

2024 Stevenage Labour Borough Council Manifesto



**A SAFER,
STRONGER
STEVENAGE**

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INTRODUCTION

This manifesto comes at an increasingly challenging time for local Government. With an unprecedented cost of living crisis, soaring energy prices and high-interest rates caused by the war in Ukraine, Truss' disastrous mini-budget and the recovery from Covid, amongst other varied challenges, resources are incredibly stretched, with Stevenage Borough Council having lost over 70% of its funding since 2010. Even in these troubling times, you expect a political party to make promises they can keep, to tax fairly and spend wisely and to run the council in partnership with local people and within the best interests of our residents. That is what the Stevenage Labour Party will continue to do.

We are moving forward with our £1 billion town centre regeneration and connecting our town seamlessly with the public transport that serves it. We are planning to build a new leisure centre on the current swimming pool site, and deliver our climate change priorities; improving our parks and green spaces, making Stevenage Council net-zero by 2030, renewing our biodiversity action plan and planting over 2000 trees in the next 5 years.

Alongside this, we are tackling domestic abuse in partnership with Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse (SADA), improving health outcomes across the town, and continuing to work with our co-operative neighbourhood wardens, community safety partnerships and the police to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour.

Stevenage has a unique place in the country, with brilliant transport links and is a thriving centre for the defence and life-sciences industries. We will continue to work with businesses to provide well-paid jobs for our town, and provide opportunities for our young people to train and forge the careers that they want to have.

We make the issues you tell us about on the doorstep our priorities, building secure housing, creating well-paid jobs for our town and keeping our neighbourhoods safer and cleaner. These are all things we need to feel secure, in our homes and our town.

So this is what we will continue to do. In this manifesto you will find promises that are currently underway from our manifesto in 2022 alongside updated and costed pledges we know we can deliver. Investing in our services, imposing no charge on residents for Green and Kitchen waste, and making sure that whoever you are, and wherever you come from Stevenage is a safe place for you and your family to live.

Stevenage Labour Councillors have delivered your priorities on our council for over 50 years now. As we continue through these uncertain times, we promise that a vote for Labour is a vote for a party that will continue to care about our community, listen to our residents and deliver on your priorities.



Councillor Richard Henry
Leader of the Labour Group
Stevenage Borough Council

Councillor Tom Plater
Chair of Stevenage
Constituency Labour Party

IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING IN STEVENAGE, FOCUSING ON OUR HOUSE-BUILDING PROGRAMME

Like everywhere else in the UK, Stevenage is suffering from a shortage of social and truly affordable housing. A safe, energy-efficient and truly affordable home is key to our quality of life, achieving our potential and feeling part of our community. We will continue with our programme to build more homes for the people of our town, focusing on developing as much social housing as possible and ensuring our stock of Council homes are kept in good condition and improving their thermal efficiency.

By doing this we will help alleviate fuel poverty, which is becoming more important to people's lives in the current climate. In the tradition of new towns, we want to ensure that homes built are accompanied by all the facilities needed to support quality of life: doctors' surgeries and schools; shops and transport; and high-quality green spaces and leisure facilities. We continue our home building programme at our most recent sites Shephall View, Brent Court and supporting the Guinness development on the former Matalan site. We know that having a safe, warm home is one of the top priorities of our residents, and we will continue to work hard to deliver these for our town.

Continue to build new Council homes ensuring use of the most up-to-date, energy efficient designs using our 5* quality programme:

1. Sustainable development
2. Genuinely affordable rents
3. Tenure blind design, integrating rented and owner-occupied homes
4. Making best use of land
5. Community-led consultation

Complete the development of homes at Shephall View, our Independent Living Scheme at Brent Court, support the Guinness development on the former Matalan site and continue to consult with the community on our plans to re-develop the Oval.

Look for further opportunities to develop Council homes on Council owned land.

Continue to develop our 'tenant & leaseholder voice' through new and more open discussions with tenants and leaseholders, ensuring a tenant-focused co-operative housing service.

Develop the innovative Housing First service we have introduced to ensure we take a 'homes first' approach to tackling street homelessness alongside support for complex needs. We will also continue to maintain our work with YMCA at the Haven.

Continue to recognise protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation) in our allocations policy, as well as those who have served in the armed forces and those who have a connection with Stevenage.

Ensure that at least 60% of our new homes, including in the Town Centre, are built on previously developed land and look to use co-operative garden city values in all our developments.

Use our Local Plan to ensure new developments are well-planned, well-designed, and sustainable and have the facilities they need included in development plans.

Complete the work on our multi-million pound plan to refurbish all of our 500 flat blocks.

Work with residents to provide secure cycle parking.

Provide information for young people on housing options and work to develop new schemes to meet their needs.

Continue to develop our Wholly Owned Housing Company to increase the number of affordable homes available, buying land, developing, and managing homes for local people.

CREATE WELL-PAID JOBS FOR RESIDENTS, AND WEALTH-BUILD OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

The recovery from COVID-19, high energy prices, a cost of living crisis and the war in Ukraine, amongst other challenges, continue to create uncertainty in our national and local economy. However, against a backdrop of these issues, Labour is committed to building our local wealth and continuing to provide a strong economy for our residents.

Labour will ensure that Stevenage continues to enhance its reputation for encouraging investment across local businesses and for supporting our existing companies as well as new ones. Labour's main aim is to create an environment where local people can benefit from secure, well-paid jobs, and where our young people have access to good training and job opportunities across a wide range of our local industries. We have world-beating companies in Stevenage, specialising in technology, aerospace and pharmaceuticals. Our Bioscience catalyst and life-science ecosystem makes Stevenage the largest gene therapy cluster in the UK - and the third largest in the world. Airbus and MBDA continue to invest in their offices on Gunnels Wood Road, showcasing their intent to promote Stevenage to the world's aerospace and defence industries. We believe it is vital to the future of the town to ensure that our industries have a town in which they can flourish.

Stevenage has excellent connections by road, rail and air, making it perfectly placed geographically to connect business with their customers across the UK and the world. Our Co-operative Labour Council has worked with businesses and partners to develop our infrastructure to support their needs. As the town develops, we will continue to work with businesses and the Stevenage Works Partnership to build a local economy that generates the jobs and wealth to support our community.

Our promise to you is to aim to build the wealth of our community and we will:

Work co-operatively with residents and businesses in the Old Town to ensure that our historic High Street has a sustainable future and that both day and nighttime economies are supported to thrive.

Use the Council's considerable expertise in sourcing funding to create secure employment for local people and, where Council contracts are offered, ensure our local businesses are at the front of the queue wherever possible.

Encourage an extensive apprenticeship programme led by the Stevenage Works Task Force, working with and alongside our local businesses to source opportunities for industry to embrace apprenticeships in their businesses and work with young people in our community.

Encourage union membership among Stevenage Borough Council employees. We will continue to foster the partnership between the Council and our unions whilst enhancing our reputation as an example of a good employer.

Encourage entrepreneurs and provide support to new and growing businesses through our Business Technology Centre. We will embrace the concept of a business incubator and provide advice and guidance to potential start-ups.

Provide tools and support for local businesses to provide advice, guidance and opportunities to our young people across a wide section of industry and the local jobs market.

Provide essential financial opportunities and support to Citizens Advice Stevenage.

Sustain a co-operative approach to working with partners through the Social Inclusion Partnership and seek out collaborative funding opportunities for local charities and social enterprises.

Record and promote the impact of Stevenage Borough Council services on our local community and economy, and the value of our spend, as a local authority in the community.

Protect free parking in the High Street.

A TOWN WITH A VIBRANT, REGENERATED TOWN CENTRE

Your Stevenage Labour led Council has made huge progress in the regeneration of the Town Centre. It continues to be a top priority for the town and we have worked with partners to create a master plan that ensures our Town Centre can continue to thrive by incorporating new shops, homes, leisure and café facilities, new public squares and parks and a one-stop hub to include a library, access to health, County and Borough Council services as well as an exhibition space and café.

These works are visibly continuing within our town, and as we continue to develop the major SG1 phase of the town centre development and celebrate the new Stevenage Bus Interchange and the continued success of our Stevenage works programme. We will continue to drive the change our town needs alongside our partners on the Stevenage Development board.

Our pledges to you driving forwards from 2024 are:

Always work with our residents on their priorities as we take Town Centre transformation forward.

Continue to resource and deliver the ten projects in the Towns' Fund deal to ensure they are all progressed on budget and in time. Those projects are:

- *A new sports and leisure hub*
- *A science, innovation & technology training centre for local people*
- *Pedestrian and cycling connectivity, including an Arts & Heritage trail*
- *Station Gateway*
- *Digital infrastructure – hyperfast fibre broadband*
- *Biotech offices and key worker housing*
- *Garden Square including retail, commercial and leisure*
- *National New Towns Heritage Centre*
- *Gunnels Wood Road infrastructure improvements*

Work with development partners Mace to deliver the major SG1 phase of the Town Centre regeneration including: housing; a new school and a new linear park at the south of the Town Centre; new retail opportunities and homes on the site of the former Swingate building; improvements to the Town Square, including the garden square on the site of the former bus station; development plans for 'The Hub' with public, private and voluntary sector partners.

Ensure that the vision for the Station Gateway is delivered, with resources secured and construction started, following extensive engagement with residents, business and developers.

Expand our Stevenage Works programme to ensure local people benefit from the jobs, training places and apprenticeships being created in the transformation of the Town Centre.

Develop the climate change plan for the Town Centre development to ensure that buildings are energy efficient, economic and sustainable and are contributing to our Net Zero carbon by 2030 target.

Develop an accessibility plan for the Town Centre development, working with residents with disabilities, to ensure the transformed Town Centre is accessible to all.

KEEP OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS SAFER & CLEANER

We want to ensure that wherever you live in Stevenage your local neighbourhoods will feel safe, be safe and are a clean place to live and work. We want to build on the successes of our award-winning Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Service (SADA) by continuing to develop and extend the service as well as tackle those people who perpetrate such abuse. We also want to continue to decrease crime associated with drugs and alcohol through extending our 'No More Service' and working with individuals directly, as well as through the Housing First Service, by securing as much Government funding as possible.

We are also dedicated to keeping our neighbourhoods clean, and will push for the toughest sanctions on those found to be fly-tipping across our town, as well as directing council green space services to work with local people to keep our local areas clean and looking their best. We are committed to working with our local partners to stop the scourge of graffiti across our town, and where it is identified, we will continue to work with local partners to remove it, and make sure it does not come back, building on the success of our co-operative model in Hampson Park.

We know that feeling safe at home, on clean well-kept streets, and reducing crime and disorder, are top priorities of Stevenage people and we believe our cooperative approach to working with residents, victims and partners will help us tackle the offending that affects people and impacts most on people's fear of crime and detracts from their neighbourhoods.

Our promise to you is to work towards making our neighbourhoods even safer and cleaner. We will:

Work with Herts Police and other partners to prioritise the protection of women and girls in Stevenage, both at home and in their communities.

Campaign for misogyny to be on the statute books as a hate crime and for Herts Police to record such crimes accordingly.

Work with residents through effective neighbourhood wardens and community safety teams to tackle issues of antisocial behaviour in their area and where necessary, and in more serious cases, undertake legal interventions.

Continue to develop the Stevenage Against Domestic Abuse Service (SADA) for all groups affected, including preventative services, to help break the cycle of abuse.

Continue to invest in facilities such as leisure and cultural opportunities e.g. basketball courts to help prevent offending behaviour and promote more positive outcomes for our young people, encouraging them to feel like valued members of their local community.

Launch a robust anti-litter campaign with strong enforcement including fixed penalty notices.

Work to secure funds to increase street cleaning across our town.

Tackle graffiti across our town with a new reporting system, and work closely with local partners, including Herts Police & Hertfordshire County Council, to identify and remove graffiti quickly.

Engage residents in improvements to our parks and neighbourhoods, through litter picks, consultation around new facilities, and Green Volunteer action days.

Investigate and Push for the toughest sanctions and highest fines for those caught fly-tipping across our town.

Continue to work with our partners to tackle the national fly-tipping crisis.

PROMOTE EQUALITY ACROSS OUR TOWN

Having a diverse town is something we celebrate and welcome. Everyone should be allowed to flourish regardless of ethnicity, gender identity, age, religion, disabilities, sex or sexual orientation. We will continue making Council services fair across all aspects of our work but we would also like to emphasise what we want to do to address inequalities in our town.

To achieve these objectives we will:

Continue to support the administration of the Stevenage Equalities Commission and help to produce their final report and future development.

Address inequalities in Stevenage Borough Council's workforce by promoting positive recruitment and employment practices and addressing any barriers.

Support and promote Older Persons' Day through a Town Centre event, together with other agencies to highlight services and activities available.

Continue to work with the police to promote awareness and reporting of hate crime in all its forms.

Ensure that the developments that are taking place in the Town Centre address accessibility issues for all people with disabilities.

Support the rights of people with learning disabilities to integrate, feel safe and be understood in our community and aim to work with the various specialist agencies to enable and facilitate access to amenities and life opportunities.

Highlight and support particular events during the year such as International Women's Day, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day and LGBTQI+ History Month.

PROTECT AND PRESERVE OUR ENVIRONMENT, DELIVER ON OUR CLIMATE CHANGE PRIORITIES AND WORK TOWARDS A NET-ZERO STEVENAGE COUNCIL BY 2030

Having declared a climate emergency, our Labour & Co-operative Council has set an objective to achieve Net Zero by 2030. It is a challenging target and depends upon adequate central government funding in the key areas of housing and transport.

The Council's own carbon footprint represents around only 1% of the Stevenage total and around 10% with the Council's own housing stock included. All areas of Council activity have to progressively take into account direct action to reduce their carbon footprint.

As a town, we already have one of the lowest levels of collected waste in the East of England, and we pledge to reduce this further, whilst improving our recycling rates. Through our planning approval process and housing development projects we are improving insulation levels and phasing out fossil fuel heating.

Central to our objective to deliver Net-Zero is protecting and preserving our local environment, and brilliant green spaces. With increasing government cuts to the funding of local government we will need to work hard to ensure we prioritise our green spaces, we know that Stevenage people truly value our wonderful Green Flag spaces like Fairlands Valley Park, Town Centre Gardens and Weston Road Cemetery. Our children's play spaces encourage exercise, imagination and creativity as well as inspire a love of the natural world. We want our town to contribute to that natural world, so our promise to you is to work to protect our green spaces, seek further green flags and improve the biodiversity of our town.

It is also important to ensure equal priority is given to both adaption and mitigation measures. Temperature will continue to change up to and beyond 2050. Climate Change will be a key consideration in all our actions.

We pledge our council services to work co-operatively with residents & ward councillors to:

To continue to reduce the total level of collected waste and increase recycling rates to at least 50%.

Impose no additional charges for green and kitchen waste on residents, unless forced to by law.

Retain Green Flag status for our significant green spaces and continue our programme of play space improvements involving young people in their design.

Maintain active cooperation with all our primary and secondary schools on environmental issues, this being a key factor in helping to establish behavioural change.

Renew and enhance our Biodiversity Action Plan and continue to seek every opportunity to increase the town's tree cover to over 20% by 2035.

Ensure, where possible, that water-resilient plants are used in public areas and that native tree species are the preferred option. In both cases, plants and trees should be suitable for the projected 2050 climatic conditions while supporting local wildlife.

Promote neighbourhood green space volunteers across our town with the support of the council officers and our ward councillor and promote our green spaces through a 'Green Stevenage' section of our website.

Lobby central government alongside other local authorities for the funding needed to transition to sustainability across transport, housing and waste management.

Work with local and national businesses to align our programmes to Net Zero where appropriate.

Ensure all new developments have the minimum carbon footprint and developers' operations are close to Net Zero.

Bring forward our proposals for retrofitting of non-fossil fuel heating and improved insulation of our Council housing stock.

Use active procurement to minimise our supply chain carbon footprint.

In conjunction with Herts County Council improve maintenance and regular upkeep of cycleways and pedestrian areas to encourage active travel.

Ensure that by 2027 the majority of Council vehicles are non-fossil fuel.

In conjunction with public and private sector partners increase the number of electric vehicle (EV) charging facilities across the town including apps showing the location.

As a chosen Sustainable Travel Town, we will work with Herts County Council to ensure we have an affordable public bus service that meets the needs for all employment, education and leisure travel within the town and surrounding area.

Maximise the use of social media and public events to inform and encourage public understanding and engagement with the climate change programme.

Recognise the direct link between biodiversity and the climate change agenda and seek opportunities for rewilding across our town.

Maintain our working relationship with the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust, the UK 100 campaign group and Friends of the Earth.

Form a partnership with the young people of our town who are key to achieving the behavioural change required by us all to meet our objective of Net Zero by 2030.

Continue to be an active member of the Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Panel to maximise the joint use of our resources and knowledge - remembering climate change has no boundaries.

PRIORITISE SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

We know that many parts of Stevenage do not have the bus services they need and, if we are to encourage people who can choose alternatives to cars, we will have to make sure that those alternatives are available. But we must also recognise that people in Stevenage still require their cars, especially those who have a disability or have young families who rely on a vehicle to go about their daily business.

We are fortunate to have a magnificent network of 45 kilometres of cycle ways around the town. We want to promote their use, but need to ensure they are fit-for-purpose. We will continue to lobby Herts County Council to ensure that our cycle ways, which they are responsible for maintaining, are maintained in good condition and that defects to the cycleway are repaired in a timely manner.

We want our neighbourhood streets to be places that our community can enjoy, not streets that are dominated by parking issues and speeding traffic so we're committed to working with our community on prioritising their local needs. We see the need for lower speed restrictions in some neighbourhoods, so we will work hand in hand with our residents to make the right decisions for their local area.

And as long as we have a Labour Council, we are committed to not introducing ULEZ anywhere in Stevenage.

Our Stevenage Labour Co-operative Council has, and continues to promote, the excellent transport links that we have in our locality. We will continue to strive for excellent public transport and make local transport options work for local people.

We pledge to you that we will:

Explore a case for a 'park and ride' offer for all our Town Centre facilities including the Old Town, Town Centre, Leisure Park and Roaring Meg using electric buses, where possible.

Promote cycling within the town, especially utilising our 45 kilometres of cycleways, and lobby Herts County Council to improve that network with better surfaces, maintenance and lighting.

Implement and maintain an extensive cycle hire scheme around Stevenage.

Campaign for more frequent buses, and whole town bus coverage.

Support resident-led 20mph initiatives appropriately across our local neighbourhoods.

Enable the use of electric vehicles by providing electric vehicle charging points around the town and use planning policies to promote electric car use. Planning policies will be used to promote active travel – eg to new leisure and shopping developments and also as a first choice from new residential developments through infrastructure and cycle parking.

Campaign for an electric public transport route from Roaring Meg to the Town Centre, the Old Town and Lister Hospital.

Secure cycle parking at all retail areas, local centres and the Town Centre, situated conveniently for the cycleways.

In conjunction with Herts County Council improve maintenance and regular upkeep of cycleways and pedestrian areas to encourage active travel and protect the cycleway network.

IMPLEMENT OUR CULTURE, LEISURE AND HEALTH INEQUALITY STRATEGIES DELIVER A NEW LEISURE CENTRE

Stevenage has a unique cultural heritage, both as a settlement that goes back to the Domesday Book and also as Britain's first post-war new town. Stevenage also has a rich history of sporting success. We continue to build on this legacy with an enhanced and sustainable culture and leisure offering; complementing Town Centre regeneration; substantially improving health and wellbeing; benefitting our local economy; involving residents of all ages; and attracting visitors from far and wide to a thriving, busy and accessible creative environment.

However Stevenage continues to suffer from significant health inequalities compared with the rest of Hertfordshire. Although not directly responsible for health, there is much our Labour Council can do to provide excellent leisure and cultural opportunities, health promotion and partnership working to increase access to health advice and facilities.

We will work with our partners to tackle the key causes of poor health in our community - smoking, obesity and mental ill-health. Working with the Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire, we aim to continue to develop our Healthy Hub alongside our Young People's Healthy Hub.

Alongside this we are committed to delivering a new leisure centre complex on the site of the current swimming pool at St. George's Way, and creating state of the art health and wellbeing facilities across our town.

Our promise to you is to develop the cultural and sporting life of Stevenage, working with partners to achieve the key ambitions set out in our culture and leisure strategy. Our partnership with Everyone Active, Stevenage's new leisure provider, has already led to significant investment in our theatre, fitness centre, swimming pool and golf course.

We will:

Encourage a 'people-powered culture' approach – supporting local people and groups to express their creativity, including sourcing external funding, using the Council's and our partners' facilities and involving local people in designing and developing new ideas.

Explore opportunities to develop (pop-up) artist studios and hubs including digital media, such as Junction 7 Creatives.

Deliver a state-of-the-art Leisure Centre complex on St. George's Way.

Support and maintain the facilities of our well-loved local theatre, the Gordon Craig.

Plan and deliver a public art programme and heritage trail, enhancing our High Street and Town Centre, parks and open spaces and our 45 kilometre cycle network.

Support the relocation of Stevenage Museum to a Town Centre location with an aspiration to develop a New Towns Heritage Centre using the Town Funds Deal monies.

Working with Junction 7 Creatives and telecoms companies, communities and schools, develop a project to create artworks on media cabinets across the town, linked to the anti-graffiti programme.

Create even more artwork in the town's underpasses and make them a safer environment for local people.

Encourage provision of high-quality music facilities for the town to provide access to skills development and career opportunities.

Build on the town's substantial sporting heritage by encouraging sport for all, such as the highly popular parkrun and junior parkrun, and attract national and international sporting events.

Focus on children and young people, older people and those with poor health outcomes.

Support Stevenage Cycling Hub at our Green Flag Fairlands Valley Park and promote active travel.

Support arts and health projects that use creativity to enhance physical and mental wellbeing and quality of life, for all residents.

Promote regeneration through a wide-ranging programme of cultural activity in the Town Centre.

Continue to ensure there is free creative and cultural activity for our community to engage in, such as Stevenage Day, Fireworks Night and the Christmas Light Switch-on events, so everyone can get involved.

Work with our new leisure provider Everyone Active to enhance our leisure, sport and cultural offer.

Explore delivering the best value for Stevenage residents through innovations such as a Residents' Card to ensure preferential rates for residents in accessing our leisure and cultural facilities.

Work with our colleagues in the NHS and Public Health to deliver innovative and improved health facilities in our Town Centre, giving residents easy access to specialist healthcare.

Work to improve local availability of activities in our neighbourhoods to help residents improve their health.

Support health promotion campaigns especially smoking cessation, tackling obesity and maintaining good mental health and wellbeing.

Support our older residents to remain independent for as long as possible in their own homes.

Provide free-access health and wellbeing facilities like trim-tracks, outdoor gyms, aquapark, multi-function and skateparks in our parks and green spaces.

Support and promote parkrun and junior parkrun, Stevenage Cycling Festival, our cycle network and the huge range of sport and leisure opportunities we provide in Stevenage.

Work with local sports clubs to support them to thrive.

Work with partner organisations to enhance leisure and cultural opportunities in our local centres.

ENSURE OUR CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL GIVES PEOPLE A SAY IN THEIR LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOW WE DELIVER SERVICES

Our Co-operative Neighbourhoods approach is designed so that residents have the opportunity to engage in planning for their local areas, working with local Councillors and the dedicated Council team for their neighbourhoods. It offers the opportunity for residents to have a say in how local funding is spent. We already have teams set up in each of the six neighbourhoods in Stevenage, including our dedicated Neighbourhood Warden teams. These teams will work to identify the key issues and actions in each local area and make sure we have a programme in place to deliver, for residents.

Our Co-operative Council also provides a model for working across all of our services and offers residents to have a say in how local funding is spent at the point of need. We must work co-operatively both inside our council and across our town if we are truly to deliver the services that local people rely on.

We pledge to:

Maintain our co-operative partnership-led approach, working with charities, schools and colleges, supported by Council officers to realise positive outcomes in our communities.

Maintain the Local Community Budget scheme and work to bid for the funding to increase the amount of budget for each councillor to support their wards and support residents on projects in our neighbourhoods, including with budgeting.

Work with Herts County Council to direct funds for supporting our public areas and consider the ageing of early build areas when maintaining them.

Continue to sustain our commitment to the Neighbourhood Wardens, who have their ears to the ground in their areas and bring a lot of reassurance to residents, whilst listening to ward councillors' concerns and acting on that intelligence.

Continue to establish Neighbourhood Bulletins in all ward areas, with a separate Town Centre Bulletin when occupancy levels justify this for new members of the community in the Town Centre.

Support face-to-face and virtual resident meetings and maintain a flexible response to short-term consultations. Develop our digital capacity to hold 'pop-up' meetings with residents.

Commit to continually improving our residents' survey and encourage resident feedback on the website and call centre services through improved digital access and invite resident views on the budget-setting process for the Council.

Practice a customer-focused culture which puts residents first.

Continue to draw on the excellent feedback from residents, to implement changes in our communities that local people need.

Tackle anti-social behaviour with our neighbourhood wardens and engaging residents in our local neighbourhoods by creating a community team in each of our areas (wards) with funding to help them plan new local initiatives for the future.

Continue supporting elected members to work with local police officers and 'safer neighbourhoods' teams to improve and implement strategies from feedback given by residents.

Continue to support the incredibly successful repair café.

Continue to expand our community bank of kindness across Stevenage, building on the success of our pilot program encouraging our residents to swap skills with each other and foster our sense of community.

RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP

Every council in the UK has faced the toughest times in living memory, with huge cuts to government funding and unfunded inflation. It has been necessary to reduce our costs by over £14m while retaining the services that we all value. We have had extra duties placed upon us due to the Covid Pandemic which will be with us for several years. Despite promises from central government we have not been reimbursed with the full cost of implementing these measures, leaving a £1.2m shortfall.

We still deliver these exceptional council services at an average cost of £250 per year to each household. This is incredible value for money. It is important to stress that although Stevenage collects the Council Tax, it does not get to keep it all. For every pound collected, 77.3p goes to the County Council for the services they are responsible for and 11.5p goes to the Police and Crime Commissioner. Stevenage Borough Council retains only 11.2p. We know that the services we deliver to the people of Stevenage are important - you tell us this when we conduct household surveys - as well as seeing which ones are the most essential. We listen to your comments and when we have to make cuts we take those views on board. We have moved to streamlining some services and making them available online. To reduce costs we share services with other authorities where this does not affect service delivery. Some small increases in the fees and charges which increase the Council's income have been made and, as a last resort, we have increased Council Tax within the limits set by government. All of the financial transactions you make with us are now cashless and we have encouraged the use of direct debits to reduce costs.

Our promise to you is to tax fairly, spend wisely, and deliver good value services based on those that you have told us are important. We will:

Ensure that we deliver as many Council services as possible through in-house provision. We currently collect our waste and recycling and do most of our housing maintenance with our in-house teams.

Retain our local community budgets for use in projects within your area.

Increase the use of priority-based budgeting for schemes in your neighbourhoods and make sure they give value for money.

Continue to work with Herts County Council to create an exemption from Council Tax for those young people in care until they reach the age of 25.

Continue to promote and work with our neighbourhood wardens who are out and about in every local area so that they continue to be the first point of contact with the Council.

Invest in our commercial property in the borough and make sure that it increases the revenue it generates to help reduce our funding gap caused by the current Government.

Encourage our residents to contribute to decision-making through public meetings, digital methods, accessibility to councillors and through our website.

Invest in digital participation in local democracy, and support our residents in accessing council services digitally.

Continue to support our Youth Mayor and Youth Council so that the voices and ideas of young people are heard.

Encourage larger contractors to contribute to voluntary groups in our town, either with finance or help. We will also ask them to look to employ and offer training to local people.

Continue to improve our queries and complaints line to give residents the service they deserve.

AN MP THAT IS ON YOUR SIDE

I'm Kevin Bonavia, standing to be the next Labour MP for Stevenage. My team and I have been out knocking on doors for the last few years, to make sure the plans I want to deliver on are in line with the priorities of people in Stevenage. I will always listen first before acting, as I will be well and truly on your side.

I have committed to being a hardworking, full-time MP. I will have no second jobs, hold regular residents surgeries and ensure I have a local constituency office run by staff that know and care about our community here in Stevenage. To give a clearer picture of my vision, here are my 5 missions for our area:

Tackle the Cost of Living Crisis

Labour will create publicly owned 'GB energy' to drive down bills, require lenders to provide mortgage support and secure the highest sustained growth in the G7.

Build an NHS fit for the future

Labour will cut waiting lists with 2 million new appointments annually by doubling medical school places and recruiting 10,000 new nurses and midwives.

Cut crime in our community

Labour will recruit 13,000 new police officers and impose tougher sentences to halve violent crime and tackle anti-social behaviour.

Transform local transport

Labour will hand powers to local authorities to determine new bus routes and set affordable fares, whilst investing in pothole repairs.

Fix our education system

Labour will drive up school standards, introduce free breakfast clubs, reform the apprenticeship levy and recruit thousands more teachers.

This work can begin with a Labour MP and a Labour Government, but it cannot be done without a strong team running Stevenage Borough Council efficiently and effectively. And that is what you get with your Labour candidates. A team totally committed to building a safer, stronger Stevenage for all.

It would be the honour of my lifetime to represent you as your MP, but for now you can continue to be in safe hands with hardworking Labour councillors across the town who are on your side, all year round.

KEVIN BONAVIA

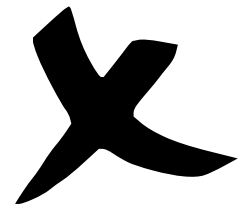
**Standing to be the
Labour MP in Stevenage**



USE ALL 3 VOTES FOR LABOUR ON 2ND MAY

FIRST CANDIDATE

Labour and Co-operative



SECOND CANDIDATE

Labour and Co-operative



THIRD CANDIDATE

Labour and Co-operative

