

Labour Llafur

STANDING UP FOR **RHONDDA CYNON TAF** IN TOUGH TIMES
THE LOCAL ELECTION **MANIFESTO 2012**



FOREWORD

Standing Up for Rhondda Cynon Taf



“Labour Councillors have been honoured to serve the people of Rhondda Cynon Taf, leading the Council since 2004. We seek your continued support to progress our improvements and stand up for local services against the cuts being imposed by the UK Government.”

On May 3rd 2012, local elections will take place to decide who becomes your local Councillor or Councillors.

These are challenging times as the cuts to public sector finances bite. Since the cuts from Westminster have been imposed on Wales, Labour Councillors have demonstrated their commitment to find ways and means to mitigate their impact on local communities and the Council services we all so heavily rely on.

In contrast to cuts from the Tories and Liberals we have protected frontline services and public sector jobs. These cuts from Cameron and Clegg are too swift and too harsh. With the help of the Lib Dems the Conservatives are repeating the assault they undertook on nationalised industries in the 1980s with an attack on the public sector today. We all saw the devastating consequences this had for our local valleys’ communities then, indeed we are still suffering the effects of this today. That is why it is so fundamentally important that we stand up against these cuts and do everything we possibly can to minimise the impact on our local communities.

Labour Councillors can achieve this. Our manifesto is geared towards ensuring fairness for families and older people, protecting the services which support them. If re-elected, at the heart of our work will be a commitment to stimulate investment in infrastructure, such as roads and schools, ensuring a boost for the local economy and creating jobs.

We will also ensure that we continue to improve Rhondda Cynon Taf, through the regeneration of local communities and making our local environment cleaner and greener. Unlike the opposition, we put delivery ahead of political rhetoric and we have a strong track record to point to.

The continuity of Labour Leadership since 2004 has seen us able to progress our long term ambitions such as the Church Village Bypass, the regeneration of Pontypridd and Aberdare and the Rhondda Fach Relief Road.

Labour Councillors are on the side of your community. We represent the values of ordinary families right across Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Cllr Russell Roberts
Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf Labour

‘FIVE’ for a fairer Rhondda Cynon Taf.

A Labour Council would stand up for the residents of Rhondda Cynon Taf against the cuts being imposed on Wales and would protect the important public services valued by the public.

1. ‘PROTECTING & CREATING LOCAL JOBS’ A Modern Apprentice Scheme

The Council is one of the only local authorities in Wales not to cut local jobs. A Labour controlled Council would commit to a modern apprentice scheme, which would create 200 traineeships for young people aged 16-24 in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

2. ‘SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES’ Community Wardens to Patrol Our Streets

Labour has a strong track record in improving community safety. In addition to the extra Community Support Officers provided by the Labour Welsh Government, a Labour controlled Council would create a dedicated team of Community Rangers to patrol our parks and town centres. This team would work closely with the Police to tackle issues such as nuisance behaviour in local communities

3. ‘IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENT’ ‘Zero tolerance to Enviro-crime’

Labour in Rhondda Cynon Taf already has a strong track record of tackling enviro-crimes such as littering, fly-tipping & dog fouling. A Labour controlled Council will commit to the creation of dedicated local enforcement to tackle these nuisances such as litter and dog fouling with a zero tolerance approach.

4. ‘IMPROVING EDUCATION STANDARDS’ ‘Investment in new schools & facilities’

In addition to the extra funding being provided by the Labour Welsh Government, the Council will commit to further investment in new school buildings and facilities. We will also continue to drive up standards and educational attainment.

5. ‘CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS IN HIGHWAYS’ ‘Extra funding for Resurfacing, Pothole & Pavement repairs’

In the last year alone, Labour in Rhondda Cynon Taf has invested an additional £10M to improve our main roads and streets. A Labour controlled Council would commit to continue this additional investment and also include extra pavement improvements within the next phase of this programme.

'FIVE' to Protect & Keep.

Public sector funding is being slashed by the Conservative & Lib Dem Government in London, which threatens the many important services local Councils provide. A Labour controlled Council would commit to protect the following services valued by the public.

1. PROTECT 'SEVEN DAYS A WEEK MEALS ON WHEELS' & SUPPORT PROVIDED FOR THE ELDERLY

A Labour controlled Council would commit to protect the provision of our seven days a week meals on wheels service and other associated services supporting the elderly introduced by Labour from UK Government cuts.

2. 'PROTECTION OF INVESTMENT IN FRONTLINE SERVICES'

Despite cuts to public sector finances, a Labour Council would commit to continue Labour's programme of investment in frontline services, such as highways, the environment and services for the elderly and vulnerable.

3. 'MAINTAIN WEEKLY REFUSE COLLECTIONS'

Labour in Rhondda Cynon Taf already has a strong track record of investment to improve our environment. A Labour controlled Council will protect and maintain weekly refuse collections and will not following the example of neighbouring Plaid Cymru & Lib Dem controlled Councils who have adopted fortnightly collection of waste.

4. 'PROTECT OUR E3 AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITY PROGRAMME'

A Labour Council will protect the E3 initiative which has transformed the availability of activities to engage young people after school within every school area in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

5. 'MAINTAIN SUPPORT FOR CLEAN & TIDY NEIGHBOURHOODS'

Our 'Street Blitz' approach to ensuring our neighbourhoods are clean, green and tidy will be protected and will receive additional support and investment under a Labour controlled Council.

Standing up for our record...

Labour Councillors are proud of our record in control of the Council since 2004. We look for your support to continue building on our record of delivery in action:

Just Some Examples of our Delivery in Action:

- Almost £200M invested in two major road schemes – Porth Relief Road and Church Village Bypass;
- New £4.1M Park and Ride at Abercynon along with car park extension at Taffs Well;
- New railway station at Llanharan, restoring a passenger rail service there for the first time in forty years;
- Porth Bus Interchange providing better bus facilities, new public toilets and improved links with the town centre;
- Free Parking for disabled people;
- Unprecedented investment in maintaining our road network - £10M in this financial year alone to tackle consecutive winter damage;
- Safe Routes in Communities schemes delivered in many areas; amongst others, Aberaman, Ferndale, Abercynon, Llwydcoed and Ynysybwl;
- Massive increase in recycling – from one of the worst in Wales under Plaid to one of the most improved, now recycling over 50% of waste;
- Roll out of food waste recycling service to 100,000 properties, meaning almost all of the County Borough is now covered;
- Regular street blitzes to keep our towns and villages clean;
- Robust and pro-active enforcement action against those who litter, fly-tip or fail to clear up dog mess;
- £21.3M being invested in Aberdare, Ferndale and Pontypridd town centres, to enhance their economic strength and to create a stronger business environment and local job opportunities;
- High profile events programme, including annual Ponty's Big Weekend, bringing economic benefits to RCT;
- Secured over £3 million for the Rhydyfelin Flood Alleviation Scheme to protect hundreds of homes from severe flooding;
- New £5M school for Ynyshir Primary and £9M Williamstown Primary School at Penrhiwfer;
- £1.7M rebuild and major refurbishment of amalgamated Maerdy Primary School and internal refurbishment of Llwynypia Primary;

- £3M extension at Penywaun Primary School as well as new extension blocks at Dolau and Tonyrefail Primary Schools;
- More school building improvements on the way after the Council secured Welsh Government support for exciting £160M programme;
- Radical new Services for Young People provision, including E3, giving young people opportunities and activities they really want and benefit from;
- Opening of E-Teens libraries in Treorchy, Tylorstown and Aberdare
- New Consultation Strategy adopted, giving a framework for our extensive engagement and communication with residents so that policies and services are shaped in line with their wishes and needs;
- Transfer of Council's housing stock, with the support of residents, to RCT Homes, enabling multi-million pound investment in tenants' properties;
- Vital Telecare and Lifeline services, enabling people to live independently whilst being connected to emergency support, ensuring their safety;
- Continued commitment to 7 days per week Community Meals service, recognising how crucial this is to maintaining older people's independence in their own homes;
- Opening of specialist cafes for sufferers of dementia, their carers and families;
- Range of support and services for 50+ age group, including welfare rights advice, forums, and a special one off event to showcase all on offer for them;
- Continued investment in our leisure centres, including major refurbishments at Ystrad, Tonyrefail and Bronwydd, and new fitness suites and improved facilities in many others;
- Free leisure access for children and their families throughout the school holidays through the High 5 scheme;
- Opened new Customer Care One4all Centres at Bronwydd in Porth and in Mountain Ash making access to Council services easier and more accessible;
- £1M investment at Dare Valley Country Park, creating a new tourism feature and visitor centre;
- Introduction of new Order covering the whole of Rhondda Cynon Taf giving the police more power to deal with anti-social drinking – follows previous measures in Penrhiwceiber and Ynysangharad War Memorial Park
- Dedicated and mobile enforcement team to apprehend illegal off-road bikers;
- Continued financial stability despite funding cuts by ConDem Government and over £40M of efficiency savings, making every pound count;

1 – Creating Jobs & Growth

In these challenging economic times, the public sector has a crucial role to play in supporting the local economy. Thanks to the protection given to Local Government by the Welsh Government from the worst of the cuts, a Labour Council will be able to support its priorities in areas such as Education, Regeneration & Infrastructure Improvement, to boost the local economy, through capital investment creating jobs and growth.

Ensuring Capital Investment

Working with our Labour colleagues in the Welsh Government, a Labour led Council will continue to maximise the opportunities for capital investment in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

By continuing with our improvements to our highway network and creating new schools both at primary and secondary level, which are fit for the 21st century, we will continue to stimulate the local economy creating jobs and growth.

Jobs for Young People

As the largest employer locally a Labour Council would continue to invest in the roll-out of apprenticeship opportunities for young people in the Council. This scheme would provide 50 job opportunities each year for local people, providing skilled training in the host of professions which support the Council.

Protecting Jobs

A Labour Council will continue to protect local public sector jobs from the cuts being imposed on Wales, avoiding compulsory redundancies.

Support for First Time Buyers

By providing support to assist first time buyers in securing a mortgage we will work to provide a boost to the local housing market, stimulating growth in our local building industry.

Support Local Graduates

Labour Councillors would support a scheme to support local graduates in finding employment opportunities in the public sector, building on the success of the current scheme.

Providing Skills & Training Opportunities

Utilise European Structural Funds to develop skills and training opportunities for young people to engage with employers. Labour Councillors would continue the Building the Future Together programme.

2 – Standing Up for Local Public Services

Labour is a party committed to Public Services which are citizen centred for all, not choice for the few. Whilst the Tories and Liberals are committed to attacking the state, we believe in protecting and investing in the services that matter to local people. A Labour Council would continue to improve all our services, using effective partnerships across the public sector to ensure the maximum impact for every public sector pound.

No Cuts to Frontline Services

A Labour Council will commit to no cuts to frontline services, which local residents rely on. Where service changes are needed a Labour Council commits to effective engagement with service users, including the third sector, in the design, delivery and improvement of these services.

Promoting Partnership & Collaborative Working

A Labour Council will, using effective partnerships, with both communities and regional neighbours, deliver ongoing improvements to Council functions, the effectiveness and efficiency of services during these challenging times.

Ensuring there is Good Value

In the last 8 years Labour Councillors have already delivered over £50M of efficiency savings, delivering more for less. A Labour Council will continue this strong track record for Council Tax payers so that the demand for improved services is balanced with affordable Council Tax levels.

Delivery in Action

Labour Councillors will publish a programme for delivery, which the public can monitor and judge annually, highlighting how their Councillor is honouring the pledges he/she made at the local elections. This will include a Delivery Unit within the Council to lead the implementation of the programme.

Supporting our Workforce

A Labour Council will continue to work with our trade union colleagues to support a healthy workforce, driving down sickness absence and supporting training and development opportunities.

Transparency & Openness

A Labour controlled Council would commit to streaming its meetings on the Council's webpage. Labour Councillors would also commit to reintroduce the area planning committees vetoed by Lib Dem and Conservative Councillors in May 2011.

3 – Clean Green Streets, Standing up for Our Environment

Labour Councillors have a strong track record of delivery on improving our environment. Since Labour retook control of the Council in 2004, the service and our local environment have seen visible improvements and significant investment. A Labour Council will pledge to protect this service area and continue to promote recycling and tackle enviro-crime with a zero tolerance approach, targeting resources at our town centres.

Weekly Black Bag Collections

Unlike opposition controlled Councils, a Labour controlled RCT will commit to continue weekly black bag collections alongside its recycling measures.

Continue Support for Recycling

Labour Councillors will continue to work to drive up recycling rates, already at over 50%.

Zero Charges for Bulky Collections

If re-elected Labour will continue its policy of maintaining zero charges for bulky collections.

Zero Tolerance to Enviro-crime

Labour Councillors will develop a dedicated enforcement team to tackle enviro-crime and increase prosecutions, tackling problems such as graffiti, rubbish/fly tipping and dog fouling.

Targeted Resources for Litter Cleaning

Labour Councillors commit to protect the services and frequency of its environmental works, picking litter, cutting grass and tidying our environment from the cuts from Westminster.

Sustainable Development

Labour Councillors will ensure this issue is integrated into all of our work, ensuring the promotion of sustainable development activities in respect of the quality of their local environment, waste, transport, energy, biodiversity and eco systems and other activities. Labour Councillors will instigate a review of how electric and energy efficient vehicles can be introduced into the Council fleet.

4 – Regenerating Our Communities

A Labour Council will continue to work with the Welsh Government to deliver the maximum opportunities for Regeneration and inward investment in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Attracting inward investment

Labour Councillors will work alongside the Welsh Government to attract major employers into Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Development Zones

Working with the Welsh Government a Labour Council would seek to establish Development Zones in each of the three areas, with simplified planning policy to assist in the attraction of inward investment opportunities.

Town Centres

A Labour Council would continue to use the opportunities presented by European Structural funds to further progress the work already being undertaken in Pontypridd and Aberdare, and also in our other town centres.

Treorchy

Labour will ensure new junction and traffic arrangements are introduced in Treorchy to boost the local economy and improve traffic flows.

Promoting RCT

Labour Councillors have a strong track record in delivering major events, never previously seen in RCT. If re-elected, Labour Councillors will continue to invest in this area, supporting the development of new events which provide a key boost to the local economy.

Tourism & Culture

Labour Councillors will develop a dedicated destination management plan to support local hoteliers and attractions. The Council will continue to provide support to the Council's key cultural attractions.

5 – Safer Communities

Since 2004 Rhondda Cynon Taf has a strong track record of tackling anti-social behaviour, working alongside the Police to drive down crime and reduce the fear of crime within our communities. Labour Councillors, despite attempts by opposition Councillors, voted through a county borough wide clampdown on drinking in public places. The Labour administration has also continued to roll out the highly success 'Alley-gating' initiative to communities across RCT. A Labour controlled Council will continue to make community safety a key priority.

Community Support Officers

Over and above the additional Community Support Officers provided by the Welsh Government, a Labour Controlled Council would fund its own support officers, each allocated to each individual community in Rhondda Cynon Taf to support the local work of the police acting as community rangers reporting and combating issues such as fly-tipping and dog fouling. They will also patrol local parks and public places.

Alley-Gating

A Labour Council will continue to invest and provide alley-gating facilities to tackle nuisance behaviour in back lanes and alleys.

Zero Tolerance on Problematic Drinking in Public Places

A Labour Council would continue with this policy, ensuring its effective implementation and enforcement. Opposition Parties voted against this proposal.

Safety at the heart of our communities

A Labour Council would continue to promote positive relationships with South Wales Police, local communities and other partners. Labour Councillors will work closely with the new Community Support Officers to tackle local hotspots for crime and anti-social behaviour.

Tackle & Eradicate Violence and Domestic Abuse

Rhondda Cynon and its public service partners are already leading in the way in shaping the services which support this huge issue. Labour Councillors will continue to work with colleagues in the Police and Health Service to develop services tailored to this difficult situation.

6 – Driving Up Education Standards

Labour Councillors already have a strong track record in delivering investment into improved schools and new school buildings fit for the 21st century. The Labour Leadership has recently developed a new strategy to drive up standards including achievements in literacy and numeracy. Labour Councillors will work to continue delivering a step change in school standards and educational performance that will equip young people and learners for the future.

More Funding to Schools

Labour Councillors will ensure that at least 85% of the Council's School Funding is delegated directly to schools. Labour Councillors will focus on how education and schools money is spent, not just the size of the budget.

21st Century Schools

Labour Councillors commit to a £160M investment to transform primary, secondary and Welsh Medium education provisions in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

Protecting Vital Support for Children

A Labour Council will commit to continue promoting free school breakfasts and support further rollouts of the Flying Start Early Years programme.

Activities for Young People

In 2004, Labour Councillors initiated a radical overhaul of youth services within the Council. The outcome was the pioneering E3+ initiative which following a pledge by Labour Councillors in 2008 has been rolled out to every school cluster in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The scheme engages young people after school in a host of exciting activities. A Labour Council would pledge to protect these valued services and continue developing its innovative ways of engaging young people after school.

Limiting the impact of cuts on Schools

Labour Councillors will continue to ensure that our schools are protected from the worst of the cuts being imposed on public sector finances.

Adult Learning

Labour Councillors will continue to prioritise this important area, seeking innovative means of improving uptake in our most deprived areas and widening the breadth of provision offered.

7 – Delivering Support for People

Labour in Rhondda Cynon Taf is one of the only Councils in Wales not to reduce its support for people receiving care. Supporting the vulnerable is a key priority for Labour Councillors and if re-elected we pledge to continue the pioneering work of the Council in providing support for the elderly. We know that the cuts and changes to benefits will remove around £30M from the local economy and therefore vulnerable people will rely on our services more heavily than ever before.

Protect Services for Elderly

Labour Councillors pledge to protect the vital services the older generation rely on and to continue investing in these key areas.

Seven Days a Week Meals on Wheels

A Labour Council would pledge to protect this service from the cuts from the UK government.

Supporting Independence

Labour Councillors will ensure a further development of the Telecare model to support people's independence and would establish a professional review to seek recommendations on how Council services can be shaped to support people in their own homes.

Support Services for Vulnerable

Labour Councillors will ensure that the needs of the vulnerable are considered in all its service planning. If re-elected we will continue to prioritise funding in this area to ensure fairness for all.

Seamless Public Services

Labour Councillors recognise that people require a seamless integration between health, social services and other public services. Labour Councillors will continue to use their influence to break down barriers, reduce disadvantage and secure equality of outcomes for people locally.

Smarter Collaboration

To mitigate the impact of the cuts from Westminster Labour Councillors will ensure closer collaboration between us, the Health Trust and other local authorities in delivering care services through integrated social services departments.

Strategic Approach

Labour Councillors will ensure a strategic approach to commissioning, especially of specialist services.

Community Learning

Labour Councillors will commit to the protection of Library Services into the future, with the development of further modern and shared facilities. Labour Councillors will increase the book fund reduced by Plaid.

8 - Healthy Active Lifestyles

After years of under investment Labour Councillors have already progressed a significant investment and improved programme for our local Leisure Centres. If re-elected, Labour Councillors would continue this investment.

More Play Facilities

If re-elected, Labour Councillors would commit to investment in new park and play facilities across the County.

More Choice

Labour Councillors will ensure that its Leisure customers are provided with greater choice to achieve their fitness aims and will ensure that each centre is equipped with state of the art equipment.

High Five

Labour Councillors delivered the 'High5' initiative which provides free access to facilities and classes during school holidays. Labour Councillors pledge to protect this service from the cuts.

Cycle Paths & Walking Routes

Labour Councillors will continue to develop the Cycle Path Network in Rhondda Cynon Taf, ensuring the delivery of such schemes becomes a priority for each capital scheme considered by the local authority.

Pontypridd Lido

If re-elected Labour will work to secure the necessary funding from HLF and WEFO to deliver a new Lido facility. If successful with securing funding we will ensure that the facility becomes a regional tourism attraction. We will also ensure that the existing paddling pool facility is protected.

'RECOGNISING OUR ARMED FORCES'

A free access scheme for all Armed Forces members and veterans to Council facilities

9 – Community Leadership in Tough Times

Labour Councillors appreciate the needs of local communities and the need to stand up against the Lib Dems and Conservatives who are imposing these cuts on Wales. A Labour Council will ensure strong leadership in these times, ensuring the priorities of local people can be matched with available resources

In Challenging Times

Labour Councillors will provide strong leadership for local communities in order to help those communities respond to the challenging times we face.

Acting Responsibly

Labour Councillors will ensure strong financial management of the Council and protection of frontline services.

Better Outcomes

Labour Councillors will provide a sharp focus on delivering better outcomes for local communities and will continue to ensure a cost effective operation and delivery of Council functions and services.

Social Justice a Priority

Labour Councillors will ensure fairness, equality in the delivery of services, promoting progress towards greater social justice and the need for sustainable communities.

Working to Tackle Poverty

Labour Councillors will work to tackle poverty and improve not only opportunities, but also outcomes for local citizens.

10 – Transport & Accessibility

Labour Councillors have already demonstrated their commitment to improving our transport infrastructure, from the Church Village Bypass, £10M investment in Road Repairs and new Park and Ride facilities. A Labour Council would commit to ensuring better access and travel arrangements for the County Borough. Labour Councillors would also support public transport and sustainable transport as a priority.

Improvements & Repairs to Highways

Labour Councillors will commit to an additional programme of resurfacing, pothole repair and maintenance.

Improvements to Pavements

In addition to our highways improvements Labour Councillors will extend the programme to include pavements, beginning with our town centres as a priority.

Improving Travel & Transport

Labour Councillors will co-operate in the delivery of initiatives to secure integrated transport, improving bus and train services for local communities.

Supporting Hospital Transport Routes

Work with public transport providers to ensure servicing the routes which our communities rely upon to visit local hospitals and health centres.

Better Rail Links

Labour Councillors will campaign for better rail transport links and will seek to develop further proposals for Park and Ride developments around the County.

Heads of the Valleys Road

Labour Councillors will lobby Welsh Government Ministers to deliver the much needed dualling of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road.

Cross Valley Link

If re-elected Labour will continue to lobby the Welsh Government to secure funding to deliver the Cross Valley Link in Mountain Ash.

Electrification of the Valleys Lines

Labour Councillors will work with the Welsh Government to support the electrification of the Valleys lines and also support the implementation of a Valleys Metro.

Free Bus Travel

Labour Councillors will ensure the Free Bus Travel Initiative for older people, disabled people and carers continues to be promoted.