**Watford Conservatives Election 2014**

**Key Priorities**

**PROTECTING LOCAL SHOPS**

Smaller shopping parades are neglected in Watford and need help. Our local shops are vital to maintaining a distinct sense of community and essential amenities for older people and others who are less able to get into the town centre. The Conservatives will:

* **Support Local Shopping Parades** – To encourage residents to use their local shops, we will implement cost effective measures to improve the appearance of our shopping parades, tackle antisocial behaviour including littering and enhance the infrastructure in the surrounding areas.
* **Launch Reward Cards for Local Shops** – Some London Boroughs have launched reward schemes to incentivise people to shop locally and support their community. One of our key priorities would be to launch a similar scheme here in Watford meaning there is a tangible benefit for local shoppers.
* **Help Businesses Grow & Create Jobs** – To help local high streets flourish, the Government has given all businesses a £2,000 National Insurance Allowance, abolished employer NI contributions for employees under 21 and given a £1,000 business rate discount to shops and pubs. Watford Conservatives will work tirelessly to promote awareness of these benefits so that every local shop owner takes advantages of the help on offer.

Linda Topping says “Our neighbourhood shops are vital to maintaining a distinct community feel and provide much needed amenities for residents. As Mayor, I will continue my work with residents, local businesses, charities and politicians of all parties to re-energise our local shops. “

**PROVIDING VALUE FOR MONEY**

The Council is responsible for providing the best possible services, but also to ensure residents are receiving value for their money.

* **Saving Money in the Town Hall** – Since the creation of the Watford Community Housing Trust, Watford Borough Council has continued to outsource services. This has seen services improve and some money has been saved, however, the departments for these services remain in the Town Hall. We believe that departments with services no longer run by the Council should be reduced in size with the staff moved to areas where they can make a difference to the needs of residents.
* **Scrap the Magazine** – The “About Watford” magazine is expensive propaganda funded by the taxpayer, which should be scrapped and replaced with a more concise and cost effective method of updating residents with the latest Council news.
* **Reduce the Mayoral Salary** – With services contracted out, a full time Managing Director and limited responsibilities, Watford’s Mayor is paid too much. While seeking to provide value for money, it would be ludicrous to maintain the current amount. Linda Topping pledges to reduce the Mayoral salary so that it better reflects the responsibilities of the position.

**TRANSPORT AND PARKING**

* **Congestion** – Traffic is a huge problem in Watford and we need to explore as many options as possible to tackle this issue. Watford Conservatives fully support Richard Harrington’s campaign to open up the Hospital Link Road to traffic from West Watford, Wiggenhall Road and Dalton Way. This could greatly improve traffic congestion in hotspots such as the Ring Road and Bushey Arches.
* **Parking** – There have been too many failed attempts to fix parking in recent months. The Watford Business Park plans would have penalised people working in the Park and caused problems in the surrounding area. The results from the St Albans Road consultation aren’t released yet, but it was clear from residents that the plans were not going to help. We want to bring a fresh approach to parking that looks, street by street, at targeted ways to help, rather than large schemes which displace the problem and create further issues.
* **Watford Junction** – The new layout of Watford Junction has been a disaster and the Council only recently woke up to the problems facing both pedestrians and motorists. Rather than the parties involved blaming each other and bickering over who approved what, we need to move forward. Watford Conservatives will make Watford Junction a top priority and ensure that action is taken to resolve the issue as quickly and as cost effectively as possible.

**Overall administration**

* **Joined-up thinking -** With the plans for growth and development of Watford requiring significant ongoing management. We want to improve the Town Hall’s current approach to working with Hertfordshire County Council and relevant Government departments, to deliver more focus and joined-up thinking. This would ensure that while Watford Borough Council delivers large projects and increased housing, infrastructure for existing and future residents is categorically the first priority.