

Putting People First

Bedford Borough Mayoral and Local Election Manifesto - 2 May 2019

Bedford Borough is suffering from the savage funding cuts imposed by an uncaring Conservative government determined to decimate all public services.

Until there is a change of government we can only promise to work hard to do the best we can on your behalf in the face of continuing Tory austerity.

Labour will challenge the Conservative government to restore fair funding to our council so that the needs of people can be properly met.

In the meantime, Labour Councillors will deliver improvements in our wards and the communities we serve, which is why we have developed tailor-made, local pledges on our individual pages of the website: bedfordlabour.org.uk

As our Labour Mayor, Jenni Jackson promises to work with our team of Labour Councillors to find ways of funding and delivering our priorities.

A Labour Mayor and Councillors pledge to:

- Remain wholly committed and available to residents, and to work on your behalf all year round.
- Meet residents regularly and ensure their concerns are listened to.
- Continue working all year round and not just at election time.
- Continue to work closely with our Labour MP to raise local concerns at a national level.



A great place to live, work and do business

- Encourage businesses to follow the council's lead and pay the real Living Wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation, not the lower Tory rate.
- Continue to work closely with Trades Unions to protect workers' rights and promote well paid and secure jobs.
- Ensure that residents working full-time do not have to rely on food banks, by encouraging employers to pay a fair wage.
- Support and encourage a co-operative economy to retain wealth locally and deliver well-paid jobs.
- Work with landlords to offer fairly-priced and secure tenancies for business and retail premises, which are maintained to a high standard, with empty premises leased as quickly as possible.
- Encourage independent businesses to take up retail space in the heart of Bedford and Kempston town centres.
- Promote and enhance Bedford Credit Union as an affordable alternative to payday lenders.
- Campaign to reinstate peak-time Midland Mainline train services to and from London and the North.
- Work with One Public Estate to develop Bedford Midland Station into a hub interchange for the East-West mainline, Thameslink, and Midland Mainline services.
- Pursue funding to redevelop the station area and road network in Midland Road, Prebend Street and Ashburnham Road.
- Continue to facilitate events such as Park Run, the River Festival, Kite Festival and Bedford Park Concerts.
- Maintain our libraries, museums, and archives for the benefit of all residents of the Borough.
- Continue to offer council-led sport activity programmes for all ages to encourage people to stay active, socialise and keep fit throughout their lives.

Looking after our young residents

- Maintain our record of keeping Sure Start Children's Centres open, and offer early help and intervention to parents who may be struggling.
- Work with partner agencies and community groups to provide lunch clubs in school holidays and other youth clubs.
- Maintain play areas and open spaces and encourage the use of the leisure facilities, cycle networks and activity programmes.
- Support schools with our school improvement service, and work with local authority schools and academies to monitor and drive up the achievements of pupils throughout the Borough.
- Ensure the academies invest any profits from the sale of academy land back into the education of the children of Bedford Borough.
- Investigate setting up our own academy trust to transition failing academy schools.
- Reintroduce and develop summer play schemes with a focus on working families and poorer residents.
- Campaign alongside the Local Government Association and our Labour MP for the regulation, registration and Ofsted inspections for residential homes for 16 to 18 year olds.
- Recruit respite foster carers for children with Special Educational Needs.

Caring for older people

- Strengthen services to counter isolation for older people, encouraging social prescribing by working with the voluntary sector to increase provision and support them to access available funding.
- Ensure care visitors are granted realistically timed appointments to attend to the elderly with care and compassion.
- Create a council run care company, and work with local authorities in our region who are considering this on cost and quality grounds.
- Provide better advocacy for housing and adult services users by encouraging positive cooperation between the council and advocacy services, and explore how the council can signpost people to them.
- Support charities to enhance services for specialist clients, including providing respite provision for autistic adults.
- Improve support services for carers, who are frequently isolated.

Protect the environment and campaign for action on climate change

- Pursue a zero-carbon policy for the Borough Council, with Directors set environmental targets as part of their annual appraisals.
- Provide a green energy solution for residents to end fuel poverty.
- Request that measures are installed to reduce speed on the roads and eliminate hazards for pedestrians.
- Review areas providing council-run bus services and investigate the feasibility of introducing a provider operated for the benefit of passengers, not shareholders.
- Work with local voluntary groups to protect our award-winning parks and green spaces, and promote local cycling routes.
- Roll out the provision of electric car charging points.
- Ensure that climate change reduction measures are taken seriously and encourage our partners and local businesses to adopt green practices.
- Introduce recycling ideas that produce incentives for people such as giving vouchers for recycling bottles, and encourage pubs and cafes to fill reusable water bottles free of charge to reduce use of plastic water bottles.
- Procure the best waste disposal contracts for waste recycled and sent to landfill from the Borough.
- Introduce regular urban skip collections in addition to ones in rural areas and promote regular community events for litter picking.
- Provide better tree maintenance with more tree protection orders where appropriate.

Promote joined-up health and social care

- Fight any future threats to downgrade or cut services at Bedford Hospital or Putnoe walk-in centre.
- Retain key services at Bedford Hospital and encourage the development of 'health hubs' to serve all areas of the Borough, including one in the heart of Kempston.
- Work with the local hospitals, ambulance service, Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group [CCG], neighbouring local authorities and other partners to ensure our health and social care systems provide efficient, timely, effective and caring services for all our residents when they need them.
- Invest in and support public health services and schools to encourage frank and open dialogue about public health issues, and encourage young people to speak up and seek help if they need it.
- Bring acute mental health inpatient beds back into the Borough for all patients.
- Ensure the safe running of all private mental health facilities in the Borough, for the sake of their residents and local people.
- Use the Council's Scrutiny Committees to effectively scrutinise the services commissioned by the NHS locally for health and social care, and ensure these provide best value and care for the public who fund them.
- Develop the successful Social Work Academy within Bedford Borough Council, to recruit, train and retain the best officers to work for our residents.

Tackle homelessness & rough sleeping

- Promote the building of social housing and expand on the Labour-led successful empty homes programme, bringing disused properties back into use as family homes.
- Work with charities and health providers to prevent homelessness and direct people in need to the services available.
- Continue to secure funding for the complex needs centre at Clarence House.
- Work with charities and the Police to reach out to those rough sleeping and to provide them with the help and assistance they need to rebuild their lives and health.
- Help the 'hidden homeless' move into their own home by encouraging them to come forward to bid for properties.

Prevent crime and anti-social behaviour

- Continue working closely with the Police to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, tackle all types of anti-social behaviour, and ensure fly-tippers are prosecuted and fined.
- Continue to work to improve communication between Police, the council and residents.
- Work with the Police, schools and council to keep our young people safe, and stop violence and knife crime.
- Ensure effective working with partners to prevent, detect and stop domestic abuse.
- Maintain a focus on preventing modern day slavery, and continue to prevent and detect cases of modern slavery.