Too many contracts are issued to large organisations, rather than commissioning services from the voluntary sector and community groups. We should support these groups, so they can make the most of the opportunities. By allowing the community groups to flourish, we create a stronger voluntary sector. This provides good value for money and often retains the council's spend within the borough.
255. We will seek to make the council's spending more transparent by publishing all spending on suppliers rather than just those instances over £500, and making this clear by cost code.
256. Under Labour, Kingston will continue to be a "Fairtrade Borough" and continue with its Ethical Procurement Policy.

Pension fund

257. The pension fund has some £500 million of assets. It must be run properly to deliver the returns needed to meet the council's pension obligations.
258. We will establish some new guiding principles. We will invest ethically: the council will not invest in tobacco stocks or payday loan companies.
259. We will look at investment opportunities that relate to our borough in order to keep our much needed funds within the borough. For example, investment in housing could provide a return to the pension fund from a proportion of the sale of private housing while also delivering additional affordable housing.

The council as employer

London Living Wage

260. We believe in promoting economic prosperity and social justice, and believe that all staff employed by the council should be able to have a decent standard of living. We will aim for the council to become a living wage employer accredited by the Living Wage Foundation. Paying the living wage boosts incomes, helps to cut the benefit bill and makes sure people feel rewarded for the important work they do. We will press for the lowest paid direct-employees (currently on £7.83/hour) to be paid at least the London Living Wage (£8.80/hour) as soon as is practicable.
261. Furthermore, as a commissioner of services, Kingston Council wields substantial negotiating power; we will encourage partner agencies and contractors to follow our lead in meeting the London Living Wage target. We will push for a requirement in new contracts that indirectly employed staff should also be paid at this level. Increasing the take-home income of the lowest paid not only reduces their dependence on benefits and lowers bureaucratic costs, but will also enrich our local economy.
262. But we want to go much further so we will work with employers across Kingston to secure a living wage for even more of Kingston's residents.

Zero hours contracts

263. Security at work is vital. We will aim not to use exploitative zero-hours contracts among our directly-employed workforce. Zero hours contracts shall only be used for bona fide unpredictable work. In particular, their use in personal care services, including support for disabled children, shall be deprecated as continuity of care is paramount.
264. Zero hours contracts shall not insist that zero-hours workers be available even when there is no guarantee of any work.
265. Zero hours contracts shall not require workers to work exclusively for one employer.
266. Council contractors shall be contractually obliged to adhere to 263, 264, and 265 above. (Where it is not possible to amend current contracts, they shall be amended at contract renewal time.)

Blacklisting

267. The illegal practice of blacklisting, where companies refuse to hire people who have been involved with a union or highlighted health and safety issues at work, ruins lives and puts the safety of workers under threat. Under Labour, the council will only take out new contracts with organisations that can demonstrate they have never used blacklisting or, if they have, can prove they have compensated their victims and taken adequate measures to prevent future occurrences. We will use our influence to work with any existing council contractors involved in these practices to ensure they own up, clean up and pay up. We will work with the trade unions represented among the council's workforce to make sure contractors stick to these rules.

Your Labour candidates

To contact your candidates, email: actionteam@kingstonlabour.com

Alexandra

Marilyn Corry, Jay Jayasundera, Paul May

Berrylands

Toby Flux, Lawrence Green, Amina Rasool

Beverley

Marian Freedman, Liz Meerabeau, Chris Priest

Canbury

Tony Cottrell, Colin Startup, Nisha Tailor

Chessington North and Hook

Max Freedman, Steve Kearney,
Amanda Stuart

Chessington South

John Dodwell, David Griffin, Tony Murray

Coombe Hill

Edward Naylor, Roger Price, Sally Richardson

Coombe Vale

Sushil Pallen, Ian Parker, Geoff Parnell

Grove

Tessa Kind, Steve Mama, Peter Roland

Norbiton

Linsey Cottingham, Sheila Griffin, Laurie South

Old Malden

Bill Bennett, Ian Kellett, George Pearson

St James

Gerry Jones, Eric Masters, Mary Masters

St Marks

Sandra Coombs, Martin Johnson,
Michael Morton

Surbiton Hill

David Cooper, Richard Heys, Anne Vase

Tolworth and Hook Rise

Tony Banks, Katie Hill, Ben Miller

Tudor

Judith Cowley, Philip Gregg, Bob Smy

Contacting Labour locally

If you have liked our manifesto and would like to help or join, contact the local Labour parties as given below.

If you would like to make a donation to our campaign, contact: marian@kingstonlabour.com or Kingston and Surbiton Constituency Labour Party.

Kingston and Surbiton Constituency Labour Party

160 London Road

Kingston upon Thames

KT2 6QW

<http://kingstonlabour.com/>

020 8546 6002 (answerphone)

Parliamentary candidate: [Lee Godfrey](#)

Email: lee4kingstonsurbiton@gmail.com

Twitter: @Godfrey_Lee – https://twitter.com/Godfrey_Lee

Richmond Park Constituency Labour Party

Starr House,

57 Church Road,

Richmond

TW10 6LX

Parliamentary candidate: [Sachin Patel](#)

Email: sachin@sachin4richmondpark.org.uk

Twitter: @SachinPatel_87 – https://twitter.com/SachinPatel_87

Kingston Borough Labour Party

Twitter: @KBLabour – <https://twitter.com/KBLabour>

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