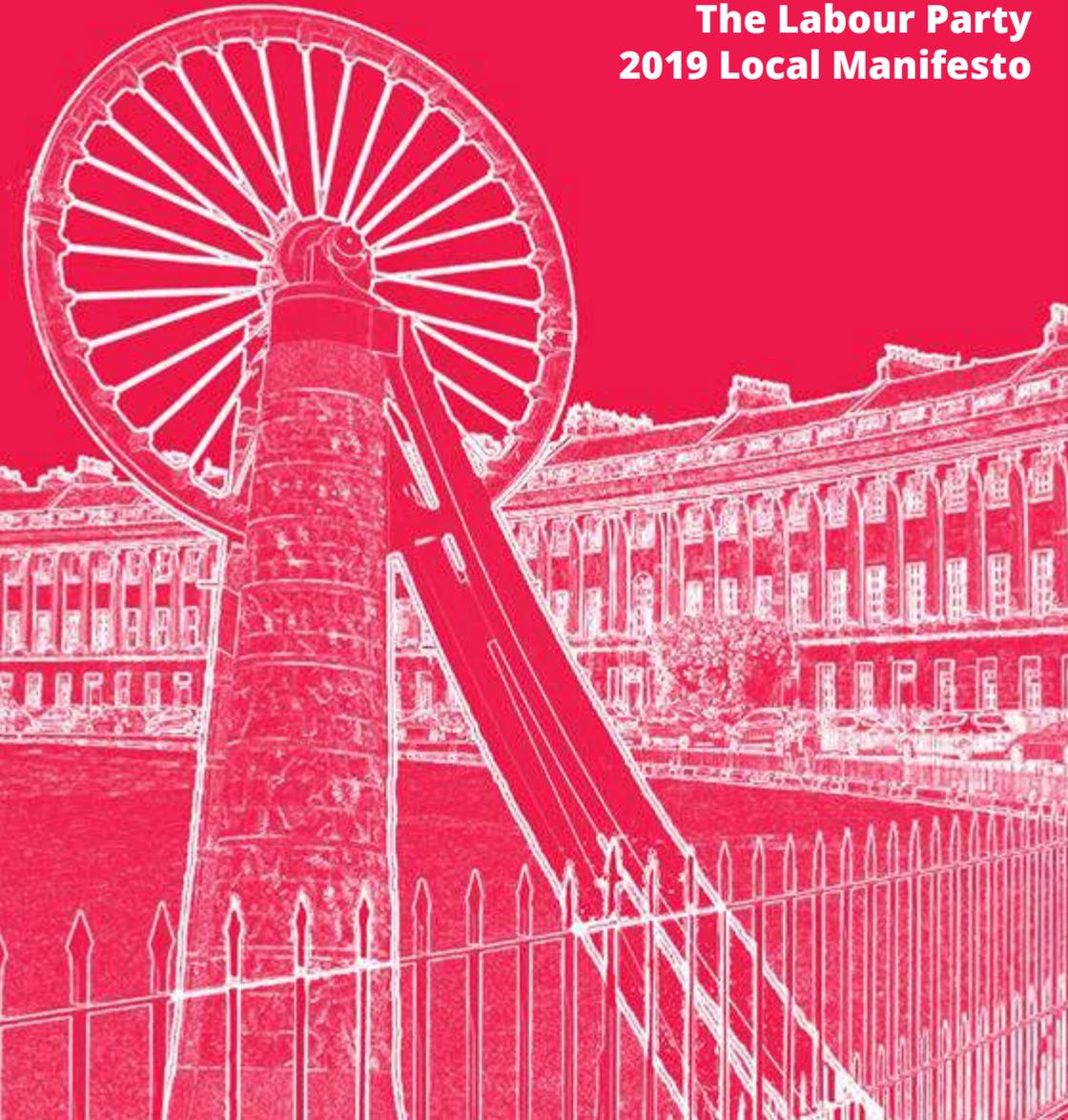


TRANSFORMING

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

FOR THE MANY NOT THE FEW

The Labour Party
2019 Local Manifesto



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Foreword

Bath & North East Somerset has so much to offer: from the delights of Georgian architecture in Bath to our mining and agricultural heritage in North East Somerset. However, under the surface lies a different story; a story of poverty and inequality.

There are parts of Bath & North East Somerset where people live ten years less than their peers a couple of miles away, where young people are ten times less likely to go to university than people they went to school with, and where up to a third of children live in poverty.

Years of austerity and underinvestment have put us into this shameful position.

Bath & North East Somerset stands at a crossroads at this election. Either we can choose to continue with the tired Conservative and Liberal Democrat councils of the past – passing power between them with nothing ever really changing – or we can choose to do things differently.

This is Labour's ambitious plan to do things differently.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robin Moss', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Robin Moss
Leader of Bath & North East Somerset Labour Group



Affordable homes for people, not profit

We are not currently addressing our huge housing need and our country and our local area are in the midst of a housing crisis. We simply must build more homes that are for people, not profit. We will make the provision of housing that is genuinely affordable our number-one priority.

A Labour Council will:

- Start building council housing again.
- Change the priorities of ADL, the Council's wholly owned development company, to ensure that more social rented homes are built and rented out by the Council, not by a housing association.
- Encourage parish councils to use their powers to purchase land and build council houses for local key workers and provide support for community-led and community-owned affordable housing.

Rough sleeping has nearly trebled since the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition came to power in 2010, while other forms of homelessness ('sofa surfing' etc) have also sky-rocketed. This is completely unacceptable.

A Labour Council will:

- Publicise properly the existing support system for military families and veterans.
- Work with existing agencies and partnerships to address rough sleeping and other types of homelessness in Bath & North East Somerset.
- Provide more funding to enable the re-possession, refurbishment and sale of derelict properties, to develop homes above shops and garages and to adapt empty commercial and operational properties to provide temporary housing for homeless people. We will count the numbers of people in temporary accommodation and rough sleeping every quarter in order to monitor the success of our approach.

Landlords and developers make their profits from housing, which comes with major responsibilities. Many take those responsibilities seriously and some go above and beyond. However, too many also try to get away with renting out homes that are substandard or not building the affordable homes that they are obliged to build.

Since the Lib Dem/Tory Coalition Government removed the cap on student numbers, Bath particularly has experienced a proliferation of student accommodation – through both the conversion of family homes into HMOs and the development of Purpose Built Student Accommodation on brownfield sites. This results in the loss of Council Tax, and many residents feel that their communities are now unbalanced, losing shops and a sense of neighbourhood.

A Labour Council will:

- Set up a partnership of local authorities affected by the growth in student housing, such as Bristol, York, Canterbury and Exeter, to lobby government both to reintroduce the cap on student numbers and to give local councils the power to introduce other measures to curb the impact of student accommodation.
- Ensure that all rented property is decent and safe by investigating the extension of the present (self-funded) licensing scheme to all rented properties on a rolling basis, not just student HMOs. We will require all eligible landlords to apply for a licence. In order to encourage landlords to rent property at or below the Local Housing Allowance Rate, we will exempt those doing so from the licensing fee.
- Open up more of the private rented sector in Bath to people on low incomes by proposing to government that Bath, where rents are higher, becomes a separate Broad Rental Market Area (BRMA) from North East Somerset, where rents are lower.
- Enforce minimum levels of affordable housing in new developments using the Local Housing Allowance as the upper limit, including service charges, to determine whether a housing development is genuinely affordable. We will commit ourselves to strict scrutiny of financial viability statements, which developers use to shirk their responsibilities, and we will force developers to publish their financial viability statements so that the public can see them.
- Lobby government to give us the powers to control the spread of and license short-term holiday lets (like those let through AirBnB).
- Give more resources for the enforcement team in the planning (Development Management) team, to make sure planning policies are abided by.
- Use planning policy such as the Neighbourhood Plan system to ensure that the right size of property is in the right location.
- Establish a register of complaints sent to councillors about housing associations,

such as Curo. This will allow the council to hold them to account properly by pointing to patterns in their failure to tackle specific issues.

Just having new homes is not enough. We need to make our communities safer and more enjoyable places to live.

A Labour Council will:

- Improve allotment provision to enable families to grow their own food as part of planning consents.
- Install more street lighting where new LED lights provide less cover. Currently unlit pathways on housing estates will be provided with lighting.



A fair start for all children

Our future success as an area is dependent on how we nurture young people today. Children's services and education should aim to reduce inequalities. Yet as a result of Government's failed education policy, which has taken responsibility for schools away from local authorities, we have seen the closure of two secondary schools serving our most deprived communities. This has led to significant gaps in education provision.

A Labour Council will:

- Seek robust scrutiny of academies, push for the B&NES School Standards Board to have higher status, and support it to narrow the gap between advantaged and disadvantaged children.
- Encourage schools to coordinate their admissions policies for the benefit of local children, and run a campaign to encourage parents to use all their available choices when applying for schools, in order to reduce the number of children having to travel long distances to school.
- Work with schools and local mental health services to

improve the provision of mental health support in schools and for young people not in school.

It is a sad fact that one in five children in Bath & North East Somerset lives in poverty. Many children live in inadequate and unaffordable housing. As a result of the Government's austerity programme, they are growing up in homes where there is insufficient money to ensure they are properly clothed and fed and where parents are going hungry in favour of feeding their children.

A Labour Council will:

- Give responsibility for addressing the causes and effects of child poverty to the Leader of Council, to ensure that this issue gets the priority it deserves.
- End the use of bailiffs to collect Council Tax debt. Bailiffs are not ethical or effective; they make profit by pushing people even further into unaffordable debt. There are other ways to collect debt that do not allow people simply to avoid paying what they owe, but actively support those who are struggling.

- Promote healthy eating initiatives and run a campaign to battle stigma around free school meals, encouraging those who are eligible to claim them to do so. This is not just good for the child but also means more money for their school. We will also work with local charities and food suppliers on projects to provide meals to children during the school holidays. We will put the emphasis on wraparound care rather than just meals, in order to avoid any stigma.
- Work to end period poverty in Bath & North East Somerset by providing a universal supply of reusable sanitary products to girls. We will also work with schools to ensure that they are always able to provide disposable sanitary products to those in need.

Young people need services and opportunities that work for them. Vibrant and engaging services and opportunities reduce crime, improve education outcomes and benefit our economy and society in the long term.

A Labour Council will:

- Work with providers to ensure that there are sufficient childcare places to meet the needs of the local community.
- Extend the Connecting Families Programme so more families in need get early and constructive

help. Early interventions are always more cost effective.

- Undertake a recruitment drive to address the shortage of Council foster carers.
- Protect Youth Services by ensuring that changes in the way these work do not result in deterioration of quality. We will provide services that are inclusive and community based, preventing problems further down the line.

We need to ensure that our young people are equipped with the skills that our local economy needs, and that enable them to reach their potential and contribute to society as a whole.

A Labour Council will:

- Work with the West of England Combined Authority to enable young people to access good-quality apprenticeships.
- Ensure that apprenticeships are included, where appropriate, in any contracts that the Council has with external organisations (e.g. for construction work or the delivery of social care services).
- Set up a Skills Forum with local employers and educators to assess what skills are required and determine how we can help to cultivate those skills.



EMERGENCY DOOR
TO OPEN PULL HANDLE



The Future
Is

First

Sustainable transport and a clean environment

Where it is possible, we want to encourage people to make journeys by walking and cycling. Not only would this have a positive impact on pollution and climate change, but it's also a much healthier option than any other mode of transport.

A Labour Council will:

- Promote the 'Safer Routes to School' Programme.
- Invest in safe, segregated cycle paths on key cycle routes and produce safe cycle maps.
- Pedestrianise or partially pedestrianise areas of Bath city centre, with exact roads to be decided following detailed modelling and consultation with residents and businesses.

Where walking or cycling isn't possible, public transport should be a convenient and affordable option. As a result of high-cost housing, more and more people are forced to live outside Bath. This means more people use cars to come into the city. Our bus system currently serves the interests of bus company shareholders, not the public. That is wrong and we would make correcting it a priority.

A Labour Council will:

- Work with the West of England Combined Authority to implement a bus franchising scheme. This would put control over bus routes, fare levels, frequency and vehicle accessibility in the hands of transport authorities and bring in an integrated ticketing system and low-emission buses. When we have a Labour government, this will also mean free bus travel for under-25s.
- Work with local bus companies, in the meantime, to extend the 50% discount on full fares from children aged 5–15 to all under-19-year-olds.
- Lobby for the powers to set up a bus company, and in the meantime encourage the foundation of co-operative not-for-profit bus companies that could bid to provide services.
- Support additional – and more frequent – rural bus services and support a bus system that links key focal points around the city of Bath, not just the city centre (e.g. Park & Rides, train stations, universities, RUH, schools etc).
- Move forward with investigation into trams, utilising 'green

wave' technology to provide quick, sustainable, reliable and affordable transport along key routes around and into Bath.

- Work with our partners to improve rail services, including pushing for the reopening of Radstock railway line and Saltford Station.

While we want to make other options more appealing, sometimes journeys by car are necessary. It is imperative that we tackle air pollution and climate change, but that we don't make driving a car a luxury for the rich. We recognise the importance of Bathampton Meadows to the setting of our World Heritage City; we promise we will always protect the meadows, and will not promote or allow any development that would harm their special character.

A Labour Council will:

- Introduce a Clean Air Zone in Bath with charges for high-emission buses, coaches, private-hire vehicles, taxis, HGVs and LGVs/vans, but not for private cars.
- Only support an A36/A46 link road that is both financially viable and environmentally sustainable. There is no current plan that meets both of these criteria.
- Review the method of dealing with potholes so they are better prioritised and fixed more durably. Filling in a pothole just

for it to reappear the following year is not a good use of public money.

- Limit parking permits for hotels in areas with resident-parking-schemes and a high concentration of hotels and raise the prices so they are in line with those for residents.

Through climate change, air pollution and ocean plastic, humans are causing lasting and catastrophic damage to our planet. We must do everything we can to halt and reverse this damage.

A Labour Council will:

- Take action to make the Council carbon neutral by 2030 at the latest.
- Oppose all fracking in Bath & North East Somerset and use every power available to stop it from happening.
- Introduce Supplementary Planning Guidance to support hydroelectric, solar and wind turbine energy sources where not already included in the Local Plan.
- Continue with the policy introduced by Labour councillors to prevent badger culling taking place on any land controlled by the Council. Lobby the Government not to permit culling at all in our area.
- Stop using single-use plastics in Council buildings and work with residents, visitors and businesses to promote

alternatives to single-use plastics.

- Ensure all Council buildings are as energy efficient as possible
- Support a programme of energy efficiency measures in properties in B&NES to address fuel poverty and climate change – for example, undertaking a feasibility study into using Bath’s hot springs to heat the Guildhall.
- Ensure our parks are properly maintained, with grass cut regularly and sufficient bins. During summer months, when bins are overflowing, provide temporary wheelie bins.
- Work with businesses to ensure that they are disposing of waste safely and legally and that they are not encouraging the feeding of gulls. Encourage businesses to use the Council’s own business waste and recycling collection service and ensure that the charges made to businesses for this service do not act as a disincentive to presenting waste properly.
- Review the cost and frequency of the Council’s garden waste collection service to ensure that it meets the needs of residents and does not penalise them for seeking to dispose of garden waste responsibly.
- Use the Council’s limited licensing powers to reduce the number of back-garden fireworks displays. We will also lobby Government for the

power to allow only licensed fireworks displays, in line with RSPCA recommendations. Fireworks displays can be great fun for children, but they can also be very dangerous and alarming to pets.



Healthy and independent people

The Council has a duty to provide social care for all who require it. We have a responsibility to make sure that all people in our area can live a healthy and independent life in the context of severe constraints imposed by national policies and lack of resources.

A Labour Council will:

- Sign the Ethical Care Charter. This establishes a minimum baseline for the safety, quality and dignity of care by ensuring employment conditions that do not routinely short-change service users. We will also improve the recruitment and retention of a more stable workforce through more sustainable pay, conditions and training levels. This in turn leads to better services.
- Ensure that carers are able to park near the homes of people they are caring for, without charge.
- Ensure that developers build the care homes that they are committed to.
- Prioritise care homes in or near centres of population, so residents are not isolated from friends and family, and assess the feasibility of building Council-owned care homes.

- Insist that there is a higher percentage of Homes for Life in each development, so that disabled people and those with long-term health conditions do not have to move.
- Reinstate funding for carers to have breaks from their caring responsibilities.
- Use all powers available to hold commissioned social care providers (e.g. Virgin Care) to account, and remove contracts if providers are not delivering on their commitments.
- Encourage the establishment of social care providers locally which are organised as co-operatives.

Poverty and disadvantage, including poor housing, affect health outcomes. Encouraging people to live healthier lifestyles and offering early interventions for health problems is better for the individual and for the public purse. The earlier we can help someone, the better their outcomes will be and the cheaper the cost to the taxpayer.

A Labour Council will:

- Work to ensure that our communities are genuinely inclusive for disabled people

- and those with long-term health conditions, e.g. making sure that the needs of people with dementia are understood and respected, and that appropriate support services are provided.
- Introduce a joined-up strategy on preventative care, easing the burden on the NHS and social care provision.
- Work with our partners in health and leisure to foster active lifestyles and support health promotion initiatives.
- Expand social prescribing provision in the area, which reduces the cost burden on GPs, hospitals and social care.
- Introduce mandatory Health and Equalities Impacts Assessment for all planning applications above a minimum size.
- Use our powers to tackle hate crime in whatever form it may take. We will address the issue of under-reporting of these crimes by running a campaign to encourage victims to come forward.

A Labour Government would reverse the cuts to policing that have seen the closure of Bath Police Station and a surge in crime – particularly robbery which is growing at one of the fastest rates in the country, and hate crime, which increased by 20.7% in Bath & North East Somerset in 2017–18.

A Labour Council will:

- Work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to ensure our community is safer for us all. We will lobby for a police station in Bath and work to secure the future of Radstock Police Station.



A Council that puts residents first

For far too long, people have felt ignored by their Council. We have council elections every four years, but that doesn't mean that residents' participation in decision making should take place only every four years. A Labour Council would value the contributions that residents can make to the way our area is run, and that means making sure those residents know that they are being heard.

To this end, **a Labour Council will:**

- Hold a minimum of six 'People's Question Time' events each year around the authority area, with the leader and cabinet.
- Make sure consultations take place before firm decisions are made. Too often, consultations feel tokenistic and meaningless. Where we have a mandate for change, we will deliver change, but we understand that that won't always be easy. We will be sensitive to people's concerns and listen to what they think would help.
- Set up focused policy groups to which the public are invited within the formal structures of the Council to listen to the views of residents and interest groups on issues.

- Ensure that Labour councillors always act in the best interests of their residents, hold regular surgeries and public meetings and constantly stay in touch with them, not just at election time.

Listening more to residents, while a good start, is not enough on its own. We also need to make sure that our Council is representative of the area that we serve. Only a third of our councillors are women and only a handful are under 40.

In addition to having a diverse group of candidates running for election to be Labour councillors in this election, **a Labour Council will also:**

- Value equality and diversity and seek to appoint a gender-balanced Cabinet that is representative of the community we serve.
- Set up a councillor mentoring scheme to encourage underrepresented groups to stand for Council, no matter what party (or no party) they plan to stand for.
- Pro-actively engage with underrepresented groups in relevant consultations.

- Invite the Member of the Youth Parliament for B&NES to attend and contribute to Cabinet meetings, and encourage young people to become involved in democratic processes.
- Review the ways in which the Council could be more inclusive for councillors from underrepresented groups, including a review of members' allowances.

Who makes decisions about our communities is important. Decisions should always be made as closely as possible to the people they affect. However, this is currently under threat, with Conservatives and Liberal Democrats both keeping the door open to the merger of Bath & North East Somerset Council with parts of Somerset, just because it would be better for them politically.

A Labour Council will:

- Oppose any plans to merge Bath & North East Somerset Council with any part of cash-strapped Somerset County Council.
- Establish a cross-party commission to bring forward recommendations about whether we should have parish councils in Bath, with a view to holding a referendum on the issue in the next Council term, should the commission decide to support parish councils.
- Lobby government for more

powers (such as powers over healthcare) to be devolved to the Council and to the West of England Combined Authority, and for those powers to come with the required funding.

Libraries have been under attack in Bath & North East Somerset and across the country as a whole.

A Labour Council will:

- Protect libraries, with the promise of no cuts to the libraries budget in the future.
- Review the mobile library service with the aim of buying new vehicles. We would base new routes on both social need and geography, and integrate a mobile One Stop Shop into the mobile library, taking the Council to our communities with outreach work.



A thriving local economy

Bath city centre and other shopping areas are undoubtedly going through a difficult time. There are far too many empty shops and a lot of small independent businesses are on the edge of having to close.

Meanwhile, as a result of the Government's economic policies and the impact of austerity, local residents have found that their wages have stagnated. More and more working people are reliant on benefits to get by.

It is important that we support local businesses that pay their taxes, create jobs and operate ethically.

A Labour Council will:

- Put our local community first by taking a Community Wealth Building approach to our economic policy. This would involve working with other local 'anchor institutions', including housing associations, our two universities, colleges, health and social care providers and the police, to encourage the purchase of goods and services from local businesses, co-operatives and charities. By doing this, we will keep wealth within our local area, grow our local economy and create jobs
- for local people.
- Use our powers as a Council and as the owner of much commercial property to help local businesses wherever possible – for example by using social-value principles of equality, wellbeing and environmental sustainability, as well as price, to determine who we rent to and at what rates. We would also lobby Government for extra powers where they are required.
- Work with local communities on economic development plans for local shopping hubs.
- Assess the feasibility and risks of developing a Council Investment Bank for local small and medium enterprises, using Council reserves. We will offer support to co-operatives, mutuals and credit unions.
- Work with foodbanks and facilitate the creation of a food co-operative whose overriding objectives will be to eliminate food poverty, reduce food waste and support local food producers.
- Support the development of the Bath and Somer Valley Enterprise Zones as critical to securing economic growth in the area. They will encourage

diversification of the local economy and provide jobs for the future, alongside safeguarding land outside these areas for economic and employment use.

- Recognise the contribution tourism makes to the local economy while seeking to balance this with the needs of residents. We will promote tourism in North East Somerset as well as in Bath so that the economic benefits can be shared more widely. We will press for the legislative changes required to introduce a Tourism Tax.

Bath & North East Somerset Council is one of the largest employers in our area and we must lead by example. Our local economy will thrive only when our household economies thrive. We look forward to a Labour Government that is committed to reforming Universal Credit.

A Labour Council will:

- Get Living Wage accreditation for the Council and insist that those with Council contracts also pay a real Living Wage.
- End the use of zero-hour contracts for the Council and insist that those with Council contracts do not use them either.
- Encourage local businesses to follow our lead and also pay a real Living Wage, only

use secure contracts and recognise trade unions in their workplaces. We will investigate ways in which we can incentivise this.

- Review our welfare scheme and council tax reduction scheme so that people who are struggling get the best support we can offer. We will retain funding for the income maximisation service.

In recent years, the Council has set up companies from which it can get a profit that can be reinvested in public services. This is a good idea at a time when our budgets are under immense pressure, but we must also ensure that our duties to residents are not forgotten in the process.

A Labour Council will:

- Review how these companies are run, so that elected councillors can still see and scrutinise how Council money is being spent.
- Assess whether this model would also work for the Council's human resources and IT functions. This will allow them to provide a bespoke IT and HR service to local small businesses, using the model of Audit West, which trades profitably and supports services outside B&NES Council.

The Council has large numbers of contracts with external

organisations who provide goods and services to or on behalf of the Council. We need to make sure that the public gets the best value for money.

A Labour Council will:

- Carry out a complete review of our contracts with external organisations within the first 100 days, and map out what will continue to be bought from outside and what will be delivered in-house. This will be based on the principles of social value (such as the extent to which they increase equality, improve wellbeing and maximise environmental sustainability), value for money and due diligence.

It's no secret that our Council and local councils across the whole country are struggling because of the failed austerity project begun by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government. Councils have no choice but to find new ways of working.

A Labour Council will:

- Vigorously oppose the austerity agenda and urge the Government to reverse the cuts it has made to our Council.
- Support a tourist tax, business rates on Purpose Built Student Accommodation, and a greater rent from the University of Bath than a peppercorn.
- Budget in a holistic way rather

than on a service-by-service basis, so that we are always working to achieve our vision for this area.

- Create a replacement for the Ward Councillor's Initiative scheme by introducing a shared pot of money across the whole of Bath & North East Somerset that local communities and local areas can bid for.

There has not been enough ambition for our area in recent years. We are a living area, not a museum, and we need to be moving forwards. It is important that we think long term about what our area will look like in decades to come.

A Labour Council will:

- Resist selling off Council assets, recognising that it is better to hold on to them so they can be used in the best interests of our communities. However, where this is not financially viable, we will always favour organisations such as co-operatives and charities to take on those assets.
- Bring forward a plan to fund capital projects that will improve our communities, not just the areas that are frequented by tourists.

Our key pledges to you

1 We will build new council homes

2 We will lift children out of poverty

3 We will introduce bus fares and routes that work for local residents

4 We will pay our care workers properly

5 We will give you a greater say over Council decision making

6 We will invest in local businesses

Vote  Labour Thursday 2 May

Promoted by Joseph Gillings on behalf of Bath & North East Somerset Labour Party, both at 136a Walcot Street, Bath, BA1 5BG.
Printed by Instantprint, Unit A Brookfields Park, Manvers Way, Manvers, S63 5DR.