



A WESTMINSTER
**FOR THE
MANY**
NOT THE
FEW

CONTENTS

TIME FOR A CHANGE: A ONCE IN A GENERATION OPPORTUNITY	4
BUILDING A CITY THAT PUTS ITS RESIDENTS FIRST	5
Building the homes we need	5
Housing management and allocation that puts residents first	8
Housing: Homelessness and Rough Sleeping	9
Private sector housing that works for residents	10
Planning that puts residents first	11
CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES	14
Investing in our young people	14
Adult social care and health	15
Equalities	16
OUR WESTMINSTER: A LIVING CITY	17
Public Protection	17
Business that works for our residents	17
Libraries and Leisure	18
A Cleaner, Greener City	19
Transport	20
REFORMING THE COUNCIL	22
A fairer Council	22
Reforming how the Council works	23
New ways to raise funds	24
LABOUR'S KEY PLEDGES	25

A WESTMINSTER FOR THE MANY NOT THE FEW. A LABOUR COUNCIL WILL:

- Build many more Council and lower rent homes
- Campaign against Conservative cuts and protect services for the most vulnerable
- Reform planning to put residents first
- Protect our communities and fight Tory cuts to the police
- Create a cleaner, greener city
- Back the London Living Wage
- Defend the rights of our EU Citizens

TIME FOR A CHANGE: A ONCE IN A GENERATION OPPORTUNITY

After decades of the Conservatives taking Westminster for granted, residents have a real chance to change the future of this city. Years of Conservative cuts have taken their toll on local services, particularly for the most vulnerable. The Conservatives have put the needs of developers above the needs of the vast majority of local residents. For generations they have failed to build the Council (social rent) and lower (intermediate) rent homes that Westminster needs to give the City a viable future.

Labour has a credible alternative plan that can be delivered today despite the damage being done by the current government. Our communities are calling out for change, and in this manifesto Labour sets out a vision for how things could be run differently, how we will deliver a Westminster for the many not the few if we are elected to run the council on May 3rd 2018.

BUILDING A CITY THAT PUTS ITS RESIDENTS FIRST

For decades Westminster Conservatives have presided over a massive decline in the number of Council homes or other types of housing ordinary people can afford. At the same time they have been notorious for waving through major luxury developments that haven't contributed their fair share to support local residents. Labour will end this cosy 'business as usual' approach and make building new Council (social) and lower rent homes the Council's top political priority.

Standards at CityWest Homes and many of Westminster's Housing Associations continue to fall, while the private rental sector has seen spiralling rents and wildly varying quality. Labour will take action to help improve homes across our city.

Labour will set up a top-level Westminster Housing Commission, chaired by Labour housing expert Steve Hilditch, bringing together senior figures from the world of housing, planning and homelessness to lead a root-and-branch review of the housing crisis in Westminster. The Commission will fully engage local residents as well as experts from across the sector in developing new ideas for the future of housing in Westminster.

BUILDING THE HOMES WE NEED

Labour will raise the proportion of Council and lower rent housing that Westminster Council aims to build within the city from the current 30% of homes built – a figure the Conservatives have regularly missed – with a goal of 50%, in line with the more ambitious Labour councils.

To make sure that developers pay their fair share, Labour will transform the way the Council undertakes viability assessments to improve transparency and accountability, making as many documents as legally possible open to the public for scrutiny and challenge. In the short term we will adopt the Mayor of London's threshold approach to viability set out in his Affordable Housing and Viability Supplementary Planning Guidance, while campaigning for a more fundamental transformation of the process. However, we will go further than the Mayor's initial guidelines, and like Lambeth, we will set the threshold at 40% affordable homes as the viability threshold for schemes without subsidy. This 40% affordable rate will form our initial target for homes built on private land. We will adopt an 'Existing Use Value Plus' model for valuing land to dissuade developers from overpaying for land and then trying to get out of their affordable housing obligations.

Labour will refocus the Council's lower rent housing offer towards Westminster's long-term residents and key workers. We will ensure that such homes are really

affordable to local people by making sure that all lower (intermediate) rent homes built on Council land are affordable for those on average (median) incomes or less – Labour’s proposed new ‘Westminster Key Worker Homes’. Other forms of significantly lower rent housing could be provided by the private sector as part of their section 106 requirements onsite on their developments or on land they provide in the local area. Shared ownership as it currently operates is not currently a viable option in Westminster.

Labour pledge that any building programme on Council land will not only fully replace any Council homes demolished but will ensure that at least 50% of any additional homes built will be Council and Westminster Key Worker homes. This will apply both to Council estate regeneration schemes and all other new housing developments on Council-owned land.

Labour will seek to access funding from the Mayor of London and central government to supplement funds from the Council’s own resources. It will also lobby the current government hard to raise the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap to invest in building more Council homes.

We will reverse the Conservatives’ recent planning rule changes (that reduce the proportion of new social housing to 40% of total affordable housing) that so that at least 60% of all new affordable housing is Council housing.

Labour believes that all regeneration has to be supported by the local residents it is aiming to help. Westminster Labour will continue our local commitment, now national Labour policy, to ensure that any significant Council regeneration scheme is subject to a residents’ ballot – after a meaningful, resident-led consultation with local people. Demolition should no longer be the first option for such plans, and where any local resident is displaced due to such changes they must be able to be rehoused in the local area with the same type of tenancy and have the right to return.

Westminster’s housing estates already comprise mixed communities, bringing together Council tenants, resident leaseholders and private tenants from a range of different backgrounds. Therefore additional private development in Council regeneration areas or other Council land should only be justified in terms of the contribution it can make to paying for Council and lower rent homes where other funding is not available, or in limited circumstances for essential public realm developments. Where possible the Council should use the Community Infrastructure Levy, Section 106 Agreements and General Fund Capital Investment to fund public realm improvements to ensure proceeds from housing sales contribute to more Council and Westminster Key Worker housing.

Any long-term schemes should be designed to enable the provision of additional Council and lower rent homes in place of planned private units if additional funding were to become available during the lifetime of a scheme, such as through a Labour government investing in Council housing.

Estate regeneration and local infill schemes will have a strong local lettings policy so that local people can benefit from such developments. Those in long-term temporary accommodation in blocks proposed to be demolished should also be able to benefit,

particularly through accommodation freed up via the local lettings strategy.

We will ensure that the Council's proposed Wholly-Owned Housing Company is used to give it greater control over building on land it owns and less reliance on developers. Unlike the current Tory plans, such a scheme must be used to assist in the building of new Council and lower rent housing. Any new company and the Council's existing Westminster Community Homes will become more open to full Council and public scrutiny.

We will actively look at opportunities to develop long-term private rented properties instead of homes for private sale, using the new Wholly-Owned Housing Company on public land and other partnerships across the city. Build-to-rent schemes should however be an alternative to private development rather than a way to water down requirements to build Council and lower rent housing. Such developments should offer longer tenancies and high-quality maintenance and management.

Any homes for sale that are built in the regeneration areas and on other Council-owned land should be marketed first to local people, rather than sold off-plan to international investors. Labour will push for this approach to be taken on other developments in Westminster.

All Council corporate property schemes will examine what role they can play in addressing the housing crisis, including both long-term redevelopment as housing or mixed-use sites and short-term adaptation of underused Council-owned facilities for temporary housing. We will look at how Westminster Council's Capital Programme could be better used to support the development of new housing, including the strategic acquisition of sites for mixed commercial and housing use.

Under Labour Westminster Council will no longer build or buy homes for permanent tenancies outside Westminster, such as the recent purchase of properties in Hounslow. We will use the money saved to build more Council and lower rent homes in our city.

Labour will change Council planning policy to enable and actively encourage car-free developments to facilitate house-building on more challenging sites and maximise living space.

We will look where appropriate to utilise overage agreements to ensure that if property prices rise after a development gets planning permission the Council benefits in-terms of more Council and lower rent housing.

We will restore the mixed-use requirement so that significant increases in office floor space and new developments are linked to the delivery of new homes to tackle Westminster's housing crisis.

Labour will instigate a comprehensive Westminster public land audit, led by the Housing Commission, to identify land owned by different parts of the Council and other public bodies that could be used for new Council-led housing development, and we will consult residents for suggested sites. We will retain control of Council-owned land to ensure it can benefit residents.

We will support community build schemes and non-conventional types of house-building to find innovative ways to tackle the housing crisis on unusual sites. We will also seek to ensure there is a level playing field for smaller developers to operate in the city.

Labour will work to build the supported and sheltered accommodation our residents will need in old age and design new homes to be more accessible for people as they get older.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT AND ALLOCATION THAT PUTS RESIDENTS FIRST

Labour is deeply concerned about the declining performance of CityWest Homes, particularly following the recent debacles over the introduction of the new call centre and the Morgan Sindall repairs contract. Labour will put CityWest on notice that if its performance does not rapidly improve it will be removed from managing Westminster's Council properties.

From day one of a Labour-run council we will take action to end the repairs crisis and improve the way it treats its residents. Labour fought the Conservative closure of the Council's network of local estate offices and we will re-establish local estate office bases for housing management staff to work in and meet with residents, including as part of our plans for local Council hubs. We will urgently examine further ways to improve the failing CityWest Homes call centre system that has suffered from huge delays.

The Westminster Housing Commission will undertake a root and branch review of the way CityWest functions to assess whether its continued existence is in the best interests of residents. In particular the Commission will undertake a review of CWH's resident engagement and support structures to find ways to give residents a greater say over how the organisation is run to make it a genuinely democratic organisation if it is to survive. The review will:

- Seek to reverse the decline in the activity and autonomy of local residents' associations and sounding boards by giving them greater power and ensuring residents, not housing officers, choose their leadership and participants
- Aim to restore the election of area panel members and to introduce election of resident board members if CWH continues
- Look at new ways to bring together tenants and leaseholders from both CityWest Homes and local housing associations to respond to shared challenges
- Assess the effectiveness of the current organizational structures

If, after consultation with residents, the Housing Commission review was to recommend closing CityWest Homes and to bring housing management back under direct Council control, Labour would do so if approved by a ballot of CityWest Homes tenants and leaseholders. Residents and leaseholders would automatically be balloted ahead of any CityWest Homes contract renewal.

Labour will guarantee not to transfer Westminster's Council homes to any organisation outside the control of the Council.

Labour is committed to delivering much-needed investment in fire safety measures such as sprinkler systems to protect residents in Council housing, despite the Conservative government shamefully failing to contribute to the costs. We would continue to strengthen fire safety checks.

We will explore options for the development of leaseholder sinking funds to assist leaseholders with managing major works charges. We will introduce a new leaseholders' charter around the support provided to resident leaseholders and around limiting huge major works bills.

We will protect the rights of residents living in housing association properties. We will create a 'preferred providers' list for housing associations wanting to get local Section 106 contracts or otherwise work with Westminster, for associations that are treating their tenants fairly (including board representation), not hiking up rents and not selling off their Westminster stock without replacing it. We will ensure that the Council's environmental health teams are able to fully tackle poor-quality housing association homes. We will campaign for national reforms of the sector and proactively support community housing cooperatives and other resident-led approaches to housing management.

Labour will strengthen the ability for long-term residents of Westminster to bid for properties through choice-based lettings through giving them extra points. We will look to restore a version of the Family Quota system to give children of tenants a chance to stay in the community in which they were raised. We will ensure that there is a proper grieving period allowed for families forced to move after the death of a tenant.

HOUSING: HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

Labour will scrap Westminster's cruel homelessness strategy and instead work to ensure that Westminster residents who need temporary accommodation are supported closer to home. Labour will seek to amend the current banding structure to give longstanding residents of Westminster greater preference within the system, and look at ways to improve assistance to those who rely on family and friends for their support needs or who have children in local schools (rather than helping only those taking exams).

We will look to implement the new Homelessness Reduction Act fairly and will seek resources to improve our housing advice and homelessness prevention services.

Where private sector options are required to provide temporary accommodation, Labour will ensure that previously longstanding residents of Westminster would be able to remain on the housing waiting list. Where placements have to be made outside of Westminster, the Council will do more to inform the receiving boroughs about any support needs the family has so that vulnerable people are not put at risk.

The Westminster Housing Commission will undertake an urgent review of

Westminster Council's approach to homelessness and rough sleeping and examine new ways of working.

Westminster will collaborate more closely with the Mayor of London's emerging strategies to tackle rough sleeping in Westminster as well as ending the continued cuts to services addressing these issues. Under Labour Westminster will create a new Rough Sleeping Partnership comprising local and national charities as well as local residents and businesses to find new training, employment and housing initiatives to help tackle this problem. This partnership would be one of the Lord Mayor's standing charities.

Labour will stop further cuts to Westminster's rough sleeping services and where possible look to provide additional support. We will look to develop a Westminster Social Impact Bond to complement existing efforts by the Mayor of London and Westminster to tackle the most challenging issues in rough sleeping.

We will support community initiatives to tackle homelessness such as through schemes like Fair B&B. Westminster could work with the voluntary sector to enable it to be used by those whom the Council does not have a statutory duty to house.

We welcome the national Labour Party's announcement that if elected to government it would immediately purchase void homes from local housing associations and reform allocations procedures to provide a pathway to help tackle rough sleeping.

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING THAT WORKS FOR RESIDENTS

Labour will take a more proactive approach towards the private housing market in our city to find ways to support our renters and help local home owners.

We will do the most we can under current government regulations to protect private sector tenants in Westminster, while campaigning for the right to do more. We will maximise the use of powers to regulate Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) by bringing in what is known as an Additional Licensing scheme. We will look at which areas of Westminster might further benefit from a selective licensing scheme for other types of private rented property. We will lobby the Government to strengthen protections for private renters and deliver the controls on rent rises called for by the Labour Party nationally. We will also develop a private renters' charter so that local renters know their rights and how to get help, using the convening power of the Council to further help raise standards in the sector.

Westminster has a significant problem of housing under-occupation where properties that could house local families are used only a few times a year by overseas investors, while a surprising number of properties remain empty. We will campaign for greater transparency over the ownership of empty homes, and for the government to deliver on its pledge to provide a proper register of beneficial ownership to help limit the acquisition of Westminster's homes by offshore companies for the world's oligarchs.

Labour will fully use the Empty Property Premium on Council Tax and campaign for

its level to be increased. Any money raised would be used to fund officers dedicated to monitoring of the scale of the problem and to help provide small grants to bring properties into housing use. We will campaign for the level to be increased. We will utilise the full range of powers legally available to the Council to help bring properties back into use.

Labour will explore the feasibility of a 'Wasted Housing Supply' policy to ensure that certain new housing developments, such as in the regeneration areas, are not left empty. This would mean that new homes could not be bought by 'buy to leave' owners or those who would use them only a few weeks a year. This approach would support vibrant, active communities and ensure that new homes are contributing to tackling Westminster's housing crisis rather than exacerbating it.

Labour believes CityWest Residential, the commercial lettings and estate agency run by CityWest Homes, should be converted into a properly ethical housing company that works to improve standards in Westminster's private rented sector. This would mean offering not-for-profit deals for landlords who were willing to offer long-term stable tenancies, limit fees, cap rent rises and meet quality and repairs standards.

Labour will do more to tackle illegal sub-letting of Council flats and the use of private flats as permanent 'mini-hotels' through sites such as Airbnb. Labour don't want to prevent local people being able to occasionally rent out their flats in compliance with the current 90-day law but instead focus on full-time landlords who are abusing the rules. Under Labour Westminster will invest more in inspections and continue to campaign for greater legal enforcement powers to protect our communities from the damaging impact this can have. We will work with Karen Buck MP and others who are pushing for a change in the law to give councils more information about flats being used for short-lets, something that is being blocked by Conservative ministers.

Labour will work with private landlords and the planners to better utilise space above retail units for the provision of housing, while at the same time working to limit attempts to convert high-street shops to residential.

A Labour Council will do more to assist residents in both the private sector and Council accommodation to find competitive rates for their electricity and water charges following the best practice from other authorities. We will enable CityWest residents to opt-out of communal charging if they wish to do so.

Under Labour the Council would improve its advice to landlords and tenants about ways to avoid damp and mould in properties.

PLANNING THAT PUTS RESIDENTS FIRST

Labour will enable residents to present their case at planning committee meetings, as they are able to do in almost all other Councils.

We will ensure the Council provides more information explaining how the planning system works, including jargon busting, to help residents find the documents that explain what is being proposed for their area.

We will ensure the Council continues to produce residents' planning notification letters and will expand their use for major schemes, while improving digital communications in this area.

As well as ensuring developers do their fair share towards addressing the housing crisis, Labour will ensure that Community Infrastructure Levy payments and Section 106 agreements support the development of community facilities and improving public spaces across our city.

Labour will create a Strategic Planning Committee to decide major planning applications, with a larger than normal membership to prevent major applications being dominated by the whims of over-powerful individual councillors.

Labour will scrap the Council's planned Tall Buildings Strategy that would allow the spread of tall buildings across the city beyond the existing clusters, looking instead at how to deliver well-designed, lower-rise high-density schemes.

Labour will establish a design panel for Westminster to allow professional architects, other experts and lay residents to give external advice to planning committees on design aspects of major planning proposals.

Labour will review private developable land holdings and developments that have not proceeded, and where the Council does have the powers we would intervene where delay is unreasonable. We will work with developers where we can to move schemes forward but we would use all tools available, including potentially the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders, where there is evidence of land-hoarding. A Labour Council would be proactive in assembling new development sites including where there are inefficient car park spaces or one-storey commercial buildings.

Labour will review how planning policy can be used to support improved environmental standards in both construction and finished properties. It will look at measures that can be taken to incorporate green technologies into the design process and integrate greenery on buildings and in the public realm as part of the process.

Labour will insist that developers adopt a tenure-blind approach to house-building.

Labour will require developers to employ local people and provide Westminster apprenticeships as part of Section 106 agreements.

Labour Councillors will work to achieve the highest standards of propriety on planning matters, and unlike the practice of Conservative Councillors over many years; we will not accept hospitality from individual developers and their agents. Labour will require the Council to formally record all meetings between Councillors and developers when discussing individual schemes. There will always be an officer present and the record of the meeting will indicate the issues discussed. The record of the meeting will be posted on the Council website within two weeks.

Labour understands that the character and future of the wider West End is under threat due to over-commercialisation, and that bold measures are needed to reverse

this decline and protect the West End's unique character. Labour will look at how the Council's special policy area framework can be used to protect a wider range of building uses such as live music venues in Soho, Chinese and East Asian cultural activities in Chinatown, and LGBTI venues near Old Compton Street. We will also support the implementation of the new 'agent of change' regulations to protect longstanding venues.

Labour will introduce new measures to tackle the clustering of betting shops and payday lenders and restrict the presence of hot food takeaways near schools. Labour will continue to press for changes to the law to restrict fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBTs).

Labour will continue to review the Council's policies on 'iceberg basements' and fight for greater powers from central government to prevent them.

CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Westminster's communities are feeling the pressure of years of cuts that have dramatically reduced the services available to them. Labour is committed to supporting all Westminster's communities, but particularly to ensuring that the most vulnerable in our society get the support they need. We will work close with local people so that the Council can better identify their priorities at this time of bitter Tory austerity.

INVESTING IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

Labour will work with the schools and the voluntary sector to widen the use of breakfast and after-school clubs.

Labour will work with our schools to push the government to develop a fairer funding formula that supports all students rather than slashing support to a number of Westminster's schools in greatest need.

We will fight to retain and strengthen the vital role the Council plays in supporting Westminster's schools and their pupils. The Council will offer further support to schools to deliver education and training on issues of sexual harassment, cyber-bullying and violence and to promote the values of tolerance.

Labour will explore new ways to give Westminster residents greater priority for local school places, including by looking at the use of a reserve option to ensure that pupils are offered a place in at least one Westminster school.

Labour will restore core funding to Westminster's youth clubs to ensure they have the security and stability they need to plan for the future. We will also increase financial support to the Young Westminster Foundation to assist with a strategic approach to youth services, ensuring that young people remain represented on its governance structures. Investment in supporting our young people now can have a significant positive impact on their life chances.

Labour will create a fund to be directed by Westminster's Youth Council and will ensure they are fully consulted on all changes impacting youth services. We will create the post of Youth Mayor to mirror the role of the Leader of the Council in addition to the youth MP if this is desired by local young people. The Youth Council will be fully consulted on how to improve Westminster's training and apprenticeship schemes for young people.

Children's Centres in Westminster are a vital resource for local families and the Conservatives have massively cut back the services they provide. Labour will stop the cuts to stay and play sessions and other 'Early Help' services and urgently review ways to improve Council support to infants and young parents, particularly for children with disabilities and learning difficulties. We will look to restore cut Council-

backed holiday and after-school programmes for our young people. We will defend and where possible restore Children's Centre services. We will assist outreach teams that work with families and children, particularly those who support the under-fives.

Labour will work with schools, social services and the voluntary sector to identify young carers, to help them receive the help they deserve including opportunities for respite during the school holidays.

We will work with schools and local communities to examine the development of play streets.

We will work with NHS partners and schools to ensure our young people are getting the support they need from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH

Labour will deliver the policies set out in the 2017 Labour Group White Paper, 'A prescription for our ailing health and social care services'. At the heart of Labour's approach will be the delivery of integrated health and wellbeing centres and increased investment in home adaptations and improved technology that that will reduce costs and improve quality of life.

Labour will instigate a review of patient access to local GPs and will work with the NHS to ensure GPs can continue to get premises at affordable rents in Westminster through co-location and integration with the Council's development plans.

Labour will look to reintroduce a 'Health Check' service in areas of greatest need.

Westminster Labour will continue its opposition to the government's Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) process for the local health service while it continues to threaten hospital care across north and west London.

We call for the failing Urgent Care Centre at St Mary's Hospital to be brought back into direct NHS control.

A Labour Council will look to sign Unison's Ethical Care Charter, enshrining our commitments on the living wage and improving the way in which adult social care is delivered in Westminster, focusing on tackling the greatest need.

We will review resident and patient engagement structures in adult social care, health and wellbeing to give local people a greater say of how services are designed and delivered, strengthen the role of community groups and Healthwatch in the development of Westminster's adult social care and health policies. We will provide a new platform for service users and their carers to help monitor the delivery of their care and provide their ideas about how it can be of the highest standard.

We will work to protect provision of short-break and respite care in order to support all families with significant caring responsibilities.

We will work to tackle social isolation and loneliness by developing partnerships with

housing providers, volunteer groups, businesses and others. We will work with these partners to better organise regular visits to lone pensioners to help with shopping, cooking and combatting loneliness.

We will champion mental health and sign up to the Local Authority Mental Health Challenge supported by Mind, the Centre for Mental Health and the Royal College of Psychiatrists. We will appoint a voluntary sector or resident mental health champion alongside the current Councillor champion role, while raising the profile of mental health throughout the council.

We will launch a review of the Council's approach to tackling childhood obesity and examine what more the Council's Leisure provider 'Everyone Active' and Fit for Sport can do to make activities more affordable and accessible to low income families.

It is shameful that food banks have been required to support low-income and vulnerable people in Westminster. It is even more shameful that Westminster Council does nothing to help voluntary groups who are helping provide this service. Labour will ensure that Westminster Council provides support to community food banks and works with volunteers and food bank users to support those facing food poverty.

EQUALITIES

Labour supports sexual orientation and gender identity equality, and Westminster being a LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) friendly Council and City, working with the community to safeguard local services and protect LGBT venues and areas such as Soho that are of national importance for the community.

We will work with our BAME communities to tackle racism, islamophobia, antisemitism and discrimination against other groups. We will work with Westminster Adult Education Service and other organisations to further support teaching English as a Foreign Language to help our communities to work together, while looking at where it is necessary to provide more information about Council support services in minority languages.

We will improve Council monitoring of staff pay to tackle the gender pay gap and ensure it has robust policies and procedures on sexual harassment. We will further develop the Council's work tackling domestic violence in our communities.

OUR WESTMINSTER: A LIVING CITY

Labour recognises the opportunities and challenges living in our great city provides. We believe that is essential however that the Council increases its focus on the people who live here to ensure they benefit most from how the city grows and changes. Our policies will seek to put the needs of residents at the heart of Westminster's development over the coming years.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

Under Labour Westminster Council will stand up to the government over the impact of police funding cuts on our communities that will see the Tory government cut an extra £400 million from the Metropolitan Police on top of the £600 million already cut.

We will work with the Mayor of London and the police, where appropriate and possible, to replace or restore additional sections of Westminster's CCTV network lost due to local Tory cuts to help protect residents from crime and anti-social behaviour.

We will review the planned Tory cuts to the City Management budget to ensure that the important work of the noise team and environmental health teams are not compromised. We will publish regular statistics on the noise team's performance so that they can be easily accessed by residents.

We will review Council and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)'s support for police-community engagement to support local ward panels and provide greater opportunities for public discussion around policing and the Council's community protection work.

We will keep under review the possibility of the introduction of a 'Late-Night Levy', such as that used by Camden Council, to increase the local police presence in hot-spot areas. Such a levy would only be introduced if the Council can be assured that this will not be used to dilute other Met Police funding for local policing and it can find a way to mitigate the costs to small businesses.

BUSINESS THAT WORKS FOR OUR RESIDENTS

While working to take advantage of the recent London devolution deal, Labour will continue to call for the government to deliver on its promise to enable Westminster to retain a greater proportion of the £1.8 billion in business rates it currently pays to the government (currently it retains only 4%). Westminster residents must be able to benefit from new business rate growth if new development is going to benefit our city overall.

We will introduce a business rates incentive scheme to encourage small businesses in Westminster to adopt the London Living Wage. We will also seek to publically promote businesses which do so.

We will review ways to provide greater business rate support for Assets of Community Value, not-for-profit organisations and locally owned start-ups.

We will look at ways in which Council property rents for small businesses can be kept at manageable levels, particularly in more economically challenging areas. We will work with major private landlords to seek a more sustainable approach to rent-setting to support local shops and restaurants.

Labour will call for a public inquiry into BT Openreach's failure to provide superfast broadband in many areas of Westminster and ensure the Council does all it can to facilitate access to it.

A Labour Council will examine new opportunities to support independent shops and other high street businesses, including through small grant funding and loans to assist small business diversification and renewal. We will work with the Greater London Mutual Bank and others to help our small businesses to get access to finance.

We will reform the way in which apprenticeships are provided by the Council, its contractors and major partners so that schemes benefit local young people, rather than seeing opportunities taken up by people from across London.

We will work with local partners to improve the training and skills of local people to take advantage of job opportunities across Westminster.

LIBRARIES AND LEISURE

Labour will protect library services and facilities, ensuring that residents are fully consulted before any changes to the city's libraries are made. We will also restore a specialist Chinese Library Coordinator at Westminster Chinese Library at Charing Cross.

We will set up a formal network of creative and literary bodies in Westminster, including the London Library, art galleries, schools, colleges and voluntary groups. This body will engage with the community in increasing awareness of literary and artistic knowledge. They would work on programmes for schools, libraries and colleges to engage with the community. This body would also work with schools, libraries and colleges to encourage and commission artistic ideas for public art projects throughout the city.

The Council would identify spaces in the city where, with the backing of local residents and businesses, it can suitably manage high quality public expression of street art and street entertainers can perform their works.

Labour will expand West End Live's work encouraging participation by disadvantaged communities in our city and its link to existing community arts programmes.

As set out above Labour will work with the Council's leisure provider 'Everyone Active' to make activities more affordable and accessible to low income families and young people. Labour will urgently review the performance of the current contract with Everyone Active, given residents' concerns about the quality of service management at venues such as the Porchester Centre and Spa.

A CLEANER, GREENER CITY

Labour will rigorously focus on fly-tipping and street litter with greater support for on-street monitoring. We will seek to reform the fees and charges for bulky waste collection, restoring a 'first time free' service, reducing costs for standard collections whilst developing an express removal option.

We will look at the use of mobile cameras to help enforcement at fly-tipping hotspots and increasing fines for dumping. We will work with local residents to restore bins that have been removed or provide extra bins where they might be of assistance, and we will also improve signage and resident communication. Landlords will be further involved as part of the process to educate short-term (including Airbnb) and long-term tenants about how rubbish collection works.

Labour will also ensure the Council develops a smartphone App to make it easier for residents to raise concerns through its 'report-it function'. Using resident data, we will further target Council inspections and waste collection to the worst-affected areas to tackle the scourge of fly-tipping in our city.

Labour is committed to maintaining or improving the existing number of rubbish collections each week.

Tackling air quality through greening, innovative design, new technology and traffic management will be central to Labour's plans.

Westminster is a green city, and Labour supports the initiative to make London the world's first National Park City where there is a connection between people and nature.

We will work with residents to generate new ideas for how to provide new green spaces in our city, with 'pocket parks' on poorly used public land, and new community gardens. Working with Westminster Tree Trust, we will make it easier for residents to suggest where they would like to see trees integrated into the landscape. We will seek to expand opportunities for local allotments and community garden schemes.

We will work with developers to find ways to reduce emissions and carbon usage during both construction and the lifetime of buildings. We will promote the use of new technology to tackle airborne pollution and look at how adapting the physical environment, through green walls and other measures, can help. We will create an air quality champion to help lead our work in this area.

We will work with the Canals and Rivers Trust (CRT) to improve the maintenance and lighting of the Grand Union canal to improve safety and expand public usage,

forming a 'green and blue spine' through North Westminster. We will also work with the CRT to address the issue of irregular moorings, so that they both improve services to narrow-boat users and address any negative environmental impacts that may be being created.

Labour will work hard to improve Westminster's recycling rate. We will explore opportunities where appropriate to support community composting and the recycling of food waste.

We will seek to return the management of Westminster's public toilets to Council control, look to improve their standards of cleanliness and explore the expanded use of pop-up toilets in hotspot areas such as the West End, if desired by local residents.

Labour will work with the Mayor of London to find ways to bring Westminster's municipal water fountains into use and identify new opportunities for free public water provision to help tackle plastic waste. We will support and expand efforts to cut down on single use plastics.

We will work with BT to remove redundant phone boxes, which are currently being used for drug dealing, public urination and other anti-social behaviour. We will also renew legal action and the lobbying of government to restrict the installation of new 'phone boxes' that simply act as advertising hoardings on our streets.

TRANSPORT

Labour will seek to develop a fully emissions-based residents' permit scheme that incentivises residents to use cleaner cars to help tackle Westminster's air quality crisis. Such a scheme would only be introduced on a cost-neutral basis that reduces charges for less polluting vehicles.

As set out above we would seek the introduction of new 'car-free' developments to tackle both air pollution and the housing crisis.

We will work to expand Westminster's electric car charging point network to make it easier for residents to take up this technology.

We will look to develop an occasional visitor parking scheme that would apply in the more residential areas of Westminster.

After years of Labour campaigning, Westminster Council is now introducing 20mph zones near the city's schools. Labour will go further, in consultation with local residents, with the aim of introducing a 20mph speed limit on all residential roads.

We will work towards ensuring that more junctions are fitted with 'green man' phases to improve pedestrian safety and we will lobby TfL to only use the most advanced low emission vehicles on routes in our area.

We will continue to exert pressure on TfL to ensure restrict additional traffic from being diverted on to residential streets north and south of Oxford Street as part of their transformation proposals. We will work to ensure the views of local residents

are listened to by TfL.

Labour will demand the government delivers on its long-delayed commitment to give TfL the power to regulate and licence Pedicabs in Westminster.

Under Labour Westminster Council would take a more proactive approach to adopting roads to ensure they are managed in the best interests of residents.

We will support the extensive roll-out of secure 'cycle hanger' bike storage across Westminster, in consultation with local residents.

Labour will work with TfL to expand the range of the Santander Cycle Hire Scheme across all of Westminster, utilising funds from CIL and Section 106 Agreements to help bring the scheme into new areas. The Council will examine the appropriateness of new dockless cycle hire schemes to further widen access to cycling. Through training and support schemes, alongside a wide range of organised events we will work to provide opportunities for all communities to benefit from cycling.

We will work with local residents around the appropriate development of the cycling Quietway network.

REFORMING THE COUNCIL

Under Labour, Westminster will be an open and transparent Council, ending the years of Conservative mismanagement and lack of accountability. We will give residents a far greater say in how the Council operates. We will seek to improve conditions for those who work for the Council, not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it will help us improve service quality.

A FAIRER COUNCIL

Labour will radically reform the Council's approach to contracting and procurement to put social value at the heart of the way Westminster works:

- Under Labour Westminster will become accredited with the Living Wage Foundation, ensuring that all staff and newly contracted workers will be paid the living wage, while working to reform existing unfair Tory contracts. We will also seek to support wider reforms to contracted staff conditions and support union recognition.
- Labour will ensure that the Council fully considers the option to bring a service back 'in-house' when any contract comes up for renewal, so that more services can be brought back under democratic control. Where this is not possible, the Council will also be required to see how contracts can involve the voluntary sector, smaller and more local businesses. We will improve transparency in the operation of contracts so that the public can access information about all firms providing services on behalf of the Council.
- All relevant jobs at the Council and its contractors will be advertised in local job centres and through supported employment providers in Westminster. Labour will push contractors further to provide local jobs and apprenticeship opportunities for Westminster residents.
- We will explore a guaranteed interview scheme for a range of Westminster and contractor jobs and apprenticeships whereby at least one local applicant is seen for relevant vacancies.
- We will look at ways in which contractors can be encouraged to support community groups and activities.
- As well as supporting the living wage through Council contracting, Labour will reform the way in which the Council procures its goods and services. We will introduce a community benefit approach to make it easier for local small businesses to work with the Council, supporting local employment (including apprenticeships) and firms that pay the London Living Wage.

Labour will fight to support our EU Citizen residents at this difficult time by expanding advice and legal support services, challenging the government's attempts to weaken their rights, and publically showing that EU citizens are not only welcome but a vital part of our city. We will appoint a Council champion for the issues facing EU nationals.

We will urgently review advice and support services provided by the Council or which are available in the community to see what more can be done to assist residents facing the damage of government cuts.

We will follow the model of Hammersmith and Fulham's ethical approach to debt collection to find ways to reduce, and look to phase out, the use of bailiffs in the collection of Council debt.

We will explore ways that the Council's pension fund can work to support housing and infrastructure development in a manner compliant with pension rules. We will also look at how the fund can support renewable energy and other ethical investments as part of a wide ranging review of pension policy.

Under Labour Westminster will join the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS), working with major landowners and others in the private rented sector to provide homes for 50 Syrian refugees under the government-backed scheme as many other similar boroughs, including Kensington and Chelsea, have done. We would look where possible to provide work and training opportunities for these refugees through the council and examine the development of a wider Community Sponsorship scheme.

REFORMING HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS

Labour will look to find ways to make the Council's processes more resident-friendly and interactive. Council meetings will be live-streamed on the internet. Public petitions over a certain threshold will lead to a debate at full Council, with opportunities for petitioners to speak. We will introduce time for questions from the public at full council and scrutiny committees, as well as allowing residents to speak at planning meetings.

Labour will reform the 'Open Forum' public meetings to give residents more time and opportunities to question senior members of the Council, rather than the current 'talking-shop'. We will re-establish genuinely collaborative local area forums as part of this process.

We will introduce a Residents' Charter that sets out key performance standards that residents can expect the Council to meet and explains the rights residents have as citizens of Westminster. We will introduce a new scorecard of key indicators to help residents judge our performance against these standards.

Labour will develop real local 'community hubs' that look to further co-locate Council, housing, health, police and other public services, alongside the voluntary and community sectors in a way that is outward-facing and engages directly with the community.

Labour will conduct an urgent 'zero-based' review of all existing council expenditure and revenue streams, requiring the Council to set a 'zero-based budget' that will be scrutinised by an external 'critical friends' board in order to find further efficiencies.

We will cut waste on pageantry and PR to free up funds for more important areas. This will include: scrapping private healthcare payments for new employees; scrapping the Westminster Reporter and keeping in touch with residents more effectively on local news and initiatives; and reforming the Lord Mayor's office to reduce wasteful spending.

Labour will work to further reduce spending on temporary and agency staff by introducing a cap on such expenditure and introducing a 'vacancy board' to investigate the need for temporary staffing requests. We will also seek to limit senior staff salaries where possible.

NEW WAYS TO RAISE FUNDS

Many of the ways in which Labour would like to raise funds for Westminster from existing sources are currently restricted in national law, such as allowing the Council to keep more of the proceeds of business rate growth or introducing additional higher bands to the Council Tax so that the most expensive properties would be required to contribute more. Nevertheless we will campaign for reform.

We will work with other boroughs to campaign for the ability to introduce a small tourist levy, similar to that applied in other global cities, at a low daily rate that would apply to all hotels, B&Bs and lawful short-term rentals/Airbnb. The proceeds would be used to tackle illegal renting for short-term let (e.g. Airbnb), illegal subletting and to improve rubbish collection, public toilets and other elements of the city's public realm.

We will continue to campaign for a fundamental national reform of local government finance to make the system fairer and provide the resources to properly fund vital public services.

Westminster Labour will keep Council Tax low. Due the impact of crippling government cuts to local council funding, Westminster Conservatives have raised the Council Tax (including the adult social care precept) every year since 2016. Labour will not raise the Council Tax (including the adult social care precept) by more than the rates raised by the Conservatives in recent years.

As set-out above we will levy the full current Empty Property Premium on Council Tax and continue efforts to lobby government to raise it.

LABOUR'S KEY PLEDGES

A Westminster for the many not the few. A Labour Council will:

1. Build many more new Council and lower rent homes while scrapping Westminster's divisive homelessness policies
2. Stand up to Conservative government cuts and restore support for vital public services such as our youth clubs, children's centres and support for the elderly and vulnerable
3. Provide a planning system that puts residents first, making developers pay their fair share, restricting the spread of new tall towers and 'iceberg basements'
4. Fight for fairness in our communities by supporting the London Living Wage and defending the rights of our EU Citizens
5. Protect our citizens against crime and anti-social behaviour by fighting Tory police cuts and investing the Council's community protection work
6. Create a cleaner, greener city with action on air quality, tree planting, support for cycling and a focus on fly-tipping

Westminster
 Labour

westminsterlabour.org.uk

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