

# ONE CAMBRIDGESHIRE

FAIR FOR ALL



The Labour Party manifesto  
for the Cambridgeshire County  
Council Elections

**2021**

# INTRODUCTION

Cambridgeshire remains one of the most unequal counties in the country, despite unprecedented growth. Deprivation levels in Fenland and parts of Cambridge are much higher than in the more affluent south of the county and people's health, access to services and life opportunities are poorer.

COVID-19 has added to this inequality, with frontline, poorly paid and casual workers facing the highest health risks and many others facing food or fuel poverty and increasing levels of debt. The pandemic's impact on the physical and mental health of vulnerable groups such as care home residents, carers and young people has been appalling.

Central government has 'hollowed out' local authorities, stripping them of resources. But the County has colluded in this. It has stripped out preventive services, dressing up service cuts as 'transforming lives' and 'building community resilience'. This has hit at the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in the County and increased demand for more expensive crisis-point care.

Labour understands that tackling inequalities does not only mean restoring such services, important though that is. It also means spreading jobs and services more fairly across the County, improving amenities, access and connectivity to support rural communities. Above all, it means creating a greener and more sustainable economy that protects our natural resources and helps to tackle climate change.

# A LABOUR COUNTY COUNCIL WILL:



**Deliver a tailored local COVID recovery plan in partnership with local communities.**



**Stand up for Cambridgeshire by protecting crucial services and demanding proper, national fair funding from the government.**



**Improve people's health and wellbeing through prevention strategies and place-based partnerships with service users across health and social care.**



**Prioritise initiatives to reach net carbon zero by 2030, while protecting and enhancing the County's natural resources.**



**Grow Cambridgeshire's economy fairly, investing in sustainable projects and improving opportunities and access for rural communities and businesses.**



**Re-focus the County's Housing Company 'This Land' to build decent, affordable housing for local people.**



**Work with the Greater Cambridge Partnership and the Combined Authority Mayor to deliver low carbon infrastructure, that meet people's needs.**



**Reduce poverty and inequality by prioritising funding for the poorest areas and a Real Living Wage for low-paid workers, including County Council employees and contractors.**



**Improve rural and urban bus service networks, footways and cycling provision to reduce congestion and pollution and stimulate more active travel across the county.**

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## COMMUNITIES AND COVID RECOVERY

Supporting people and communities forms the basis of Labour's anti-poverty strategy. We will overturn a decade of cuts at the frontline, reinstating children's and youth workers because equality begins at birth. We will target funding at services for elderly, vulnerable and disabled people, so that they can lead healthy, independent lives.

This focus on people and communities also underpin our plans for the County's Covid recovery strategy.

Frontline, poorly paid and casual workers have suffered the highest health risks alongside our BAME communities. The furloughed, the self employed, small business owners and those on Universal Credit have faced food and fuel poverty and increasing levels of debt.

The County Council should be at the forefront of the recovery effort across Cambridgeshire. Labour will ensure resources are allocated to supporting all those needing help during this crucial Covid recovery period.

Labour will also ensure that the County delivers all essential frontline services itself rather than relying on the voluntary sector to try and fill the gaps. Moving forward, we will harness the power of the voluntary sector as a respected partner, targeting funds to enable them to support community-led innovation.

Labour will keep the County Council's libraries open and in public ownership. We will accelerate the current agenda of transforming libraries into 'community hubs' where residents can access a range of services.

## A LABOUR COUNTY COUNCIL WILL:

- ✔ **Prioritise social mobility and diversity work across the County by establishing a real Cambridgeshire anti-poverty strategy.**
- ✔ **Ensure the government's Winter Support fund, which we received as a one off in 2020, remains topped up at least through 2021/22, helping families who qualify for free school meals during the holidays, as well as supporting vulnerable groups and individuals with their household bills, food, fuel, clothing, white goods maintenance and repair.**
- ✔ **Commit to long-term support for the Community Hubs and the work that they do in assisting the most needy.**
- ✔ **Keep all libraries open, well stocked and under public ownership, reversing recent cuts to the library book fund and re-focusing them as 'community hubs'. Ensure all library amenities are free for everyone on Universal Credit.**
- ✔ **Tighten criteria on community grants to ensure that they focus on the most disadvantaged populations and move from a narrow focus on financial return to broader assessment of need and social value.**





## ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Central government policy on social care has been disgraceful and its White Paper on integrated health and social care (Feb.2021) ignores the social care funding crisis. Conservative 'sticking plaster' has been to allow councils to raise a 2% Social Care precept alongside general council tax. But this may end in 2021-22.

While budgets have shrunk, the number of very old and frail people and those of all ages with disabilities needing some type of care continues to expand. In Cambridgeshire, this has led to increasing tightening of eligibility criteria to focus only on those in 'substantial and critical' need. With an estimated £16.6m social care savings required between 2018/19 and 2020/21 the County cut services and drove up charges. From 2020 it reduced the 'minimum income guarantee', driving some residents needing social care to pay up to 34% more for services.

As well as cuts, the County Council put its faith in 'transformation', investing small sums in the hope of making large savings. In social care, schemes such as Adults Positive Challenge fell short of their savings target and Learning Disability and Supported Housing cuts had to be scaled back as needs continued to increase.

The impact of COVID-19 has been devastating for residents, staff and families. 42% of Cambridgeshire deaths up to late January 2021 were in care homes, increasingly seen as unsafe. The care market is nearing collapse, home care support is patchy, staff recruitment is weak, pay levels low and turnover high.

A Labour County Council will provide equitable and high quality care to all those who need it. Building on its campaigning work for Early Intervention, Labour will ensure adequate investment in preventive social care.

## A LABOUR COUNTY COUNCIL WILL:

- ✔ **Use the 2% Adult Social Care Precept while it exists to help meet local needs, and press for a sustainable social care system as an essential part of White Paper proposed reforms.**
- ✔ **Ensure genuine 'co-creation' in initiatives (eg. the Care-Suites wrap-around care project) by involving older and disabled people as full partners in project design and evaluation.**
- ✔ **Invest a further £1.5m over 3 years in the Asset-Based Commissioning and Delivery Pilot in East Cambridgeshire and drive forward future-proofing innovation so older people can stay in their homes for longer.**
- ✔ **Increase the hourly rate for County-funded home care workers to attract more staff and identify training and professional development pathways to up-skill them in post.**
- ✔ **Improve support for adults with learning disabilities, physical or mental health disabilities, using personal budgets/direct payments to widen their choices in independent living.**
- ✔ **Commission a robust evaluation of benefits and risks of social care transformation projects and reframe priorities as required.**
- ✔ **Explore the case for County Council investment in its own residential care provision.**





## SCHOOLS, CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

Despite the sterling work of generations of parents and volunteers to secure fairer funding for Cambridgeshire, recent announcements from the government still leave the county's schools among some of the lowest funded in the country. Maintained nursery schools are still awaiting the government decision about funding and many nursery schools are fighting for survival. The government funding changes while providing much needed additional funding for schools the money is still inadequate and will lead to growing disparities between schools with small primary schools being particularly at risk of underfunding and possible closure. The special needs budget is in deficit, as in many local authorities, but the government has refused to provide additional funding for this vital service.

We will lobby the government to improve funding for Cambridgeshire's school children. We would also work with voluntary organisations and staff to protect nursery schools from closure. We will push for proper and meaningful consultation to take place when schools propose to convert to academies and we will campaign for schools to remain within local authority control. We will also work to ensure that all schools including academies are properly accountable to the local authority and the communities they serve. We will campaign for 'looked after' children and child refugees, to receive the best possible care and attention.

It is clear that Covid 19 and the return to school is going to need additional resources because despite the great work done by the council and parents in home schooling some pupils will need extra help to cover lost ground. The Labour Group will campaign for more resources to allow this to happen.

## A LABOUR COUNTY COUNCIL WILL:

- ✓ **Redouble efforts as part of the fairer funding for Cambridgeshire's schools campaign to make sure all schools, no matter their size, type or location, receive a proper level of funding on a par with the rest of the country, and more funding for special needs and help with the return to school.**
- ✓ **Create free breakfast clubs to be established at all schools to ensure that all children receive at least one nutritious meal a day.**
- ✓ **Campaign for public- and private- sector employers to offer apprenticeships to young people and work with other councils to get young people into education, training or work.**
- ✓ **Invest a further £1.6m in budgets for looked-after children.**
- ✓ **Improve the County Council's capacity to forecast and prepare for growing needs and risks to children's services, including child sexual exploitation and mental health.**
- ✓ **Continue to find homes for child refugees.**
- ✓ **Invest in further services for young mothers so that the 20% of 2 year-olds in Cambridgeshire receive essential health checks.**



## PUBLIC HEALTH, WELLBEING AND HEALTH SCRUTINY

Cambridgeshire County Council has a dual responsibility: scrutinising the local health system on behalf of residents; and providing public health services across the county. The COVID pandemic has shown how the coordinating role of public health is crucial, working closely with the local NHS and County Council and repairing deficiencies, for example in National Test and Trace delivery.

Central government cut public health budgets from 2015 and County Council budget cuts and targets have added pressures, shifting public health towards larger-scale contracts that pressured smaller providers. Health inequalities work has been hampered by lack of staff and limited resources.

Public health now needs to embrace a wider role in population health, leading reduction of health inequalities and action on the social determinants of health across the emerging integrated care system. It must invest more in preventative support, including mental health services. It must influence policy across the council and in its partners and contractors, so that health becomes a key consideration in every local policy development.

The NHS has limited democratic accountability so the County's scrutiny function for NHS services is vital. Labour questions the timing of the 2021 White Paper, issued in the midst of the pandemic and has concerns about the Government's NHS-dominated model of 'Integrated Care Systems' (ICS) that undervalues the local authority contribution and under-funds social care and public health.

Labour calls for services to remain accessible and responsive to residents' needs across the county, with more intensive work in areas of deprivation.

## A LABOUR COUNTY COUNCIL WILL:

- ✔ **Create a population health strategy with agreed timeframes, staffing and resources, positioning public health as the system leader for reduction of health inequalities.**
- ✔ **Scale up public health over the next 5 years, seeking match funding from partners, Trusts and the ICS to deliver wide-ranging initiatives to tackle health inequalities.**
- ✔ **Adopt a 'Health in All Policies' approach (WHO), so all new County Council policies are reviewed to ensure there is no negative impact on population health and wellbeing.**
- ✔ **Improve partnership working with adult social care so that the public health dimension of initiatives is fully planned.**
- ✔ **Increase funding for early intervention and support services to meet the needs of residents experiencing mental health issues.**
- ✔ **Oppose any move to enable ICS privatisation and campaign for a properly funded and integrated population health system, with local authorities as equal partners with the NHS.**
- ✔ **Ensure contracts are benchmarked, fully funded and monitored, with community-based providers not disadvantaged in bidding.**



## ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

Labour will discard the current Conservative climate change target date of 2050, which is too little, too late. Instead, we will accelerate the Council's initiatives so that we reach net carbon zero by 2030. This will require faster progress to be made in cutting emissions and our carbon footprint. We will work in partnership with farmers, local communities, green businesses and voluntary groups to protect and enhance the County's natural resources. We will review the biodiversity targets to assess the scope for a more ambitious goal.

Labour endorses and will continue the enterprising work of the County Energy Unit including its programme of the use, and generation, of green energy. We will support the further development of solar farms, solar panels and heat exchange pumps for Cambridgeshire schools and the expansion of solar panels at Park and Ride sites to power electric buses. Pioneering work to develop green energy for communities currently dependent on oil needs to be supported in the short term so that green energy become the norm across the County.

Reduction of plastic waste is a pressing environmental issue. Labour led a successful campaign for a ban on all single use plastics in the County Council. We will work with contractors, other businesses, our partners and communities for reduction in plastic use. We will work with Water Resources East (WRE) on water conservation and flood prevention. We will introduce a major tree planting programme, working with partner councils to get national funding for this essential contribution to fighting climate change and protecting biodiversity.

## A LABOUR COUNTY COUNCIL WILL:

- ✓ **Reprioritise initiatives so that the County can reach net carbon zero by 2030, while protecting and enhancing the County's natural resources.**
- ✓ **Review the work of the Energy Unit in generating green energy and installing sustainable energy schemes to assess where faster progress is possible.**
- ✓ **Invest in green energy schemes for rural communities, pressing government for better funding and building on experience from the Swaffham Prior project.**
- ✓ **Work with WRE and DEFRA on projects, including Cambridgeshire chalk streams protection, as part of their wider water conservation and management strategy.**
- ✓ **Give a higher priority to flood prevention and control across the county, working as the lead authority with districts.**
- ✓ **Drive forward major tree-planting programmes throughout the County, working together with city and district councils.**
- ✓ **Protect, and increase where possible, the County's farmland, working in partnership with tenants on innovation, sustainability and biodiversity projects.**
- ✓ **Press for major funding from national government to support the preservation and enrichment of natural capital and biodiversity as essential contributors in reducing the impact of climate change**





## TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Cambridgeshire is one of the fastest growing areas in the country with more and more people moving into the county to live and work, but too much of this focused on Greater Cambridge. The County Council must work with partners to deliver major infrastructure projects that spread opportunities across the entire county and reach the many communities that are still very isolated..

To develop the county's economy fairly and sustainably, transport infrastructure must be a priority. Fenland in particular suffers the worst 'transport poverty' in England due to the lack of an affordable public transport network. This forces low income households into high cost, private motoring in order to access work and reach remote but essential services.

Labour will work with the Combined Authority Mayor and central Government's Bus Investment Strategy to create better rural bus services, restoring and expanding subsidised bus services where no viable alternatives are available. We will also encourage co-operatives and social enterprises to provide additional community, on demand, transport options. We will ensure that sustainable and more active travel is encouraged and supported through investment in footway and cycleway building and maintenance in urban and rural parts of the County.

## A LABOUR COUNTY COUNCIL WILL:

- ✓ **Improve bus travel and connectivity across the county, working with the Combined Authority Mayor to secure bus-franchising and creation of a reliable bus network, with Bus Priority lanes on key routes.**
- ✓ **Ensure bus operators upgrade to all electric bus fleets**
- ✓ **Press for a Fair Fares policy on bus and rail transport to encourage a shift from private car use.**
- ✓ **Support the introduction of more Park and Ride sites and expand Travel Hubs across the county.**
- ✓ **Push to continue investment in high-quality strategic cycle routes across the county, segregated wherever possible.**
- ✓ **Enable more active travel on foot and by bike to become a realistic option by investing more in urban and rural footway and cycle lane repair and maintenance.**
- ✓ **Expand the School Streets “no car zone” initiatives and ensure permanent funding of school Bikeability training schemes.**
- ✓ **Expand the number of Residents’ Parking Schemes across Cambridge city**
- ✓ **Press for the adoption of powers to make pavement parking an offence and investigate the potential for restricting verge parking across the county.**
- ✓ **Campaign for more rail investment, including completion of the Wisbech-March rail link and Oxford-Cambridge East-West line, with full consultation on Cambridge South rail station.**



## FINANCE, GROWTH AND COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT

The council has faced financial challenges due to abolition of national Revenue Support Grant. Its response has been to increase commercial activities and investments and to leverage county assets, with varying degrees of success.

The Council's wholly-owned subsidiary housing company 'This Land', has failed to meet its forecast contribution in any of the last four years or to build a single 'affordable' house. It has not built affordable homes for sale and rent across the county; instead focusing on up-market schemes and dabbling in projects outside the county. The Council has not helped to reduce the housing crisis or provide itself with a secure funding stream. Labour will work with partners to establish integrated planning for major sites, enabling affordable housing, transport and infrastructure to protect local communities.

The County has failed to create a vision and clear strategy for the whole of Cambridgeshire and some more rural areas feel left behind. The new HQ at Alconbury and schemes to reduce costs by localising services, may prove risky and expensive in a post-COVID world. Labour will reset priorities, building constructive relationships with district councils, the Greater Cambridge Partnership, and the Combined Authority Mayor.

Labour accepts that continuing change is inevitable to allow the council to deliver more for less, but we will ensure that this never compromises our ethical principles of fairness and public service. We depend on the hard work and exceptional flexibility of the dedicated council workforce. We will ensure that all staff get the Real Living Wage and press for council contractors to pay this too. Labour is determined to deliver for all residents while prioritising projects and policies that will make a real difference to those who need our help the most.

# A LABOUR COUNTY COUNCIL WILL:

- ✓ **Provide affordable homes for sale and rent by re-focusing the county owned 'This Land' as a genuine local housing provider.**
- ✓ **Invest when opportunities arise to diversify on County Council assets such as the county farms estate, without compromising our commitment to sustainability and net zero carbon goals.**
- ✓ **Press for Fair Funding and restoring Revenue Support Grants.**
- ✓ **Work with partners to sustain local communities, especially through affordable housing provision and bus/cycle networks.**
- ✓ **Create new County apprenticeships to mitigate the impact of COVID and create new job opportunities for young people.**
- ✓ **Pay all employees of the County Council the Real Living Wage and reform the County's agency policy to include this requirement in contracts.**
- ✓ **Adjust the priorities of the County Council's transformation programme to encompass social value and building internal capacity, rather than contracting out or privatisation.**
- ✓ **Conduct a social audit of all council spending, directing scarce resources to services for low income and struggling groups.**