

Kingston for the many

Labour's manifesto for Kingston's local elections, 3 May 2018



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Kingston for the many

Kingston can be a great place to live in. It should be great for everyone. We have easy access to three Royal Parks, the River Thames, and the countryside. The cultural treasures of London are a short journey away and Kingston continues to develop a cultural scene of its own.

However, all is not well: shamefully, 18% of people in Kingston are living in poverty. Real earnings are lower now than when the Tory–Liberal Democrat government came to power in 2010. Private rents in the borough are increasingly unaffordable to many and tenancies are often insecure. Young people can see only a remote prospect of ever owning their own home.

The Tory–Liberal Democrat government cut funding to Kingston every year for five years and the Tories have continued that policy. This has made it increasingly difficult for local authorities to provide services to a standard that everyone wants.

Kingston deserves better. In this manifesto, Labour presents a comprehensive programme of innovation and reform that we can start to implement in the next four years.

Vote for change in Kingston – vote Labour on Thursday 3 May.

Some key policies

Housing. There are 3,500 people on the council's housing waiting list and, since 2010, the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation has increased from 565 to 671. Rough sleeper numbers have increased from 5 to 27. Labour will provide new homes at low rents. On new sites, developers must provide at least 35% affordable housing.

NHS. We will use all available powers to ensure the local NHS meets Kingston residents' needs, and that any changes in services are properly funded. We will improve the scrutiny of local health services, and tackle inequalities in health. We oppose plans to charge blue badge holders for parking at Kingston Hospital.

Policing. Under the Labour government, Metropolitan Police numbers increased to 32,904. Under the Lib-Dem–Tory Coalition government, numbers fell to 30,663 – *a 7% reduction*. Under the later Tory governments, numbers have declined still further to 30,083 – *a 9% cut from 2010*. The Liberal Democrats and Tories will generate much hot air about policing and crime. *Don't believe what they say: believe what they do.*

Brexit. Labour will support EU citizens who want to stay in our borough, and oppose any Tory Brexit deal that threatens jobs, or consumer or workplace rights.

Council tax. Under both the Liberal Democrats and Tories, Kingston has been notorious for demanding the highest council tax of any London borough. We will ensure best value for council tax-payers by drawing on the experience of Labour-led councils in innovations to provide better services at lower costs. Despite a difficult financial environment, Labour will set council tax at the lowest level that ensures essential services are protected and will aim to keep council tax rises no higher than the rate of inflation.

Education. We will identify sites for new schools, and provide enough school places.

Economy. We will promote business in Kingston. As an aid to this, a Labour council will work with the proposed GLA scheme to make Kingston a fully Wi-Fi-enabled borough.

Environment. We reduce the use of single-use plastic. To reduce the need for plastic bottles, we will increase the number of free drinking fountains and bottle-refill stations.

Transport. We will promote environmentally friendly transport: walking, cycling, buses, and trains. To reduce air pollution, we will support the expansion of any future Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) beyond the North and South Circular area to eventually include Kingston.

Planning. We will halt the unchecked spread of high-rise developments and protect our Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land.

Recycling. Currently, Kingston recycles 47% of its waste, compared with 65% achieved by the best authority. Labour aims to improve Kingston's performance.

Creating a fairer Kingston

1. The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames is a vibrant and diverse place with a long and proud history. However, too many of our borough's residents struggle to gain all the advantages of living and working here.
2. Labour's goal is to make our borough a fairer place so that everyone can share in its success. This goal inspires our priorities for 2018–22:
 - **Tackling Kingston's housing crisis** – by building more new homes for social rent, with local people getting priority, and setting up a non-profit lettings agency to provide an affordable alternative for private renters
 - **Improving local services** – as described throughout this manifesto
 - **Protecting Kingston's economy from the worst effects of any Brexit** – by opposing any Tory Brexit deal that threatens jobs, or consumer or workplace rights.
 - **Keeping control of council tax** – Kingston has been notorious for demanding the highest council tax of any London borough and one of the highest in England. The capriciousness of central government makes planning difficult: however, Labour will set council tax at the lowest level that ensures essential services are protected and will also aim to keep council tax rises in line with inflation.
 - **Boosting Kingston's economy** – by helping to ensure every young person in the borough has an offer of a job, a college place, or an apprenticeship and by developing council-led enterprise support
 - **Protecting our environment** – by improving recycling, preserving and enhancing our green spaces, and promoting biodiversity
 - **Keeping the borough's character** – by halting the unchecked spread of high-rise developments and protecting our Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land.
3. As well as working towards these important goals, we aim to run an efficient and effective council. Providing vital services such as weekly recycling collections and street cleanliness will be priorities.
4. The task is made much harder by the government. Under the Lib Dem–Tory Coalition and the Tory governments, the Government will have reduced its support to Kingston from approximately £67m in the financial year 2010/11 to £19m in 2019/20, which is all generated from business rates. This represents a 72% reduction to a significant part of the council's funding over 10 years.
5. At the same time, many residents are facing falling real wages and cuts to benefits while the cost of living is back on the increase. Energy bills, rents and childcare costs are all rising faster than incomes, squeezing living standards – not just for the poorest but for people on low and middle incomes across the borough.
6. We will fight government policies that damage Kingston while providing practical support for residents. A Labour council will work with other local organisations to make Kingston a fairer place despite the cuts imposed by the Tory government.
7. Labour has campaigned to protect essential services, such as those at Kingston Hospital. We will continue campaigning in the years ahead. Under Labour, the council will challenge government policy that is detrimental to Kingston – in the courts, if need be.
8. We will work with others to help people in Kingston affected by the Tory government's damaging policies. With the planned budget cuts, it is vital that the council works with other organisations in the borough – including local charities, community groups, businesses and public sector bodies – to make sure our residents get the support they need. Kingston gains from an active and vibrant voluntary sector, who often serve our most vulnerable residents and harness the time and talents of local volunteers. Under Labour, the council will support this vital work.

9. In difficult times, there is a risk that people look for others to blame for their problems or turn against one another. Labour will work to promote community cohesion and inclusion, and oppose those who seek to spread blame and division. We will listen to residents and involve them in the difficult decisions we may have to take in the years ahead.

Promoting Kingston's economy

Brexit

10. The Labour Party in Kingston was at the forefront of the campaign for a Remain vote in the European referendum. In the borough of Kingston, residents voted by 62% to 38% to Remain in the European Union.
11. Labour wants to remain close to Europe by securing a Brexit deal that delivers the benefits of the single market and the customs union. This would be achieved by negotiating a new and strong relationship with the single market and a new UK–EU Customs Union. Unlike the Tories, we will not sacrifice our relationship with Europe by ripping up rights and protections to secure a deal with Trump's America.
12. We will support EU citizens who wish to remain in our borough. The Government has stated that they will need to apply for 'settled status' to remain here after Brexit. We support the Mayor of London's plans for a EU citizens' online portal to help make it easier for them to access the information they need so that they can stay in the UK after Brexit.

Investment in Kingston

13. As the capital grows, major investment is needed in transport and other infrastructure. Labour will campaign to secure the best deal for Kingston residents from projects such as Crossrail 2 to make sure they provide apprenticeships and decent jobs for local people and bring advantages for the whole community, including disabled people. We will work with other London councils to get London the funding it needs to support economic growth.
14. There are about 6,250 manufacturing jobs in Kingston and Merton and 110,000 in Greater London. Labour seeks to retain manufacturing jobs and welcomes the Mayor of London's backing of the GMB's Making It charter.
15. Kingston's small businesses provide thousands of jobs for local people and play an important role our local economy. We will work with small business owners to make sure they have the support they need. We will make the public pound go further by enabling local Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and co-operatives to bid as suppliers of goods and services, and asking other anchor institutions to do the same.
16. Labour will seek to make the council more responsive to the ideas and concerns of local SMEs seeking assistance, as one way of promoting the local economy. In particular, we will consult them about ways of making their dealings with the council less onerous, so that regulation is necessary rather than time-consuming or duplicative.
17. A Labour council will work with Kingston University's 'incubator' and with Kingston College, to help create more SMEs. We will look at developing a business support agency in concert with other local authorities.
18. We will encourage businesses to invest in our towns and our district centres and to employ local people. We will encourage owners of empty office space to bring it back into use, particularly for new enterprise and business start-up units.

19. A Labour council will work with the proposed GLA scheme to make Kingston a fully Wi-Fi-enabled borough. We want everyone to be able to connect to the web for free – at first, in main shopping and business areas and then across the borough. We want to ensure the borough has the best connectivity for companies that are already based here, as well as for those we want to encourage to come here.
20. The borough now has many hotels. We will ensure that tourist information is of a good standard. We will encourage the development of phone apps and digital technology to enrich the tourism experience. Local residents will also benefit from having a greater knowledge of our borough at their fingertips.
21. Locations in Kingston are often used for films and television. We will maintain a service to help prospective customers.
22. We will aim to improve development opportunities and to attract investment by promoting the borough at every opportunity, both at home and abroad.
23. We will encourage the growth of the co-operative economy. Mutuels, co-operatives and social enterprises are ideal vehicles for local economic development. They generate wealth and employment, while income is often retained locally to the advantage of local communities. We will establish a Co-operative Development Agency, preferably jointly with other London boroughs, to provide prospective co-operatives with investment finance, advice, help with planning applications, and where possible, premises, using established best practice. To support mutual structures we want to see the development of Employee Ownership Trusts at national and local levels. We are particularly keen to work across London on developing worker- and /or consumer-owned “platform corporations” in areas such as mini-cabs.

Retail centres in the borough

24. By any measure, Kingston town centre is an important and successful retail centre. A Labour council will grow Kingston town centre with its mix of shopping, hotels, entertainment and culture, all helping to generate employment.
25. Labour supports the Ancient Market and the Monday Market at the Cattle Market site. We will also support regular visiting markets throughout the borough, such as Surbiton and New Malden Farmers' Markets.
26. A Labour council will bring forward area and regeneration plans for our other parts of the borough.
27. We will encourage the retention of neighbourhood shopping parades and individual shops. These can be vital for older people and others without easy access to transport.

Night-time economy

28. A town such as Kingston, with a large student population, needs a vibrant night-time economy. We will implement policies to protect and enhance culture and the night-time economy, following the GLA's *Culture & the Night-Time Economy: Supplementary Planning Guidance*.
29. We aim for Kingston to have a variety of venues, including those with larger audience capacities.

Getting people back to work

30. Getting more of Kingston's residents into a decent job is one of our top priorities. Our goal is to reduce the unemployment rate in the borough. We will work to boost employment including working with businesses in and around Kingston to match local unemployed people with vacancies. We will work with local employers to expand employment opportunities for Kingston's residents. We will ensure that asking firms to offer jobs and apprenticeships to local people are an element when the council offers contracts.

31. We are particularly keen to tackle the barriers to employment faced by disabled people and parents (especially mothers) with young children. The lack of affordable and flexible childcare can make it hard for parents to work. We will make sure there is more support for childcare outside of standard working hours, to help parents who take a job working in the evenings or at weekends, and we will invest in childcare for disabled children. We will also consider how the council can promote more flexible working opportunities for parents, older people, carers and disabled people, and encourage local employers to pay the London Living Wage so that work is a real route out of poverty.
32. Much of the public money spent supporting people back to work in Kingston is not effective for residents. Services to help people find work are more effective when they are coordinated at a local level and draw on the expertise of local organisations, rather than seeing millions of pounds of public money going to big business. We will campaign for more power and resources over back to work services to be handed to Kingston.
33. A Labour council will work with local employers to build confidence about employing disabled people. We will increase awareness of the Access to Work scheme and promote evidence-based programmes such as Individual Placement and Support and Supported Employment, which are particularly successful in enabling people with mental health problems and learning disabilities into fulfilling work.

Training for work

34. We want our young people to have the best possible start in life, whether going to university, going into apprenticeships or training, or joining the workforce. Compared with other parts of the country, London's job market has a much higher proportion of jobs requiring high-level qualifications. It is vital that all our children do well in school in order to ensure the best possible opportunity of employment.
35. We will make sure Kingston parents, pupils, and students are fully informed about the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund. We will also expand mentoring and work experience programmes for Kingston's young people so that they have the skills and confidence to move into work when they leave education.
36. People need the right skills to get into work. We will work with Jobcentre Plus, employers and our educational partners to ensure that people can get the training they need to find a job.
37. We will support all young people in finding suitable education, training or apprenticeships – in particular by ensuring appropriate apprenticeship places are offered by Kingston Council, targeting those young people who do not have Level 3 qualifications.
38. The Apprenticeship Levy is raising a lot of money for the Treasury but the implementation is poor. A further concern that schools have to pay the levy out of their decreasing budgets. We will seek to increase apprenticeship opportunities for 18–25 year olds within the borough. Under Labour, when the council funds or procures a new service, building or development, we will ensure training and apprenticeship opportunities are given to local people. We will encourage this through the planning process and by working with local businesses and other public sector bodies. We will actively encourage employers to pay apprentices a decent wage. We will discourage local employers from using unpaid internships as a prelude to an apprenticeship.

Fighting modern slavery

39. Modern slavery is the one of the great evils of our time and it can happen under our noses. In nail bars, car washes, factories, and restaurants, it is estimated that tens of thousands of people in the UK could be victims. Local authorities have a number of statutory duties under the Modern Slavery Act 2015. These include the duty to notify the Home Office of any individual encountered in England and Wales who they believe is a suspected victim of slavery or human trafficking.

40. A Labour council will lead a local awareness-raising campaign so that businesses and residents can spot the signs and report incidences of exploitation.
41. We aim to eliminate modern slavery from the council's supply chain by requiring all companies in receipt of public funding or contracts to have a Modern Slavery statement.
42. We will work with the council's suppliers to develop an ethical employment code of practice.

Affordable homes for the many

43. Introduction

The London housing crisis has grown worse as a result of a series of inappropriate policies being pursued by successive Tory-led governments and by decades of underinvestment. Both Labour Councils and the Labour Mayor of London are constrained in the action they can take to improve the situation by the policies of central Government.

During the 2017 General Election campaign, Labour published its New Deal on Housing, setting out detailed policy proposals for first-time buyers, homeowners and private renters, and on housebuilding, genuinely affordable homes and homelessness. When Labour wins the next election, the country will finally have a Government that is committed to tackling the housing crisis through the implementation of these policies.

In the meantime, a Labour Kingston Council would work together with local residents and the London Mayor to tackle the housing crisis in the borough. We would increase the amount of genuinely affordable housing through toughening up planning rules, building our own high quality council housing, and regenerating estates where appropriate. We would provide support to tenants' and residents' associations in council, housing association and private rented sectors. We would work with tenants and leaseholders to ensure better management and maintenance of council housing, and with tenants in the private rented sector to tackle rogue landlords, the single biggest cause of homelessness in the country.

The housing crisis in this country is particularly acute in London boroughs like Kingston, where it has been made worse through a lack of strategic leadership by successive Lib Dem and Tory councils: new housing developments mainly consist of ridiculously expensive homes for sale and, if there is any so-called affordable housing, it is only available at Tory 'affordable rents'; people who work in the borough, like teachers and Kingston Hospital staff, can't afford to buy or even rent their own place; homelessness is on the increase, including rising numbers of rough sleepers; and the main cause of this increase is evictions from private rented homes of people not able to afford the high rents due to Tory benefit cuts.

44. Working with residents to develop more homes in the right places

Kingston residents recognise there is a need for more homes in the borough but are often left angry and frustrated about decisions taken by the Tory council regarding new developments. People are understandably concerned about the impact of new developments on their local area, for example increased traffic volume, noise and pollution, and it often feels like developers' profits are put above neighbourhood concerns when planning decisions are taken. A Labour Kingston Council would ensure transparency of viability appraisals relating to planning decisions.

Any development should have adequate social infrastructure. Access to public transport is important but more creative transport solutions are required (see Transport section).

The Mayor of London has proposed in his draft London Plan that outer London councils like Kingston should be set higher annual targets for homes built in their boroughs. The Tories and Lib Dems have characterised this as an attack on the suburbs but this is because they don't care about the housing crisis. The draft London Plan seeks a better use of land and also, crucially for Kingston, the maintaining of green space. A Labour Kingston Council would work together with local residents to identify the right places in the borough for new homes to be built that people want and would resist developments in other places. Local plans, as have been developed for New Malden and Tolworth, should be the vehicle for resident involvement. There is potential to transform Tolworth into a thriving town centre if a long-term vision can be agreed with local residents but this won't be achieved by simply caving in to developers' plans for individual sites, as the Tory council has done, for example, with the Post Office site in Kingston town centre.

Fuel poverty is a growing issue in the borough. A Labour Kingston Council will therefore take appropriate action to reduce energy costs in both new and existing development.

45. Providing genuinely affordable housing

There are 3,500 people on the council's housing waiting list and since 2010, under the Tories and Lib Dems, the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation has increased from 565 to 671, and the number of rough sleepers has increased from 5 to 27. A Labour Kingston Council would use local authority and publicly owned land to provide new homes at low rents and with security of tenure. We would incorporate explicit income related definitions of affordability in relation to social rent, London Living Rent and other forms of sub-market housing into planning policy and ensure that all new housing developments have appropriate proportions of homes in relation to each affordability category. We would also ensure that all new residential developments meet the required standards in relation to, for example fire safety, sustainability and access for people with disabilities.

The council's stated policy is that 'where more than 10 units are being built, at least 50% of the units must be affordable' (p15, Housing Strategy 2015-20). In practice, no previous administration has achieved this and, since the Tories took control of the council in May 2014, the average amount of affordable housing on developments given planning permission has been 27%.

This isn't good enough. In May 2016, London elected a new Labour Mayor, Sadiq Khan, who has already started to make changes that, in those boroughs where the council is willing to work with rather than against the Mayor, will increase the amount of affordable housing that is available for local people. He has introduced changes to planning policy for London to encourage developers to deliver at least 35% affordable housing on new sites. A Labour Kingston Council would bring the borough's planning policy in line with this, while still pushing wherever possible for 50% affordable housing.

This would be meaningless, however, if the housing being delivered isn't genuinely affordable. Since 2010, the Tory-led governments have defined affordable housing as either shared ownership, where people buy a 25% share in a property and pay rent on the rest, or 'affordable rent', which can be up to 80% of market rent. In boroughs like Kingston, neither of these is genuinely affordable for most people.

The Labour Mayor of London has acted quickly to address this situation, introducing changes to planning policy to require affordable housing for rent to be let at either London Affordable Rent (about 30% of market rent) or London Living Rent (about 50-60% of market rent), and providing funding for councils and housing associations to develop such housing.

A Labour Kingston Council would not only bring the council's planning policy in line with this but would also make the development of more council housing at genuinely affordable rents the priority of the development company that the Tory council has set up (DevCo). We

would establish effective control over DevCo to ensure public interests and assets are protected. We would establish in-house capacity for development and maintenance to minimise dependence on external contractors. We would use new methods of construction where they are cost effective and meet required quality standards. We would also support new mutual housing initiatives including co-ops, community land trusts and co-ownership schemes.

46. Working with residents to deliver quality estate regeneration

A Labour Kingston Council would resist any loss through redevelopment of existing socially rented homes, whether owned by the local authority or by housing associations. We would only propose redevelopment which at least replaces all existing rented and sub-market homes on a like for like basis and, preferably, increases the number of both. Crucially, a Labour Kingston Council would ensure full resident consultation in any proposals to improve or redevelop estates, with any proposals to be subject to a ballot of residents.

One of the main objectives of the council's Housing Strategy 2015-20 is 'regenerating our estates' but the Tories have made painfully slow progress with this and handled consultation with residents poorly. The only place where they have made any progress is the Cambridge Road Estate (CRE) but residents there have not been impressed by the council's approach. Delays in agreeing a way forward have resulted in the condition of some tenants' homes getting worse.

Estate regeneration is a great way to involve local people in the improvement of their area and to develop much-needed new genuinely affordable housing. The key test of any regeneration proposal, however, is that it must improve the quality of life of existing tenants and leaseholders. Labour councillors in Norbiton have worked tirelessly to ensure that the council's proposals for CRE meet this test.

Building on that experience, a Labour Kingston Council would guarantee residents at CRE and other estates that any regeneration would involve:

- **increased numbers of council housing**
- **phased development so residents don't have to move off the estate**
- **a council property for tenants who want to stay**
- **similar rent levels to now and security of tenure**
- **shared equity homes available to resident leaseholders and freeholders**
- **fair compensation for any disruption**
- **genuinely affordable housing that's realistically priced**
- **community facilities at the heart of the estate**
- **a Residents' Friend experienced in Regeneration offering independent advice**
- **a ballot on the package of proposed development for eligible residents.**

47. Working with tenants and leaseholders to manage council housing better

The Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017 exposed the terrible consequences of local authorities failing to listen to tenants and leaseholders in their council housing. A Labour Kingston Council would seek to agree with tenants and leaseholders how the lessons learnt from the Grenfell Enquiry could be used to improve their safety and the services that they receive.

Kingston council tenants have made it clear time and time again that they don't want anyone to manage their housing apart from the council but that they want a better and more responsive management and maintenance service than they get now and they want to be more involved in monitoring the performance of that service. Following tenant and leaseholder consultation, the Tories will be pushing ahead with the likely contracting out of elements of the housing management service to a local housing association

A Labour Kingston Council would focus available resources on maintaining existing council homes to the highest possible standards. We would also work with council tenants to identify the best way for council housing in the borough to be managed, including consideration of

estate management boards and tenant management organisations. We would ensure that appropriate housing options were available for potential downsizers to ensure the most effective use of existing council housing stock and to free up homes for families suffering from overcrowding.

A Labour Kingston Council would ensure that all direct and indirect employees and contractors comply with required contractual and performance standards, including pay, working conditions and health and safety requirements.

48. Working for private tenants

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

By far the greatest cause of homelessness is evictions from the private rented sector. A Labour Kingston Council would ensure bad private landlords can no longer operate in the borough by increasing resources within the council to tackle rogue landlords, including an extension of the existing licensing scheme. We would also establish a register of properties used for successive short term letting.

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

49. Tackling homelessness

The plans set out above to increase the amount of new genuinely affordable housing in the borough will eventually address the housing crisis in the borough but it does, of course, take time to build any new housing.

In the short-term, therefore, more action needs to be taken to both prevent homelessness in the first place and to deal with the consequences of it when it happens. A Labour Kingston Council would establish effective housing advice services to support tenants in the private and social housing sectors.

The most telling symptom of the homelessness crisis is rough sleeping. It is not acceptable that in a wealthy borough like Kingston there are people sleeping on the streets. Labour councillors have secured funding to increase outreach services and a Labour Kingston Council would build on this by working with housing association partners to source properties in which to house rough sleepers and provide them with the support they need to regain their independence. It would also ensure that temporary accommodation for homeless families is appropriate to the needs of the specific household and is of an acceptable standard.

Bringing down the cost of living

50. Kingston residents are being hit by increases in the cost of living while average wages are stagnating. To help people in tough times, a Labour-run council will work hard to cut residents' costs and raise incomes. The economic circumstances over the next four years are unpredictable, particularly with the planned Brexit. However, provided essential local services can be protected, we will aim to keep council tax bill rises no higher than the rate of inflation.
51. We will maintain Kingston's free school meals programme.
52. As big energy companies continue to rip off customers, we will work to ensure Kingston follows the examples of Woking, Islington, and Birmingham in generating more of its own energy, using cost effective sustainable energy generation on council owned buildings, so that residents start to have a real alternative. We will encourage schemes in Kingston to cut bills and emissions.
53. We will maintain the council's home insulation programme to help residents save money on their energy bills, keep their homes warm in winter, and lower their carbon emissions. We will also continue to support the Big London Energy Switch, a collective switching scheme that helps residents club together to get the best energy deals.
54. The cost of travel in London is a major burden on people on low and middle incomes. We will continue to campaign against excessive increases in public transport fares.
55. Kingston residents can fall prey to rip-off payday lenders. People on low incomes may need get credit but not at any cost. Labour will support the work of the Boom CU (formerly SurreySave) and other Credit Unions, so more people can get affordable loans.
56. We will stop access to payday lender web sites from council-owned computers (for instance, in libraries). We will campaign against payday lenders operating in the borough, while using our planning, licensing and other powers to limit the spread of payday lenders.
57. We will work to limit the spread of betting shops and amusement arcades in our neighbourhoods and actively campaign for changes in the law to enable the council to make decisions about improving local areas and allowing a diversity of shops to flourish.
58. In the face of this Tory government's cuts to benefits and rising levels of debt, we will support the Citizens Advice Bureau, a vital resource for Kingston's residents. We will also support other sources of welfare and debt advice in the borough.
59. Labour is appalled by the Tory government's benefit cuts, which are pushing many of the borough's vulnerable residents into hardship. We will campaign against these changes while offering practical support to people who have been affected, including helping people hit by the Bedroom Tax.
60. Kingston Foodbank has seen a sharp rise in demand and now distributes over 1.8 tonnes of food a month to clients referred to them. We will support the work of the Foodbank but seek to use the policy levers available to us to reduce the need for residents to turn to food banks.
61. We will support people who want to downsize into a more manageable property and free up a home for a family suffering from overcrowding. But we oppose the government's pernicious Bedroom Tax, which takes no account of people's personal circumstances, local connections, or the availability of smaller homes. We will assist those affected by the Bedroom Tax until it is repealed by a Labour government.

Learning throughout life

62. The current Tory government continues to reduce the role of local councils in education. Consequently, all new schools, primary or secondary, must be free schools. Furthermore, in view of the funding crisis that is affecting all Kingston schools, a Labour council will monitor any waste of public money on politically motivated projects such as ill-conceived free schools and academisation.
63. We recognise the growing demand for more local school places and new schools. Where additional school places are needed, we will continue to support the expansion of existing maintained schools through setting up Co-operative Trusts (such as in Hackney) or with intra-borough local academy trusts, such as the Coombe Academy Trust.
64. We will prioritise partnership working between the council, local communities and education providers to ensure that local needs are met and local people's views are heard.

Schools

65. The cuts in school budgets are becoming increasingly serious, and indeed divisive. Schools are already cutting staffing levels, asking parents to help fund their schools, and cutting courses and options for children. Some primary schools are in inadequate accommodation. In defending the principle of fair funding for all schools, we will support schools, parents and unions in their campaigns to resist the cuts and reductions to services in Kingston's Schools.
66. So-called "failing schools" are likely to have academisation forced on them. We will not encourage any more of Kingston's schools to convert to academy status or blindly accept a government directive to force a school to academise. We will call for parental ballots where schools are considering this step. We will also support parents, unions, staff and schools in any campaigns to resist such moves.
67. Attainment gaps have generally narrowed somewhat locally. Labour will aim to narrow this attainment gap further. Labour will focus on standards in all of Kingston's schools so that every parent can be confident their child will receive an excellent education in the borough. We will work with all schools to raise standards and encourage collaboration between schools, so that the best performing schools pass on their knowledge to those that need extra help.
68. Every child should feel safe at school. Bullying, poor emotional well being and poor mental health are all increasing problems in schools and, whilst schools are doing their best to combat them, there is a serious lack of support in these areas for most schools. A Labour council will aim for adequate support to be given to schools, through agencies such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
69. We will work with schools and local charities to open up more school facilities for community use by more of Kingston's residents.
70. Alongside supporting academic achievement, we will expand schemes to raise young peoples' aspirations and confidence through sport and debating competitions across Kingston's schools. We will roll out music programmes to more of Kingston's schools so that children from all backgrounds get the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument.

Tackling the shortage in schools places

71. We will identify new sites for new schools, and ensure that there are enough school places for all local children. We will ensure that all stakeholders are properly consulted about proposals for new school sites and buildings, and encourage community use of school facilities.

72. In August 2016, the Tories changed government policy stating that, "Building Regulations do not require the installation of fire sprinkler suppression systems in school buildings for life safety". Labour will ensure that new schools and extensions will have sprinklers, and in refurbishments where feasible.
73. We will ensure that any new schools (and extensions and refurbishments to existing schools) are thoroughly scrutinised throughout the process of design, planning, building and control, and fire regulation to ensure the highest standards for modern 21st century schools. It is important to ensure that these buildings have:
 - adequate facilities for teaching, sports, and arts
 - safe and secure play areas
 - adequate SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) facilities and are designed to be accessible to disabled pupils, including those who need full changing and hoisting facilities to participate in mainstream education.

Early years

74. Kingston's network of Sure Start children's centres help parents to avoid isolation and get the support and services they need. Under both the Liberal Democrats and Tories, centres have closed. We aim to keep every children's centre in the borough open and will fight hard to protect this vital community service despite any cuts imposed on the council's budget.
75. We will defend Extended School provision.
76. Despite the government's claim that they are providing 30 hours per week in nursery education, it is increasingly apparent that the funding is inadequate. Some nurseries are operating on a first-come first-served basis whilst others are closing down. We will campaign for adequate funding to develop nursery education, with a range of provisions to meet the needs in each part of the borough.
77. We believe that classroom support staff and teaching assistants are vital professionals in the modern school environment and should be recognised as such. We know the difference teaching assistants make every single day, whether it's supporting a teacher, helping a child, or working with students with greater needs. We will campaign to defend teaching assistants from cuts by central government.

Tackling inequality

78. We will give priority to raising attainment for children from Kingston's poorest families, and ensure that all Pupil Premium funding is used effectively for this purpose.
79. We will ensure high-quality support for children and families whose first language is not English.
80. The provision for Special Educational Needs is in a state of crisis, with parents and children losing faith in the system. We will continually monitor the situation and campaign, alongside parents and teachers, to ensure that SEND provision is properly funded and implemented.

Preparing for employment

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

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82. We will encourage local schools to fulfil their responsibilities to provide careers and employment advice.
83. The local youth services have been seriously cut over the years. A Labour council will ensure there is a range of youth provision, integrated with other services to meet local needs

And beyond school

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

Lifelong learning

87. The Department for Education is planning to devolve the Adult Education budget from the Education and Skills Funding Agency to the Greater London Authority. We will ensure that Adult Education meets the needs of local people of all ages, and is available at a range of locations throughout the borough.

Supporting older people, disabled people and their carers

88. Labour will help Kingston residents to live long, independent lives in their own homes, and we will seek to provide care and support where needed. We will work with the third sector, co-operatives, mutual and social enterprises to provide high-quality self-directed care, which maximises autonomy and independence and goes beyond a basic "feed and clean" service to enable disabled people to participate fully in their community.
89. We will work with the Kingston Pensioners Forum and other organisations in the borough to tackle fuel poverty and call for more action from the government. We will work with the NHS so that older people get advice about health, staying warm and getting the benefits they are entitled to.
90. Our goal is that new-build houses will be Lifetime Homes, adaptable to support people's changing needs throughout their lives. We will also ensure that at least 10% of all new housing is built to full wheelchair standard, with the council's housing officers, occupational therapists and planners working closely with registered social landlords to ensure the detailed design is appropriate for the end user.
91. We will make sure that an adequate number of respite units are available locally.
92. We welcome the construction of new dementia home on the current Newent House site in Surbiton. It is planned to open in 2020.
93. We will promote advice centres that help people fill in forms – paper and online.

Social care

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

95. Linking up social care with the NHS is vital for making sure people can stay independent for longer, as well making the best use of scarce resources. We will pioneer new work with local NHS services to join up social care and health care so that services are coordinated around the needs of the individual. We will strengthen our reablement and intermediate care services to help avoid expensive and unnecessary stays in hospital. This will also mean that people can leave hospital quickly knowing that they will have the help they need when they get home.
96. Homecare services are better when they are provided by well-trained and motivated staff on a decent wage. Extending the London Living Wage to all homecare workers on council contracts, and funding personal budgets to enable disabled people to pay a decent wage to their Personal Assistants, will help to raise wages among the workforce. We will work with social care providers to improve the pay and working conditions of care workers. This includes fighting to secure a living wage for residential care workers and to reduce the number of people on zero-hours contracts.
97. The changes made to the local authority's charging policy for non-residential care will lead to greater numbers of vulnerable people refusing the care and support they need and will place a greater burden on the unpaid carers who support them. A Labour council will reverse the 2016 changes to the contributions policy for non-residential adult social care. Where someone is financially assessed as able to contribute towards the costs of their care, they will pay 75% of their available income, or the maximum cost of their care, whichever is lower.

Carers

98. Unpaid carers make a huge contribution to life in Kingston and our community relies heavily on the support they offer to family and friends. Caring is a tough job and carers themselves need support, including the chance to have a break, catch up with friends and do things that interest them. We will take further steps to identify and support unpaid carers in Kingston, regardless of whether those they care for are no longer eligible for local authority support, under central government criteria. We will work with charities and support groups in the borough.
99. A Labour council will ensure that carers' services, such as relief care hours, remain non-chargeable. This is to ensure that carers are able to access essential services that provide them with the support and respite they need to continue caring.
100. We will aim to prevent the closure of overnight respite centres for disabled children, which provide families and parent carers which vital support and relief. We will ensure that, for parent carers not otherwise accessing child services, who request a Parent Carers' Needs Assessment, there is a ring-fenced budget for services provided as a direct result of these assessments.
101. A Labour council will look at adopting *UNISON's ethical care charter* and implementing it in stages as far as practicable.

Dealing with loneliness

102. Isolation and loneliness create negative health outcomes, particularly for our older residents, leading to expensive dependency. Connecting older people to the outside world can reduce these problems. Labour will look at ways of improving all forms of social interactions for our older residents, disabled people, and people with learning difficulties.
103. We will campaign to protect the Freedom Pass so that older people can get out and about. We will ensure that any disabled people who lose their entitlement to the Motability scheme following reassessment for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are supported to identify alternative ways of remaining mobile.

104. We will work with local voluntary organisations to reach out to older people in Kingston and connect them to local social activities or make sure they are getting the help they need. We will work with a range of local befriending schemes to help tackle isolation and loneliness in Kingston. We will provide day centres for those who need and want them.
105. We will encourage social prescribing: see paragraph 166.
106. We will aim to follow the recommendations in the Jo Cox Foundation's Commission on Loneliness: *Combating loneliness one conversation at a time: A call to action*.

Improving health

107. Our NHS Pledge is to:

- Protect the NHS's founding values
- Halt Tory hospital closure plans and restore proper funding levels
- Take one million people off NHS waiting lists
- Put safe staffing levels into law
- Stand up for patients' rights to access high quality and timely care
- Reintroduce bursaries for health-related degrees, to address staff shortages
- Promote collaboration over competition and put patients before profits

108. Under the Tory government, the National Health Service is at even greater risk of inadequate funding and privatisation by stealth. Labour will do everything we can to mitigate the worst effects of this policy, which siphons off profits to shareholders. Labour is dedicated to an NHS as a comprehensive health service, publicly provided, open to all and free at the point of use. We will fight to safeguard NHS services in the borough. We will work with the NHS to get the best services, but we will ensure that it is held to account, and that any proposed changes are properly discussed with local people.

We will support a future Labour government in ensuring the NHS is free from marketisation, and we welcome Labour's national commitment to repeal the Health and Social Care Act and restore proper accountability by the Secretary of State. We will campaign to exclude the NHS from any post-Brexit free trade agreements.

We will argue for increased funding to the European average, and a clear investment plan to strengthen primary care, community care, social care, and enhanced care in care homes. We oppose the proposed cuts of £828m in the South West London Five Year Plan for health care.

We support the integration of services, but will oppose the local development of any US-style Accountable Care Organisations (ACOs), unless and until there is public consultation, parliamentary scrutiny and legislation. The United States has a very different health care system (with much poorer outcomes overall) and ACOs would expose the NHS to major risks.

109. We will use our powers through the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel to make sure that NHS services meet the needs of Kingston's residents. We will seek to address the inequalities that blight our borough, including inequalities in access to dental care and poor care provided to people with learning disabilities.

We will scrutinise the geographical provision of GP services, and lobby against the current system of tendering for GP service provision. A key focus for scrutiny will be the South West London Health and Care Partnership, which currently has little publicity.

110. Under Labour, the council will work closely with the Kingston Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), who decide what health services the borough's residents need. We will ensure that residents get the best possible healthcare and a full range of treatments. We will work with local GPs to make sure GP services are accessible to all, including looking at more evening and weekend surgeries and support the shift of more care to community settings, provided that these are properly funded and staffed. We support our local pharmacies and will oppose any further cuts to this service.
111. The prevalence of mental ill health among Kingston's residents is too high. We will use all our powers to enhance mental health services in the borough, both voluntary and statutory, building on the *Thrive Kingston: A Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the people of Kingston by the people of Kingston: 2017 to 2021*. We will invest more in mental health services and address issues such as loneliness and isolation, in particular through supporting the new social prescribing scheme in Kingston.
112. We oppose plans to charge blue badge holders for parking at Kingston Hospital.

Social care

113. We will lobby nationally for a sensible policy on social care, which shares risk and responsibility fairly between the individual and the state. This will end the unfair system in which self-payers subsidise council-funded places.
114. We will lobby for the proper funding of social care services and will provide accessible services and early intervention rather than a service led by eligibility criteria. We will adopt in stages the *UNISON's ethical care charter*, which would mean the end of 15-minute home visits.
115. We will expand the occupational therapy service to speed up assessments, and review the existing Community Transport service to ensure that it meets users' needs.

Preventing ill-health

116. A Labour council will work on preventing ill-health by enabling people to take more control of their lives. Under Labour, all council departments will be expected to consider how they can provide services to improve the health of residents. We will use the Mayor of London's health inequalities strategy (*Better Health For All Londoners*) to create a healthier, fairer borough, in particular actions to support early years, to remove the stigma from mental health problems, to improve air quality, to introduce social prescribing, and to reduce childhood obesity.
117. Social prescribing schemes can involve a variety of activities which are typically provided by voluntary and community sector organisations. Examples include volunteering, arts activities, group learning, gardening, befriending, cookery, healthy eating advice and a range of sports. We will encourage health professionals to use social prescribing as part of their range of treatments and help the service providers.
118. We will lobby nationally to reverse the Tory government's cuts to public health services and we will use the council's responsibilities for public health to tackle health problems at an early stage and to promote healthy lifestyles. For example, we will use our public health funding to invest in stronger health services for young children and new parents, and to improve mental health in young people.
119. We will work with local GPs and the Health and Wellbeing Board to improve the advice given to avoid and prevent conditions such as obesity, diabetes, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse and to also encourage people to give up smoking.
120. We will seek to improve services to reduce the effects of alcohol, smoking and substance abuse. We will review Kingston's licensing strategy to reduce the harm done by excessive consumption of alcohol.
121. A Labour council will aim to reduce, and then end, any council investment in the tobacco industry.

122. We will review our planning and licensing guidelines to stop the spread of fast food outlets on our streets, particularly close to our schools, and we will work with existing outlets to promote healthy eating.

Safeguarding children and older people

123. Under the former Liberal Democrat administration, Ofsted, the independent inspector, found the council's child protection services to be inadequate in two consecutive inspections. Consequently, children's services were removed from the council's control.
124. Labour will work to strengthen the council's safeguarding processes and collaborate with the police, voluntary organisations, hospitals and GPs, to make every effort to prevent incidents of abuse taking place in our community.
125. Council budgets have been slashed by the Tory government, putting unacceptable pressure on child protection agencies. Social workers and social work departments are straining to maintain services.
126. In the wake of the many reported cases around the country of neglect and abuse of older people and people with learning disabilities, a Labour council will ensure that adult safeguarding, despite government cuts, is strengthened. As with children's safeguarding, we will work closely with external agencies to ensure this area is a priority.
127. We will make every effort to safeguard against violence and abuse (physical, mental or financial) being inflicted upon our older and most vulnerable people, but equally as important, we must guard against simple indifference, which so often leads to neglect. Labour will strengthen the council's safeguarding processes, and through our scrutiny role, we will make other involved agencies responsible and accountable. We will aim for a preventative rather than reactive approach.

Early intervention

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

Planning

Keeping communities alive

130. Kingston University with its 17,000 students is a resource with immense untapped potential. We will discuss with the University how it and its students can be better integrated into Kingston community and play a more pro-active role in the community in a range of educational, environmental, enterprise, cultural, sporting and research spheres.
131. We will promote and protect community 'hubs' in our neighbourhoods. These are the places where people traditionally meet – whether in their church or community hall, a pub or a club, the post office or a local shop – all places that are vital for thriving communities.
132. We will encourage communities to nominate valued facilities such as pubs as "assets of community value" under the Localism Act.

Building standards

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

Tall buildings

135. Tall buildings can change the character of an area, often against the wishes of the public. During their twelve years running the council, the Liberal Democrats failed to make any progress on Kingston's *Tall Buildings Supplementary Planning Document* (SPD). The Tories abandoned the project. A Labour council will develop a *Tall Buildings SPD* for Kingston as many other councils have already done.

Student accommodation

136. The 2012 *Core Strategy* identified a need for 1,700 student rooms and other estimates calculated a demand for up to 5,600 student rooms. Whilst the prospect of student accommodation can be unpopular, the alternative is often that students occupy housing built for families, often ex-council housing. Kingston University owns or leases from private landlords around 120 properties (circa 500 bedspaces). Since 2012, several private student halls have been completed, reducing the demand.
137. Labour supports the idea that any purpose-built student accommodation should be based on the University's preferred 'cluster' model, not just corridors of studio flats.
138. Any student accommodation should be built in partnership with Kingston University and Kingston College. They should have first refusal on any purpose-built student accommodation: student rooms built in Kingston should not be used for students commuting to central London whilst students studying in Kingston might be commuting in from miles away.
139. We will ensure that all new student accommodation includes appropriate provision for disabled students.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

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

Houseboats

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

Public lavatories

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

Improving our local environment

Local voluntary organisations

146. A Labour council will provide help to local organisations working on environmental projects such as the purchase or loan of equipment, training in the use of equipment, and reasonable expenses.
147. Kingston Environment Centre has done some valuable work and Labour favours its continued support.

Global warming (climate change)

148. Labour takes the challenge of global warming and pollution seriously because they have the biggest impact on the most vulnerable. Taking action to reduce carbon emissions also helps residents struggling to cope with the rising cost of living, by cutting energy bills.
149. We aim to cut energy bills and reduce emissions by replacing old boilers and insulating homes through additional funding of local authority grants for energy efficiency improvements. We will expand the programme of home insulation. We will encourage the highest standards of energy and water efficiency in new-build homes in the borough.
150. Unpredictable weather patterns are a consequence of global warming. We will review the council's emergency planning procedures for extreme weather conditions, such as flooding and heavy snow.

Air pollution

151. In 2008, estimated premature deaths in Kingston through air pollution amounted to 91 from PM_{2.5} alone. Poor air quality is a major health risk as it can cause childhood asthma and other respiratory problems. Air quality in Kingston is still not good enough, particularly along our main roads, such as the A3 and Fairfield North. We will campaign with the Mayor of London to take action to improve air quality in the borough, for example by tightening up emissions standards for taxis, HGVs, and buses.
152. Diesel vehicles are the greatest single cause of air pollution. We aim to reduce vehicle use through improving public transport and encouraging walking and cycling.
153. We will encourage the use of low emission vehicles, with the council taking the lead in its own fleet. We will work to ensure that all car parks for council employees have electric vehicle charge points.
154. We will support the expansion of any future Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) beyond the North and South Circular area to eventually include Kingston.

155. We will improve air quality through planting street trees and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.
156. We will encourage the use of electric vehicles by providing electric vehicle charging points on-street and in our off-street car parks, and requiring developers to provide them in housing developments.
157. We will work with and encourage TfL to convert bus routes to low and zero emission bus operation, such as the new buses on the 85 route.

Promoting biodiversity

158. After 12 years of Liberal Democrat control, the borough had 2,500 empty street tree locations. The Tories have managed to plant just 487 trees in these spots and a similar number elsewhere. Labour councillors have initiated street tree planting in Norbiton through use of their personal budgets. Labour will take an active part in the Mayor of London's ambitious tree planting programme, which has already planted 90,000 trees in the capital.
159. A Labour council will follow the government's *The National Pollinator Strategy* and Southend-on-Sea's *Bee Happy* initiative to promote bees and other pollinating insects. We will:
 - Manage council land and properties with consideration to providing food, shelter and nest sites for pollinators.
 - Use flowers, shrubs and trees that provide food and habitat for pollinators as part of council planting schemes when practical.
 - Not kill pollinators or destroy nests, including wasps.
 - Encourage good practice to help pollinators through initiatives with a wide range of organisations.
 - Encourage developers to consider pollinators in all developments and landscaping schemes.
 - Encourage beehives at suitable locations on council-owned land such as allotments.
 - Minimise the use of herbicide on all council land including highways.
 - Restrict the council's parks sections use of pesticides to fine turf sports pitches (accepting the occasional need to address infestations such as brown tail moth caterpillars in other locations).
 - Encourage a greater acceptance of naturalised areas including long grass with wild flowers across the town, helping to create 'bee corridors'.
 - Encouraging the public to take action in their gardens, allotments, window boxes and balconies to make them pollinator-friendly or through other opportunities such as community gardening and volunteering on nature reserves.
160. We will encourage beetles to flourish through leaving standing and fallen deadwood, creating log piles, and 'bug hotels'.
161. We will continue with the good practices detailed in *Biodiversity & the Development Process in Kingston upon Thames*.

Invasive species

162. A Labour council will endeavour to control invasive plant species on European Union's Consolidated List of Invasive Alien Species such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam, Water Hyacinth, and the Rhododendron.

163. Similarly, we will control invasive animal species. Grey Squirrels cause damage to our broadleaved and coniferous woodlands, the costs of damage are estimated at between £6 and £10million per annum in Great Britain. The Grey Squirrel is a major predator of the eggs and young of songbirds in British woodland. A Labour council will attempt to reduce Grey Squirrel numbers on public land using humane traps.

Improving our streets

164. A Labour council will aim to improve our local environment and make Kingston a more pleasant place in which to live, work, shop and visit. Labour is determined to make Kingston one of the cleanest and greenest boroughs in the capital.

165. We will adopt TfL's "Healthy Streets" approach. There are ten indicators of a healthy street, which is one where:

- it's easy to cross;
- there is shade and shelter;
- there are places to cross;
- it's not too noisy;
- people feel safe;
- there are things to see and do,
- people feel relaxed;
- the air is clean;
- people choose to walk and cycle;
- there are pedestrians from all walks of life.

166. We will increase the frequency of street cleaning in areas where the need is greatest.

167. Many residents have told us that they are unhappy with the state of their street, with problems such as fly-tipping and dog-fouling. These problems can spoil someone's quality of life and a Labour council will tackle them.

168. We will target the minority of dog owners who let their dogs foul our streets and estates, and issue significant fines when we catch people.

169. Fly-tipping is a problem in some parts of the borough. Where possible, we will use fixed or mobile CCTV to identify offenders. We will work with the police to pursue large-scale fly-tipping through the courts and press for the maximum penalties in addition to seeking compensation. We will require council employees to report incidents and also aim to establish a dedicated fly-tipping and litter hotline to make it easier for people to report offences. We will name and shame offenders. Where beneficial, a Labour council may install physical barriers such as posts and height restrictions to reduce vehicle access to hot spots.

170. Urinating in public is antisocial and disgusting. A Labour council will make it an offence punishable by an on-the-spot fixed penalty notice. We will also adopt the same approach to spitting in public places.

171. We will aim for graffiti to be removed speedily.

172. A Labour council will empower enforcement officers to issue a fixed penalty notice for a wide range of environmental offences and make enforcement activity more effective. We will also make it easier for environmental crime to be reported so that incidents can be resolved more quickly.

173. Labour's new approach aims for many more offenders to be caught and punished. This will send a clear message that fly-tipping and other antisocial behaviour in Kingston will no longer be tolerated.

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

Waste, recycling, and reuse

175. Currently, Kingston recycles 47% of its waste, compared with 65% achieved by the best authority. Labour will seek to improve Kingston's performance. We will look for ways to make it easier for residents to recycle.
176. A Labour council will work with households and businesses to reduce the amount that is sent to landfill sites by doing more to reduce waste, encourage re-use and increase recycling.
177. Households shall have containers and recycling bins that adequately meet their needs. We will tackle the problem of recycling for flats, particularly those over shops. We will increase the frequency of waste collection in areas where need is greatest.
178. We will work in partnership with our contractors to ensure our recycling and waste is collected efficiently. We will take firm action against contractors who do not keep our streets clean.
179. We will work with charities and recycling companies to do more to reuse or recycle old clothes, shoes, bedding, white goods, furniture, and any other reusable items.
180. We will examine abolishing the charge for the bulky waste collection service for low income households and households headed by a disabled person.

Plastic pollution

181. Around 70 per cent of all the litter in the oceans is made of plastic. Pollution of the environment with plastics is a global environmental problem, with plastic debris contaminating habitats from the poles to the equator and from the shoreline and sea surface to the deep sea. Many items are discarded single-use packaging. Plastic pollution can be harmful to wildlife, human well-being and to the economy. There is extensive evidence that entanglement in, or ingestion of, plastics can cause injury and death to a wide range of marine organisms, including commercially important fish and shellfish.
182. We will increase the number of free drinking fountains and bottle-refill stations. This will help improve public health, reduce waste from single-use plastic bottles and support the circular economy through the use of reusable water bottles. Suitable locations include areas with high levels of pedestrian activity, such as in town centres and inside shopping malls, as well as areas of the public realm used for play, exercise and relaxing, such as parks and squares. We support initiatives to this effect in the Mayor of London's *Draft New London Plan*.
183. As our first steps, a Labour council will:
 - End all sales of Single-Use Plastic (SUP) bottles in council buildings and phase out their use at all events hosted in council-owned buildings, both public and private.
 - End the use of other SUP products in council buildings starting with (but not limited to) 'disposable' cups, cutlery and drinking straws.
 - Ensure reusable and affordable food containers are available for sale in public markets.
 - Create a policy in which single-use 'disposable' plastic cups are replaced at all borough festivals with reusable or deposit scheme cups. This will ultimately be a condition for obtaining a licence for large-scale events.
 - Work with bars and cafes to phase-out single-use 'disposable' cups and to encourage the use of reusable and deposit scheme ones.
 - Work with partners, schools, sports groups, businesses and residents to cut back on plastic waste and improve arrangements for disposal.
 - Support Government and industry initiatives to reduce plastic waste, such as a bottle deposit scheme.

Transport

Roads

184. Too many road surfaces are poor and potholes take too long to be filled in. We will give a high priority to spending on road maintenance, to help all road users, especially bus passengers and cyclists, and to reduce noise and vibrations from traffic. We will set targets that reward only those contractors who complete the work on time and to a high standard – not to a standard that needs repair within a year.
185. Blocked drains are causing issues right across the borough. We will ensure adequate unblocking of gullies and drains to tackle flooding.
186. Almost half the roads in Kingston currently have 20 mph speed limits. This makes our roads safer for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists and brings both health and environmental benefits. We will install more 20 mph zones and limits with residents' support. We will also hold a consultation on making 20 mph the default speed limit on residential roads throughout the borough. Traffic-calming measures will be kept under review, to check that they allow reasonable progress by buses and that they do not give perverse incentives for reckless driving. We will work with local police to ensure that speed limits are observed.
187. Transport for London controls the A3 and the A240 and A243 south of the A3. These roads are where accidents often occur and also where air quality is particularly poor. We will lobby Transport for London to introduce appropriate speed limits on their roads in Kingston and improve cycle safety on the roads they manage. We will work with Transport for London to review the operation of A3 interchanges to make sure they are working as well as they can for Kingston's residents, including cyclists and pedestrians.
188. We will reduce congestion and improve air quality by promoting walking, cycling, public transport, home working and video conferencing, school and workplace travel plans. We will work with cycling groups and local residents to ensure that safe, practical cycle routes are established throughout the borough.
189. We will introduce more car club bays to help reduce congestion and parking pressure.
190. We supported the introduction of a new pelican crossing in Tolworth Broadway. We will monitor the Tolworth 'Greenway' for its safety and make adjustments to its design as necessary.

Buses

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

Railways

196. We will work with South Western Railways, Network Rail and Transport for London to:
 - Make all stations in the borough accessible to disabled people and those with buggies, heavy luggage, and suchlike

- Keep staff at Norbiton station so that they can help those going to Kingston Hospital with the awkward gap and drop, and ensure travellers with disabilities can access “Turn up and Go” assistance.
- Increase the frequency of services on the Chessington South and Hampton Court (Berrylands) lines, especially at evenings and weekends
- Secure the completion of Crossrail 2 on schedule
- Improve London's railways generally, particularly for Heathrow; see 268.

Walking

197. Encouraging more people to walk and cycle will help improve residents' health, cut emissions and improve air quality. We will make sure that new developments do not generate disproportionate traffic problems (for example, by providing parking spaces for car clubs).
198. We will make walking and cycling in the borough safer so that residents have the confidence to leave their cars behind. However, we will take steps to ensure pedestrians, especially older or disabled people, do not feel intimidated by cyclists on non-vehicular routes.
199. We will introduce more 20mph zones (see 235).
200. We will increase the number of lavatories for public use (see 193) as it allows elderly people and others to walk and use public transport more.
201. We will introduce play streets where residents want them.
202. We will revive our shopping areas by implementing high-quality urban realm schemes.
203. We will ensure that footways are properly maintained and that crossings meet accessibility and safety standards, with adequate lighting.
204. Cluttered streets can be difficult for walkers to negotiate, especially for people with visual impairments or other conditions impacting mobility. We will look for opportunities to remove *unnecessary* signs, guard railings, and bollards – for example, by moving a road sign to an existing lighting column rather than it having its own pole. We will restrict other forms of clutter, such as unlicensed A-boards. These steps should make the pavements clearer and more spacious for pedestrians.
205. We will ensure that street lighting is of high quality and high energy efficiency.
206. We will work with neighbourhood police to reduce street crime and the fear of street crime.
207. We will ensure that Kingston publishes its Rights of Way Improvement Plan and implements it.
208. As well as for recreation, long-distance paths play a part in bringing trade to local pubs and cafes. We will give proper support for long-distance paths through Kingston, such as the Thames Path, Thames–Down Link, London Loop, and Hogsmill Walk.

Cycling

209. We will seek to establish cycle hubs in Kingston and Surbiton town centres, offering secure bike parking.
210. We will continue the council's courses in cycle training and maintenance.
211. We will seek to expand automatic cycle hire schemes in the borough, offering optional use of electric bikes. These may include the existing Brompton scheme, the eventual expansion of the Mayor of London's Santander Cycles, or other schemes such as those in Hackney, Islington, Ealing, and Waltham Forest.
212. We will work with partners to provide secure and convenient cycle parking, particularly in residential areas and estates. New developments will have more bike stands and stores

Labour's local election manifesto for Kingston 2018–2022
to encourage their residents to cycle.

213. We will progressively fill the gaps in the borough's cycle network. We favour properly segregated cycle paths with distinct boundaries as opposed to those that just consist of white lines painted on the road.
214. Shared cycle paths and other shared areas must be kept under review. Often they are difficult for visually impaired people and their assistance dogs to negotiate.
215. Similarly, we do not encourage the introduction of floating bus stops (or 'bus stop bypasses'). This is where a cycleway runs behind the passenger boarding area of a bus stop, between an island and the footway. These are difficult for visually impaired people.
216. About 50% of cyclists' deaths in London are caused by Heavy Goods Vehicles, even though HGVs are only 5% of the traffic. We will sign the London Cycling Campaign's "Safer Lorries, Safer Cycling" pledge.
217. We will ensure that all the council's own HGV drivers will have to attend 'safe urban driving' training and we will require all major new council contractors and major developers operating in the borough to do the same. We will aim to achieve bronze accreditation under the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (which sets out safety requirements beyond the legal minimum for the council's own vehicles), followed by action to achieve silver and gold status. We will also encourage contractors to become members of the CLOCS, which stands for Construction Logistics and Community Safety, and "brings the construction logistics industry together to revolutionise the management of work related road risk and ensure a road safety culture is embedded across the industry".

Air transport

218. We recognise the importance of Heathrow Airport to West London's economy. However, its continued expansion would have detrimental effects on people who live under the existing and proposed flight paths. We support the HACAN vision of "A Better Heathrow, Not a Bigger One" with a sophisticated mix of specialist use of different airports, demand management, and substitution of some trips by High Speed Rail.
219. Heathrow will remain an air pollution black spot. To mitigate this, we support improved public transport to Heathrow such as the Elizabeth Line, due for completion in 2019, and the proposed western and southern rail links outlined in the Mayor of London's draft *Transport Strategy*.

Green spaces

Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Land

220. Our borough benefits enormously from its Metropolitan Open Land and Green Belt. Labour seeks to preserve these areas. Our predisposition is that new developments will be on 'brownfield' sites.
221. A well-tended allotment can provide a family with almost all its vegetables throughout the year. This is particularly important to people of modest means and for those living in flats. We will preserve Kingston's current allotment space.
222. Seething Wells filter beds site: The Friends of Seething Wells produced outline proposals to turn the site into a riverside park at their then estimated cost of £2.62 million. Sources of funding for these proposals are highly uncertain. Labour wishes to see the restoration of the site, while maintaining its historical features and wildlife habitats with appropriate public access.
223. We will support initiatives –such as the restoration of the Raeburn Open Space, the Kingston Cemetery Nature Group, and the Hogsmill Community Garden –to make waste land more ecologically diverse.

Parks

224. As the capital's smallest borough, we are fortunate to have many public parks. They are invaluable green spaces where people and children can relax, play and escape the pressures of daily life. They can also support the local economy, provide opportunities for exercise and sport and help to mitigate global warming.
225. However, Surbiton has few public parks. As a long-term goal, we support the construction of a pedestrian and cycle bridge in the Raven's Ait–Seething Wells area to give residents convenient access to the Thames towpath and Home Park. Similarly, the Go Cycle proposal for a pedestrian and cycle bridge attached to Kingston railway bridge would give residents a quieter and less polluted route to Bushy Park.
226. In partnership with local people, a Labour council will seek to ensure that our parks are of the highest quality, and in which all our communities can take pride. A Labour council will set higher expectations of our parks and open spaces and view them as key assets for the local community.
227. A Labour council will work to make our parks and open spaces safe for all. Current mobile maintenance and security teams are inadequate. We will increase patrols in parks with known problems. We will look at having some parks permanently staffed during working hours. Some park gates are poorly maintained, particularly those keeping dogs out of children's play areas. Some parks need better lighting.
228. A Labour council will work with local communities to enable them to take the decisions that affect their parks and open spaces, identifying priorities and developing them to reflect the needs of residents and support nature conservation.
229. We will look at parks as a resource to give young people and the unemployed opportunities to learn new skills and that enable disabled young and unemployed people to take part.
230. A Labour council will not sell off buildings in parks and open spaces, but will work with residents to find new uses for them where their original use is no longer appropriate.

Sourcing materials for parks and open spaces

231. We will continue the council's policy of using predominantly native species of trees and shrubs in general planting areas. Problems can arise when importing strains of native species of trees and plants from abroad. There is a danger of importing plant diseases such as Ash Die Back and pests such as Oak Processionary Moth and to which indigenous strains have no resistance. Therefore, a Labour council will procure trees and plants from British sources unless there is a compelling reason to do otherwise.
232. We will continue the council's policy of not using peat-based composts.

Reducing light pollution

233. Inefficient street lighting is still the main contributor to light pollution, wastefully shining into people's homes and into the sky, causing the orange haze that hangs over urban areas and can be seen for many miles. Wasted light is wasted money: estimates are difficult but one suggests the €2 billion per annum is wasted by inefficient lighting in Europe.
234. We believe that lights should shine only where and when needed.
- Lights should always shine downward, towards their targets.
 - Lights should be shielded from shining into neighbouring homes, to avoid causing nuisance.
 - Lights should not shine onto people's property without their permission.

Fracking

235. New Malden and Worcester Park are already in part of a concession block granted for exploration of fossil fuels. In December 2013, the rest of Kingston borough was put in an area under consideration for new licences. However, the London area is not thought to have any shale gas or oil present. A Labour government would ban fracking because it would lock us into an energy infrastructure based on fossil fuels, long after the point in 2030 when the Committee on Climate Change says gas in the UK must sharply decline.
236. In the event that fracking in the borough were applied for, the exploration company would need council planning permission to start drilling. In that instance, Labour would insist on six safeguards, set out below.
- Baseline conditions should be assessed prior to any exploratory work with microseismic monitoring, in order to discriminate natural from artificially induced seismic events once the drilling begins. An early warning detection system should also be implemented, similar to that used in the Netherlands and Germany, which would allow measures to be taken before seismic activity has a noticeable impact.
 - Chemicals used must be restricted to those that are proven to be non-hazardous. Further, there should be mandated disclosure of all the chemicals to be used in fracking, including their toxicity levels.
 - The integrity of each shale gas well must be assured to prevent water contamination. An independent assessment of the well design, the cement bond between the casing and well bore, in addition to the composition of the casing to determine its ability to resist corrosion, is essential.
 - The level of methane in groundwater should also be assessed prior to any drilling. Methane can occur naturally in groundwater, but there is concern from the experience in the USA that it may occur as a result of fracking. In each case, that needs to be assessed prior to any activity, so there is robust baseline information to monitor against.
 - All potential shale exploration sites should be subject to screening for an environmental impact assessment – at present, those below one hectare do not need to undertake such an assessment. This assessment should include the level of water used, how much can be recycled and the availability of water in each case.
 - All of the monitoring activity referred to above should take place over a twelve month period, to allow sufficient time to gather all of the evidence required to make an informed decision on whether to proceed with exploration.

Promoting animal welfare

237. Kingston Labour believes that all animals are sentient creatures, capable of enjoying a state of well being and equally capable of suffering. We believe that, in a civilised society, people should advocate the welfare of animals and take whatever action is within their power to protect them from abuse and cruelty. We support the view that all animals have the right to enjoy five basic freedoms:
- freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition
 - freedom from physical discomfort and pain
 - freedom from injury or disease
 - freedom from fear and distress
 - freedom to express their normal behavioural needs.
238. It was Labour councillor Jean England who led the way in getting Kingston Council to ban the use of large performing animals, such as elephants, in circuses held on council land.

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

Making Kingston a safer place to live

Tackling crime

240. For overall crime, Kingston has been the safest borough in the capital for two years running. However, the number of crimes has been rising since 2014. We know that crime and antisocial behaviour can blight some residents' lives and disproportionately hurts those who are less well-off. We aim to reduce crime and the perception of crime. We will work with local police and other organisations in the borough to act against perpetrators and to tackle the underlying causes of crime and antisocial behaviour.
241. We will work to build public trust in the police and to strengthen our residents' confidence to report crime and antisocial behaviour. We will maintain CCTV around the borough to deter criminals and make it easier to bring offenders to justice.
242. Under the Labour government, Metropolitan Police numbers increased to 32,904. **Under the Lib-Dem/Tory Coalition government, numbers fell to 30,663 – a seven per cent reduction.** Under the later Tory governments, numbers have declined still further to 30,083 – a decline of nearly nine per cent from 2010.
243. Since 2010–11, the Metropolitan Police's general grant funding from the Coalition and Tory Governments has fallen by more than £700 million, or nearly 40 per cent in real terms. We welcome the announcement by the Labour Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, to put an extra 110 million into the Metropolitan Police budget, to counteract government cuts. From 2019–20, this additional money will support an extra 1,000 police officers.
244. Neighbourhood policing is at the forefront of our fight against crime and antisocial behaviour, a visible presence on our streets that reassures residents and helps the police to build relationships in our communities. We will campaign to maintain police numbers in every ward in the borough.
245. We will work with the Metropolitan Police Service to safeguard the successful Safer Neighbourhoods Teams (SNTs) and urge local police to respond to residents' priorities. Where appropriate, Safer Neighbourhood Teams should operate from local bases in the borough, making them community-based. SNTs should not waste precious time travelling from far-off offices; they should be based in our communities.
246. We will press for police officers to be properly trained to attend to vulnerable members of the community in an informed and sympathetic manner.
247. We will also work with the police and other organisations in the borough to tackle hate crime in all its forms.
248. It is vital that Kingston's residents feel safe in public places. We will ensure that our streets, estates and urban open spaces are well-designed and properly lit at night.
249. Kingston's lively nightlife attracts many people to our borough. However, we must protect residents from the excesses of the night-time economy and make sure that local businesses behave responsibly. Under Labour, the council will have a tough licensing policy, including strict rules on closing times and new 'saturation zones' throughout the borough to make it harder for new outlets selling alcohol to open in areas that already have lots of bars, pubs and off-licences. We will monitor the impacts of this approach and use all the council's regulatory powers to address problem drinking.
250. We will tackle crimes such as fly-tipping: see "Improving our streets" on page 26.

Tackling domestic violence

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

Leisure

Culture

254. Kingston has a rich history of artists, authors, and musicians. Labour aims to further this. Even in times of financial constraint, we believe it is important that the council does what it can do to promote art and cultural events.
255. Labour will ensure that our libraries are run directly by the council using professional staff for core services. We will not close libraries.
256. In its first ten years of operation, the Rose Theatre has become a focus for artistic activity in the borough, enriching the lives of local residents and attracting more visitors to the town centre. We will fulfil the current funding agreement that lasts until 2020 and, as that date approaches, we will undertake a review to decide the appropriate level of future funding. In doing so, we will have regard for the value the Rose Theatre provides for the whole community of Kingston and will encourage it to intensify its efforts to widen participation in the performing arts beyond its traditional audience.
257. We are dedicated to maintaining local artistic and entertainment venues. We will work with local residents in support of a wider variety of venues and for greater participation in the arts in our borough. We will aim for all venues to have adequate signage and encourage all venues to improve accessibility for disabled people.
258. We will work with voluntary organisations to make it easier for community-led, community-run arts and cultural events to take place in the borough.
259. We will work with community groups, the voluntary sector and investors to support festivals in Kingston. We support the continuation of the Kingston Carnival.
260. Our cultural heritage informs us of who we are and what we can become. It is our duty to safeguard it for the future. A Labour council will value our cultural heritage and maintain our museum service, the Local History Room and archives. We will be active in seeking grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other sources.
261. A Labour council will put in bids each year for Kingston to become the London Borough of Culture.

Sport and recreation

262. A Labour council will use sport to improve health and well-being across our communities. We will work with volunteer sports clubs and organisations to increase participation and strengthen communities.

263. A Labour council will showcase the wealth of volunteer-led sports clubs, commercial sports providers and council-provided facilities through co-ordinated 'open house' weekends that encourage people to try out different sports or activities, or to volunteer in the running of them.
264. A Labour council will actively manage our leisure centres and promote their use. We aim to develop the use of leisure centres and make them accessible to more people and affordably priced.
265. A Labour council will set out to help its sportspeople, the coaches, officials and other volunteers, to recruit, train and retain new members; to foster stronger links between schools and sports clubs and to offer more sporting opportunities and better sporting events in the borough.
266. We will carry out a detailed survey of all the sporting facilities in the borough and their states of repair. This will determine the facilities' availability for public use.
267. Well-staged sporting events promote Kingston, as well as bringing many visitors to the borough to participate or spectate. They in turn visit our shops, cafes, bars, pubs, and restaurants. We will work with sporting organisations and the voluntary sector to develop Kingston as a place of choice for staging a range of sporting events.
268. A Labour council will work with Kingstonian F. C. so that it has a permanent home ground in the borough, whether this is by means of a ground share with Corinthian Casuals, or whatever option provides best for the secure futures of both clubs.
269. A Labour council will retain sports development staff to help unlock available funding to help our local sports clubs and schools. We will continue grant aid to Sport Kingston.
270. A Labour council will ensure it meets its obligations under the Equalities Act and ensure all leisure and recreational facilities are fully accessible to all members of the community.
271. As part of a long-term plan, we will aim to provide free leisure access to all young people in the borough.
272. As well as competitive sports, Labour will support recreational exercise, such as walking and cycling. We support rehabilitation activities such as Walk For Health and Walk4Life.

Running a good council

An efficient council

273. As the smallest borough in London, we must ensure that the council's budget is well-managed and prudently spent. Against the backdrop of cuts to the budget, we will ensure Kingston council is efficient and effective. Labour believes that the council owes residents the duty to be efficient and provide value for money. Under both the Liberal Democrats and the Tories, Kingston has been notorious for demanding the highest council tax of any London borough, despite the cynical decision to freeze council tax in this election year.
274. In these tough times, it is more important than ever that public money is spent wisely. We will draw on the experience of Labour-led councils in innovations that provide better services at lower costs. We will take a fresh look at everything the council spends and where staff are allocated. This means that we can ensure that resources are deployed where they are most needed. This is not only good for residents but saves money in the long run. We will review the council's advertising and PR teams for savings.
275. We will look rigorously at current budgets to strip out waste, and reduce costs. We will energetically explore ways to reduce unnecessary costs, and continue to develop ways to share appropriate services and administration with other local authorities and public sector bodies. Any such arrangements would retain accountability to councillors and enable Freedom of Information requests.

276. We will continually strive to improve services and get the best value for every pound the council spends. Labour strongly prefers the provision of council services through a directly-employed workforce. This makes staff more accountable, gives the council more control and saves money on expensive contractors. Outsourced providers often fail to deliver promised services due to a lack of expertise and investment. Guaranteeing an income often gives the provider little incentive to innovate and to cut costs to the public. Furthermore, contracts can prove to be inflexible with the slightest variation having to be laboriously and expensively negotiated by lawyers. We will seek to bring services back in-house unless it can be demonstrated that outsourcing will benefit residents.
277. We will investigate the opportunities for expanding local authority trading.
278. We will make it easier for residents to use council services, by enabling them to do simple tasks online. This will save money that can be reinvested back into the services residents want.
279. Labour supports the principle of Neighbourhood Committees as a means of engaging with residents at a local level, and of making decisions on appropriate local matters. We will give them appropriate powers and look for ways enhancing their effectiveness.
280. The council has a large asset base of land, buildings, and other assets. Some may be under-used. We will look at all assets to see how they can be better used. We cannot allow council premises to be wastefully under-used or left empty.
281. Our staff are our most valuable asset: we will review council structures to enable greater efficiency, rapid decision-making, and more effective front-line services. We will ensure all staff can undertake Continuing Professional Development.
282. We will make sure the council's overall salary bill for senior staff does not grow further. When staff leave the council's service because of poor performance, we will ensure that they do not get "Golden Handshakes" – pay-offs over and above any contractual obligations.

Managing suppliers and procuring services

283. We believe that there are significant savings to be made in procurement by exercising the council's power as a large-scale purchaser. For example, under the former Liberal Democrat-run council, Kingston had been paying over £10,000 for windows in each council flat that it refurbished; bulk savings are possible.
284. We will establish a Contract Compliance Unit to review all existing contracts. The Unit will enforce contract compliance using fines and break clauses. The Council will develop a contract compliance policy that enables accountability to councillors and the local community. We want greater transparency and scrutiny, especially for multi-authority contracts.
285. Where the council uses contractors, we will ensure that they are held to account for the quality of the work they do. Suppliers will be properly managed and not allowed to get away with poor service or be paid to fix their own mistakes.
286. Our suppliers must be made to work together, rather than residents having to contact the council multiple times just because of the way in which the council gives out its contracts.
287. We will work with our suppliers to further our wider objectives, such as local apprenticeships, jobs with decent wages, and the employment of disabled people, including through engagement with local, specialist programmes that support both employers and disabled job-seekers.
288. In line with Christian Aid's Sourced campaign, a Labour council will ask the tax compliance questions in Section 4 of the 2015 Public Contract Regulations). These ask companies to disclose information about tax returns submitted to HMRC (since April 2013) that have been found to be 'incorrect' – that is, to disclose their attempts at failed tax-avoidance.

The questions also require companies to disclose information about convictions or challenges of their tax affairs by a foreign tax authority

289. We recognise the value of companies who pay their fair share of tax and will encourage suppliers to gain the Fair Tax Mark.
290. In line with the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012, public services contracts will be used to secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Kingston's use of Social Value is undeveloped: we will enlarge it.
291. Procurement will be done on a range of "best value" criteria, not simply the lowest bidder.
292. Where Kingston is procuring services in conjunction with other local authorities or public bodies, we will press for Kingston's procurement criteria to be in force.

Local procurement

293. The council cannot discriminate in favour of local suppliers: contracts are awarded based on the evaluation criteria set out in an invitation to quote/tender. However, we will encourage local organisations to bid for contracts with the council, in the manner of Camden's "Camden First" scheme. We favour local procurement because:
- Local suppliers generally employ local people, retaining the council's spend within the borough.
 - Local suppliers tend not to indulge in sophisticated tax avoidance schemes, impoverishing the British public.
 - It helps to reinvest in the local economy.
 - There are environmental benefits, such as less congestion and pollution.

We will encourage local businesses and co-operatives or consortia of local businesses to bid for council contracts. Where practicable, packages of work may be split to allow smaller local bodies to realistically tender for a contract.

294. We will also seek to commission services from the voluntary sector and community groups. We should support these groups, so they can make the most of the opportunities. By allowing the community groups to flourish, we create a stronger voluntary sector. This provides good value for money and often retains the council's spend within the borough.

Ethical policies

295. We will seek to make the council's spending more transparent by publishing all spending on suppliers rather than just those instances over £500, and making this clear by cost code.
296. Under Labour, Kingston will continue to be a "Fairtrade Borough" and continue with its Ethical Procurement Policy.

Pension fund

297. The pension fund has over £649 million of assets. It must be run properly to give the returns needed to meet the council's pension obligations. We will ensure management fees and charges are reduced – in line with the best European practice.
298. We will establish some new guiding principles. Subject to the agreement of council staff and pensioners, we will invest ethically: the council will not invest in tobacco stocks, payday loan companies, or the arms trade. Over a long period, we will transfer investment from fossil fuels into renewable energy and other investments.

299. We will look at investment opportunities that relate to our borough in order to keep our much needed funds within the borough. For example, investment in housing could provide a return to the pension fund from a proportion of the sale of private housing while also providing additional affordable housing.
300. We will monitor the pension fund deficit and act when advised.

The council as employer

London Living Wage

301. We believe in promoting economic prosperity and social justice, and believe that all staff employed by the council should be able to have a decent standard of living. Following a Labour initiative, Kingston has adopted the London Living Wage but more progress needs to be made. We will aim for the council to become a living wage employer accredited by the Living Wage Foundation. Paying the living wage boosts incomes, helps to cut the benefit bill and makes sure people feel rewarded for the important work they do. The lowest paid direct-employees shall be paid at least the London Living Wage (currently £10.20/hour).
302. Furthermore, as a commissioner of services, Kingston Council wields substantial negotiating power; we will encourage partner agencies and contractors to follow our lead in meeting the London Living Wage target. We will push for a requirement in new contracts that indirectly employed staff should also be paid at this level. Increasing the take-home income of the lowest paid not only reduces their dependence on benefits and lowers bureaucratic costs, but will also enrich our local economy.
303. We will work with employers across Kingston to secure a living wage for even more of Kingston's workers.

Zero-hours contracts

304. Security at work is vital. We will aim not to use exploitative zero-hours contracts among our directly-employed workforce. Zero-hours contracts shall only be used for bona fide unpredictable work. We will review any council zero-hours contracts except where the use of non-exclusive zero-hours contracts is to the benefit of and with the agreement of the employee and trade unions and is not imposed. In particular, their use in personal care services, including support for disabled children, shall be deprecated as continuity of care is paramount.
305. A Labour council will pay any interns over the age of 18 the London Living Wage. Council-funded bodies will be expected not to offer unpaid internships.
306. Council contractors shall be contractually obliged to adhere to 353 and 354, above. (Where it is not possible to amend current contracts, they shall be amended at contract renewal time.)

Blacklisting

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

Further reading

Bee Happy: A Strategy on Bees & Pollinating Insects for Southend-On-Sea 2015–2020

http://www.southend.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/4286/pollinator_strategy_2015-2020.pdf

Better Health For All Londoners: Consultation on the London Health Inequalities Strategy

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/draft_health_inequalities_strategy_2017.pdf

Better Homes for Local People: The Mayor's Good Practice Guide to Estate Regeneration

<https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/better-homes-for-local-people-the-mayors-good-practice-guide-to-estate-regeneration.pdf>

Biodiversity & the Development Process in Kingston upon Thames

https://www.kingston.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1351/annex_3_good_practice_guide_-_biodiversity.pdf

Combatting Loneliness one conversation at a time: A call to action

https://www.jocoxloneliness.org/pdf/a_call_to_action.pdf

Culture & the Night-Time Economy Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/supplementary-planning-guidance/culture-night-time>

Draft New London Plan

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/>

Fair Tax Mark

<https://fairtaxmark.net/>

Healthy Streets for London

<http://content.tfl.gov.uk/healthy-streets-for-london.pdf>

Homes for Londoners: Affordable Housing and Viability Supplementary Planning Guidance 2017

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ah_viability_spg_201708152.pdf

Labour's New Deal on Housing

<https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Housing-Mini-Manifesto.pdf>

Lifetime Homes

<http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>

Local Authority Charter for the Welfare of Animals

<http://www.labouranimalwelfaresociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/LocalAuthorityCharter2012.pdf>

London Living Rent

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/housing-and-land/renting/london-living-rent>

Making It charter

<https://www.making-it.org.uk/>

Modern Slavery statement

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transparency-in-supply-chains-a-practical-guide>

Kingston Housing Strategy 2015–2020 (RBK Housing Strategy 2015–2020)

https://www.kingston.gov.uk/downloads/file/1519/kingston_housing_strategy_2015-2020

List of Invasive Alien Species of Union concern

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/invasivealien/list/index_en.htm

Our Plan for Animal Welfare

<https://labour.org.uk/issues/animal-welfare-plan/>

Passivhaus

<http://www.passivhaus.org.uk/index.jsp>

Police Service Strength

<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN00634/SN00634.pdf>

Preparing for Brexit

<https://www.camecon.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Preparing-for-Brexit.pdf>

Social Infrastructure: Supplementary Planning Guidance

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/implementing-london-plan/supplementary-planning-guidance/social-infrastructure>

Sourced: Christian Aid's campaign briefing for local councillors and council officers

<http://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/Local-councils-tax-briefing-June-2015.pdf>

The National Pollinator Strategy: for bees and other pollinators in England. November 2014

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/409431/pb14_221-national-pollinators-strategy.pdf

Thrive Kingston: A Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for the people of Kingston by the people of Kingston: 2017 to 2021

https://www.kingston.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1893/mental_health_and_wellbeing_strategy.pdf

UNISON's ethical care charter

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2013/11/On-line-Catalogue220142.pdf>

Glossary

ACO	Accountable Care Organisation
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
CLOCS	Construction Logistics and Community Safety
CRE	Cambridge Road Estate
CU	Credit Union
EU	European Union
GLA	Greater London Authority
GP	General Practitioner (local doctor)
HACAN	Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise
HGV	Heavy Goods Vehicle
HMO	House in Multiple Occupation
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PIP	Personal Independence Payment
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SNT	Safer Neighbourhoods Teams
SUP	Single-Use Plastic
TfL	Transport for London

Your Labour candidates

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

Alexandra

Steve Kearney, Robin Marsden,
Kris Srisaravanapavaan

Beverley

Pat Dobson, Michelle Gordon, David Nelson

Chessington North and Hook

Dave Cooper, Lawrence Green, Tom Prestwich

Coombe Hill

Sally Richardson, Paddy Vishani,
Frank Wingate

Grove

Simon Ayre, Emma Francis, Laurie South

Old Malden

David Hill, George Pearson, Karen Templeton

St Mark's

Phil Austin, Kezia Coleman, Caoilte O'Connor

Tolworth and Hook Rise

Tony Banks, Judith Cowley, Greta Farian

Berrylands

Rob Brownlie, Sarah-Jane Brownlie, Nannette
Herbert

Canbury

Clare Keogh, Chris Priest, Jean Sarhadar

Chessington South

Anna Cunnyngnam, David Griffin, Tony Kearns

Coombe Vale

Ryan Coley, Ian Parker, Gareth Thomas

Norbiton

Phil Bevin, Linsey Cottington, Liz Meerabeau

St James

Gerry Jones, Sarah O'Flynn, Alex Scales

Surbiton Hill

Johnnie Byrne, David Cottington, Max
Freedman,

Tudor

Jude Hurtado, Bob Smy, Oscar Thorpe

Contacting Labour locally

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

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

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Kingston Borough Labour Party

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