



Cheshire West & Chester

Election Manifesto 2023



Cheshire West and
Chester Conservatives



Our Vision

**A Cleaner, Greener,
Safer Borough
Open for Business**

Time for Change

**Stronger Leadership
for Cheshire West
and Chester**



Cheshire West and
Chester Conservatives

OUR KEY PLEDGES

1

Council Tax

End the 8-year cycle of Labour's 'Tax to the Max' – through streamlining council services, engaging staff in area efficiencies, and delivering a programme of increased financial prudence.

2

Parking

'Free after Three', new borough-wide Parking Policy supporting 'shop local' and the night-time economy, by working with businesses to build back our high streets.

3

Roads & Pavements

Tackling our deteriorating infrastructure – by increasing the Highways Maintenance budget by 50% to £4.5m pa, reversing Labour's cuts of £1.5m pa since 2015.

Raising the quality of our A-roads (currently below 40%) to 70% green quality.

4

Green Bin Tax

Abolish the Green Bin Tax by the end of the next Administration, starting with £10 reduction in Year 1.

5

Chester Walls

Reinstate the ring-fenced budget to proactively maintain and protect one of our Borough's most historic assets.



GETTING OUR COUNCIL WORKING FOR YOU

Investing in Front-Line Services – providing extra staff to improve motivation in service areas struggling to meet demands, streamlining delivery, and identifying best practice for improving productivity.

Putting Local Businesses First – addressing barriers to the business application process, by ensuring procurement is clear and simple and leads to increasing the number of local businesses who achieve contracts.

Reducing Procurement Costs – working with other councils to achieve savings through combined purchasing and contracting.

Generating Income – identifying new financial opportunities for the council's portfolio of offices, commercial property and community assets, increasing revenue currently static at 10%.

Reducing Financial Waste – rationalizing under-used park & ride points currently losing £1m pa.

Reducing Consultancy Costs – by using staff expertise to undertake tasks and reduce the average cost from £4.5m pa.

Transparent Council Finances – implement stricter financial scrutiny ensuring value for money and overspends such as the Best 4 Business IT (Information Technology) initiative are not repeated – currently £6.5m.

Managing Debt – identify barriers and causes to council services with low collection rates to reduce the current debt of over £10million.

Planning Applications – fully resourcing the team and streamlining the process for both residential and commercial planning applications, with set meetings across directorates to deliver decisions quickly and within mandatory timeframes.

Devolution – working with Government and neighbouring authorities to secure a Cheshire-wide devolution deal – delivering increased powers and funding to drive our local economy, increase inward investment, improve transport and infrastructure, whilst developing and supporting our communities across the Borough.



IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENT

New Tree Avenues in Urban Areas – planting tree avenues on entering Chester, and other key towns, with a variety of trees known to be effective in reducing carbon omissions, matched with a new borough-wide Tree Maintenance Policy.

Flooding – investing in tackling the issues causing surface water flooding through an improved and visible maintenance programme for gullies, grids and flat valves. Training Flood Wardens in mitigation and evacuation, protecting residents and businesses, by implementing the council's responsibilities as the Local Lead Flood Authority (LLFA) by ensuring Risk Management Authorities (RMAs), and the Canal & River Trust, are contract compliant.

New Community Area Teams (CATs) – to be responsible and accountable for the upkeep of local roads, pavements, grids, gullies, verges and white line visibility, improving the environment and increasing local community pride – annual incentives for the most improved areas.

Climate Change – commitment to continuing as a cross cutting theme, embedding thinking, and encouraging innovative ideas across all areas of council work.

Public Rights of Way (PROW) – working with residents and parish councils we will lock-in an additional annual maintenance budget of £250k to improve the network, while working towards all council owned green spaces being as accessible as possible to encourage walking and wellbeing.

Recycling – to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill, which has increased from 808 tonnes in 2019/20 to 2858 tonnes in 2020/21, and to ensure centres have consistent opening times and access days. Also, to review the cost of commercial recycling, to address barriers to recycling - to reverse the concerning drop from 59.11% to 54.47%.

CCTV or Automatic Number Recognition (ANR) – increased to reduce fly-tipping, and vehicle congestion hot spots.

INVESTING IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

Transport – rethinking borough-wide subsidised school and public transport strategy, for savings and efficiencies to benefit the rural areas.

Highways – providing timely responses and sustainable repairs to potholes, thereby reducing costs. Working with the Police & Crime Commissioner, supporting the implementation of average speed assessments and units, to monitor speed and volume through a council financed Community Speeding Control Fund, and reviewing the need for more Pedestrian Crossings.

Roads & Pavements – based on the national traffic light system for quality, the aim is to raise the current network of A/B/C/U roads to 70% Green for A roads, currently below 40% - way behind most other boroughs. Investing in pavements, to reach 60% Green standard - which has dropped from 49.81% in 2015 to 35.39% in 2022 this is just not good enough, when walking is being encouraged.

Cycling – investing in new cycle ways, while improving the maintenance of the current cycle network, providing more and better parking for cycles and motorbikes.

Electric Charging Points – working with communities and the private sector on identifying the best locations and removing any barriers to increasing the network.



INVESTING IN OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

Verges, Drains & Gullies – to publish a visible and transparent maintenance schedule and cycle of works, prioritising areas of high need, through improving reporting mechanisms for the Community Area Teams to respond to.

Housing Developers – focusing on smaller private developments and incentivizing developers to build quickly on sites with permissions, and ensuring contributions deliver maximum community benefit.

Derelict Sites – bringing them back into use by activating the Council's right, under the S215 of the Town & Country Planning Act, to take steps in requiring land to be cleaned up when its condition adversely affects the amenity of the area.

Household & Non-Household Waste – to prioritise recycling, reuse or composting to maximise the reduction of waste entering landfill. Our ambition is to take the Council beyond its 65% target recycling rate by 2024, improving the percentage year on year, through concerted efforts to raise awareness and maximising the new waste /recycling service.

Major Infrastructure Projects – we will review both costs and proposals for solutions where funding bids have been unsuccessful, to address congestion at key pinch points across the borough, like Winnington Bridge in Northwich and Hoole Bridge in Chester.





The Fishmonger's Hall

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ERNEST JONES

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chesca

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Wolfe

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GROWING OUR ECONOMY

Inward Investment – building on the success of Winsford Road 1 to 6 and Ellesmere Port Origin Industrial Estates in attracting companies to grow the economy, thereby increasing jobs - especially in the green economy and Hydrogen energy.

Training – promoting the fantastic ‘free training’ opportunities to increase take-up and develop the skills base, to underpin not only the green economy but also digital expansion in an everchanging job market and supporting inward investment.

Planning & Enforcement – tackling barriers and increasing staff to reduce the application backlog and slow responses to enforcement issues, by increasing University placements, apprenticeships, and re-training or upskilling staff to address shortages in key service areas.

High Streets – to fill empty premises due to retail changes, by regenerating and repurposing to meet changing social needs, and engaging with the private sector to deliver new leisure and sporting activities, food and beverage outlets, events, and education opportunities.

Tourism – targeted promotion of staycations linked to rural tourism offers as a driver for increasing the rural visitor economy. Repurposing council properties as wedding venues or to provide social events, as appropriate, for increasing visitors and revenue.

Heritage & Chester Walls – dedicated ring-fenced funding to match funding pre-2015 for maintaining this historic site and unique visitor experience of our historic past. All other important buildings and sites will be reviewed to ensure appropriate maintenance programmes. Heritage assets capable of adaptation without loss of their significance will be identified as viable options to facilitate change, optimising use of much-loved assets that can bring continued investment.

Attractions – working with the private sector to deliver new attractions to complement and enhance Chester and other borough towns, increasing footfall and adding some fun to the visitor economy such as zip wires, big wheels etc.



HELPING OUR FAMILIES

Health & Wellbeing – sustaining initiatives to promote and improve physical and mental health.

Social Care – providing choices for families that deliver reliable, value for money services, while harnessing technology to help people retain independence in their own homes.

Schools & Places – ensuring sufficient school places, helping parents gain their first choice of school. While incentivising walking, cycling and car sharing to reduce costs and carbon omissions, implement competition for the most innovative schools.

Apprenticeships – promoting apprenticeships to utilise the levy both in-house and with the Council's supply chain, to increase the number of apprenticeships.

Leisure – extending Park Runs, outdoor gyms, sporting activities, events & performances, making libraries and mobile libraries multi-purpose service centres.

Cost of Living – promoting website signposting to pragmatic approaches for reducing costs; energy, broadband, food & nutrition, recycling, travel, supporting community groups.

New Homes – building more homes or converting commercial property to residential use is a must to reduce the numbers of people in bed & breakfast - currently costing £2m pa - invest savings in one bedroom accommodation and affordable homes to meet demand.

Children in Care – as corporate parents, children need the best start in life and with numbers increasing and costs escalating, providing more suitable, accessible accommodation within the borough is a priority.



LISTENING TO LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Empowering Communities – using the Health & Wellbeing Board to reduce inequalities. Using peoples lived experience alongside professional expertise to deliver shared solutions to improve their quality of life.

Community Assets Transfers – reviewing the policy for simplifying the process of reusing properties, for communities interested in running and providing activities and interests for a wide variety of community groups. Not necessarily transferring but leasing, to ensure sustainability and success.

Gypsies & Travellers – to identify a suitable location for providing a transit site to enable unauthorized encampments to be moved to an authorised site.

Local Maintenance Contracts – to deliver a pilot programme for town and parish councils, or community groups, to be proactive in running local grass cutting and litter picking contracts - ensuring viability and sustainability through value for money, and implementing long term parish improvements.

Rural Communities – working with our farming communities to support sustainable local food production and next generation of farmers.

Walk-in Health Centres – to persue the possibility of developing a network of centres to help the rural communities where public transport is limited.



**TO
LET**

HQ OFFICE












01244 408200

HQ Offices

HQ OFFICE

HQ OFFICE

8 YEARS OF LABOUR'S WASTE AND FAILURES

-  IT system – rocketing from £11.8m to £25m due to poor project management
-  Winnington Bridge – still not delivered after 8 years of promises
-  Bus & Cycle Lanes in Chester – costing £200k. Caused mayhem, before being closed with removal still awaited, at yet more cost
-  Staffing – recruitment explosion of 300 extra staff with 17 earning over £100k pa
-  Roads – Under 40% of A/B/C/U roads meeting green standards
-  Furniture – £2m on new furniture when 70% of staff are working from home
-  Fly-tipping – up from 3701 incidents to a staggering 5725 over 7 years, costing £400k
-  Recycling – levels down from 60% to 56%
-  Claims – for personal injuries (roads & pavements) since 2015 £1.6m with £1.4m pending
-  Planning – backlog of 700 applications which has been static for years
-  Consultancy – still running at £4.5m pa

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