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Suffolk County Council Labour Group is dedicated to making Suffolk a fairer, greener, healthier and safer County.

All people in our County need to benefit from the sustainable economic development of Suffolk. We aim to encourage businesses, to improve our transport & IT infrastructure, protect our environment, support young people into work, and encourage the fairer distribution of wealth and income.

We believe that by delivering high quality public services to those who need them the most, we can create a more equal and a more productive County.

**Our approach will be to invest in the prevention of problems wherever possible**, in preference to having to deal with the consequences. We will enable as many people as possible to support themselves and contribute to Suffolk society.

We are committed to responsible budgeting, but are convinced that the £198 million* that the Conservatives have built up in the County’s reserves is far greater than the amount needed to be safe, and that it makes no sense to continue to add to this enormous sum.

*SCC Cabinet 15-11-2016 p32

Labour will use the money that the County already has, to invest in;

I. **Education** for our children and young people;

II. **Care services** that are preventative and early-intervention to improve health and reduce the need for expensive nursing care;

III. **Roads and transport** that are safe, effective, healthy and sustainable;

IV. **Broadband** to improve the productivity of our County; and in our

V. **Fire Service**, in **Trading Standards** and in **Flood Prevention measures** to improve our safety and make us better able to deal with emergencies.

We will put forward a budget amendment for 2017/18 in February, which will seek to achieve those aims. If we are elected to form an administration, we pledge to introduce in full the amendments we proposed in February at the Annual Meeting in May 2017.

We believe that the Government should use Devolution to give local councils more powers and resources. We are opposed to the imposition of a directly elected Mayor because we believe local councillors are more responsive to local needs. However, if the Government decides that there will be an elected Mayor, we will work as closely as possible with the Mayor to gain the maximum benefit for the people of Suffolk from the additional resources for transport, planning and training.
II ... **Transport** - dedicated to delivering better services throughout the County

The economy, the environment, and the well-being of Suffolk all suffer as a result of poor transport.

The state of Suffolk’s roads is one of our residents’ most frequently voiced concerns about Council services. We will improve the quality of our roads. And we will use the County’s resources to support public and community transport, and improve walking and cycling, to promote health and protect the environment, and to help those without access to cars.

**A Labour-led administration at Suffolk County Council will:**

Use capital to **improve planned road and footway maintenance** to prevent potholes occurring in the first place.

Allocate an adequate budget for **annual verge and hedge cutting** to enable safe use of footways and footpaths for all.

Use all available powers to **create a more coherent, comprehensive, accountable, affordable and less polluting bus service** for Suffolk.

Increase investment in **passenger transport**, and carry out a thorough review of bus services which have been cut, with a view to reinstatement where possible.

Increase the number of, and improve existing **bus shelters**, raised-level bus stops, printed onsite timetables and booklets, and online information.

Re-institute an effective and comprehensive transport discount card for young people in education or training and restore **24-hour free bus travel for the disabled and for older people working in the voluntary sector.**

**Restore funding for Community Transport** and build up a new County-managed fleet of vehicles to support community organisations which cannot afford to purchase their own.

Invest in an expanded network of **high-quality dedicated cycle-paths**, especially alongside waterways and on the tracks of old railways, for both commuting and leisure purposes.

**Develop coherent cycling plans** for all the towns in Suffolk.

**Encourage cycle tourism and leisure cycling** by improving existing rural cycling routes and developing new ones.

**Promote walking** as an effective transport mode and as a healthy life-choice.

**Make road junctions in our towns more pedestrian-friendly.**

Introduce a programme of **20mph safety zones in residential urban areas**, and make capital available to build physical safety measures where necessary.

Work with Ipswich Borough Council and bus service operators to **find a stable financial model for Park and Ride in Ipswich**, and investigate reopening Bury Road Park & Ride.
Commit to a North Ipswich Relief Road to take traffic out of Norwich Rd and Whitton, alleviate congestion in North Ipswich, and provide a viable alternative route when the Orwell Bridge is closed.

“We will fight for better roads in Ipswich, especially where there is new development or where there is already congestion.

We will change junctions around the town where necessary to reduce congestion and air pollution as well as making the town safer for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.”

Sandra Gage, Labour Councillor for Rushmere and Spokesperson for Roads, Transport and Planning

Work with bus service operators to improve bus services between North & South Lowestoft.

Work with Network Rail and Anglian Water to ease congestion in Oulton Broad.

Re-examine and, where feasible, improve the road layout, junctions and one-way systems in Ipswich, working with Ipswich Borough Council, local Councillors and residents groups, in order to; improve the flow, reduce congestion, reduce air pollution and make the town safer for motorists, pedestrians.

Introduce electronic advance Car-Park signs to let drivers know where spaces are available and thus reduce unnecessary queuing.

Produce a definitive footpath map for Ipswich to complete the coverage for Suffolk.

Ensure the building of the Lowestoft 3rd Crossing is commenced by the end of 2018, and finished by the end of 2020 as promised, and meet any shortfall in funding from County Reserves, if necessary, up to £30 million.

Investigate a possible Park & Ride scheme for Lowestoft.

Investigate a possible Park & Ride scheme for Bury St Edmunds.

Commission a new study into restoring the Haverhill – Cambridge railway and push for it to be built as soon as possible. Prior to the rail line being restored, institute a regular high-speed bus service between the two towns.

Take a more active role in pushing for the electrification of the Felixstowe to Nuneaton rail line and other major improvements to this route.

Make a fresh case for a new station at Great Cornard.

Investigate all viable schemes for taking through-traffic out of Sudbury town centre, including a Western by-pass.

Work with bus service operators to improve bus services in Sudbury & Great Cornard.
III ... **Economy** - declaring Suffolk, ‘open for business!’

Suffolk’s residents need and want fulfilling work which uses their skills and properly rewards their efforts. An economy which provides those opportunities depends on having a well-educated and well-motivated population.

We need to play to our strengths; our countryside and environment, our ports, our proximity to London and to Europe, our links with IT and Insurance, and our relative abundance of space for businesses to start and to flourish.

And we need to identify and remove hurdles to achieving more, such as congestion, poor connectivity, and skills shortages.

**A Labour-led administration will use the influence and resources of Suffolk Council to:**

- **Press ahead with the high-speed Broadband programme** to bring better coverage and higher speeds to homes and businesses throughout Suffolk.

- **Campaign for and, where necessary invest in, comprehensive mobile phone 4G coverage** across the County and especially in our towns.

- **Expand apprenticeship programmes within the County Council and its contractors**, paying a decent rate to apprentices, encourage employers within specific sectors to work with training providers to establish courses and, if viable, set up an Apprenticeship Training Agency to help courses to match real need.

- **Run a programme facilitating apprenticeships in small businesses in Suffolk**, by providing legal and administrative support.

- We will **ensure that at least 2.3% of County Council staff are apprentices.**

- **Ensure that quality apprenticeship programmes are established with all companies awarded contracts by Suffolk County Council.**

- **Ensure that all apprenticeships in Suffolk are providing education and training for their apprentices to the required standard**, and where applicable institute County-wide standards.

- **Invest in a business support programme and a new managed workspace programme**, to ensure that there is an adequate supply of advice and appropriate accommodation for start-up companies.

- **Institute a County Enterprise Loan scheme** to provide or guarantee loans to small businesses which are unable to access private finance.

- **Institute a young entrepreneurs scheme** to provide start-up capital and advice for new businesses.

- **Use the new Barley Homes and the financial power of the County to provide housing to meet identified local need**, including social rented housing.

- **Promote the agricultural and rural economy and encourage local purchasing.**

- **Work with businesses, and use the Council’s procurement, to encourage decent terms and conditions for agency staff, and tackle bogus self-employment in Suffolk.**
Establish an innovation support programme to improve the profitability of farm and forestry businesses in Suffolk.

Encourage more environmentally friendly tourism, aimed at longer holiday stays.

Promote the Living Wage and genuine career progression in the Tourism industry.

Promote the use of Credit Unions, and especially the SCC Credit Union and Eastern Savings & Loans.

Work with our Further Education Colleges and the University of Suffolk to improve the links between their research and innovation in our County.
Suffolk’s environment directly affects both the quality of life for its residents, and its appeal for tourists.

Labour is committed to making our county cleaner, greener and more energy efficient.

**A Labour-led administration will:**

- **Restore free organic waste bin collections throughout the county.**

- **Re-emphasise waste reduction and recycling** to reduce the cost of residual waste.

- **Introduce food-waste collections** on a trial basis, and **invest in anaerobic digestion**.

- **Reinstate 7-day-a-week opening of Household Waste Recycling Centres** & expand the hours of opening at the busiest.

- **Improve resources to investigate fly tipping.**

- **Re-open a Household Waste Recycling Centre in Beccles.**

- **Promote and encourage the introduction of renewable energy schemes**, including on the Council’s own buildings and land.

- **Produce an effective air-quality plan** to reduce the levels of pollution in our urban “hot-spots”, and use the Council’s policies and procurement to **achieve less polluting vehicles, buildings, processes and practices.**

- **Support a programme for protecting and enhancing our indigenous species** and **stimulate a tourist market** to enable our wild spaces to be financially supported.

- **Promote the environmental value of our Country Parks.**

- **Strengthen the County Council’s commitment** to **Suffolk Nature Strategy** and lead actions to help achieve its aims.

- **Encourage more urban ‘greening’**, including reducing impermeable pavement, driveway and other surfaces that exacerbate flooding problems.
V ... Education and young people - ensuring that no child is left behind

Suffolk Labour will not tolerate a situation where half of our schools are flourishing, while the other half struggle.

All children in Suffolk should be able to attend local schools which are of the highest possible standard.

Labour believes in a comprehensive, accountable, non-selective education system, and we will do whatever we can to achieve that.

A Labour-led administration will pledge to move Suffolk from being one of the worst performing local authorities in England to one of the best. We will:

Build a coherent and effective Children’s Centre service, offering a full range of services including health, counselling, basic educational advice and support for parents, benefits advice and signposting for other public services, and play and exercise opportunities for babies and small children.

Reopen Children’s Centres which have closed, and open new centres where there is the greatest unmet need, working in association with Libraries or local schools where appropriate.

Explore continuing services in Children’s Centres for children as they progress into primary school, including possible breakfast and after-school clubs.

Inject fresh determination and resources into achieving the additional school places our children need in the areas where they are most needed.

Introduce significant additional support for underachieving school and academy pyramids, including financial and administrative support, and help with recruitment, governance and school improvement partners.

Run teacher recruitment campaigns, to bring additional expertise to Suffolk schools.

Establish a countywide ‘Challenge Partnership’ that encourages best practice and the exchange of new ideas between schools whether they are academies, free-school or state run.

Ensure that the ‘Challenge Fund’ initiative is taken up by struggling schools, actively encouraging and supporting ‘RED’ RAG rated schools to organise projects and tap in to the funding that is available.

Use other departments of the County Council, and work with other public sector bodies, to enhance Personal and Social Health Education (PSHE) and out-of-school education, to enable our children and young people to gain life skills,

“We will reverse the Conservative cuts in Children’s Centres so we can help parents make sure their children are healthier, more confident and ready to gain the most from Primary School once they get there.”

Helen Armitage, Labour Councillor for Chantry and Spokesperson for Children’s Services.
avoid harm, and grow socially and emotionally as well as gaining educational qualifications.

Ensure a full range of provision - both in mainstream schools and in special schools - to meet the educational needs of children with varying degrees and types of special need.

Ensure an effective diagnosis and early-intervention regime for Autism, ADHD, language difficulties and other childhood conditions, to prevent these becoming insurmountable problems for children as they access mainstream education.

Work with schools, GPs and social workers to identify young people with mental health problems and find whole-life solutions which deal with the causes and not just the symptoms.

Provide targeted educational advice for parents and carers with children with additional needs.

Work with families and children to address the causes of possible harm before they become insurmountable and institute a targeted intervention programme, including short breaks, in order to keep more families together.

Provide a wider range of support for more challenging children or children with more complex needs, in order to reduce the need for out-of-County placements.

Build on what we have learnt from the Mix and other young people’s service centres to establish a county-wide network of young people’s service centres, offering the services which will be most beneficial to them and which they will value in a way that they prefer to access them, including careers advice services where appropriate.

Invest in a graduated transition programme for Looked After Children leaving care, in housing, training, employment, and social and emotional support, to compensate for the disadvantages they currently face.

Put in place a fairer system for over-16 transport so that no young person is prevented from accessing the school, college or training of their choice.
VI ... Social Care - committed to supporting our older generation

Suffolk has a thriving older population, which will reach around 250,000 people by 2021.

We are committed to making sure the enormous contribution that they make in our communities is recognised and supported.

We will work with older people to encourage independence, foster dignity, and provide good public services when they are needed.

A Labour-led administration will:

**Cease all placements in Residential Homes rated Inadequate.**

Work with the Care Home providers to identify the necessary cost of providing quality and safe care, to eliminate poor wages and zero hours contracts and ensure all care homes in Suffolk are Good or Outstanding within 4 years.

Establish an in-house training programme for all care sector workers in Suffolk.

Set minimum standards for training, pay, and terms of service for domiciliary care workers, and renegotiate contracts with domiciliary providers accordingly.

Use procurement to ensure all apprentices in domiciliary care train to achieve a national award in care.

Investigate the purchase of, or new build of, a limited County-owned care home estate, in order to provide resilience in the case of emergency closures, a benchmark for service in our contracted care, and the training necessary to enable County staff to understand and manage the sector.

Improve the level of interventions and support for family carers, including increasing available respite care, in order to reduce the demand for County provision and enable people to remain with their closest relatives for longer.

Work with the Director of Public Health and other public bodies to identify housing, transport and other needs which could be met in order to reduce the dependency of elderly or disabled people and increase their years of healthy life.

Study good practice in mental health services in other Counties, and ensure County mental health frontline staff have sufficient training to intervene appropriately in order to secure the help their clients need.

“We all want our loved ones to be safe and properly looked after if they are no longer able to care for themselves. Most care staff do a fantastic job in extremely difficult circumstances. But the County Council is not paying enough for care to enable the care staff to do their job properly.

We need a caring service which helps people to stay independent as long as possible, and then provides safe care in a decent home for when people need it. We think that is worth paying for”

Sarah Adams, Labour Councillor for St Margaret’s and Westgate and Spokesperson for Health and Adult Care.
Work through the Health & Wellbeing Board to promote a level of funding for Mental Health which demonstrates comparable commitment to the funding for physical health services.

Ensure that children and adults receive timely and effective assessments when referred.

**Restore a dedicated benefits advice service** to improve the level of benefits advice given by Social Workers and others to all those who receive our services.

**Introduce a more effective alarm system**, such as the HEARS system in Ipswich, to enable vulnerable residents to stay safe in their own homes, by fitting sensors and alarms which will link with a responder service.
VII ... Community services - promoting and protecting Suffolk’s cultural heritage

Arts and voluntary groups provide important services to many of the county’s most vulnerable people, and create a more vibrant and inclusive community for us all.

We believe it is important that the council does what it can do to promote art and cultural events, and retain and improve the very popular library service.

Voluntary sector organisations tap into the valuable contributions of time and effort from our County’s volunteers, and enable their members and their clients to improve their lives.

A Labour-led administration will:

Pledge to retain and improve every library, unless it is replaced with a new and better library and, work towards bringing the library service back into direct SCC ownership and administration.

Investigate building new libraries in North East Ipswich (eg Selkirk Road), North West Ipswich (eg Ulster Avenue), Moreton Hall (Bury St Eds), North Stowmarket/Stowupland.

Restore the Library book-fund to enable the regular purchase of new books.

Maximise the effectiveness of the Mobile Library service, and investigate the reinstatement of the services that have been lost including in Ipswich and Lowestoft.

Restore cuts in voluntary sector funding and increase investment in Suffolk’s charities and voluntary sector organisations.

Work with Community Action Suffolk to identify a coherent fabric of voluntary sector organisations which can be most effective in supporting people across our County in ways which they would not be able to support themselves.

Set up a county-wide joint voluntary sector advisory body with Boroughs and Districts to ensure public financial support for the voluntary sector is comprehensive, coherent and proportionate.

Ensure that the Council’s commissioning and tendering processes do not discriminate against smaller charities or community organisations.

Institute a welfare rights campaign, working with voluntary sector partners.

Identify arts and heritage assets which need our support in order to survive and/or flourish, and maximise the tourism potential of these assets.
VIII ... Public protection - safeguarding Suffolk’s citizens

The County Council has a duty to protect Suffolk citizens.

We will always keep our Fire & Rescue Service, flood protection and prevention, and Trading Standards as top priorities, because the cost to residents of not doing so would be far greater than any supposed financial saving from making cuts.

If we are elected to lead the County administration, Suffolk Labour pledges to reverse all the recent cuts in public protection services.

We will:

- Restore the Fire Engines and Crews cut in this year’s IRMP.
- Re-Introduce whole-time day crews in Sudbury and Felixstowe.

“Over 20,000 Suffolk residents told this Tory Council that they thought the cuts put their lives, homes and businesses at risk.

We gave the Conservatives every possible opportunity to back down, but they refused.

We pledge to reverse these cuts and give Suffolk back its full fire protection.”

Peter Gardiner, Labour Councillor for Chantry and Spokesperson for Public Protection.

Support joint working and colocation of Fire Service, Police and Ambulance wherever there are clear material advantages.

Prepare a county-wide programme of capital investment in flood-prevention.

Expand the capacity of Trading Standards and investigate possible new funding streams.

Improve liaison between Trading Standards and the Police, and provide the additional staff necessary to make that happen.

Lobby for more realistic fines, especially for Health & Safety violations, and seek to recover assets where applicable.

Improve the County’s engagement with Community Safety, and institute joint support with the Police & Crime Commissioner for voluntary sector organisations working in the areas of community coherence, equality, domestic abuse, hate crime, and drug and alcohol abuse.
IX ... Investing in Suffolk - our vision for the future of our County

We have a vision of a better Suffolk, a Suffolk where families get the advice and help they need to stay together, where vulnerable elderly people and people with learning difficulties are enabled to stay in their own homes or with their families for as long as possible.

A Suffolk where walkers and cyclists of all ages can travel safely to work or to school or for leisure, where those who need to drive can travel on well-maintained roads, where those who need public transport can find it going where they want when they want it.

A Suffolk where all our young people can access the education and training they need and grow to their full potential.

Will we ever achieve all of that? Can we ever be satisfied with what we have done? No, there will never be a time when we can do everything we would want. But should we not try, with the resources we have, to at least achieve some of it? Or should we leave £190 million in the bank? Cuts or care? You decide.

We will be a Living Wage Employer, paying all our staff a living wage and ensuring all contractors pay a living wage to their staff.

We will use our contracting power to phase out zero hours contracts in Suffolk.

We will restrain the cost of allowances and ensure that the overall cost of ‘reimbursing’ Councillors does not rise in real terms.

We will ensure openness and honesty by making all our decisions in public whenever possible, and work with the media to inform Suffolk residents of all that we do.

We will take consulting seriously, giving residents a genuine opportunity to help us change our decisions before they are set in stone.

We will aim to make our Council genuinely democratic, so that all of your local Councillors will get the chance to vote against bad decisions and will no longer be vetoed by the Cabinet.

“It’s down to you. On May 4th you can vote for a Labour County Council that will make Suffolk safer, greener, healthier and more productive.”

Sandy Martin, Labour Councillor for St John’s and Suffolk Labour Group Leader.