

The Conservative Manifesto for the Hounslow Borough Council Elections on May 3rd 2018



**A proven record of success ...
A future to look forward to ...**

A better deal for all

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It really matters who runs Hounslow Council

We all know that it is national issues and national government that get all the press and media coverage. However, it is the Councillors you elect on **May 3rd** who will determine how often your bins are emptied, how well your roads and pavements are repaired, the Council Tax that you will pay, the quality of local social care, the service at local libraries and sports facilities and so much more.

We are proud of our Borough and its diverse communities and are excited by the huge potential that exists to make it a better place in which to live, study, work, build a business and eventually retire. Our vision is to work with all residents to deliver real improvements in the delivery of essential services, enhance the life chances of the young, protect the vulnerable and make your Council directly accountable to you.

Before preparing this manifesto we have listened to people all across the Borough. We know that most people are troubled by the same issues that concern us and that many of you agree with the policies that we will implement if elected on **May 3rd**. In this document, we have brought together our ideas and pledges for you to read at your leisure.

We give an absolute commitment to focus our efforts on tackling the disparities that exist in terms of economic achievement, education, child poverty, health and well-being. We will set up an independent commission to investigate inequality in the Borough.

Managing the wide range of services that a local authority provides will always be a challenging task. You can however be reassured that we have a proven track record in local government of **doing more with less** and **doing it better**. Austerity means that there is an added incentive for us to find new and better ways of working. Increasingly the actions of the current Labour administration demonstrate that whatever its intentions it is not up to the challenge and instead seek to blame everyone but itself.

We will critically examine every service that the Council provides. Those areas that work well we will build on, but those activities that are clearly failing to deliver an acceptable service to residents will receive our full attention. We will be seeking and implementing innovative solutions, some of which are set out on the pages that follow.

At the heart of our approach is a simple concept – let's get the basics right. We will;

1. deliver the high-quality services that you deserve and should be receiving.
2. act always to preserve and enhance our shared environment.
3. re-establish the sound financial management that will support our pledges
4. transform the way that officers relate to residents and deliver services.

You will find our contact details on the back page. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need any more information or simply wish to share your ideas with us.

Finally, past experience tells us that probably around six out of ten residents will not vote in the local election on May 3rd. Please be under no illusion, things can only change for the better if you vote for the three Conservative Candidates standing for election in your ward.



Councillor Sam Hearn – Leader of the Conservative Group

Summary of our pledges

1. We will deliver the high-quality services that you expect and deserve

- Always put residents and their needs first.
- Reverse the cuts in spending on roads and pavements
- Drive recycling rates up by at least a third
- Simplify recycling and phase in the weekly collection of non-recyclable waste
- Make performance reporting visible and clear
- Protect funding for libraries and parks
- Build social housing – not just talk about it
- Fully support our schools and young people
- Rebuild the Borough's youth services
- Reduce the waiting time for diagnosing children with ASD (currently 18-23 months).

2. We will preserve and enhance our shared environment

- Re-join the London Air Quality Network
- Oppose any scheme that will increase air pollution
- Lobby the London Mayor to rethink the planned Ultra-Low Emissions Zone and remove diesel buses
- Increase the pressure on Thames Water to improve Mogden Sewage Works
- Work with third party partners to reduce the risks of over-development e.g. flooding
- Enable residents to better contribute effectively in planning decisions
- Insist that new developments meet the highest environmental standards
- Rigorously enforce the laws against unlicensed and illegal Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs)
- Champion improvements to transport infrastructure
- Part-fund replacement of old domestic boilers
- Make roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists
- Roll out additional electric charging points
- Commission an holistic strategy for the Borough's heritage assets

3. We will re-establish the sound financial management that will deliver our pledges

- Hold Council Tax increases as low as possible
- Appoint a finance director Re-establish the Finance Scrutiny Committee
- Restore the funding of the Scrutiny Committees – reinforce their independence
- Set clear and costed strategic goals and cut the inflated budgets for corporate services
- Stop the over-spends on department budgets and deliver planned savings
- Open up Council expenditure to "citizens' audits"
- Apply strict value for money procurement rules
- Challenge the basis for every financial reserve Speed up the release of S106 and CIL funds
- Conduct a rolling review of all services including the Hounslow Highways PFI and Parking Services
- Seek expert advice on the future of the Lampton 360 'empire', including the Recycling Depot.
- Explore the potential for more service sharing with other Boroughs and organisations
- Work with our GLA member to control the budget of the London Mayor

4. We will transform the way that the Council interacts with residents

- Commission an independent review of inequality in the Borough
- Roll out a Hounslow Residents' Entitlement Card – making access to services easier
- Ensure residents' enquiries and complaints are answered promptly and properly
- Rebuild relationships with charities and volunteer groups e.g. The Hounslow Community Network
- Track response times to emails and phone calls and simplify the routing of residents' queries
- Make staff accountable for delivery of services Track and publish Councillors' performance
- Publish results of real-time surveys of customers' service experience
- Respect residents' responses to consultations
- Make proper provision for residents without Internet access or mobile phones

What you can expect from a Conservative-led Hounslow

1. We will deliver the high-quality services that you expect and deserve

Key policies at a glance

- Always put residents and their needs first.
- Reverse the cuts in spending on roads and pavements
- Drive recycling rates up by at least a third
- Simplify recycling and phase in the weekly collection of non-recyclable waste
- Make performance reporting visible and clear
- Protect funding for libraries and parks
- Build social housing – and not just talk about it
- Encourage self-builders and small builders
- Increase the grants to private landlords renovating properties for use as social housing
- Fully support our schools and young people
- Rebuild the Borough's youth services
- Reduce the waiting time for diagnosing children with ASD (currently 18-23 months)

Road and Pavement Repairs – We will conduct a comprehensive review to identify the scale of the backlog in repair and maintenance work and the cost of bringing our streets up to the highest standards. Residents will be invited to bid for additional money for urgent road and pavement repairs from a fund that we will top up each year. We will invest to save. Labour's 2018/19 budget includes cuts of £650k expenditure on street repairs.

Labour have failed to properly monitor and manage the work of Hounslow Highways the contractor awarded the Treasury funded 25-year PFI contract. This funding was won by the Conservative led administration in 2010. The Scrutiny Committee has recently established that Labour has no idea what the back-log of repair work is or how much it will cost to put right.

Waste Collection and Recycling – Following an independent review of the current waste collection service we will implement change. We will simplify waste collection and reintroduce weekly collections of non-recyclable waste. By investigating and implementing alternative waste strategies we will increase the percentage of waste that is recycled. Other Boroughs do better. We will act as quickly as possible to bring the waste collection service up to a high standard. As a result of Labour's changes fly-tipping of domestic waste has increased, disfiguring our streets and increasing the opportunities for rat and fox infestation and the risk of disease.

Labour failed to manage the previous outsourced refuse collection contract effectively. It is deplorable that, without market testing the service or putting it out to tender, the service was brought in house. New highly paid staff were employed and a large new depot was constructed and a fleet of specially designed waste collection vehicles was purchased. The cost of both building and running the depot escalated alarmingly. There will be a £3m overspend on the service this year, double the overspend incurred in 2016/17. Overspends mean Council Tax increases.

Libraries and Parks – We will fund our libraries and parks properly. The service has recently been brought back in house. We will use this as an opportunity for a thorough review.

We will vigorously protect our parks and green spaces by enforcing existing contracts and laws. We will not allow schools or homes to be built on parks and green spaces. Nor will we allow the character of these places to be destroyed by unsympathetic developments either within or alongside them.

We will market test the existing services and deliver the kind of parks and libraries that residents tell us that they want and need. Savings will be re-invested in these services. Labour has failed to properly manage the contractors who provided both the library and parks service. They believe, without any evidence, that an in-house service will provide better value for money.

Housing - This is a London-wide problem but Hounslow must pull its weight. In the last four years Labour has built only 400 housing units. In addition, Labour has poured millions of pounds of your money into the Lampton 360 'special trading vehicle' that has yet to deliver a single new home. Labour has bought just seven houses on the open market in four years against its plan of 196.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, has specifically criticised the Borough of Hounslow for allowing the proportion of affordable housing built by developers to be so small. A new Conservative administration will sort out the mess of the Lampton 360 experiment and drive forward the housing projects that it is failing to deliver on.

We will announce new and fully auditable targets for the construction of social housing when a comprehensive and long overdue strategic review of the Borough's housing needs has been completed. To help meet the immediate short-fall we will buy houses and flats on the open market for occupation by those on the housing waiting list. We will also encourage self-builders, small builders and charities to build in Hounslow. In addition, we will increase the grants available to landlords renovating properties for renting to social tenants. These measures will help re-skill local people with construction industry trades. We will in addition ensure that publicly owned land is released quickly for development.

The much-publicised figures for the affordable homes built in the Borough relates to houses and flats built and paid for by private developers. The Council has **not** itself built any such housing.

Schools and young people – We fully support the Borough's schools and the provision of appropriate youth services. All but one of the Borough's secondary schools are now to all intents and purposes independent of the Council's education service e.g. academies. Labour has resisted these developments clinging on to dogma abandoned by most, even in their own Party, in the last century. Paradoxically Labour likes to claim the excellent academic results of these schools as one of their 'achievements'.

A Conservative administration will take steps to address the ongoing budget pressures on schools' funding. There are insufficient one-off Direct School Grant (DSG) reserves available to fund this in future years. Labour has yet to bring forward any proposals. If this is not addressed by 2019/20, the cost will fall on the Council Tax Payer. We will lobby the Mayor of London and the Government for recognition that Hounslow should be funded as an inner and not an outer London Borough.

We will top up the funding of local schools and provide the statutorily required support services e.g. allocating school places. We will support diversity in the provision of school places. We will not erect ideological barriers to the application of new ideas and the entry of new providers. Our aim is for all schools to be rated as excellent by Ofsted.

We will work with our voluntary sector partners to reverse the blight caused by Labour's draconian cuts to youth services that we opposed. We are also committed to additional expenditure via the Children and Adolescents Health Service that will reduce the 18 to 23 months delay in diagnosing children with ASD to a matter of weeks. The current long delays in initial diagnosis are doing potentially irreparable damage to these vulnerable children's educational outcomes and their life chances.

2. We will preserve and enhance our shared environment

Key policies at a glance

- Re-join the London Air Quality Network
- Oppose any scheme that will increase air pollution
- Enforce anti-engine idling legislation at key locations including schools
- Lobby the Mayor and TfL to rethink the ULEZ and remove diesel buses
- Increase the pressure on Thames Water to improve Mogden Sewage Works
- Work with third party partners to reduce risks from over-development e.g. flooding
- Enable residents to contribute effectively in planning decisions
- Insist that new developments meet the highest environmental standards
- Rigorously enforce the laws against unlicensed and illegal HMOs
- Champion improvements to transport infrastructure
- Part-fund replacement of old domestic boilers
- Make roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists
- Roll out additional electric charging points
- Commission an holistic strategy for the Borough's heritage assets

Air pollution - This is a complex problem that must be tackled head on in a variety of ways. Labour cynically cut the funding for local air pollution monitoring so that they could hide how bad it is. We will not only re-introduce the air pollution monitoring used by most other London boroughs but will also take aggressive steps to reduce air pollution street by street.

We will demand an immediate meeting with the London Mayor to discuss the damaging impact of his planned Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ) on the residents of Brentford and Chiswick. His scheme will divert additional traffic around the North Circular. It is not acceptable that the A4 between Chiswick and Hogarth roundabouts will be excluded from the ULEZ. We will insist that TfL moves quickly to remove diesel buses from our streets. We will require TfL to introduce cyclist-appropriate road schemes but we will not support anything that adds to traffic congestion and air pollution e.g. CS9.

We will move to replace the Council's own fleet of vehicles with electric/hybrid vehicles. We will join with other councils in forcing Heathrow Airport to adopt environmentally responsible transport solutions. We will plant 1,000 new trees mainly in areas where air pollution is at its worst. We will enforce anti-engine idling legislation at key locations. Labour wish only to restrict enforcement to areas outside schools – good but not good enough.

Mogden Sewage Works – The Borough's rapidly expanding population is putting ever increasing pressure on the ability of Thames Water to deal with all the effluent and sewage that we generate. We will negotiate directly with TW to establish the scale of the problem and work to identify innovative ways of mitigating or removing the huge potential risks to residents and river-users.

Heritage Assets – We will commission an holistic strategy for the assets and properties owned by the Borough, setting out detailed long term maintenance plans and the funding sources. This will be fully integrated with other relevant strategic thinking e.g. education, leisure and planning.

Other Environmental issues – our policies on waste collection and street repairs are explained in section one above. We will enforce the existing laws and regulations to stop rogue landlords from converting small family homes into unregulated slums. Enforcement officers must be ever alert to this issue and the continuing “beds-in-sheds” problem.

We will unlock additional external funding and sponsorship for a scheme to replace inefficient old domestic boilers that contribute disproportionately to air pollution. We will accelerate the review of heating systems in Council owned buildings owned. We support the introduction of more charging points for electric cars. Residents will retain a say in where these charging points are sited.

3. We will re-establish the sound financial management that will deliver our pledges

Key policies at a glance

- Hold Council Tax increases as low as possible
- Appoint a finance director
- Re-establish the Finance Scrutiny Committee
- Restore the funding of the Scrutiny Committees – reinforce their independence
- Set clear and costed strategic goals for all departments
- Stop the over-spends on department budgets – deliver planned savings
- Cut the inflated budgets for corporate services
- Open up council expenditure to “citizens’ audits”
- Make Project Management training mandatory for key staff
- Apply strict value for money procurement rules
- Challenge the basis for every financial reserve
- Speed up the release of S106 and CIL funds
- Conduct a rolling review of all services including the Hounslow Highways PFI
- Seek expert advice on the future of the Lampton 360 ‘empire’
- Explore the potential for more service sharing with other Boroughs and organisations
- Work with our GLA members to control the budget of the London Mayor

Sound Financial Control – We will move quickly to appoint a finance director. This post was abolished by Labour as a cost saving measure! We will re-establish the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Committee – also abolished by Labour. Simple changes will be made to enhance the effectiveness and independence of the Scrutiny, Audit and Pension Fund Committees. With the assistance of bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce experienced independent professional volunteers will be appointed to assist these specialist committees.

Overspends Against Budget – We will introduce much tighter budgetary controls that will in future identify problems at an early stage and ensure corrective actions is taken. Senior Officers will be required to deliver savings included in the annual budgets. We will not allow corporate budgets to be “padded out” so that they can then be used to fund departmental overspends. In 2017/18 the Council will £7m more than it budgeted for. We will make it easy for residents to apply the legislation that supports “Citizen’s Audits”. No more delays of up to two years in processing freedom of information requests.

Procurement Rules to Be Applied – We will properly market test all Council services. There will be no presumption that in-house or outsourced provision is best or to be preferred. All services will be subjected to a rolling review to see if current arrangements are fit for purpose. Local voluntary groups will be given a chance to bid where appropriate. Small and medium sized local businesses will not be excluded from tender lists simply because they are small.

Lampton 360 – We will commission an independent review of the Lampton 360 ‘empire’. The justification for setting up this ‘trading vehicle’ has never been clearly established. Even Labour now belatedly admits that such a review is needed. We must establish what has happened to the millions of pounds of public money transferred to Lampton and when (if ever) Council Tax payers will see a return on their investment.

S106 and CIL Funds – We will ensure that these funds are reported on regularly and all allocation decisions are open to investigation by the Scrutiny Committees. Local funding decisions will be reviewed at Area Forums.

Local Voluntary Groups – We will work closely with local voluntary groups on joint external funding bids to bring new sources of external finance into the Borough.

4. We will transform the way that the Council interacts with residents

Key policies at a glance

- Commission an independent review of inequality in the Borough
- Roll out a Hounslow Residents' Entitlement Card
- Ensure resident's enquiries and complaints are answered promptly and properly
- Rebuild relationships with charities and others e.g. Hounslow Community Network
- Track response times to emails and phone calls
- Simplify routing of residents' queries
- Make staff accountable for delivery of services
- Publish results of real-time surveys of customer service experience
- Respond quickly to trends and increases in enquiries and complaints
- Track and publish Councillors' performance
- Respect residents' responses to consultations
- Make proper provision for residents without internet access or mobile phones

Transforming the relationship with residents - We promise nothing less than a complete change in culture. As Conservatives we never forget that we are elected to serve the residents of the Borough. We will not assume as Labour appears to do that all residents have access to a computer or a state-of-the-art mobile phone.

Senior Officers will be accountable for their departments' performances. Critical performance indicators such as response times and customer satisfaction will be monitored and reported on regularly.

All Councillors to be trained in how residents can access key services and on how to identify and work with local voluntary groups. We will re-establish proper working relationships with partners in the third sector who represent residents and can bring experience and volunteer resources to bear on local issues. We will make decisions on the funding of local groups in an open and transparent way.

We will schedule public consultations so that residents and community groups will have enough time to properly research and respond in detail to what is proposed.

We will respect the results of public consultations. Transport infrastructure changes will not be introduced without the support of the majority of residents e.g. road closures and CPZs.

We will prioritise the selection and implementation of a user-friendly planning system that will provide residents with straightforward easy access to information about planning applications.

We will provide space in the planning timeline for residents and residents groups to be able to properly respond to planning applications both big and small.

Annual spending on voluntary groups will be published in a separate report.

We stand on our record of real success in running the Borough of Hounslow for the four years up to May 2010

1. We froze Council Tax for an unprecedented four successive years.
2. Our efficiency programme generated £49m recurring savings over four years.
3. Our radical changes to service delivery have cumulatively saved over £200m to date.
4. Our team won the nationwide competition to secure £267 million Government PFI funding to replace the Borough's roads, pavements and street furniture.
5. We doubled the recycling rate from 17% to 35% and improved waste collection.
6. We invested £35m in modern libraries and new leisure services.
7. We implemented the long overdue new planning monitoring and enforcement regime.
8. We re-established Hounslow's top rating for adult care services.
9. We invested £2m in new CCTV systems and staff to help build safer communities.
10. The Hounslow Pension Fund Team won the award for the best performing local authority pension fund in 2008 (investment and income).
11. We appointed five new Community Safety co-ordinators to tackle crime and the fear of crime across the Borough.
12. Our concentration on social misbehaviour led to a 50% reduction in graffiti incidents.
13. Over 1,000 new trees were planted, improving both the street scene and air quality.
14. We increased spending on Children's services by 20% and were once again awarded 'Good' OFSTED scores for our work in safeguarding local children.
15. Academic performance improved. There was a 13% increase in those leaving school with five A* - C grades including English and Maths.
16. We continued the task of rebuilding our secondary schools and ensuring that future demand for new school places could be met.
17. We delivered new investment and big safety improvements in play areas for children.
18. Our new complaints procedure was praised by the Local Government Ombudsman.
19. We gave the freedom of the Borough to all members of the 2nd Regiment of the Fusiliers on their return from Afghanistan.
20. We made good on our promise to continue flying the UK flag at the Civic Centre, except on St George's Day when the English flag is flown.
21. We continued our (then) successful battle against the negative aspects of Heathrow expansion.

We stand on our record of real success in opposition since May 2010

1. Participated fully and 'punched above our weight' in all the Council's specialist committees e.g. scrutiny, planning, licensing, audit and the pension investment committees.
2. Made the Chiswick Area Forum the model for other Area Forums. Allowed residents and amenity groups time to raise and debate local issues. Ensured that the deputy chair of the forum acts as the Area Champion.
3. Arranged independently chaired public meetings at which residents discussed contentious issues such as plans for controlled parking zones.
4. Secured additional funding for Chiswick Library.
5. Established and chaired the Gunnersbury Station Action Group. The Business Park Bridge to Chiswick Park Station is at last being constructed.
6. Secured £500k of section 106 money for the reconfiguration of Gunnersbury Station.
7. Helped secure funding for murals under Turnham Green station bridge.
8. Forced Labour to amend its annual budget to spend an additional £1m on litter collection.
9. Persuaded Council to install a meter on Chiswick High Road to measure the most dangerous air-borne particulate matter (PM 2.5 – the small particulates that damage the lungs).
10. Secured appropriate street lights in areas of special historic interest.
11. Stopped many pavements being replaced with tarmac where residents objected.
12. Took the lead in arranging the rehousing of a group of vulnerable elderly residents into new purpose-built accommodation.
13. Councillors successfully lobbied to secure funding for many smaller local projects e.g. children's play grounds and planting of additional trees.
14. Worked closely with the Officers and Councillors from other parties to develop and begin implementing strategic plans e.g. Dukes Meadows.
15. Highlighted various local problems with Hounslow Highways and secured action on many things from the correction of poor workmanship to alterations in street lighting.
16. Called-in contentious 'single-member' decisions for review by the Scrutiny Committee e.g. cuts to youth services.
17. Took the lead in opposing TfL's flawed cycle super highway plans (CS9) and prevented Labour simply rubber-stamping the decision.
18. Held public meetings to oppose the plans for The Chiswick Curve development on Chiswick Roundabout. The planning application was turned down.

Do you know who runs your Local Council?

It really matters who runs your local Council, your local services depend on it. Yet many people do not know who controls their local Council.

Is it the Borough's two MPs? No.

Is it the Mayor of London? No.

Is it national government? No.

The answer is - it is your local elected councillors who run your council and they are accountable only to you.

Since 2010 Hounslow Council has been run by Labour. Help us to change that.

For more information about the policies contained in this manifesto, please contact us:

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