

Watford Labour launches manifesto for Mayor and Council elections 2014

Launching Labour's manifesto for the local elections to be held on 22nd May, Matt Turmaine Labour's Parliamentary Candidate for Watford said, "These elections are of great importance for our town coming less than 12 months before the general election. The future of our hospital will be a key issue in this and next year's elections as the coalition parties have failed to provide the investment that is much needed"

Mayoral candidate Jagtar Singh Dhindsa attacked Dorothy Thornhill saying, "She's standing for Mayor again but won't come clean on whether she will resign after 11 months to stand as MP. She needs to be honest with the electorate. This may sound personal but this election is about the experience and character of the candidates", said Jagtar. "Unlike her, I am committed to go the whole term", he said

"Under Mayor Thornhill the Council has lost millions of pounds of our money. Look at the overpayment on £1.3 million in housing benefit and the loss of £250,000 development money when she tried to build on Watford Fields. She has wasted £500,000 on consultants and is now splashing £4.5 million on the Parade including a bridge to nowhere over the Pond that no one wants". These are hard times for local people and she has been reckless in spending taxpayers' money", he said.

"I have made **five key pledges** as my priority if I am elected" (See attachment)

Labour's Election Agent and Chair Mike Jackson said, "Once again, we are publishing a manifesto – 'Our Vision for Watford', laying out what a Labour Council would do to make Watford an even better place to live.

"Priorities for Labour would be to build more affordable homes for local people, increase recycling and campaign for the modernisation of Watford Hospital. In addition Labour would campaign for a new secondary school in Watford, build more cycle-ways and work to extend the use of the oyster card on local buses and the Abbey line. Labour would extend apprenticeships at the town hall and guarantee the living wage for all employees and new contracts," he said.

"Unlike other parties we have a broad and diverse range of candidates that look more like Watford and the communities they seek to serve than other parties", he said. (see note below)

With one third of the seats up for re-election and one by-election Labour, as the largest opposition party, hopes to make further gains.

"A bigger opposition group in the Council would be good for the town and better hold the Lib Dems to account", said Mike Jackson.

Note to Editor

One third of Council seats are up for election plus one seat in a by-election.

Labour currently has 8 seats, the Greens 3 and the Lib Dems 25 plus the Mayor

Labour's candidates are diverse and as a team (unlike other parties) look like the community they wish to serve. Of Labour's candidates

- 7 are men, 6 are women
- 7 are white, 3 are black and 3 are asian

For biographies on all Labour candidates click [here](#)

Jagtar's five pledges

1. Proper funding for our hospital

I'll campaign tirelessly to persuade the Government to modernise Watford General

2. Clampdown on illegal dumping

Step up prosecution of offenders but reinstate free bulky collections

3. 20% cut in cost of Mayor

On over £81,962 a year the Mayor is vastly overpaid - in these tough times I'll take a cut - but she won't!

4. New housing for local people

Make the best use of land for both private and social housing

5. Less waste - getting greener

I'll improve and extend recycling services and cut the landfill bill

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Watford Labour Party - OUR VISION FOR WATFORD

We want Watford to be a clean, vibrant, diverse, family friendly town that offers job opportunities, a world class hospital, good housing and first class leisure, retail and sports facilities for its residents and visitors.

Labour is the party of social justice: we want to see high quality services provided for all but also make sure that the vulnerable are supported so that everyone can live in dignity and participate in our local communities.

The Tory/Lib Dem Coalition got its economic policies wrong. The economy stalled for too long and tax revenue to pay off the deficit declined. The national debt has continued to grow under the Tory/Lib-Dem Coalition, by billions of pounds.

Rather than supporting growth and jobs, the Coalition cut taxes for the super rich, causing a cost of living crisis for hard working families and has cut benefits and tax credits for the least well-off in our town. Most of those who have had their benefit cut are working families. Many families have been pushed to the point of poverty that they have to rely on food banks for survival. The election of a Labour government in 2015 is their real hope.

In Watford the Liberal Democrats have enthusiastically embraced the cuts agenda, slashing grants to voluntary and community groups just when they are needed most.

Services have been cut, council staff have been made redundant and what is left has been privatised. The state of our roads and the rubbish on our streets are evidence of these cuts. Whilst it is clear that savings are to be made we believe that the out-of-touch Tories and their junior cheerleaders in the Liberal Democrats have got their priorities wrong. We need to have a new ambition and confidence for our town and get our priorities right. We believe our priorities are your priorities.

Jobs

Watford Labour believes that a foundation for being able to fully participate in society is having a worthwhile and decently paid job. With unemployment at an unacceptable high under the Tory-Liberal Democrat coalition and with the cost of living going through the roof, a Labour administration would prioritise job creation and the protection of living standards. In Watford we would:

- Work with local businesses to build on the town's pre-eminence as a centre of hi-tech industry, retail, leisure and entertainment in order to secure and grow employment
- Work with the local schools, colleges and University to ensure that all young people who leave education have a guaranteed opportunity for further or higher education, training, an apprenticeship or a real job opportunity
- Guarantee the living wage as a minimum for all council employees and ensure that all businesses with whom the council contracts do likewise
- It is clear that only a jobs and growth agenda will deal with the deficit. The current recovery is fragile and not felt by ordinary working people who struggle with the cost of living. The Tories and Lib Dems let the benefits go to the rich whilst threatening more austerity for the rest. Labour would ensure sustainable growth by investing in our economy for secure jobs.

Housing

Watford Labour believes that everyone has a right to a decent home either through ownership or at an affordable rent. Under the Tory-Liberal Democrat government overcrowding has increased and the waiting list for a social housing has grown; scandalously some families now have to survive in bed and breakfast. And those who are in work are finding it harder and harder to get a foot on the housing ladder.

Under the Liberal Democrats, most of the new housing developments have been designed to maximise developers' profits rather than enhancing housing for local people. The decision to build a massive private development in west Watford on the Farm Terrace allotment land is unnecessary for the modernisation of the hospital and contrary to the Council's own District Plan. We would reverse the policy to build on these allotments.

We will:

- Work with social landlords and Watford Community Housing Trust to explore ways to raise funds to build more social housing for rent
- Campaign for the repeal of the hated bedroom tax, which was introduced on the same day the government, gave millionaires a tax break worth tens of thousands of pounds to each of them
- We will work with landlords to prevent people becoming homeless due to the coalition cuts in Housing Benefit
- We will support the sensitive building of new homes and ensure that every new residential development in Watford includes a minimum of 40% of properties that are affordable through rent, shared ownership or other such schemes
- Use available Council capital monies to provide mortgages to first time buyers
- Take urgent action to bring empty properties back into use including flats above shops.

Environment

Watford has some beautiful parks and open spaces but the Liberal Democrat administration has presided over a marked reduction in the quality of street cleaning. Many streets in our town are dirty and soiled with dog excrement, litter and empty drinks bottles. Many roads are no longer lit at night and the fear of anti-social behaviour and crime is growing. They have allowed residential overdevelopment in some areas with no account taken for new amenities, schools and local shops, leading to a reduction in the quality of life for many.

The Liberal Democrats have failed to meet their re-cycling targets, putting even more waste into landfill year on year

We will:

- Make it a priority to renegotiate the street cleaning contract to improve street cleansing and reintroduce dog-poop bins

- Introduce an enhanced recycling and refuse collection scheme to reduce the amount going into landfill
- Reinroduce free collections of bulky household items to reduce dumping and fly tipping
- Oppose further privatisation by the Lib Dems which put profits ahead of the quality of services to our community
- Put a stop to over development in already crowded areas of the Town
- Use council resources and planning rules to improve pavements
- Press the County Council to turn our street lights back on

Leisure

Watford is the entertainment capital of Hertfordshire. It has a fantastic football team that attracts supporters from across the county, a beautiful theatre and its clubs and pubs provide a vibrant and exciting draw for those wanting a night's entertainment.

Some of this however, is at a cost to the well-being of local residents. We will:

- Work with Watford F.C. Community Trust to create a genuine partnership between the council and the football club
- Work with the clubs and pubs and local police to ensure that all ages can enjoy a night out in the town centre and that inconvenience to local residents is minimised. The Parade has one of the highest crime records in the country much of it drink related. We will support the police in using new powers to stop anti-social drinking in the early hours
- Continue to work in partnership with the Palace Theatre to bring top quality performing arts to our town

Watford General Hospital

- **Thanks to the tireless campaigning of the last Labour MP for Watford the town has retained a District General Hospital with a full range of services including A&E. The last Labour government invested heavily in the local NHS and the new Emergency Admissions Unit is testament to that commitment**
- Labour also agreed to guarantee the funding for the hospital modernisation within the new Health campus but in 2010, the new Tory/Lib Dem Coalition government withdrew that guarantee and told the West Herts Hospitals Trust to raise the money itself.
- Four year later, the hospital is even further away from getting the investment it needs as its deficit grows due to underfunding by the government. Far from supporting the hospital the Tory MP and the Lib Dem Mayor have singularly failed to lobby their own government for investment.

- Labour believes we deserve a world class hospital in Watford to serve the western half of Hertfordshire and will continue to campaign for this investment.

Advocate for the Community

Too often the Mayor and the Liberal Democrats talk without delivering but fail to take action. Labour will act to deliver a better town, not only using its own resources and powers, but as an advocate for the town promoting solutions to problems sometimes beyond the scope of the council to solve alone.

For example:-

- Transport and Congestion. Labour will promote the interest of rail commuters who suffer above inflation rises; we will work with Arriva buses and others to extend the use of Oyster card to local buses and the St Albans Abbey line. Work to provide more resilience in the road system that cannot cope when works or incident closes part of the network. We will work with County and Highways agencies to counter the congestion in certain parts of the town.
- Campaign for new rail services from Watford Junction following the resignalling work. For example enhanced services to East Croydon and more Inter City services to Manchester.
- Push for the building of a new link to Watford Junction from Colonial Way - to improve access for buses, taxis, and passenger set down by car. All of which have been severely restricted by the reworked Clarendon road entrance
- Set up a task force with the Highways and public transport companies and town centre businesses to improve pedestrian access from Watford High Street station, in advance of the new Metropolitan line services serving the station.
- Work with the County to provide more safe cycling routes across Watford
- Continue to press the County Council to introduce 20mph speed limits in residential streets make them safer.
- Provide support for Watford's beleaguered taxi industry, improving its services and increasing the number of ranks.
- Schools. Work to ensure sufficient primary schools, oppose further school closures and campaign for a new secondary school within the boundary of the town.
- Housing. We will take a more 'hands on' approach to working with landlords to improve the availability and standards of accommodation. We will work with Watford Community Housing Trust to ensure the needs of tenants are met.
- We would work with advice and voluntary organisations to mitigate the impact of the bedroom tax that is causing hardship to so many tenants in our town
- Children. We will provide free swimming in school holidays, taking up government subsidy that the Lib Dems have ignored and we will explore ways of supporting working

families during school holidays. We will oppose the County Council's plans to close children's centres in Watford.

- Young people. We will be more proactive at the Town Hall to make sure the Council starts a programme of apprenticeships across all departments, linking this with making sure that private companies we do business with have a proper apprentice programme.
- We will work with the County to make sure there are proper meeting points for 'outreach' work from youth workers in the outer parts of the town like Woodside, Meriden and Holywell.
- Healthcare. We will campaign for investment in our local healthcare services; oppose the privatisation of the NHS and stand up for our local Watford General Hospital.
- Crime. Watford has the highest crime rate in Hertfordshire and the fear of crime has increased since the Tory County Council, supported by the Lib Dems, turned the street lights out at night. We will campaign to get the lights put back on.
- We will work with the Police and our anti-social behaviour team to use powers to make Watford a family friendly town at night as well as in the daytime, to rid the town centre of crime and vandalism that the Mayor has failed to do.
- We will carry on the policy of 'neighbourhood policing' introduced by the Labour Government and work to get our Licensing teams to work closely with the bars and clubs in the town but not neglect the outer wards of the Borough.
- We will support action against domestic violence, working with the police and other agencies and we will provide support to the Watford Womens' Centre whose grant was recently cut by 100% by the Mayor.
- Shopping areas. We will work with traders and other agencies to maintain the viability of shopping areas, such as St. Albans Road, and revitalise them when needed.
- We will find land so that a new cemetery can be built in Watford.

Watford is a great town and Watford Labour wants it to be an even better place to live. Watford Labour wants to work with new partnerships, with community and voluntary groups and individual citizens to make our ambitions come to life.

- We value the voluntary and charitable sector for the great work they do in our town and will find new ways to support them.
- We value diversity and champion local communities and want to see more democratic control over community facilities.
- We would open up the council to more transparent and inclusive decision-making.

For a more than a decade a small clique of tired Liberal Democrat councillors and an ineffective mayor have failed to realise the potential of our town. Its time they moved aside and let Watford Labour lead - moving our town forward together.

'Our Vision for Watford' was published by Watford Labour Party in 2012 and updated annually most recently in March 2014

For further enquiries contact Watford Labour Party at the address below or via our web site at www.watfordlabour.org.uk

