



**Labour has a plan
to get Swindon's
future back**

**Swindon Labour
Local Elections
Manifesto
2024**

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Labour has been working hard for you since taking control of the Council last year.



We knew from the thousands of conversations that we had with Swindon residents ahead of the elections last year that you were worried about the Cost-of-Living Crisis, whether people in Swindon could reach their potential, about the state of the town and how we play our part in the climate crisis facing the country.

We were humbled by the overwhelming support that Labour received last year and straight away after taking control of the Council, we put together a Cost-of-Living action plan to help support residents and signpost them to the most appropriate support to help them deal with the huge rise in bills and mortgage payments following the catastrophic Conservative budget in 2022 that brought down Liz Truss and sent inflation soaring.

We then used the first Full Council meeting of the year to launch our Missions for the Council:

1. Combat Inequality

– make Swindon a fairer place, reduce disadvantage, make poorer areas richer and eliminate big disparities in life expectancy, education levels and social justice.

2. Build a Better Swindon

– create a town ready for the challenge of the coming decades, understanding what facilities and infrastructure we need. Understand the Council's direct and indirect role in improving the town centre and in creating more affordable housing while supporting and brokering support from the private sector.

3. Achieve Net Zero

– fully play our part as a Council and a town in combatting climate change. Work with communities to find new ways of doing things that help not hinder the natural environment.

Prior to taking control, we knew that there were key challenges facing the Council. The budget position was described to us as being the worst in living memory for Local Government when we took over the Council. At SBC, there was a projected budget overspend for 23/24 of £10m in July 2023 as well as a projected budget gap for 24/25 of nearly £27m. We knew that the Children's Services departments were not working as well as they should. We spoke to Ofsted as soon as we took over, and at a subsequent visit, they found the service to be 'inadequate'. We knew that staff morale was low and residents' trust in the Council and satisfaction in Council services was also very low.

We have tried to tackle all of these challenges head on – by working tirelessly to manage spending, we have eliminated the overspend and delivered a small surplus this year and managed to balance the budget for next year. We have agreed an action plan with Ofsted to improve the Children's Services department performance and focused heavily on resetting the relationship with the staff. We hope that over time we can prove to residents that the Council is more responsive to residents, and we will be able to demonstrate more trust in our services and performance.

We have also been delivering for you:

- Carried out the largest engagement project in the Council's history and are using the feedback to develop the Swindon Plan – our strategic plan to deliver on your missions.
- Invested £3m in transforming Children's Services, and allocated a further £2m to procure the best IT support for the department, a key recommendation of the Ofsted report.
- Increased financial support for Foster Carers.

- Obtained funding to create the first new youth provision in the Borough in years at the Lyndhurst Centre to help us support out young people and keep them away from crime.
- Expanded specialist support for young children by developing a new centre in Penhill.
- Supported GLL to reopen the Link Centre after the flooding, and prioritised support for the Swindon Wildcats Ice-hockey team to ensure they could stay in the league.
- Worked with Wiltshire Police to fight anti-social behaviour in the town centre and fund additional wardens.
- Agreed a deal with Seven Capital to reopen a refurbished Oasis, complete with iconic Dome, pool, wave machine and Domebuster slides!
- Improved our relationship with key partners such as Historic England and Arts Council England, and been designated as an Arts Council Priority Place.
- Started the process to make Swindon a Borough of Sanctuary.
- Obtained Sports England funding for increasing activity levels in the town.
- Relocated Swindon Museum and Art to the Civic Offices, restored the famous Gharial and promoted Swindon's incredible modern art collection.
- Held meaningful talks with the owner of the Mechanics' Institution and tried to reset the relationship with the Heritage Community in the town.
- And finally, we have just unveiled the masterplan for Marlowe Avenue – the largest plan for social housing in living memory delivering hundreds of new Council houses for the town.

We have more exciting plans for the town that we have been working on and will announce them when we can. We know that the town centre remains high on people's concerns and we have actively been working with partners to bring forward deliverable plans.

Swindon Labour believes in the town and your missions, and we will work tirelessly over the next year to deliver on our promises and repay your faith in us. We know that with your support we can keep on building a better Swindon.

Cllr Jim Robbins
Leader of Swindon Labour
and Swindon Borough Council.



Listening to residents and doing what you tell us.



We have worked tirelessly this year to really get Swindon Council back on track and improve the way that the Council responds to residents and really listens to their concerns. We met with senior officers immediately after the elections last year and set out how we wanted to change the relationship that we had with residents and really improve our engagement with residents and partners.

I'm really proud that we carried out the largest engagement exercise in the Council's history to make sure residents could get behind our plan for the town. We held seven events across the town for residents, five for staff members as well as recording a session for those who work shifts and held a drop-in session at the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Waterside. We also held a session for partner organisations and created bespoke sessions for hard-to-reach groups to make sure we heard from a wide range of residents.

The feedback was clear, and chimed with the messages that you have consistently given us on the doorstep:

- You want us to be holding developers to account to deliver on the key services that you need in the town, such as affordable housing, GP surgeries and the best possible schools.
- You want your families to be safe, but you fear knife crime and anti-social behaviour affecting your family. We need to work with the Police to lower the risk and reassure residents.
- Housing is really important to you. The cost of housing has spiked under the terrible leadership of Liz Truss, and Rishi Sunak hasn't

got it under control. We will build more council houses for Swindonians and try to create safer places for people to live.

- You want us to regenerate the town centre and create a town that people can be proud of and has all of the facilities that we need for the new ways of working, shopping and enjoying leisure time.
- Heritage is really important to residents and you want us to cherish the buildings and history of the town that make us unique. The Mechanics Institution, the Locarno and the Oasis are all closed and you want to see them open.
- Parks and Green Space consistently top the residents survey as a key demand, and you want us to improve and protect our green spaces.
- You want the roads around the town to be safe, well maintained and free of potholes.
- You want us to support the local economy and ensure new jobs and education opportunities are created in the town to help us thrive.

We are working hard on bringing forward the new Swindon Plan based on the feedback that you gave us and we are determined to get on with delivery if we can retain control of the Council in May.

We really need your vote to help us carry on building the better Swindon that you keep telling us you want, and we are keen to get the mandate to keep on working for you.

Cllr Emma Bushell
Deputy Leader of Swindon Labour
and Swindon Borough Council.

Our pledges to you

1

Town Centre - devise a bold regeneration plan for the town centre. Push property owners to introduce temporary uses to tackle empty shops in advance of redevelopment.

2

Young people - open new youth facilities and set up a council-run community engagement group to reduce knife crime and serious youth violence in the town.

3

Roads - lobby Government for additional funds for pothole repair and additional powers to manage roadworks better.

4

Get the Oasis re-opened - finalise the deal with the developer and explore options for a new performance venue for the town.

5

Tackle the Housing crisis - increase the number of council houses in the town and support everyone to have a safe and secure home.

