

Our plan to deliver for Wiltshire

**The Conservative Manifesto for the
Wiltshire Council elections on 6 May 2021**



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A personal message from the Conservative Group Leader

Wiltshire Conservatives Deliver

Conservative run Wiltshire Council has delivered huge improvements for Wiltshire residents over the last four years.

We have overseen a successful response to Covid-19. We gave over £136 million in support to local businesses whilst the Wellbeing Hub helped residents who were shielding. Throughout the pandemic we have ensured our waste collection services continued and have taken advantage of quieter roads to step up our resurfacing and repair programs.

We have built over 170 new council houses, with plans for 1,000 more, built to a zero-carbon standard to follow. We have set up the Stone Circle Housing company to provide affordable rented housing to those who don't qualify for the housing waiting list. We have finalised plans to build the new Silverwood Special School in Rowde to provide state of the art education to our pupils with special educational needs and are proud that 94% of our children were offered a place at their first or second choice school.

We have resurfaced 458 miles of road, investing £20 million extra a year in keeping our highways network in good condition. We transformed our services for vulnerable adults, building on a successful shared lives scheme. We have (unlike many councils) maintained all of our libraries and leisure centres and they will **all** be reopened again as restrictions are lifted. We have continued to fund 99 vital local bus services.

Whilst Covid has taken much of our focus over the last year we have also been continuing with plans to transform Trowbridge and Salisbury High Streets through the Future High Street Fund. We have risen to the challenge of responding to climate change, cutting Wiltshire Council's carbon emissions by 80%. Our approach has been to take action when it will both reduce our emissions and also save money, as highlighted by the conversion of our street lighting to LED bulbs, saving £1.9 million a year and reducing emissions by 1,777 tonnes a year. Our Council House refurbishment program will save our most vulnerable residents £500 a year.

We have huge plans for the future of Wiltshire as outlined below. These plans are all fully costed and will be delivered, unlike the proposals being put forward by other political parties.



Delivering our pledges to you



Wiltshire contains some truly wonderful natural assets. From our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the New Forest National Park (yes about 10% of that is in Wiltshire) and the rolling chalk down land of Salisbury Plain. Some of the world's best chalk streams are in Wiltshire along with ancient woodland like Savernake. We need to preserve our natural assets, to connect them and ensure wildlife can thrive. At the same time, we need to rise to the challenges of decarbonising our economy to address the issues of climate change.

To protect and enhance our environment we will...

Act on the blight of litter and fly tipping across our towns and countryside. We have had success prosecuting fly-tippers much more needs to be done. We will significantly increase the resources going into the prosecution of fly-tipping and pursue greater enforcement against littering along our roads.

Ensure all new Council Housing in Wiltshire is built to a zero-carbon standard and providing government policy allows we will ensure, through the Local Plan, all new housing complies with this.

Put a new Green Blue Infrastructure strategy at the heart of our local plan process. This will create links between our wild spaces both on land and along rivers to ensure that wildlife has corridors where it is prioritised, for example, otters have recently been seen in the centre of Salisbury along the river and we want to ensure that there are similar havens for our wildlife across the county.

Continue to promote wildflowers along our road verges and other open ground in our towns. We have started doing this via our grass cutting program and will work with all our communities to find spaces to ensure native wildflower species can flourish.

Continue to improve our waste collection service. Only 12% of our waste currently ends up in landfill with the rest being either recycled, composted or being turned into energy. We need to continue to improve on this with the eventual aim of nothing being sent to landfill.

Develop a Climate Strategy to help the entire county reduce carbon emissions. This will not be an easy process and will require us to work with the Government to ensure funding is properly channelled to support residents and businesses.

Make Wiltshire Council carbon neutral by 2030. We have already reduced carbon emissions by 80% since 2015 and are confident the Council can become carbon neutral by 2030.

Look to maximise renewable energy generation on Wiltshire Council assets. This is already being done with our buildings and we will look to sustainable provision on our county farms and Park and Ride sites.

To protect and enhance our environment we will...

Develop an infrastructure of electric vehicle charging points across the county working with electricity providers and government to ensure the network is adapted to developing technologies.

Create a network of community groups to develop programs to support our natural environment and reduce emissions locally building on excellent work already being done through our Area Boards.

Lead the way by retrofitting all our Council Houses to achieve at least an EPC B rating. This will stimulate the development of a new retrofitting industry for our existing housing which will ensure the appropriate skills and businesses are available to support our residents in retrofitting their own properties.



Delivering our pledges to you



Wiltshire has a thriving, diverse and highly varied local economy. We have many Market Towns and whilst there are some large employers, most of our economy is comprised of small businesses. We supported our businesses during Covid, providing over £136 million in grants. We know our High Streets faced significant challenges before Covid with the growth of internet shopping and the events of the past year have only increased these challenges.

To support our economy we will...

Invest £4 million over the next 4 years supporting our High Streets and to bring residents back to them. The future of our Market Towns will be about culture, entertainment, tourism and leisure as well as retail - this funding will kickstart that transition.

Roll out the Salisbury Heritage Trail App designed to let people explore familiar streets with a different perspective to cover the entirety of Wiltshire, promoting local tourism and encouraging people to learn more about local centres.

Develop the Wealth of Wiltshire brand to enable local food producers and other artisans to sell Wiltshire's products under an umbrella that backs their quality.

Look to maximise the benefits of employment development sites, for example expanding the world renowned hugely successful Porton Down Science Park and developing other opportunities around technology.

Do everything we can to force developers to use land allocated for employment for that purpose and not for more housing.

Use the High Street Fund awards for Trowbridge and Salisbury to transform both centres with a greater focus on tourism, culture, events and independent retail.

Develop a What's On In Wiltshire App that residents and visitors can use to find out what fairs, activities and events are on in the communities around them, encouraging people to make more of the opportunities inside Wiltshire.

Work to promote tourism in Wiltshire both to the wider country but also to people living in and near Wiltshire.

Ensure that the Local Plan provides for micro-business units to be developed in our rural communities. This enables people to create new businesses where they live, reducing the need for travel and making it easier to start a business when you have a young family.

Work with Town Councils and the City Council to create comprehensive improvement plans for each of our towns and city.



Delivering our pledges to you



Wiltshire is a large rural county (comprising 1,257 square miles) and half our population (250,000 people) live in rural communities. Whilst we have done everything we can as a Council to support rural bus services, funding 99 different routes, we cannot rely on public transport for our residents to get around to the same degree as in a large city. We have a good cycle network and want to expand it to connect more of our communities. We have delivered major improvements to the A350 over the last few years, addressing a significant congestion problem around Chippenham. We continue with enhanced investment of £20 million a year into our highways, fixing a long term backlog of repairs, resurfacing 458 miles of road in the last 4 years.

To ensure Wiltshire keeps moving we will...

Continue to invest in road repairs and resurfacing - people need to be able to get around Wiltshire easily and safely to keep our economy going.

Deliver further improvements along the A350 and work with the Government to provide a bypass for Westbury. Air quality in some of our towns is not good enough and we need to make sure heavy lorries driving through the county do not drive through the middle of our communities.

Invest in cycle routes as part of a strategic solution aimed at connecting all our communities.

Investigate a new model for rural public transport looking to make use of technology and smaller minibus type services to provide a more flexible way to support our more rural communities, connecting residents to their local towns.

Invest to significantly improve maintenance of our footpaths and bridleways. Many of us have had an opportunity during Covid to re-connect with the countryside around us and we want to encourage people to be active and enjoy our natural environment.

Continue with our work to provide new train stations in Devizes, Wilton and Corsham. This is reliant on support from the train companies, but significant plans are being successfully progressed.

Develop a sensible and deliverable plan for the introduction of infrastructure for electric vehicle charging points based on patterns of behaviour and usage, in conjunction with government programmes and the grid capacity in the South West.



Delivering our pledges to you



There is undoubtedly a need for new housing in Wiltshire if families and whole communities are not to be priced out of the county. Fulfilling the housing targets set by successive governments of all political persuasions presents a significant challenge. The amount of housing we have to provide means sites coming forward are increasingly contentious, even though only 1% of Wiltshire is developed at the moment. The stark reality is, if the county fails to meet government housing targets it loses control over where development occurs.

Thanks to our efforts to date, we do not face a housing crisis in Wiltshire but there are significant areas of market failure we are working to address. We have started a new Council House building programme delivering over 170 properties to date, focusing on ensuring affordable housing in our villages. We have also set up a Council owned housing company, Stone Circle, to provide affordable housing to specific groups that we cannot support through council housing but where we know there are problems that need addressing.

To ensure that Wiltshire delivers on its housing targets but also enables our communities to continue to thrive we will...

Complete the Local Plan review process. We have consulted on the range requested by Government and will propose the minimum number of new homes required.

Provide at least 1,000 more Council Houses over the next 10 years. These homes will be zero carbon and let at a social rent (50% of market rent) providing a safety net for vulnerable residents in Wiltshire.

Continue to expand the activity of Stone Circle to provide affordable rental accommodation to groups who need more flexible support. For example, our care leavers need an environment where they can learn to live and budget independently.

Ensure surplus Council owned land is developed for the benefit of Wiltshire residents and not simply sold to developers who then lack the incentive to develop it.

To ensure that Wiltshire delivers on its housing targets but also enables our communities to continue to thrive we will...

Update the Local Plan, the planning framework under which development is carried out, to transform the way that new development occurs in Wiltshire. For too long we have seen cookie cutter developments built on the edge of settlements that are not properly integrated into the towns they are built next to. New developments must create cohesive communities with good cycling and walking links into existing communities. They also need to have their own community focus, to be built as neighbourhoods. They need to be built to a zero-carbon standard with local renewable energy generation and green spaces which provide proper leisure facilities as well as a place for nature to thrive. This will require a step change in the way we approach development with master planning of communities at the centre of new developments.

Ensure planning policy means affordable housing is not just built in our towns but also in our villages. Families are often desperate to stay where they grew up but are unable to find housing they can afford. We will continue to prioritise a local connection in the letting of affordable housing. We know if people can stay in their communities, they will be able to look after older relatives, shops and schools will be supported and our villages will remain vibrant, thriving places to live.



Delivering our pledges to you



Our strong communities have been at the heart of everything the Conservative administration has done since the creation of Wiltshire Council. We first created and then worked with Area Boards to ensure more decisions are made at a local level. We have maintained all our Libraries and Leisure Centres and delivered new campus facilities in Salisbury, Tisbury, Corsham and Pewsey with more to come, including Melksham. We will continue our successful policy of transferring assets to town councils and the city council enabling them to take a greater control over the events and services offered in town centres. During Covid, this network allowed us to rapidly create the Community Hub which has supported our residents across Wiltshire.

Over the next 4 years we will...

Create better working relationships and regular opportunities for direct engagement with Wiltshire Council, the Police and the Police & Crime Commissioner to address all aspects of crime and anti-social behaviour. We need to ensure that resident's priorities in this area are fully understood by the Council and that in turn the Police take on board and act on these concerns.

Seek to address the issue of speeding across Wiltshire both in villages and towns. We will promote the use of Speed Indicator Devices and help communities put them in place. We will support a greater use of 20 mph speed limits where communities want them. We will work with the police to provide more support for Community Speed Watch.

Work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to secure an additional 100 officers ensuring their deployment will lead to a marked increase in visible police presence in our communities.

Promote, through our communities, greater sharing of existing private CCTV information with the Police, look at new Public Space Protection Orders and use social media as a more effective medium to share information between the Police and public.

Continue the program of transferring assets to our towns and villages where Parish Council want them, enabling them to have greater control over delivering the priorities of their communities.

Provide a library service which both provides access to books and other key community facilities, most importantly access to computers. This is essential for people accessing benefits, particularly in rural areas with poor broadband and phone signal.

Over the next 4 years we will...

Continue to renovate our leisure centres, bringing them up to a modern standard including the provision of new campus leisure facilities in Melksham and Trowbridge.

Continue to fund the Arts and Museums in Wiltshire, working with our partners to deliver an increasing range of cultural reasons to visit our town centres.

Continue to build on the work of Area Boards, looking to increase their effectiveness with a hybrid meeting model combining face to face meetings and virtual ones.

Integrate Public Health outcomes with the priorities of Area Boards, focusing on delivering more active connected communities with greater access to our countryside and greater support for local groups.



Delivering our pledges to you



Adult Social Care continues to be by far the largest area of budget spend for Wiltshire Council. We have made significant improvements in transforming this service to one that meets the needs of our residents. All our residents need to feel involved in their communities ensuring no one experiences isolation. We need to modernise accommodation for older people providing newer provision with greater emphasis on longer term independent living where support can be scaled up when needed. As long-term care contracts end, older buildings will need significant modernisation to be fit for purpose and meet the needs of the people of Wiltshire.

To achieve this we will...

Press government to complete the fair funding review to transform the way social care is delivered, ensuring Wiltshire gets its fair share.

Continue to develop our extremely successful Shared Lives programme helping people who need care to live with a family who can support them, whilst also giving them a greater sense of independence.

Enhance the current network of Older People's Champions to help address isolation amongst our residents, working alongside other measures such as social prescribing.

Continue to work closely with our hospitals to ensure when patients are discharged, they either return home or move to the right sort of accommodation supported by our groundbreaking Reablement Service. We will continue to help people live fulfilling independent lives wherever they are able.

Work with our Care Home providers and residents to ensure that Wiltshire has an appropriate range of up to date care homes to cater for the needs of the most vulnerable. We need to bring provision up to date and enable Wiltshire residents who need support to live with dignity.

Provide mental health support, particularly following the impact of lock down from the Covid latent demand fund.



Delivering our pledges to you



We all want the best for our children in Wiltshire. To see them thrive, get a first-rate education and have a safe environment to grow up in. Wiltshire Council has a vital role in ensuring all schools have appropriate buildings, that there are enough school places in the right locations and in particular in supporting provision for children with Special Educational Needs. 94% of our children are offered a place at their first or second choice of school and 84% of them attend local schools rated as 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. The Council also supports targeted work with young offenders and children at risk of offending, along with a wider Youth Service offering, tailored to the specific needs of our communities. Our Safeguarding service has been rated as Good by Ofsted in its latest inspection. We have worked with Wiltshire College helping them improve their buildings and the range of further education they provide.

In order to continue to support our young people we will...

- Deliver the state-of-the-art Silverwood Campus for children with Special Educational Needs, providing a truly top-notch educational facility to ensure our most vulnerable young people get the best possible education.
- Continue our major investment in special school provision in the South of the county ensuring all young people in Wiltshire can access great facilities.
- Develop an effective Outreach Support programme to enable young people who have mild and moderate learning difficulties to receive an effective education in mainstream schools.
- Continue to develop our youth services model giving the funding to Area Boards to decide what provision is best suited for our diverse communities.
- Work with all our schools to help them achieve the best possible results.
- Build on the excellent work done during Covid ensuring that our more vulnerable young people have access to computers and technology to enhance their ability to learn. We will work with the Government, local companies and the Council to ensure that IT and support is provided for those who need it.
- Continue to explore opportunities to increase the provision of Further Education in Wiltshire, working with neighbouring universities, business and hospitals as well as continuing supporting Wiltshire College in its expansion.
- Provide mental health support for young people particularly following the impact of lock down from the Covid latent demand fund.
- Continue our program to recruit more Foster Carers to prioritise our children staying in Wiltshire and avoiding out of county placements.

