

**MAKING PROMISES, KEEPING THEM &
DELIVERING VALUE FOR MONEY**



**The Conservative Manifesto for the
South Gloucestershire Council
Elections 2011**

Living within our means

£120 million a day - that's how much we are paying, as a country, on the interest on Labour's debt.

Over 4 days, that's the equivalent of South Gloucestershire Council's entire annual budget.

That debt interest is money that is being paid to foreign creditors for them to spend on their schools and libraries, rather than our own here in South Gloucestershire.

In order for us not to pass this debt onto our children, it has to be reduced, and the longer we leave it, the worse it will get.

Here in South Gloucestershire, Conservative councillors predicted several years ago the current tough times that Labour's out-of-control public spending would lead us to and so the Council was ordered to find ways to reduce costs without reducing services.

That earlier work has meant that South Gloucestershire Council is one of the most well-prepared authorities in the country to deal with its expected and understandable reduction in government funding.

In fact, the recent council budget actually saw investment increased in the vital services we all rely on, including youth services and care for the elderly.

In the years ahead, we need to eliminate what remains of the waste, inefficiency and duplication in the system in order to continue to protect and improve the services that our fellow residents want.

Working together, we can protect South Gloucestershire, even as we pay off Labour's debt.

Making promises and keeping them

It's been 4 years since a record number of our fellow South Gloucestershire residents put their faith in a Conservative councillor.

We promised then that we wouldn't let you down and that we would work with local people to make South Gloucestershire even better.

As a result, since 2007, not only have we kept the promises we made, but residents' efforts have helped us go even further.

However, we know there's more to do, but as we start on the hard road of paying off Labour's debt, we won't be able to afford to do everything that we would like to.

But, just like 4 years ago, we won't make promises we cannot keep.

These are our 5 main pledges for the next 4 years:

1. Keep household bills down by:

- **controlling council tax:** In these tough times every penny counts, yet all the evidence nationally and locally is that Labour and Liberal Democrat Councillors cost you more in Council Tax. When they dominated the Council it went up by a thumping 12.4% in just ONE YEAR!

In comparison, Conservative Councillors in the last four years have succeeded in cutting council tax rises every year – and freezing it this year.

Astonishingly, not a single Liberal Democrat or Labour Councillor put their hand up for the freeze in this year's main budget vote.

- **insulating more homes:** we want to work proactively with the Coalition Government to ensure that South Gloucestershire is one of the first districts to benefit from the 'Green Deal' – Europe's most ambitious energy efficiency and insulation plan.
- **and investigating a 'rewards4recycling' scheme:** we want to reward those households who reduce the amount of waste they produce.

We will, therefore, investigate how best to do this, including examining incentive-based schemes already in existence in this country and around the world.

2. Support our local economy and jobs by:

- **delivering the flagship Science Park:** over a number of years, we led the campaign for the world-beating Science Park at Emersons Green and associated infrastructure, which is now under construction.

Following the securing of the National Composites Centre (NCC) at the Science Park last year and last month's announcement that the NCC will become part of the first Technology and Innovation Centre in the UK, this will help to cement the reputation South Gloucestershire has for strong economic growth, job creation and cutting-edge innovation.

- **campaigning for the roll-out of superfast broadband:** we have already secured a number of meetings with senior telecom executives and the Broadband Minister to press for the roll-out of superfast broadband across the district. We promise to continue to work with local residents to improve their broadband speeds.
- **make small business rate relief automatic:** business rates are the third largest cost to small firms after salaries and rent, but despite the council's

efforts to promote the rate relief that is available, we suspect that many small businesses in the area are still not claiming it.

In the summer of 2009, we used the *Sustainable Communities Act* to call on the previous government to allow for small business rate relief to be paid automatically.

We welcome the Coalition Government's confirmation that it will introduce our proposal through the *Localism Bill* that is currently before Parliament.

- **and keep car parking free:** South Gloucestershire Conservatives are the Party of free car parking in our High Streets and town centres because we recognise the importance of encouraging local shopping and supporting the vitality and vibrancy of local traders.

3. Invest in our schools to give our young people the best possible opportunities in life: earlier this year, we set out a £30 million school investment programme spread over 3 years, including investment in over 20 different schools and other projects over the course of this year.

4. Secure the maximum possible health facilities at Frenchay, Cossham, Southmead and Thornbury Hospitals: one of our most senior councillors sat on the Frenchay Project Board to fight for the maximum possible facilities to remain at the site after the previous Labour Government's decision to downgrade Frenchay Hospital. This pressure led to the South Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust revising upwards the numbers of beds and services prior to signing off the final scheme. A planning application for this new community hospital is expected shortly.

After being under threat of closure by the last Labour Government, Cossham is undergoing a £19 million refurbishment to give it a future as great as its past while work to rebuild Southmead hospital is continuing.

And we believe that Thornbury needs a 21st century hospital and so we will push for all the facilities and services that come with that.

5. More police on the beat by working closer with the council: over the last 4 years, we have funded an extra 5 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and we will build on this over the next 4 years.

We are sharing more council office space with the police, for example at the Kingswood council offices, to reduce overheads and we will encourage more of this, as well as investigate a greater sharing of services to minimise duplication and inefficiency.

Coupled with the Coalition Government's push to reduce police paperwork, our aim is to help put more police on the beat.

Even as the previous Labour Government increased the national debt, recent Parliamentary research has shown that Avon and Somerset police force were one of 13 police forces across the country which experienced falling officer numbers in the five years before 2009.

A record of action, a promise of more

We renew the promise that we made 4 years ago to work with you and for you to make South Gloucestershire the best possible place to live and work in.

We have a proven record of action locally and we are promising you more.

Just think about how much more we can achieve together over the next 4 years.