

# Labour:

Ambitious for you, your family and for Reading



## LABOUR: AMBITIOUS FOR YOU, YOUR FAMILY AND FOR READING

Labour has worked hard to secure Reading's thriving and buoyant economy - to guarantee the prosperity of the town on which everything else depends. We believe the years of Labour control have been good years for Reading, and good years for Reading people.

When Labour took over from the Tories in 1986, Reading was a run-down third division town. The town has come a long way since then, thanks to Labour's ambition to make it a really great place to grow up in, to live and work in, and to enjoy.

Labour is working hard to make Reading safer, greener and fairer. And, having just delivered a Council Tax rise of just 1.9%, the lowest in Berkshire and one of the lowest in the country, Labour Reading has proved that we believe in value for money too.

The Tories have said they will keep to Labour's spending plans for this year but after that everything is up for grabs. Labour's commitments in this Manifesto are for the long term and build on our vision for the town's future.

Labour's key priorities are to:

- Make sure crime in Reading goes on falling - with the increased number of police officers and PCSO's, the development of neighbourhood policing, and strong action on drugs, anti-social behaviour, street drinking and graffiti.
- Make sure every child gets the best possible start in life, with a strong network of children's centres, good schools, and good training opportunities.
- Develop more affordable housing – to rent and to buy – giving people a chance to have a decent home at a price they can afford.
- Make sure older people and the disabled receive the help they need, and don't suffer the cruel cuts that have been imposed by our Tory neighbours
- Make sure Reading benefits to the full from the £664Million we have won for revamping Reading Station, one of the biggest investments in public transport in the country.
- Work with John Madejski on developing the land between the station and Friar Street, and on the next phase of Chatham Place, continuing the transformation of Reading town centre.
- Work to overcome the resistance of Oxfordshire Tories to a third Thames Bridge. Building a third bridge, the Oxford Road relief road and other improvements we believe would cut by half the 155,000 cars that drive through the town centre every day.
- Deliver a new, larger, state of the art, theatre to replace the ageing Hexagon and a modern, improved central library, as part of regenerating the civic centre area.
- Promote access to sport for all, with the Sport Reading partnership helping Reading children participate in 5 hours of sport and exercise a week.
- Reduce Reading Council's carbon emissions by at least 10% by 2012 and become one of the leading Councils in carbon reduction and leading the fight against climate change.

## SAFER READING

Labour has increased the number of police officers and PCSO's, brought in neighbourhood policing across the town, and developed successful approaches to tackling drugs, anti-social behaviour, street drinking and graffiti

Labour will:

- Work with the police to provide a network of neighbourhood police offices across the Borough.
- Increase funding to Neighbourhood Action Groups in tackling the police priorities set by local communities.
- Prioritise dealing with anti-social behaviour on Council estates, co-operating with the police and other agencies and resorting to enforcement and eviction where other measures have failed.
- Enforce against breaches of standards by private landlords, including health and safety, infestation, failure to clear rubbish, and overcrowding.
- Continue to work with the police and the magistrates to crack down on graffiti vandalism, and to invest in graffiti cleaning teams.
- Work with the Local Safeguarding Children Board to keep children safe and develop a "child-friendly Reading" for the town's youngsters to grow up in.
- Consult young people on changes to bus services that would help them get safely to and from school, college and leisure activities.
- Continue to invest in road safety schemes so as to reduce injuries and deaths on the roads.

## GREENER READING

Labour has preserved and extended the town's green spaces, worked to reduce Reading's carbon footprint, secured huge investment in public transport, built a new waste recycling centre and greatly improved the town's recycling rate.

Labour will:

- Replace Reading's 12,650 street lights with new energy-efficient lighting – cutting both energy use and light pollution.
- Achieve and surpass Government recycling targets, avoiding the cost and reducing the long-term damage of using landfill sites.
- Work through the planning system to make sure new buildings are built to the highest environmental and energy-saving standards.
- Work to reduce traffic congestion and the pollution that goes with it, by tackling through traffic in the town centre and individual bottlenecks elsewhere.
- Keep Reading Buses in public ownership and maintain and develop bus lanes and other priority measures so as to continue to reduce bus journey times and increase reliability.
- Continue to invest in greener, low carbon emission buses - making Reading Buses one of the cleanest bus fleets in the country.
- Divert lorries away from residential roads, using lorry bans and signage.
- Provide a network of quality pedestrian routes radiating from the station and a network of quality cycling routes throughout Greater Reading.
- Work with schools to get more "walking buses" and reduce the impact on traffic congestion of the school run.
- Protect Reading's open spaces and invest in the town's parks and play areas.

# FAIRER READING

Labour has sought to give every child the best possible start, protected and improved services for the elderly and disabled, built more affordable housing, and worked hard to achieve good relations between Reading's communities.

Labour will:

- Work to give a good start in life to every child, rolling out Children's Centres across the Borough.
- Continue investing in and improving Reading's schools so that the town's record scores for GCSE and A-level are broken and broken again.
- Support elderly and disabled people living independently in the community. Unlike our Tory neighbours, Labour Reading will never cut back on those people eligible for care and services.
- Maintain Reading's system of pensioners' bus passes which is one of the best in the country. Thanks to Labour, the bus pass can now be used nationwide.
- Retain Reading's Council housing stock and achieve the Reading Decent Homes Standard, which is better than the Government standard, by 2009, a year before the Government deadline.
- Work with landlords and partners to ensure that decent homes standards are achieved also in the private and registered social landlord sectors.
- Work to provide more key worker housing for police, nurses, teachers, and other workers in the public sector.
- Maintain Reading's generous support to the voluntary sector – which no other Berkshire Council, Tory or LibDem, has ever sought to match - and work to provide a new resource centre for smaller voluntary organisations.
- Help local groups and ethnic minority organisations who are keen to develop their own community facilities.
- Support local communities by refurbishing local branch libraries and increasing their opening hours, and renewing the mobile library service.

Reading is a better place with Labour. The Tories' long term plans would put our success in jeopardy. The town's economy is strong and experts say Reading is better placed than most to do well in tough economic times. We have two great new hospitals, there has been a great deal of investment in our schools and school results are improving faster than most of the country, there's been investment too in parks and leisure facilities and Reading now has one of the best shopping centres in the country.

But Labour is not complacent. We know there is always more to be done, and we work week in week out to make sure we can, with our partners, improve the town and improve your life and the life of your family. This is the first Manifesto published by any political party for the 2008 elections, it is one built on real achievements in the past but brimming also with ambition for the future, and we hope it has your support.

Promoted by Robert Owen and printed by Reading and District Labour Party on behalf of its candidates named herein all at 413 Oxford Road, Reading, RG30 1HA