

Labour with you in Birmingham

**A fair city
A prosperous city
A democratic city**

City Council Elections 22 May 2014





Introduction from Sir Albert Bore Leader, Birmingham City Council

Labour believes in local councils that work hard to help improve people's lives, to support the economy and create jobs through investment in infrastructure and regeneration, to care for those in need from birth through to old age, to provide opportunities for learning and development of skills and to help people to lead healthier, safer and more secure lives.

We believe in a democratic city in which all communities and individuals can have a say in planning the future and the decisions that affect them. And we believe in working for a fairer society, in which so many lives are not blighted by social exclusion and inequality of opportunities.

Labour believes that we are all part of one community as a city and that we have a duty to look after those who are least able to look after themselves. But we also believe that government should empower people to take more control of their own lives and to work together to solve the problems faced in their community.

These are the values we have worked hard to put into practice since winning the election of 2012 and taking on the task of leading the City Council.

Labour will take on eight long term challenges for the city:

- **Driving economic growth and job creation by closing the skills gap**
- **Supporting young people to overcome the barriers to achieving their full potential**
- **Reducing child poverty**
- **Improving the local environment and reducing anti-social behaviour and crime**
- **Helping older people to live independent lives**
- **Improving health and wellbeing**
- **Providing affordable and suitable housing**
- **Welcoming diversity and promoting social cohesion.**

A handwritten signature in green ink, likely belonging to Sir Albert Bore, positioned at the bottom right of the page.

Our top priorities for 2014-15

Jobs, Skills and Education

We are committed to education and training, with every citizen given the opportunity to achieve their potential in terms of educational attainment, and to maintain and update their skills to keep pace with the changing nature of the local and regional economy.

We will link skills provision to the needs of business and publish a Birmingham Skills Investment Plan, setting out the role and actions for schools, agencies, commissioners, employers and individuals; making it clear how working together we can develop the skills necessary to foster current and future economic growth and prosperity.

For our young citizens we will create a Birmingham Apprenticeship Agency, bringing businesses and the best of our colleges and specialist training providers together, under one umbrella, to accelerate and increase yet further the number and types of apprenticeships available.

To ensure that all children in the city are given the best possible start in life we will launch a new **Strategy for Special Educational Needs**. This will show how we can improve the support given to the one in four children in the city with some level of special needs, in partnership with teachers, parents and carers.

Living Wage and Poverty

Everyone in work is worth more than the minimum wage. We have already made sure our staff get a Living Wage and we will take that further to make Birmingham a Living Wage City. We will insist on all contracts for services to the public sector being Living Wage contracts and we will work with employers across Birmingham to end poverty pay. We will set up a Birmingham Child Poverty Commission to help the city's schools, health services and employers break the poverty that blights the lives of a third of our children.

Quality Homes for Local People

We will tackle the biggest housing crisis in a generation by building more homes and helping people onto the housing ladder. We will deliver quality social housing and affordable homes and work to raise standards for tenants in the private rented sector, tackling bad landlords. Our ambition is that every Birmingham citizen can access quality housing that suits their needs.

Investment in Leisure and Green Spaces

Over four years we will provide new modern leisure centres for the 21st century and empower citizens to help manage our parks and green spaces, ensuring that Birmingham residents can enjoy quality sport, leisure and recreation.

Crime and Policing

Working with the Police and Crime Commissioner, we will develop a Birmingham Police and Crime Plan that includes putting “bobbies back on the beat”. This will ensure Birmingham remains one of the safest cities in the UK and allow us to put victims first, tackle anti-social behaviour and crack down on doorstep and online scams.

The Tories and Lib Dems are imposing huge, unfair cuts on Birmingham

This Tory-Lib Dem government has got it in for Birmingham.

Birmingham City Council is facing huge cuts in funding which are more than double the average for the country as a whole – cuts implemented by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in government.

Labour recognises there is a need for spending reductions, as a result of the banking crisis and recession which has dramatically cut government income since 2008. But the cuts being made to local government by the Conservatives and Lib Dems go too far, too fast – local councils are being cut by 40% whilst some government departments are cut by just 12%.

The cuts are also deeply unfair, with the more deprived parts of the country being hit hardest. Birmingham will lose £145 per household in funding in 2014-15 and £147 in 2015-16. The England average cut will be £72 in 2014-15 and just £45 in 2015-16. And some well off areas will actually see an increase in income this year or next year – affluent areas like Surrey will get £50 more per household in 2015-16, Buckinghamshire £39, Windsor and Maidenhead £41 and Wokingham £55.

The Tories want to see a drastic reduction in our public services and are using the public sector borrowing deficit as an excuse. The Liberal Democrats are helping them within government.

Responding to the cuts: our mission and priorities

Since coming to power in 2012, Labour has been honest with the people of Birmingham about the challenge we face. And we have been responsible in decisions on the annual Budget of the City Council. Unlike the other political parties, we have to take responsibility for running the City Council and we cannot make empty promises to give blanket protection to local services.

Labour will respond by protecting services that support the most vulnerable people in our community. We have ensured that the reduced funds available are distributed more fairly across the city by basing district budgets on measures of need.

Crucially, we have got our city back on the move with new Economic Zones and action to boost the number of new businesses, cut youth unemployment and begun to give our children the skills to do the new jobs we are helping to create.

Wherever possible we will make savings by modernising services – for example in our changes to leisure services that will see public resources refocused on providing health and wellbeing centres in the poorest communities, whilst at the same time providing £30m of investment in new sports and swimming facilities. We have also secured £30m of investment to modernise our refuse collection service and bring it into line with most councils across the country.

Our core mission is to work together to create a fair, prosperous and democratic city. The priorities set out on the previous page and the long term challenges we will tackle all reflect this core mission.

Standing up for Birmingham

Labour believes that public services belong to all of us and we are all part of the community of Birmingham. We all need to play our part in defending our public services and the strongest must support the most vulnerable. That is why we have launched our Standing up for Birmingham campaign.

Your Labour council is open to new ways of delivering services and welcomes the contribution of community groups, schools, housing providers, social enterprises and businesses.

Our intention is to develop opportunities for a wide range of organisations to provide neighbourhood management initiatives. We will encourage further volunteering action programmes and set up an online system to support a network of community 'time banks'.

A plan for the future – how we will transform the City Council

Unlike the other political parties Labour has recognised that we need radical reforms of how our local services are managed – not just cuts. The Labour council in Birmingham is working closely with the other big cities and with Ed Miliband's policy review to come up with bold new ideas for the future. Without these changes we will not be able to provide adequate public services in the future. We will act nationally and locally to bring them about.

We are campaigning for a radical decentralisation of funding and decision making. Cities like Birmingham would then be able to drive economic growth and job creation more effectively and bring together public services such as health and social care to ensure that money is spent more efficiently. We are also committed to devolving power and resources within the city so that communities and neighbourhoods can work together to address local issues.

Our plans for the year ahead include:

- Working more closely with our neighbouring councils across the Greater Birmingham city region to take forward clear strategies for investment in transport, housing, skills and job creation.
- Working towards joint planning and commissioning of an integrated social care and health service in the city. This will provide additional resources for decent social care, enabling more older people to have a better quality of life in the community that could free up acute hospital resources for other pressing needs.
- Developing the Birmingham Education Partnership so that it can commission a comprehensive range of support services for schools and support strong partnerships to improve education attainment levels across the city.
- Creating integrated neighbourhood services that can protect and improve our local environment and housing, including a bigger role for community groups and social enterprises and working more closely with housing associations.
- Campaigning even more strongly for the decentralisation of funds and decision making powers from London so that we can take these changes forward more rapidly.

Jobs, Jobs, Jobs

The future strength of the city depends on the strength of our economy. Since we took office, Labour has got our city back on the move, unlocking the enterprise and innovation of Birmingham people. We need to harness investment into housing and foster a stronger base of small and medium sized businesses. We need to skill up and re-skill our workforce, connect our young people to work and retrain older workers.

Labour recognises that the economic crisis in the country has not been just about falling growth and job losses. People's living standards have also been driven down by spiralling living costs and declining wages.

There are huge opportunities as well as challenges in the current economic environment. With the right support, Birmingham and the West Midlands can become once again a global centre for the most advanced manufacturing businesses. We can also grasp the opportunities of new "green" technologies, reducing energy costs and creating a more sustainable city at the same time as creating new jobs.

We also need to help secure wider opportunities for the whole of our population – creating an inclusive as well as a prosperous economy. This includes creating new opportunities for women and others who experience disadvantage in the labour market.

Labour's approach

Since Labour's election, we have taken real steps to drive forward economic growth and job creation in Birmingham. We've brought together a 'year of infrastructure' including delivery of New Street Station, the Grand Central shopping centre, the airport runway extension and the Midland Metro extension to come. In future years, HS2 will be the most important infrastructure project for the city and will bring regeneration and jobs across the West Midlands, which is why we have championed the project and worked closely with the government and HS2 Ltd.

To help secure Birmingham's position as the Enterprise Capital of the UK, we have established the largest Enterprise Zone in the country to bring new jobs and investment to the city centre and unlock funding, for example, for the Paradise Circus redevelopment. We have also created five other Economic Zones to support investment and new businesses in key growth sectors, provided support for the Women's Enterprise Hub and encouraged business development in the Creative Quarter in Digbeth.

We have begun to tackle the skills challenge by piloting the Birmingham Baccalaureate initiative that ensures that young people are recognised to have the skills for work, and we've shown our determination to help young people find work and training by establishing the Birmingham Jobs Fund. We also challenged local businesses to create 1,000 apprenticeships in 100 days – a target that was exceeded.

But this can be only the start. The West Midlands has the opportunity to be a global hub for manufacturing once again. We also need to think about how our city region fits in the national economy, as outside of London we are now Britain's start-up capital for new businesses and we have attracted more inward investment than anywhere else in England.

As London overheats and becomes expensive in a business sense, there is a big opportunity as 'Canary Wharf's back office' priced to support expansion when London throttles growth, building on the successful relocation of Deutsche Bank. We will consider renaming the existing Birmingham International station and adopt a promotion campaign around the London Underground Zone 4 label.

Securing the power – and resources – to grow

Birmingham needs new powers which we can use together with our neighbours – existing structures need to be more democratic and we need real power and resources devolved to us by government, especially the power and resources to build the infrastructure we need, which have already been given to the Mayor of London. Labour is standing up for Birmingham and will continue to lobby government and work with the Labour Party nationally to make the case for change.

Infrastructure to help us grow

Competitive economies require fit-for-purpose infrastructure. For us, infrastructure can unlock Birmingham's potential as a global portal to the UK, linking the airport, High Speed Two rail, existing rail and road networks and our position as the crossroads of the UK. This we will start through a Birmingham Curzon Regeneration Company to commence the development of the area that will surround the new HS2 Curzon Station, and capture the jobs created by these developments.

Connectivity both to the global economy as well as within the Greater Birmingham region is a critical underpinning to the local economy. We aim to connect people to jobs and connect both people and business to the city region's economic assets such as the airport and tourism destinations.

But beyond this we want to expand the metro, especially through the eastern corridor and build a citywide competitive digital infrastructure. Developing Birmingham Airport can be the ready-made answer to the UK's aviation challenge, and investing in the route delivery capacity will bring forward the benefits of existing capital investment in the runway extension.

Skills to do the job

Birmingham needs skills matched to our ambitions for the future. We will continue to work to ensure Birmingham's schools and colleges are the best in the country at preparing young people for the world of work, and employers are actively involved in the design and delivery of skills programmes. This will include creating more opportunities for work experience and work-related learning in high growth and high churn sectors so young people are well-equipped for a smooth transition from education to employment.

The Birmingham Skills Investment Plan will set out the key investment priorities with a focus on closing the skills gap and increasing the number of jobs and training opportunities available to young people. We will create a Birmingham Apprenticeship Agency, building on the work of the Youth Unemployment Commission, and bring forward more high quality apprenticeship opportunities – adding value to existing programmes.

Deliver Jobs and Skills for Young People

Labour in Birmingham is ready to deliver our Youth Guarantee which will ensure that every young person has a place in education, training, volunteering or a job; assisting them on the journey to a life of prosperity and independence. We will build on the investments already secured to open up wider opportunities for young people and by fostering direct links with employers, ensuring no young person gets left behind.

Support for Business

We want to create a culture of businesses doing more to support other businesses, building on the ideas put forward by the Greater Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and creating the conditions necessary for businesses themselves to invest more in skills training and innovation.

We will also seek support from the business community in developing further the Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility and with more businesses adopting projects and roles in the community as part of their own commitment to corporate social responsibility.

Reducing Child Poverty

We want to create a prosperous city where prosperity is fairly shared. And that's why we will not stand by and watch Birmingham's children get trapped in poverty. We believe in something simple. Every child in Birmingham is equal.

Child poverty affects many families who are in work and struggling on low wages, as well as those who cannot find work. It is a damning indictment that in Birmingham in 2014 31% of children are growing up in poverty. The pattern of child poverty varies across the city. In three of the four Sutton Coldfield wards, it is just 5%. By contrast, in Nechells it stands at 47%.

Labour's approach

Labour in Birmingham has already taken radical steps to tackle the effects of poverty on families and individuals. Since 2012, your Labour Council has:

- Introduced the **Living Wage** for all council employees and a **Business Charter for Social Responsibility**, designed to drive the Living Wage through the supply chain and help to make Birmingham a 'Living Wage City'
- Continued to provide 100% support with Council Tax costs for low income families with children under the age of 6
- Launched **Birmingham Fair Money** – providing access to affordable credit via the credit unions, together with debt advice and support for hard-pressed families
- Taken action on fuel poverty. Through the Warm Home Discount Project, EON are now working closely with Birmingham City Council to target Warm Home Discounts to the citizens of Birmingham most at risk of fuel poverty. We are also setting up an affordable fuel partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureaux and Carillion
- Worked to support families with complex needs through the Think Family programme – a multi-agency approach designed to improve outcomes for 4,000 Birmingham families.

- Secured extra funds to support council tenants affected by the Government's unfair Bedroom Tax. We've also been working with the Child Poverty Action Group and other key partners in the city to provide help and support for those affected by other benefit cuts
- Invested £9.2m for each of the next three years in frontline child protection to give our children the safe, secure start in life they need.

Labour's mission, especially in these tough times, will be to ensure that our children and young people – and our city as a whole – is no longer held back by inequality. We will do this through a Birmingham Child Poverty Commission that will work with the city's schools, social care, health services and employers to break the poverty that blights the life of a third of our children.

Promoting Social Cohesion, health and wellbeing

Unleashing the potential of our diverse communities

Birmingham is a vibrant and diverse place – a city of a million people with roots right around the globe. Birmingham's place at the heart of the industrial revolution was based on the skills of migrants. It is also one of the youngest cities in Europe. Our youth and diversity are tremendous assets and a Labour council will work hard to realise the social and economic benefits they bring to our city.

Birmingham has a reputation for being a welcoming city, demonstrated by the generosity of existing and new communities. The network of community-led **Places of Welcome** provides new residents with help, support and a simple welcome to their area. A Labour council will work with community groups to ensure that this network continues to flourish.

We have a thriving network of community organisations meeting the challenges of austerity, organising food banks, working with vulnerable people or supporting hard-pressed communities. Labour will work alongside them in these difficult times.

Faith organisations play a key role in our neighbourhoods, alongside secular groups. Labour will strengthen this partnership by adopting the national **Faith Covenant**, setting out how people of all faiths and none can collaborate to deliver services and support to local communities.

A Labour council will ensure that a commitment to community engagement and social cohesion sits at the heart of all the council does. We will challenge ourselves and others – in the public, private and voluntary sectors – to ensure that all of our work helps to reduce inequality and fosters community cohesion.

Labour-led Birmingham has already **pioneered new ways of engaging with communities** through the Fair Brum and Transforming Place initiatives, making use of social media and other creative activity. We will continue to innovate and find ways to ensure the diverse voices of Birmingham are clearly heard by the council and its partners.

Labour believes in strong, empowered communities. We will encourage projects that help people ‘do it for themselves’, in line with our **Standing up for Birmingham** campaign. The days of “top-down” programmes imposed on communities are over. Local people are the experts about their community and a Labour council will work to help them make change happen.

Health and wellbeing

We take the same approach to the promotion of health and wellbeing in the city – helping people to live longer, more independent lives by working with the community and joining up services to focus on their needs.

We took over responsibility for Public Health from the NHS a year ago and moved quickly to put in place a Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The strategy prioritises the needs of the most vulnerable and children. We have made rapid progress to arrest the challenge of childhood obesity in the city and we have made homelessness a top public health issue.

Our popular Be Active programme has removed cost as a barrier to participation in physical activity. We’ve brought forward plans for the modernisation of leisure centres and focused the City Council’s role on the provision of health and wellbeing centres in the most deprived areas of the city – helping those who find it hardest to take part in physical activity. We will also make more use of the city’s parks and open spaces as places for physical activity. The implementation of these plans will begin in the year ahead.

We will establish a **Public Health Charter**, setting out a new vision for a healthier city.

We will develop “**Ageing well**” plans for each district in the city so services to enable older people to remain in their own homes are better planned according to need and which will fully recognise and promote the importance of support from neighbours and communities.

Supporting Young People

Birmingham has the youngest population of any city in Europe, with over 50% of its population under the age of 35 and over 37% under the age of 25. This means there is a huge potential for the future. But our young people are facing difficult times, with access to jobs and affordable housing limited and with cuts reducing services targeted at children and young people.

We have inherited an inadequate children's social care service and we are now taking decisive steps to provide the leadership and resources to put that right. We have seen improvement in the performance of Birmingham's schools over the last two decades, but the level of skills in the city as a whole remains low.

The relationship between schools and the Council has changed in recent years. We are reviewing our support services in partnership with them to make them fit for the needs of the schools themselves.

Labour's approach

Our ambition is to make Birmingham one of the best places in the country to be a young person. We want young people, including graduates from our universities to be able to stay in the city to begin their working life. We want to ensure the safety of children in our city and provide joined up support to those who need it and their families from birth through to adulthood.

This will require a more strategic approach at all ages and across all agencies, including a new locally driven approach to skills training to ensure our businesses are able to recruit from a well-trained local workforce.

Since 2012 we have:

- Started to develop the **Birmingham Baccalaureate** through our partner, Skills for Birmingham. This is being piloted in 11 schools
- Welcomed the launch of the **Birmingham Education Partnership**, an umbrella organisation across Birmingham's schools, led by head teachers. 265 schools have signed up already
- Established **Parent Partnership Service Locality Groups** where parents of children with Special Educational Needs can come together to discuss issues which affect them as a group
- Taken action to deliver jobs and created the **Birmingham Jobs Fund**, following the recommendation of our Youth Unemployment Commission. Working with partners, £2m per year has been committed to create a jobs and apprenticeships fund in the city for unemployed young people
- Secured £4m of additional government money to better prepare and connect young people to jobs
- Begun an overhaul of our adoption and fostering services
- Turned around the lives of more than 1000 families in the UK's largest Troubled Families Programme

Improving Children's Safeguarding Services continues to be our number one priority. We will invest £9.2m for this and each of the next two years to give our children the service they deserve.

We will:

- Continue to give the maximum priority to improving safeguarding services for children
- Conduct a review of support for two key age groups where there may be gaps in support: 0-7 and 16-18 year olds
- Invest an additional £1m to create a more joined up “offer” to young people, ensuring that they can influence the services available and how they are delivered and that all services work better together
- Develop a Birmingham “offer” for young people to foster and promote youth engagement in education, training and employment
- Work with schools to further develop the Birmingham Education Partnership and continue the roll out of the Birmingham Baccalaureate, to ensure young people have the skills they need.

We will launch a new strategy for Special Educational Needs. Nearly one in four children in the city has some level of special educational need and the vast majority of these are educated in mainstream schools

Driving Growth

New Homes to kick-start growth

There is a need for a significant number of new homes in the city to provide for both current demand and future growth, ensure those seeking work can find accommodation and provide affordable housing for all. We will make use of brownfield sites wherever possible, but we also need to make sensible use of land surrounding the city. We need to be able to meet our already demanding housing growth targets, so we will campaign for government to further lift the housing borrowing cap to free up around £400m of funds to create new assets in the homes that people need.

Our ambition is to tackle the biggest housing crisis in a generation, building more homes, helping people on to the housing ladder, providing quality social housing and affordable housing and working to raise standards for tenants in the private rented sector by tackling bad landlords.

Growing the business of the future

We need to grow knowledge intensive businesses, for example, expanding the economic output of our Universities and expanding two brand-new business incubators and fostering more University spin outs. Jobs in the knowledge-intensive sectors pay wages 40% higher than the national average – if we are to earn our way out of the current cost-of-living crisis then we need to grow the number of these jobs in knowledge-intensive sectors.

We will bring Science and Industry together to power growth, with a bold new Enterprise Zone within the heart of the city – Birmingham's 'Tech City'.

Improving the Local Environment and Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour & Crime

We want to make sure that Birmingham stays a safe and clean city and that we tackle the common causes of nuisance and disorder. We want to strengthen the way we support victims and how we work with the police. We need to build confidence and security across our communities.

Crime has fallen steadily and significantly since the mid-1990s. Birmingham remains one of the safest of the English big cities. We recognise concerns about cuts in police funding and also resident concerns about litter, nuisance, and anti-social behaviour, which influence how safe people feel. Road safety issues also feature highly in public concern.

We also want to promote the responsibility of all citizens to work together to reduce litter and graffiti and to support the Police and other agencies in keeping our neighbourhoods safe and clean.

Labour's approach:

Since being elected we have:

- Secured money from Government to support the introduction of wheelie bins, as part of a wider investment plan to **modernise the waste service**. Wheelie bins will bring down costs, and have a major impact on decreasing levels of litter and waste spilled on the street. Big improvements have already been seen in Bournbrook, Brandwood and Harborne and satisfaction with the new system amongst residents is high. Wheelie bins will be introduced across the city by the end of 2015
- Announced plans for **20mph limits** for the vast majority of the city's roads, as part of a wider review of the Road Safety Strategy based on enforcement, engineering and education – and the broader context of developing the Birmingham Mobility Action Plan

- Worked with the Police and Crime Commissioner to bring about community-led priority setting for policing and community safety in Birmingham, through the new Birmingham Community Safety, Policing and Crime Board
- Appointed the **Victims' Champion** and launched the Victim's Charter, putting the experience of the victim at the forefront of the Council's mind
- Taken the 'Think Family' approach to troubled families in the city, providing intensive and tailored support to get struggling families back on track, rather than letting problems grow and grow.

In the year ahead we will:

- Make sure we are **tackling problems early on**, fixing them at source, rather than letting them become a mess that the Council or other agencies have to clean up later, at huge cost to the public purse
- Create **safer streets**, bringing down speeds and casualty rates, and by encouraging more active travel, delivering a healthier, safer and more welcoming city. Every time we make changes on the road network we will make sure road safety, pedestrians and cyclists are at the forefront of our minds.
- Set out a clear deal for residents over anti-social behaviour, setting out what their rights and responsibilities are, and building on the work of the Victim's Charter
- Work with communities, businesses and other statutory bodies to make sure we are all taking responsibility and pulling in the same direction on the crime and nuisance agenda, rather than working in isolation or thinking that things are 'not my job'.

Working with the Police and Crime Commissioner, we will develop a Police and Crime Plan that includes putting "bobbies back on the beat". This will ensure Birmingham remains one of the safest big cities in the UK and allows us to put victims first, tackle anti-social behaviour, drugs misuse and crack down on doorstep and online scams.