

Inspiring Hastings

Hastings Labour Manifesto
for the 2018 Borough
Council Elections

Thursday 3rd May

vote



Labour

Introduction



Since our last manifesto in 2016, the Labour Hastings Council has notched up some significant achievements. We put on the ROOT1066 festival to celebrate the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings, attracting audiences of 70,000. We secured a Blue Flag award for St Leonards Beach, carried out improvements to the seafront with new kiosks opening, and completed the refurbishment of Bottle Alley with a spectacular new lighting scheme.

We've introduced Public Space Protection Orders to tackle street drinking and anti-social behaviour in our town centres and built a package of support services with partners to address the massive increase in homelessness and rough sleeping.

We've secured funding for new projects too, including £1m from the EU to help the Hastings fishery, and an EU-funded scheme totalling £7m to help people in the most deprived parts of town to train in new skills and help them into employment.

We've set up a council-owned housing company that has now begun to acquire properties for rent and we have successfully generated around £2.2m in additional income to offset government cuts, through our commercial property investments, service efficiencies and new IT systems.

And we've kept up previous achievements as we promised to do, such as the Grotbusters scheme which has improved almost 1,000 properties, as well as our compulsory purchase programme of empty homes, bringing around 170 empty homes back into use. We've maintained Green Flag status for Alexandra Park, Hastings Country Park, and St Leonards Gardens, as well as winning new awards for our sustainable maintenance regimes in the Country Park.

We've lost a total of over £45m in government grant since 2010, with deeper cuts to come. But we remain ambitious, not only maintaining our successful programmes of activity, but also pressing ahead with exciting new initiatives, such as our plan to redevelop Bohemia Quarter and White Rock Gardens to provide a new leisure centre and multi-function performance venue.

We'll need to generate even more additional income, through more commercial property investments, our housing company, and an exciting new electricity generation project, setting up a local supply network to supply homes and businesses more cheaply than national suppliers.

None of this is going to be easy – all councils are going to find it increasingly hard to provide decent levels of service under the current austerity regime. But this manifesto outlines what our priorities will be, and how we'll achieve them.

Peter Chowney
Leader, Hastings Borough Council

Our Values

The policies and initiatives outlined in this manifesto can only cover a small part of what a Council does in its day-to-day activities. But everything we do needs to be governed by a clear set of guiding socialist principles. These are the values we have already adopted to guide what the Council does, and which will continue to promote, and ensure they're at the heart of everything the Council does.

- We believe that equality of opportunity is paramount, and that services to local people should be provided in a way that addresses their needs and reasonable expectations, regardless of gender, social class, race, disability, age, culture, sexuality, or philosophical beliefs, in as far as such beliefs do not oppress others.
- We believe that the Council should uphold a culture of co-operation, openness, fairness, and transparency in all it does, enabling local people to hold us to account and other agencies to work with us.
- We believe that all local people (including employees of the Council) should be entitled to a high standard of education and decent jobs that pay a living wage, where they are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness.
- We believe that all local people have a right to a safe, secure, affordable home in an environment that enhances their health, quality of life and access to lifelong learning.
- We believe that the economic regeneration of Hastings should narrow the gap between the most deprived communities and those of the rest of the town, as well as between Hastings and the rest of the South East and that poorer people should not be excluded from the new opportunities that arise.



What does the Borough Council do?

In Hastings, there are two councils providing different local services. They are independent of each other, and make their decisions separately, with different councillors elected at different elections (the next county council elections will be in 2021). Hastings Borough Council is a district council, and is based in Muriel Matters House, on the seafront. East Sussex County Council is based in Lewes. Generally, county councils provide fewer, more expensive services, while district councils provide more, less expensive services.

Hastings Borough Council is responsible for:

- Domestic waste collection and street cleaning
- Licensing (pubs, off-licences, events, taxis etc)
- Planning policy and planning applications
- Economic development and regeneration
- Homelessness, private sector housing regulation and housing advice
- Social housing allocations policy and local housing strategy
- Community grants
- Arts and culture
- Parks and gardens
- Sport and recreation
- Seafront services
- Marketing, publicity, and tourism
- Environmental health (including air quality and noise) and food safety
- Dangerous structures
- Off-street parking
- Cemetery and crematorium
- Housing benefits
- Council tax and business rate collection
- Health and safety at work in shops and some other businesses

East Sussex County Council is responsible for:

- Highway maintenance and on-street parking
- Streetlighting
- Economic Development
- Public Health
- Skills training (via colleges)
- Strategic transport
- Children's and youth services
- Adult social care
- Minerals planning (including fracking)
- Waste disposal
- Libraries
- Education services and maintained schools

Councils are not responsible for:

- Academy schools (all schools in Hastings are academies apart from Sandown Primary)
- Social housing run by housing associations (all social housing in Hastings is run by housing associations)
- Trade waste collections
- Benefits (apart from housing benefit), tax credits, universal credit
- Police and fire services
- Further Education colleges
- Drains, sewers and most waterways
- Health and safety in factories, offices and building sites
- Environmental pollution

Our achievements since 2016

As we have elections every two years, not everything in the manifesto is achieved within that timescale – some of our commitments are longer term, or are continuous commitments, in which case they've been 'carried over' to the 2018 manifesto. But many of the specific commitments we made in 2016 have been achieved. Here are some examples of what we pledged in 2016, and what we've done:

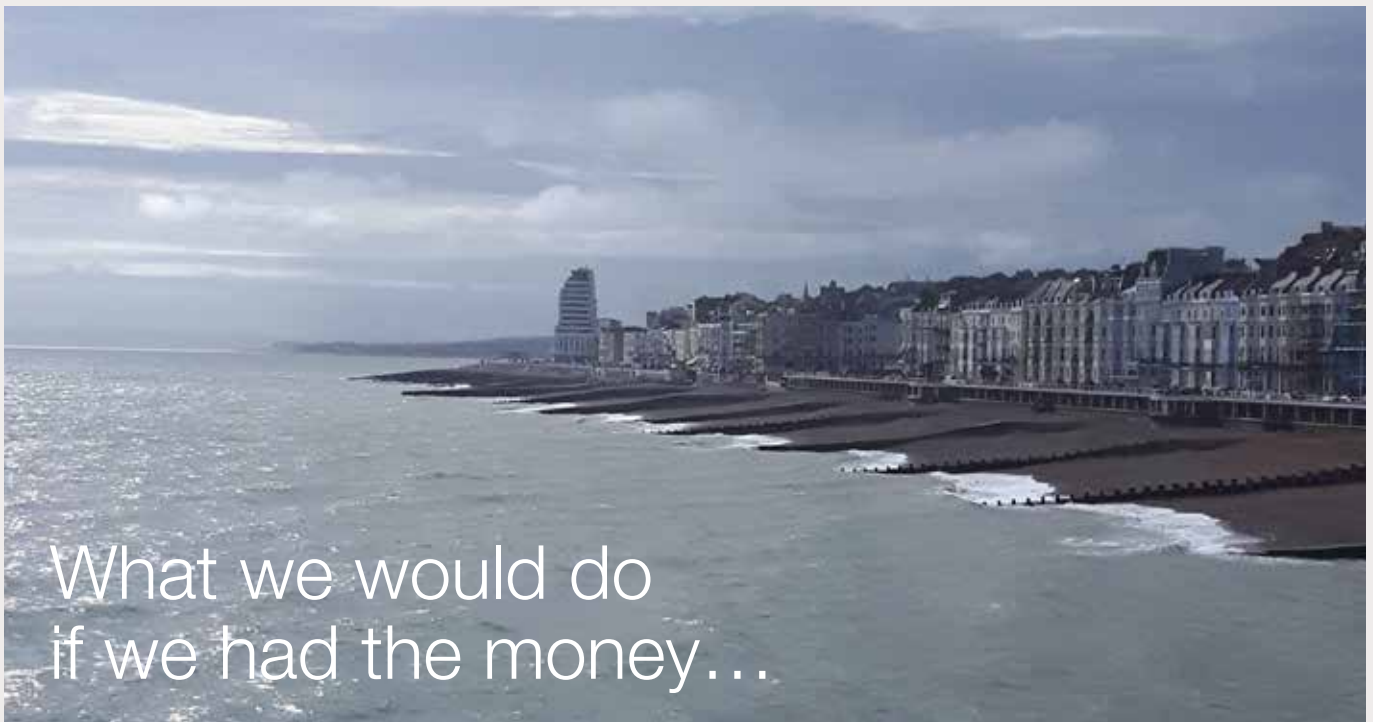
- Work with the Environment Agency and Southern Water to make sure water quality is further improved and standards continue to be met in subsequent years
– *Quality continue to improve, with a 'good' rating at Pelham Beach and an 'excellent' rating at St Leonards. Works through Alexandra Park to improve water quality completed, and won a national award.*
- Install more electric vehicle charging points and pressure local supermarkets and leisure providers to provide charging points
– *Rapid Charging points installed at Marina car park.*
- Develop a plan to generate electricity from renewable sources, on Council-owned land and buildings, including PV (solar) panels on the former Pebsham landfill site
– *The Council has adopted a major sustainable energy generation and supply programme. It will involve PV and wind generation in many different locations.*
- Continue to improve Council-owned buildings in a way that maximises their energy efficiency
– *Major works have been carried out to improve the energy efficiency of Muriel Matters House, as well as EU funded energy efficiency improvements to Council-owned factory units.*
- Find a long-term use for the Old Town Hall Museum that benefits the local community and visitor economy
– *Old Town Hall is now in use as a children's discovery centre.*
- Address health inequalities through our representation on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health and Well-Being Board and work with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to sponsor specific projects that address health inequalities
– *Achieved, with £3m of CCG money being distributed to local projects in a joint HBC-CCG programme. Changes in clinical practice have been recommended by Labour councillors and adopted – for example, consultant-to-consultant referrals.*
- Do all we can to mitigate the impact of the Tory government's attack on welfare claimants, by continuing to provide full Council Tax reduction to the poorest in our communities, and working with housing associations and the advice agencies we continue to fund, to try to limit the unfair impacts of the Bedroom Tax
– *CT reduction scheme remains at 100%, and additional housing benefits have been provided to people who are victims of the Bedroom Tax, under some circumstances.*
- Vigorously pursue a path to 'entrepreneurial socialism', using commercial methods to raise money for public benefit rather than private profit, investigating every possibility for the Council to trade its services to generate income and bring services back in-house to save money and provide more opportunities for trading
– *More than £600,000 additional income has been generated, mostly by new commercial property acquisitions. A comprehensive income generation policy has now been approved, focusing on further commercial property purchase, housing acquisition and development, and energy generation. More kiosks and beach chalets have also been built and opened along the seafront, generating income for the Council.*
- Take every possible opportunity to submit funding applications to the EU, Local Enterprise Partnership, central government, Heritage Lottery, and any other funding streams available.
– *Successful grant applications include Coastal Communities Fund, UPSTRAW (for the Country Park visitor centre), FLAG2 (to support the fishery), and CLLD (EU funding for the most deprived areas).*

- Work with owners, housing associations and others to bring the few remaining large derelict properties back into use, including Winchester House and Hillesden Mansions, using enforcement powers and CPO if necessary
 - *Hillesden Mansions has been demolished following Council pressure, Winchester House is being converted into social housing via the Coastal Space programme.*
- Use compulsory purchase powers to bring at least 70 additional empty properties back into use by 2018
 - *Achieved, with targets exceeded.*
- Set up a Council-owned housing development company to provide fair rented housing and housing for sale, to both generate income and provide a supply of affordable housing
 - *The housing company has already begun to purchase homes.*
- Work with Amicus Horizon on the Coastal Space programme to fund a further 30 units of social rented housing by buying empty or neglected properties in the St Leonards Town Centre area
 - *Winchester House is being refurbished to provide 30 new homes, managed by Optivo (formerly Amicus Horizon) housing association. Further schemes are in the pipeline.*
- Use the selective licensing scheme and other statutory powers to crack down on rogue landlords who abuse tenants' rights and ensure that private rented housing is maintained to a decent standard
 - *Over 5,000 licences now issued, with several successful prosecutions for failure to licence, and more in the pipeline.*
- Support and provide services to identify and assist rough sleepers, in partnership with voluntary agencies
 - *The Council funds Seaview to provide rough sleeping outreach services, and has been able to provide additional support services for vulnerable homeless people through successful funding bids, and through the CCG programme.*
- Play our part in the programme to resettle Syrian refugees, offering to rehouse at least 20 families in Hastings over the five-year life of the programme.
 - *The commitment we made was to rehouse 100 refugees. So far 20 have been accepted in Hastings, with more to come.*
- Provide Council services online wherever possible, making it easier for people to apply and cheaper for the Council to provide them
 - *Many more services are now available online, with more to follow. Online payments will be extended, for permits and licenses. The entire taxi licensing system is now online, as is the selective housing licensing scheme.*
- Provide small grants and mentoring support to creative and cultural businesses through the new Seascapes programme and seek funding for further, similar grant schemes
 - *The 'Seascapes' programme was implemented, to provide mentoring and training for local businesses. A further mentoring scheme has been established from the Coastal Communities Fund money.*
- Support the provision of low-cost start-up units for new businesses, especially in the creative and cultural sectors
 - *New start-up units have opened around town – for example, in Rock House, which the Council has supported principally with a Coastal Communities Fund Grant, where Rock House was a partner in a Council bid.*
- Seek funding to establish a second round of Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) funding, to provide a further grants scheme for projects to assist the Hastings Fishery
 - *Second round of FLAG funding secured, totalling around £1m. Initial projects are now being funded*
- Complete the refurbishment of Bottle Alley with new lighting and a new kiosk on the upper promenade and establish regular uses for the Alley, for example as a regular 'art market' or event venue
 - *All completed, including LED lighting installation. A programme of activities is in development.*

Our achievements since 2016 – continued

- Work with voluntary, statutory, and business groups to develop a self-financing scheme for regenerating White Rock Gardens for leisure and entertainment uses
 - *The White Rock Masterplan has now been published. This will lead to a more detailed Area Action Plan for the area, with detailed policies and public consultation.*
- Complete refurbishment of the area around the newly re-opened pier and The Source's indoor skateboard arena to create a new kiosk, steps to the beach, resurfaced promenade, a new decked area with seating, and palm trees
 - *Achieved.*
- Promote the new skateboard arena as a national attraction
 - *Major events have been held at The Source BMX arena, with the 'Battle of Hastings' event over the last two years, partly funded through the Council's CCF bids. These attract international BMX stars, and national audiences.*
- Install public wi-fi along the seafront and in our town centres
 - *Achieved, for the seafront.*
- Work towards 'Blue Flag' status for St Leonards beach
 - *Blue Flag status achieved.*
- Curate and stage the ROOT1066 creative arts festival during 2016, the 950th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings and use it to promote Hastings as a world-class cultural destination
 - *The ROOT1066 festival was a huge success, attracting audiences of 70,000, with 10,000 local people participating in performances.*
- Support and promote St Mary-in-the-Castle (SMIC) as a successful performance venue, working with the charitable trust that now runs it
 - *SMIC continues to function well via the SMIC trust, with the café re-opened and now with a fully functioning kitchen.*
- Develop our programme of events such as the Seafood and Wine Festival, St Leonards Festival, Coastal Currents, and the Herring Fair to maximise the variety and impact of the overall festival programme
 - *A full programme of Council festivals is still in place, with growing visitor numbers (Seafood and Wine Festival attracted 20,000 visitors).*
- Build on the 'Stade Saturdays' summer entertainment events to develop a programme of regular music and other performance on the Stade Open Space
 - *A full Stade Saturdays programme was put on over 2016 and 2017, integrated with other music events by local performers and impresarios.*
- Work with partners to establish a new annual summer music festival
 - *New music festivals have emerged, notably Hastings and Rother Music Month, in September.*
- Continue to support local groups to put on established events and festivals and encourage new ones
 - *The Council continues to support local groups to put on established festivals, both through grant funding and marketing and organisational support. The Council helped the first Hastings Pride festival take place this year.*
- Continue the successful Grotbusting programme to force owners to improve the appearance of land and property, achieving at least 100 improved properties by 2018
 - *Achieved, and targets exceeded.*
- Use enforcement powers to make owners of listed buildings do necessary repairs
 - *Achieved, notably along Pelham Arcade, and other buildings throughout town.*
- Support and fund Hastings Youth Council and work with them to develop a Youth Manifesto for Hastings
 - *Youth Council have published their manifesto.*
- Develop a strategy to address long-standing unemployment and income deprivation, principally in the Hollington, Broomgrove, Farley Bank, Halton, and Down Farm estates
 - *This will be realised through the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) EU funded programme, through which HBC will secure around £6m in total.*
- Develop a programme of 'mini-festivals' in the most deprived social housing estates to help engage these communities in creative, cultural and regeneration activities
 - *Programme was put on as part of the ROOT1066 festival.*

- Develop further and improve the online reporting system for rubbish, dog fouling and flytipping to provide clear target times for when problems will be dealt with and use our street wardens to monitor ‘hotspot’ areas regularly
 - *Improvements have been made to the online reporting system, to make it more responsive and easier to use. An additional warden service is being trialled to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) in hotspot areas.*
- Complete the renewal of the town’s CCTV system, to provide coverage across the town and in all Council car parks through high resolution digital cameras
 - *New cameras were installed and are operational.*
- Use our new Licensing Policy to restrict the proliferation of off-licences in town centres, while encouraging responsible licensees to develop the town’s evening economy with good restaurants and other licensed premises
 - *Applications and approvals of new off-licenses have dramatically reduced.*
- Continue the ‘Reduce the Strength’ campaign to encourage off-licences not to stock high-strength beers and cider and extend this to other parts of town
 - *We extended it and have introduced a new Alcohol Action Zone in Ore - launched with the Home Secretary.*
- Work with the police to develop tailored Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) coupled with Community Protection Notices to address the problems associated with street drinking and other anti-social behaviour, particularly in town centres
 - *PSPOs were introduced. Enforcement is now taking place, with targeted action, linked to addiction support, for persistent offenders.*
- Establish Robsack Meadow as a Local Nature Reserve
 - *Achieved.*
- Maintain ‘Green Flag’ award status for Alexandra Park and St Leonards Gardens and maintain our Environmental Stewardship Programme with Natural England to protect habitats, encourage biodiversity and limit invasive species in the Country Park
 - *Achieved. Traditional methods, including grazing by ponies and cattle, have helped to reduce bracken dramatically, and have been recognized with a national award.*
- Install a new play area and visitor centre at Combe Valley Countryside Park
 - *Achieved, although HBC does not run visitor centre.*
- Work with local groups to establish a permanent fixed route through or across Ecclesbourne Glen in Hastings Country Park that recognises and respects both the local ecology and the unstable nature of the land that makes this area a Site of Special Scientific Interest
 - *Better signage and a more convenient route has been established around the glen, but the land remains too unstable for a route through it. Studies to be commissioned as part of the harbour project could help to understand the geological issues better.*
- Protect existing wildlife habitats, and create new ones, to maximise biodiversity in our parks and open spaces
 - *We have a well-established plan for this across the Country Park (shrub clearance, for example) and continue this in parks and open spaces using sustainable planting.*
- Maintain all our parks and open spaces in a way that promotes environmental sustainability, using natural methods to control invasive species while maximising biodiversity and protecting rare habitats
 - *Additional meadow areas have replaced mown grass in many areas of our parks. Natural control methods in the Country Park referred to above.*
- Work with local groups that support disadvantaged minority communities
 - *Achieved, working with many different groups involved with black and minority ethnic communities, domestic violence, rough sleepers, older people, disabled, people, LGBT groups, etc.*



What we would do if we had the money...

Since 2010, council budgets have been cut dramatically, because of reductions in government grants. Hastings has suffered particularly badly, with our main government grant cut from over £9m in 2010 to £1.5m in 2018. The Council workforce has been cut almost by half. Many services have been discontinued. If funding were to be restored to the levels under the last Labour government, before Conservative and Liberal Democrat cuts, we would be able to reinstate many of these services, and develop new ones with additional income we've raised and efficiencies we've made since 2010.

These would include:

- Restoring community development services, with support for local communities, residents' associations, and community groups, particularly in the most deprived areas;
- Reintroducing a comprehensive programme of employment and training co-ordination initiatives, working with schools, the college, and local employers to get local young people into training, jobs, and apprenticeships;
- Developing a more comprehensive community grants programme, to help fund local charities and voluntary groups;
- Employing more street wardens, bringing back local wardens in all wards throughout the borough;
- Setting up grant programmes to assist small businesses and help new businesses develop, especially in the cultural, creative, and scientific sectors;
- Enhancing street cleaning services, using street wardens to monitor cleanliness standards and take quick action where these were not met;
- Re-establishing council housing in the borough, buying and building stock to make it available at genuinely affordable, social rents;
- Building underground car parks, to get car parking off the seafront;
- Hosting trade fairs and other events to promote local businesses and local specialist manufacturing sectors;
- Reintroducing Neighbourhood Forums with their own local budgets to consult and involve local people;
- Promoting and enhance local tourism;
- Providing more sport and play facilities for children and young people;
- Investing more in community safety, providing comprehensive support services to victims of drug crime and addiction support, as well as more rigorous enforcement of Public Space Protection Orders.

Unfortunately, none of these are possible without better local government funding. When the next Labour government restores funding to pre-2010 levels, these and many other new initiatives will be pursued.

Manifesto 2018

What a Labour Council will do for our town



1 Building a successful local economy

Continuing the regeneration of the borough's economy is crucial, especially in the light of new challenges and problems created by Brexit. We need to encourage new employers into town, building up our manufacturing and creative cultural sectors in particular, as well as promoting both UK and international tourism.

We need to continue to find sources of funding to provide grants to small businesses, especially in the creative and cultural sectors. But we also need to make sure local people are given the right opportunities by supporting and promoting initiatives that help people into jobs, so working with education and training providers is important, too. A thriving local economy is an essential part of creating well-paid, rewarding jobs for all.

A Labour Council will:

- Work with Sussex Coast College to build their University Centre, while continuing to look for other universities to develop a presence in Hastings;
- Pro-actively encourage investment by new and existing businesses, where they intend to offer rewarding, well-paid jobs for local people;
- Play a prominent role in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, promoting the needs of the Hastings area;
- Look for ways to continue the redevelopment the Priory Quarter area for commercial, retail and leisure uses;
- Work with local groups to develop our town centres, recognising the special regeneration potential of the America Ground area and Central St Leonards as cultural and specialist retail destinations;
- Work with partners to develop a strategy to increase the number of high-quality tourist accommodation self-catering and serviced bed spaces in Hastings;
- Work with Sussex Coast College and local employers to promote and encourage specialist manufacturing and science research companies to relocate to Hastings;
- Support the provision of low-cost start-up units for new businesses, especially in the creative and cultural sectors;
- Ensure our licensing, planning and other policies are structured to support the evening economy, working with local music and entertainment venues to make sure our town centres are safe, vibrant, and attractive places to go for evening entertainment;
- Continue to develop the special character and potential of Hastings Old Town, recognising and supporting the fishing fleet as an important part of the local economy;
- Lobby government ministers and shadow ministers to establish a fairer system of fishing quotas that properly recognises the under ten metre fleet and the importance of sustainable fisheries such as Hastings;
- Work with Sussex Coast College, local employers and training agencies to co-ordinate apprenticeships, work experience programmes and other initiatives to help get young people into rewarding jobs and monitor the effectiveness of these programmes, especially in the most deprived areas of town;
- Participate in the Education Opportunity Area initiative to try to make sure it achieves lasting improvements to educational standards in the borough;
- Support developer-led regeneration projects (such as the Marina Project) only where they deliver clear benefits for local people, including affordable homes, good-quality jobs, and environmental sustainability.

2 Tackling deprivation in our most deprived communities

We know from figures published through the Index of Multiple Deprivation that, although Hastings is becoming less deprived overall, there are some parts of town where people have not benefited from these improvements, where economic deprivation and worklessness remain a persistent problem. Government cuts to welfare benefits and their continuing attacks on the poorest people in our society have made matters worse. Recent development, such as the £5m EU-funded Community-Led Local Development Programme, the £3m Clinical Commissioning Group funding, and the £6m Education Opportunity Area, could help to offset this deprivation, and provide better chances for young people.

A Labour Council will:

- Use the funding achieved from the EU Community-Led Local Development programme to establish projects to address long-standing unemployment and income deprivation, as well as skills shortages, principally in the Hollington, Broomgrove, Farley Bank, Halton, and Downs Farm estates;
- Participate in the Education Opportunity Area initiative, and ensure that its £6m funding is used to provide sustainable improvement to educational standards in Hastings;
- Address health inequalities through our representation on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Health and Well-Being Board and work with the Clinical Commissioning Group to sponsor specific projects that address health inequalities;
- Continue to fund the Council's Active Hastings team to take sports opportunities and street games into disadvantaged parts of the town and give the chance for young people to become accredited sports leaders;
- Provide support and advice services through grants to the non-statutory sector and work closely with non-statutory organisations to provide essential services to the most vulnerable people;
- Do all we can to mitigate the impact of the Tory government's attack on welfare claimants, by continuing to provide full Council Tax reduction to the poorest in our communities;
- Continue to fight, wherever possible, government attacks on benefit claimants and work with organisations who want to develop fairer welfare policies;
- Represent the people of Hastings wherever possible in the health and education sector to argue for better resources, higher standards and a recognition of the pressing needs that face the more deprived communities in our town.

3 Providing decent homes for all

Hastings has a large private rented housing sector, much of it in poor condition. There are nowhere near enough social rented homes and many local people cannot afford to buy their own home. Homelessness is a growing problem too, as government policies on welfare cuts hit home. Hastings Council transferred its housing stock to a housing association many years ago, but we've now set up a Council-owned housing company to buy and develop housing for rent. We can also use our Selective Licensing Scheme to ensure rented homes and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) are well-managed and that safety standards are maintained.

A Labour Council will:

- Use our housing company to provide fair rented housing and housing for sale, to both generate income and provide a supply of good-quality housing for local people, with security of tenure;
- Ensure all housing built by the new company meets the fully accessible 'Lifetime Homes' standard where possible, as well as good design and environmental standards;
- Work with local developers and through the Council housing company to develop key worker housing where this is needed – for example, to attract GPs and teachers to Hastings;

- Investigate the possible re-introduction of the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme, where this can provide better mortgage deals than private providers, especially for homes built by the Council housing company.
- Work in partnership with housing providers whose policies reflect the needs of those in greatest need in Hastings;
- Work with Optivo housing association on the Coastal Space programme to refurbish Leolyn House, a disused care home in St Leonards, providing 16 new social homes;
- Use our powers to bring into use available land, particularly brownfield sites, to meet local housing needs – for example, by considering compulsory purchase of abandoned sites;
- Use the selective licensing scheme and other statutory powers to crack down on rogue landlords who abuse tenants' rights and ensure that private rented housing and HMOs are maintained to a decent standard;
- In partnership with other agencies, develop new ways to support and advise the most vulnerable in housing need, including people with disabilities, young people leaving care, single homeless people and people escaping domestic violence;
- Continue to provide services to identify and assist rough sleepers, in partnership with voluntary agencies, offering help to secure and retain tenancies, working towards a 'housing first' model, where every Hastings resident who ended up on the street would be entitled to a home;
- Promote and enhance our homelessness prevention programme, to help people get rehoused before they become homeless;
- Develop different housing models, including modular temporary housing, as an alternative to bed and breakfast accommodation for homeless people;
- Extend our local HMO licensing scheme to other areas of the borough;
- Investigate and encourage alternative models of housing provision, including community land trusts and housing co-operatives, especially for older people;
- Set up an online scheme to assist the under 35s in finding house and flat sharers.

4 Improving the seafront and associated attractions

Tourism remains an important part of the local economy and is increasing in Hastings, against national trends. Looking after and improving our seafront is essential to this - not only is it the place most tourists visit, it's the town's shop window, where everyone from visitors to potential employers will go - it's what being a seaside town is about. This includes attractions nearby too, such as the Country Park, Hastings Castle, White Rock Gardens and, of course, Hastings Pier.

A Labour Council will:

- Develop an Area Action Plan for White Rock Gardens and Hastings Town Centre, to determine new planning policies for this area;
- Redevelop White Rock Gardens through a self-financing scheme to provide new leisure and entertainment facilities, as well as enhanced gardens and open spaces;
- Establish Hastings Castle as a major attraction, by developing a new visitor centre to use its place in history as the birthplace of English culture;
- Investigate proposals to redevelop West Marina as a mixed-use housing and leisure development, or, if these are not viable, develop medium-term temporary leisure uses for the site;
- Work with Heritage Lottery, Historic England, and the Hastings Pier administrators and any future owner to secure a long term, sustainable future for Hastings Pier that recognises the 'People's Pier' concept by involving the local community in the future development of the pier;
- Depending on future ownership arrangements for the pier, target funding bids such as the Coastal Communities Fund on enhancements to the pier – for example, a landing stage;
- Complete the restoration of Pelham Arcade as a key heritage feature;
- Redevelop the former Harold Place toilets as a new café-restaurant;
- Work with the Environment Agency and Southern Water to make sure water quality is further improved and Blue Flag status is maintained for St Leonards beach;
- Maintain and develop wheelchair access routes on our beaches.

5 Promoting Arts, Culture, and Heritage

Hastings has always had a rich tradition of quirky festivals, the range of which has grown in recent years, spanning the whole of the year. Some of these are run by the Council, such as the Seafood and Wine Festival, Mid-Summer Fish Festival, and the Herring Fair; some receive funding from the Council, such as Jack-in-the-Green and St Leonards Festival, and some are entirely independent. There's also a thriving and growing music scene. We need to encourage this vibrant cultural sector, as a core part of what makes Hastings exciting, for local residents and visitors.

A Labour Council will:

- Build on the successful ROOT1066 festival to make the most of our national and international profile;
- Work with partners to produce a strategic approach to marketing the town in a way that links the cultural, heritage and tourism sectors more closely;
- Support and promote St Mary-in-the-Castle as a successful performance venue, working with the charitable trust that now runs it;
- Support the Jerwood Gallery to use its new Arts Council National Portfolio Funding to enhance its outreach work with schools and local communities;
- Support the Hastings 'Music City' initiative, working with local music venues and event organisers to encourage and develop local musicians of all musical genres to develop a reputation for Hastings as a centre of excellence for contemporary and classical music;
- Develop our programme of events such as the Seafood and Wine Festival, St Leonards Festival, Stade Saturdays and the Herring Fair to maximise the variety and impact of the overall festival programme;
- Develop a new performance venue to replace White Rock Theatre as part of the White Rock Gardens redevelopment, but keeping the White Rock Theatre open until the new performance venue can be developed;
- Work with partners to establish new music festivals;
- Develop with partners 'augmented reality' tours of Hastings, using the latest AR technology and the seafront wi-fi network to provide a unique, futuristic visitor experience;

- Work with partners to use opportunities (for example, through the Community-Led Local Development Programme) to involve young people in arts and cultural development;
- Continue to support local groups to put on established cultural and heritage events and festivals, and encourage new ones.

6 Keeping the urban landscape clean, attractive, and well-maintained

Hastings used to be noted for its large number of dilapidated and abandoned buildings, especially along the seafront. But, thanks to the Labour Council's 'Grotbuster' scheme as well as the borough's general economic regeneration, many properties have been improved and abandoned homes brought back into use. We need to keep up the pressure, making sure that our many historic buildings are looked after, as well as focusing on keeping the streets, footpaths and twittens clean, throughout the town. Dog fouling and flytipping remain persistent problems and we need to find new ways to deal with them.

A Labour Council will:

- Continue the successful 'Grotbuster' programme to force owners to improve the appearance of land and property, achieving at least a further 100 improved properties by 2020;
- Use enforcement powers to make owners of listed buildings do necessary repairs;
- Use our compulsory purchase powers to bring at least 100 additional empty homes back into use by 2020;
- Investigate further use of CPO powers to bring empty shops and business premises back into use, as well as abandoned land;
- Promote our online reporting system for rubbish, dog fouling and flytipping to provide clear target times for when problems will be dealt with and use our street wardens to monitor 'hotspot' areas regularly;
- Establish a new Direct Services Organisation (DSO) to bring street cleansing, bulky waste collection and flytip clearance back 'in-house' when the current contract expires in 2019, and market these in-house services to other organisations;

- Link the new DSO more closely to local furniture recycling charities, to maximise the re-use and 'upcycling' of flytipped furniture;
- Develop new policies to deal with flytipping, using CCTV and other methods to identify perpetrators and secure prosecutions;
- Install more on-street recycling bins after the current contract ends;
- Work with housing associations to make sure their housing estates are kept clean and tidy, investigating joint planning of services and potential use of enforcement powers where this is necessary;

7 Keeping Hastings safe

Crime levels in Hastings have decreased in recent years, more than in similar or nearby towns. Much of this has been achieved through close working between the Council, the police, and other agencies, such as housing associations, targeting problem areas and perpetrators. We need to keep working on problems such as street drinking and drug dealing, in conjunction with the police, by enforcing Public Space Protection Orders, as well as regulatory alcohol licensing powers.

A Labour Council will:

- Continue to co-ordinate and participate in inter-agency community safety initiatives, including the Safer Hastings Partnership, Hate Crime Partnership, and Multi-Agency Task Teams;
- Maintain the town's new CCTV system, to provide coverage across the town and in all Council car parks through high resolution digital cameras, and retain local monitoring;
- Use our Licensing Policy to restrict the proliferation of off-licences in town centres, while encouraging responsible licensees to develop the town's evening economy with good restaurants and other licensed premises;
- Continue the 'Reduce the Strength' campaign to encourage off-licences not to stock high-strength beers and cider;
- Participate in and promote White Ribbon Day and work with other agencies to prevent domestic violence and make sure perpetrators are dealt with;

- Work closely with the police to close premises used for drug dealing, and help to rehouse those who have become victims of drug gangs through 'cuckooing';
- Enforce Public Space Protection Orders to prevent littering, street drinking and anti-social behaviour, while linking this to mental health and other support services that offer help to those with alcohol or drug addiction problems;
- Develop a campaign to tackle online abuse on social media, and report any such incidents on Council social media platforms or elsewhere to the police.

8 Enhancing our parks and open spaces

Almost 40% of Hastings is open space, much of it parks and gardens open to the public. The Council has won several different awards for the way it manages these. However, there is always a balance to be made between maintaining open spaces for public access, protecting sensitive habitats and ecosystems, and also between different groups wanting to use our open spaces. We need to make sure we maintain this balance, and manage our open spaces for the maximum benefit of local people, tourism and the environment.

A Labour Council will:

- Work with Ore Community Land Trust and others to secure community ownership of Speckled Wood and establish the area as a Local Nature Reserve;
- Maintain 'Green Flag' award status for Alexandra Park and St Leonards Gardens, and maintain our Environmental Stewardship Programme with Natural England to protect habitats, encourage biodiversity and limit invasive species in the Country Park;
- Integrate new local nature reserves at Ponds Wood and Robsack Meadow into the Council's open space maintenance programmes;
- Build a new visitor centre at Hastings Country Park;
- Install a cycle route in Alexandra Park,
- Maintain and develop wheelchair access routes in our parks and open spaces;

- Continue to investigate a permanent fixed route through or across Ecclesbourne Glen in Hastings Country Park that recognises and respects both the local ecology and the unstable nature of the land that makes this area a Site of Special Scientific Interest;
- Protect existing wildlife habitats, and create new ones, to maximise biodiversity in our parks and open spaces;
- Maintain all our parks and open spaces in a way that promotes environmental sustainability, using natural methods to control invasive species while maximising biodiversity and protecting rare habitats;
- Work towards the transfer of protected open space land in the Ore Valley from Sea Space (the former local regeneration company) to the Council, and establish a local trust to maintain and enhance these spaces for local wildlife and for local people to enjoy.

9 Providing opportunities for healthy lifestyles

Sports and play activities are particularly important in helping people to live healthier, more fulfilling lives, as are initiatives that encourage healthy eating, smoking cessation, and responsible drinking. Through both existing and new initiatives, with other partners, the Council can help people to adopt healthier lifestyles, and support children's play and other initiatives that combat obesity and promote active lives.

A Labour Council will:

- Work with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) through its funding programme to develop initiatives that promote smoking cessation, healthy eating, and responsible drinking;
- Work with the CCG through its funding programme to establish Health and Well-Being Centres in the most deprived communities;
- Establish a Hastings Lottery to raise money for enhanced children's play facilities;
- Focus on improving play areas in the most deprived communities, as well as in our major parks and seafront;
- Continue our 'Sport for All' programme to get adults and children involved in sports;

- Develop opportunities for sport for disabled people through our funded sports programmes;
- Develop new fully accessible sports and leisure facilities through the redevelopment of White Rock Gardens, making this area a new sport and leisure tourism destination;
- Continue our holiday play schemes for children;
- Promote cycling in Hastings, including the use of electric bicycles.

10 Finding sustainable transport solutions

In a densely populated urban area such as Hastings, in the crowded south-east corner of the country, traffic and transport issues are inevitably important, with overcrowding on our roads and railways a constant problem. While Hastings Council doesn't provide roads, rail or transport directly, there are different ways the Council can influence transport policy, while promoting sustainable transport in areas it does own, such as parks and the seafront.

A Labour Council will:

- Use the newly-established Hastings and Rother Transport Action Group to:
 - Work with the voluntary sector sustainable transport group to develop a sustainable transport policy;
 - encourage walking and cycling;
 - influence the County Council to develop new off-road walking and cycle routes;
 - encourage transport providers to introduce integrated ticketing;
 - recognise the needs of disabled people in transport provision.
- Establish a greenway cycling and walking link between Ore Station and Frederick Road, from the development of housing sites along the route;
- Work with bus companies and the County Council to promote an improved bus service and better information provided through electronic information boards at bus stops;
- Lobby for affordable rail fares, particularly on local routes;
- Lobby for more limited-stop trains on the Hastings to Charing Cross and Cannon Street route;

- Support the campaign to bring high-speed trains to Hastings via Ashford, while recognising that the potential negative impacts of gentrification need to be mitigated;
- Participate in regional groups to lobby for road improvements, particularly in the east-west A27/A259 route, and the A21;
- Work with the County Council to achieve improvements to local roads, especially the seafront road and The Ridge, following the completion of the Queensway Gateway road;
- Ensure cycling and pedestrian provision, especially in shared spaces, complies with recognised good practice;
- Establish a sustainable 'mini-tram' or sustainable bus service along the seafront, linking the Old Town, Hastings Pier and St Leonards.

11 Protecting the environment and limiting climate change

Climate change is a global issue, affecting all of us. But there is plenty that councils can do to reduce their carbon footprint, protect the environment, and encourage everyone to behave in more environmentally responsible ways. This can range from sustainable energy generation through to home composting and encouraging 'green' industry locally. We need to think globally, and act locally. By establishing a local energy supply network and locally generating electricity from renewable sources, the Council could supply up to 30% of the town's electricity.

A Labour Council will:

- Pursue the Council's newly-adopted energy generation strategy to set up a local supply network to provide cheap, sustainable electricity for local businesses and households, supplied from seafront vertical-axis wind turbines and PV arrays on Council and other buildings, as well as examining potential other sustainable sources such as wave power and district heating systems;
- Encourage other large property and land owners (for example, health facilities and schools) to install sustainable energy generation and feed in to the local supply network;

- Develop policies and practices, with local businesses and other organisations, to reduce the harmful effects of plastics in our seas;
- Use this innovative and ground-breaking work to encourage green energy generation companies to relocate to Hastings;
- Install more electric vehicle charging points and pressure local supermarkets and leisure providers to provide charging points;
- Replace Council-owned vehicles with electric vehicles as they're renewed;
- Encourage home composting as a more environmentally friendly alternative to brown bin collections;
- Allow Council-owned open spaces to grow as wild flower meadows to encourage pollinating insects and reduce unnecessary mowing;
- Continue to improve Council-owned buildings in a way that maximises their energy efficiency;
- Use planning policies rigorously to support energy efficient developments.

12 Promoting a fairer, inclusive Hastings

Over 40 languages are spoken in Hastings, amongst people from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Many of these recent immigrants have set up businesses that have helped to regenerate our town. But there are other minority groups in town too who play an important part in the future of Hastings and whose interests need to be supported and protected. We want Hastings to be a place where everyone is treated fairly and where services are provided that support everyone's needs. We will do all we can to prevent unfair discrimination too and play our part in welcoming refugees escaping from war and persecution.

A Labour Council will:

- Work with local groups and partners to promote diversity and support disadvantaged minority communities;
- Combat hate crime by continuing to fund a hate crime co-ordinator;
- Support and welcome refugees and groups working with refugees;

- Support and fund Hastings Youth Council and help them to implement their Youth Manifesto;
- Continue to play our part in the programme to resettle Syrian refugees, offering to rehouse 100 refugees over the five-year life of the programme;
- Work with the Seniors' Forum and other groups and agencies that promote the interests of older people, assisting older people to live fulfilling lives;
- Work with the local Disability Forum to make sure disability access to Council services and structures is maintained and enhanced and that local retail and leisure services are encouraged to improve disability access;
- Ensure that all Council events and public meetings are held at fully accessible locations;
- Develop an ethical procurement policy to make sure that, when the Council purchases goods and services, we don't use unscrupulous or unethical suppliers, and enable local, smaller businesses to get Council work wherever possible;
- Revise and relaunch our Animal Welfare Charter to do all we can to end the exploitation and cruel treatment of animals.

13 Maximising our resources

The government's attacks on local government have been unprecedented with grant support slashed to a tiny fraction of what it was under the last Labour government and our Revenue Support Grant (the main grant from government) disappearing completely by 2021. So far, the local Labour administration has managed to mitigate these cuts by using its resources more efficiently and successfully bidding for external grants, especially from the EU. We've bought commercial properties to generate rental income, adding to the Council's already extensive portfolio of industrial and retail premises. But there's much more we need to do. It's not going to be easy, we're going to have to be imaginative to survive, and continue to transform our town.

A Labour Council will:

- Continue our 'transformational change' programme, ensuring that all Council tasks and processes are carried out as efficiently as possible, and that all projects are properly planned and costed;
- Use our sustainable electricity generation network to raise income for the Council;
- Provide Council services online wherever possible, making it easier for people to apply and cheaper for the Council to provide them, while maintaining our telephone contact centre for people who are not able to use online services;
- Vigorously pursue a path to 'entrepreneurial socialism', using commercial methods to raise money for public benefit rather than private profit, investigating every possibility for the Council to trade its services to generate income and bring services back in-house to save money and provide more opportunities for trading;
- Continue to acquire local commercial properties to generate income for the Council and provide security for local jobs;
- Invest in new commercial properties, building new factory units for local employers;
- Use our Council-owned housing company to acquire and build housing, for rent and for sale, generating income as well as providing homes at reasonable rents;
- Take every possible opportunity to submit funding applications to the EU, Local Enterprise Partnership, central government, Heritage Lottery, and any other funding streams available, where these support the Council's priorities;
- Work with local and national groups to resist attacks on local government and fight for local government funding at sustainable and realistic levels.