

Our Alternative

We have a duty to the citizens of this town to work for a cleaner safer greener Northampton, to alleviate poverty, to support engagement with the democratic process.

Alleviating poverty and improving lives in practical ways

In our manifesto at the 2015 local election Labour argued that there should be a freeze in the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for two years. So we are keeping our promise and once again proposing that there should be a freeze in the CTRS, its current level being 29%. This will help the 9801 people affected by the change.

The Eastern District is in urgent need of attention from both local authorities and various agencies. Over the decades the problems facing the Eastern District have been placed into the “too difficult box” and the voluntary sector active in the area have not been supported well enough. Labour wants to address this. We want to work with the University of Northampton and the residents and come up with some kind of urban renewal programme for the Eastern district. This is about putting our heads together and coming up with improvements to the public realm in Northampton East that make a difference to people lives.

Fuel poverty is a real problem for vulnerable people in our town and so as a local authority we should be organising a switching scheme. Businesses also have high energy cost. So the ‘Northampton Collective Energy Switching Initiative’ would be for people and businesses who want to cut their energy bills. Local residents and businesses can join forces and use their collective bargaining power to get the best and greenest deals. So in this next year 2017/18 we will ask Council officers to carry out the necessary preliminary research on the feasibility of such a scheme.

Air pollution is moving up the political agenda in recognition of the detrimental impact it has on the lives of our residents. In particular we need to start highlighting the impact of this on younger people. We will purchase 10 air quality testing kits and give them to secondary schools in the town.

Young People and Democracy

Northampton Borough Council is a democratic body that serves our local communities. We need to engage voters and potential voters and enhance our democracy, particularly amongst young people. Labour believes we need to start training and empowering the next generation of young people in our town to be the next generation of community leaders. We will do this in 3 main ways.

Establish a Young Leaders Project which will identify and encourage local young people to become involved in their neighbourhood and town. The Borough Council will put together a training programme to give young people the confidence and skills to get engaged in the community.

We will establish a Young Persons Mayor which who be democratically elected by young people. He or she will be the figure head for young people in the town and will work with the Mayor, cabinet, Councillors and senior officers on youth issues.

Local Democracy Week has diminished in recent years and Labour wants to reverse that. We will put together a series of events that bring Councillors together with young people. The ambition is that these activities will raise awareness amongst young people of how democracy works in Northampton.

Investment in the Front Line

It is frontline services that make the difference to communities. Like in most parts of the country we have a housing crisis and people are having to go into the private rented sector. We must do more to look after these tenants. We want to strengthen the private sector housing team. We will employ an additional Private Sector Housing Officer to ensure we are tough on bad landlords, to ensure we know where all the HIMO's are, and give more capacity to administer the Social Lettings Agency.

Neighbourhood wardens are popular with the public who recognise the valuable work they do. Through their work our communities are cleaner and safer. This service needs to be expanded so more areas are covered on a regular basis. Therefore we will employ an additional Neighbourhood warden.

Correcting previous mistakes. It is widely acknowledged that Northgate bus station is a failure and it has had unfortunate consequences. One of these is the insult to coach passengers that is the Victoria Street terminus. We will spend £15,000 putting in an additional toilet, seating and a noticeboard.

The Voluntary Sector

Our voluntary sector is ever more important in our town as services are lost and austerity continues. Our Council must continue to support it. Labour will ensure that our voluntary sector grants have a real terms increase for the next two years. This will give some confidence and certainty to the voluntary sector in our town.

For The Future

Labour has longer term aspirations that we would like the Council to start considering in the medium term. We need to think of how we get more income streams. We would get the Borough Council to carefully consider for the long term future -

1. A hopper bus service for the major points in Northampton such between the town centre, hospital, university and the college. A reduced bus rate or free bus passes for those under 16 years. We can explore doing this jointly with Stage coach, the University of Northampton and also get some kind of external sponsorship.
2. Four years ago Neighbourhood Co-ordinations were cut from the budget and Labour warned this would disadvantage many communities. It is our aspiration to see a return of Neighbourhood co-ordinators sometime in future when finances allow. We would start with a Neighbourhood coordinator for the Eastern District and then gradually introduce them into them to other areas of the town.
3. Social Investment Bonds are a way of running partnership projects with a social investor putting the money up front and taking the risk. These bonds are payment by results and bring in additional Government funding if the social outcome are achieved. Investors are repaid for their initial investment plus a return for the financial risks they took. If the social outcomes are not achieved, the investors stand to lose their investment. Payment is by results rather than process. This could be used in our duty for well-being. We would like to use this mechanism to enhance the role of NPH and the voluntary sector by, for example, duplicating the work of the One Stop shop in the Eastern district. This would bring services closer to the people. This would further help alleviate poverty.
4. We would like to explore the possibility of Smart Budgeting. This is about being innovative and delivering value for money in the budget process. Perhaps it is time to no longer follow patterns of past spending by the various directorates. Doing the same spending year on year encourages the status quo. Smart Budgeting means identifying key outcomes and then allocating the funding to each outcome. Budgets are allocated to outcomes rather than directorates. The outcomes themselves are decided by Councillors and the general public.
5. We need to build more homes. We need to stop land banking. If developers won't build then we should. We need a focus on building more affordable houses. We need a financial model that works. Labour suggest the Borough Council commits to providing 200 social housing units a year. For 10 years. Doing this will provide us with much needed homes and with much needed additional income.

6. Lastly, we need to become more entrepreneurial and create new revenue streams. We have two development sites that come to mind. Sixfields and Westbridge. Sixfields is complicated by the issues around land use. Westbridge is overdue for development. We should have a plan to develop Westbridge over the next five years. The waste depot needs to go. That will alleviate the problems in St James with air pollution and nuisance caused by vehicle movements. Westbridge could be developed for new offices for NPH, to provide light industrial units for rent to SMEs and or creative businesses. If we do that we can offer shared services to SMES to help cut their overhead costs and make them more profitable. Re-development in this way will generate additional income.

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