

PUTTING CRAWLEY FIRST

The Conservative Manifesto for the Crawley
Borough Council elections on 5 May 2016



 **Vote Conservative**

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A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP LEADER



Cllr. Duncan Crow

Dear Resident,

Crawley is a great place with untapped potential to make it even better. We are passionate about our town and have the aspiration, the vision and the determination that is needed to ensure that Crawley can continue to succeed and prosper.

Crawley had a Conservative-run Borough Council from 2006 to 2014 that delivered many improvements for our town. Many of our achievements were focussed on improving Crawley for the long-term which will be benefitting Crawley for many years to come. Examples of this are our investment in Neighbourhood Parades, Manor Royal, Broadfield Barton, Ifield Millpond & Dobbins Pond, Tilgate Park and Worth Park, children's play areas, flood prevention work across the town and our £3.2 million upcoming regeneration of Queens Square.

Labour won control of Crawley Borough Council in 2014 and sadly, instead of focusing on improving services, Labour's priority has increasingly been to politicise our local Council with divisive left-wing politics. We are determined that our local Council should not be used as a campaigning vehicle to force Jeremy Corbyn's national agenda upon Crawley. Our message is very simple - a Conservative-led Council will be about putting local services and local people first. With the Conservatives, it will always be about putting Crawley first.

Our engagement with residents across all of Crawley's neighbourhoods over the last few months has directly helped to build our manifesto for the local elections on the 5th of May. The local elections take place in every neighbourhoods of Crawley with the exception of Northgate and Furnace Green. The Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner election takes place on the same day across the whole of Sussex.

Labour control Crawley Borough Council with just a one-seat majority, meaning that these elections will decide whether Crawley has a Labour or Conservative run Council. A newly elected Conservative Council will continue to be open to ideas about to make our town the very best it can be. Regardless of how you may vote and of the election outcome, Conservative Councillors will always put Crawley first and work constructively with everyone for the benefit of our town.

Duncan Crow

CLLR DUNCAN CROW
CONSERVATIVE GROUP LEADER, CRAWLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

A STRONG LOCAL ECONOMY FOR A SUCCESSFUL CRAWLEY



SOUND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

All the services provided by our local Council have to be underpinned by sound long-term financial management, with only the Conservatives in Crawley being committed to protecting services for the long-term by responsibly managing the Council's finances. Reflecting the financial recklessness of their national party, Crawley's Labour Councillors have refused in each of the last two years to support our proposal of committing to work towards balancing the Council's books for the next financial year. This is unsustainable and Labour's failure to get to grips with the Council's long-term budget has left Crawley facing a projected £1 million black hole from 2017.

A Conservative-run Council will always act in a financially responsible manner. We will aim to set a break-even budget each and every year in order to protect Council services for the long term, with any surpluses being re-invested in Crawley. Our administration up to 2014 made £8 million of efficiency savings and left the Council's finances in a very strong position. For years, Labour voted against the savings we made but have since been happy to take the credit for our good financial work.

The Conservatives ensured our Council Tax was frozen for five years and gave councils more freedom to raise revenue from investments, therefore helping to reduce the burden on Council Tax payers. In Crawley, we started the ball rolling by investing in commercial property and we will continue to look for innovative ways to pay for services as well as making further efficiency savings, so that we can both protect front-line services and limit any Council Tax rise next year to the rate of inflation or lower.

A VIBRANT LOCAL ECONOMY

The Conservatives in government have transformed the economy from the shambles inherited from Labour in 2010. Whilst much of the country's economic policy is determined at national level, there is also much that we can do locally. Manor Royal has become a great Crawley success story and we worked to help it become the thriving employment zone it is today. The Manor Royal Business Improvement District (BID) that we advanced is going from strength to strength. Gatwick Airport has also seen huge investment since 2010 and has just had its busiest ever year. Recognising their huge importance to Crawley's economy, we will ensure the Council gives strong support and constructively works in partnership with both Manor Royal and Gatwick. We have supported local businesses at our neighbourhood centres and given them free online advertising. We will always do everything possible to ensure Crawley has a strong local economy where local businesses can succeed and prosper.

We will support local employers and reverse Labour's shameful Council boycott on defence companies that provide skilled local jobs in Crawley and provide vital equipment to protect our Armed Forces. We signed the Council up to be a Living Wage employer and have encouraged other employers to pay the Living Wage. We will continue to work to bring good jobs and good pay for Crawley and fully support the Conservative Government's introduction of the compulsory National Living Wage that will rise to £9 an hour by 2020.

IMPROVING SKILLS & TRAINING

In a rapidly changing world, we recognise that skills and training will become increasingly important if Crawley is to continue to succeed. We would like to see more Crawley people have the opportunity to have the skilled and higher-paid employment that is increasingly coming to our area. Both Crawley Borough Council and West Sussex County Council have recognised the need to focus on skills and training in our area as well as developing our local economy. We will continue to develop Crawley's skills plan to help improve skills and training in Crawley, helping to ensure that greater opportunities can be available for local people. We want to see all Crawley people able to maximise their employment potential.

A TOWN CENTRE TO BE PROUD OF

Conservatives have a record of delivery for Crawley Town Centre and we want to achieve much more. We brought forward the redevelopment of the old Sussex House site, bringing Morrisons, Turtle Bay and Travelodge to the town centre, as well as securing lottery funding for the new Crawley Museum. The major Queens Square regeneration that starts in June, was brought forward and secured by us in partnership with West Sussex County Council.

Strongly resisted by Labour, Conservatives have advanced the conversion of empty office blocks into much-needed housing which is breathing new life into our town centre. We are committed to bringing much-needed regeneration to our town centre and ensuring that it thrives once again. As strong advocates for Crawley, and will always work to improve the image of our town, and our town centre is an absolute priority. Our Government is devolving more decisions to local Councils, including the power to determine business rates. We see this as an opportunity to help tackle the blight of empty shops in our town centre and will look at options for introductory rates for shops that have been vacant units for a considerable period of time.

INVESTING IN CRAWLEY'S FUTURE

HOUSING FOR TODAY & TOMORROW

The previous Conservative administration built Crawley's first Council homes in a generation. National Conservative policies such as Help To Buy have helped house building to recover and excellent new housing has been provided in Crawley as a result. We enabled the new Forge Wood neighbourhood in Pound Hill to come forward which will provide over 1,900 more homes. We have worked constructively with our neighbouring Councils to provide housing near to Crawley such as the new Kilnwood Vale estate. Our constructive approach enabled Crawley Borough Council to secure significant social housing nomination rights at Kilnwood Vale, which will greatly benefit Crawley residents waiting for housing.

We will continue to have a constructive engagement with neighbouring councils and with developers to provide a wide range of housing for Crawley people. Crawley needs a greater range of housing and we want to see more of our young people able to buy a home of their own. We will work for new housing development to have starter homes and affordable homes to buy as well as affordable homes to rent. We are supportive of all housing tenures but only the Conservatives in Crawley support helping people to own their own home and the Right To Buy. We are committed to tackling homelessness and while working to help those who are homeless, we will redoubled our efforts in homelessness prevention services and ensure these services are well-resourced, in order to help prevent people becoming homeless in the first place.

WORKING TO IMPROVE NEIGHBOURHOOD PARKING

When the Conservatives previously ran Crawley Borough Council, we increased the number of annual schemes across the town to create new parking provision out of surplus grass verges. Labour previously promised to increase this but the programme now stalling with Labour now trying to shift their blame onto the County Council. We will get on and kick-start the Council's new residential parking spaces programme and get the areas of highest parking need scheduled for improvement.

It was Labour's poor town planning that is responsible for today's parking problems and they are still allowing new development without enough parking provision, including entire blocks of flats without a single parking space. A new Conservative Council will aim to create as many new additional residential parking spaces as possible across our neighbourhoods, in places where they are badly needed. We will also aim to increase parking provision for new developments so that new housing has sustainable parking and doesn't create additional parking problems nearby, as currently happens under Labour.



Parking on grass verges is often a symptom of a lack of parking spaces. It is frustrating when damage occurs and in conjunction with seeking to increase parking provision, we will look to use a variety of solutions in consultation with residents in the worst affected areas, to reduce the number of grass verges being damaged.

COMMITTED TO INVESTING IN CRAWLEY

The previous Conservative Council increased the level of investment in many of Crawley's facilities. This was only possible because of our sound financial management which enabled resources to be freed up. Examples of this include our neighbourhood parades and centres and a wide range of leisure facilities, flood prevention and improvements to ponds and lakes, as well as parks and gardens. We will continue to invest in Crawley for the long-term and will ensure Crawley maintains a full programme of investment.

As well as investing in Council-owned neighbourhood centres, we funded the recent improvements to the privately-owned Broadfield Barton and are keen to invest in improving the Three Bridges Station forecourt. We will also look at improving other privately-owned public areas that can have a positive impact, such as the parade opposite Three Bridges Station. While we have our eye on Crawley's future, we will not forget Crawley's past. A new Conservative Council will refresh the Council's Heritage Strategy that we introduced eight years ago, to ensure we continue to have a good balance of the old and the new in our great town.



WORKING FOR A CLEANER AND GREENER TOWN



A CRACKDOWN ON LITTERING

Sadly, the on-going amount of litter in Crawley shows that there is a sizable minority of people who think it is acceptable to drop litter. We know this is a difficult problem to solve but that doesn't mean we should be accepting of this behaviour. While working hard to clear up after litter louts, we also need to be more challenging of littering attitudes in the first place.

Under Labour, Crawley Borough Council hasn't issued a single fine for littering over the last year. The Government are allowing Councils to double the maximum fine for deliberate littering to up to £150 and a new Conservative Council will do exactly that. We will promote a strong anti-littering message in tandem with a tougher approach to challenging behaviour and issuing fines. Fly-tipping remains a problem in Crawley and we will aim to increase prosecutions while swiftly removing dumped rubbish.

CARING FOR OUR NEIGHBOURHOODS

We are committed to the front-line services that keep our streets clean and tidy. The last Conservative Council put major investment into our frontline streetscene services. This included providing new and modern grass cutting equipment that is now improving the quality of our grass verge cutting, but we want to do more.

Whether it is removing litter, grass verge cutting, street sweeping, or maintaining shrub beds and trees, we will always look for ways to improve the services that help to improve the appearance of our town, especially in our neighbourhood centres and Crawley town centre. This is a major priority for us and we want our town and our neighbourhoods to look cared for once again!

ENHANCING OUR PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

We are very proud of Crawley's parks and gardens. We secured major funding to restore Worth Park Gardens to their former glory and brought in new facilities at Tilgate Park and our major improvements at the Nature Centre have proved very popular. Crawley's parks and gardens will continue to thrive under the Conservatives and be preserved for future generations. Our parks and gardens have been award-winning for many years and Crawley has had much Britain in Bloom success. We will work to maintain these high standards and enhance where possible.

We are fortunate to have many green spaces and woodland in and around Crawley. The protection of Crawley's natural environment and our native wildlife is very important to us and we will make sure that this is not forgotten in everything that we do.

COMMITTED TO ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

Since 2010, carbon use by Crawley Borough Council has fallen by nearly a quarter, exceeding our original 20% reduction target. In 2013, we started the Council using solar power by installing 194 solar panels on the town hall roof. We will continue with green policies, such as the roll-out of solar panels, increasing recycling rates and reducing our waste and energy use.

Leading by example, we will work with partners and businesses in order to be as friendly as possible to the environment. The Conservative Government played its full part in helping to secure last December's historic Paris Agreement on climate change that is working to limit carbon emissions across the world.



CHAMPIONING A HEALTHY, ACTIVE AND SAFE COMMUNITY



A HEALTHIER CRAWLEY

We will continue to work for more health services to be provided in Crawley, including from Crawley Hospital. Government spending on health increased in the last Parliament and will increase by a further £10 billion by 2020 with more people being treated than ever before. However, we recognise there are local issues of concern and we will do what we can to help address them.

We want to tackle health inequalities within the town such as major variations in life expectancy and preventable health problems that result from unhealthy lifestyles. Under the Conservatives, more services have been returning to Crawley Hospital. We will work with the NHS to improve access to GPs and to have more services available here in Crawley. We will work to ensure there are no barriers for people to lead healthier lifestyles. We provided a free-to-use outdoor gym in Tilgate Park and will look for other suitable locations for such equipment.

Crawley has a much higher smoking rate than the rest of West Sussex and we will look to promote more initiatives to help people who want to quit smoking. We already ask people not to smoke in our children's play areas and we will publicly consult on whether to create new areas that are used by children into voluntary smoke-free zones. One potential area for consideration is Queens Square (not including coffee shop seating areas) once the major redevelopment is completed in 2017. It is important to have public support and take people with us (including smokers) on such proposals so that we can ensure we are realistic and move at a pace where we can be confident that any zones will be mostly respected.

People's mental health and wellbeing matters to us and we will work to help the town have the services it needs to address this. We will review the way that Crawley Borough Council gives out community grants each year to ensure that the Council can maximise the beneficial effect on Crawley's health and wellbeing, whether that be physical or mental wellbeing.

TOUGH ON CRIME & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

It is good news that crime has fallen significantly under the Conservatives, but any level of crime is too high especially if you are a victim. We will ensure Crawley Borough Council has a good working relationship with the Police and we will look for ways to increase intelligence sharing and partnership working. We will encourage greater reporting and sharing of information on criminal activity and on anti-social behaviour. Prevention and detection of crime will be a key part of our engagement with residents and businesses across the town.

The previous Conservative administration increased the number and operational hours of the Council's Community Wardens and we virtually eliminated unauthorised traveller encampments in the eight years we ran the Council. However, the problem of dog fouling persists and we will combine an approach of education to challenge the culture of those who don't clear up after their dogs, with looking to harness new DNA technologies currently being trialled in London to better target tougher enforcement and prevention.

Labour has been slow in trying to deal with anti-social activities in the town centre such as begging and street drinking. We will work to stop this activity in our town centre and ensure that those engaging in these inappropriate activities are signposted to the services they need in order to turn their lives around.

FIRST RATE LEISURE FACILITIES

We are very proud of the leisure facilities we have in Crawley and it was the last Conservative administration which built them up. The K2 Crawley leisure centre and the Hawth Theatre have gone from strength to strength with many customer improvements. We oversaw Leisure Centre usage doubling in Crawley over a decade and we will continue to support and improve healthy leisure activities for all of Crawley to be able to enjoy.

We embarked on a major programme of ambitious improvements to Crawley's children's play areas which are still being rolled out across the town. We will continue with all this good work and also be supportive of cycling and of having a joined-up and well-maintained cycle network across the town.

An ice-rink is one major leisure facility missing from our area. A Conservative-run Crawley Borough Council will actively explore opportunities to bring a permanent ice skating rink to Crawley. While we do not have a permanent ice rink, we will look to have a temporary one each winter.

Our town is vibrant and we will continue with regular events and activities across the town that can be enjoyed by people of all ages. Some events have had disappointing feedback and a Conservative Council will make sure that your feedback is taken on board and not ignored. We will also look for opportunities for activities for our young people and to work in partnership to enhance youth facilities.

A COUNCIL THAT PUTS PEOPLE FIRST

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

A Conservative Council will always strive for excellence, both in the services we provide for Crawley and in our interactions with residents and businesses. We will be open to ideas about how to improve your customer experience and will always seek to learn from occasions where a standard of service falls below a good standard.

A FAIRER COUNCIL TO REPRESENT ALL OF CRAWLEY

Despite having only one more Councillor than the Conservatives, Labour operates a closed-shop town hall with an unprecedented exclusion of all opposition Councillors from any role of significance at the Council. If Labour can do this to other democratically elected Councillors, you have to question their commitment to inclusivity with residents who don't vote Labour.

A Conservative Council will be inclusive and will respect that Crawley is a diverse place with people from a wide range of backgrounds with a broad range of political outlooks. Under the Conservatives, everyone will be welcome and your contribution will be valued. We believe our local Council must be there for everyone regardless of politics, regardless of background and regardless of what part of Crawley or what community you may come from. We are totally committed to supporting every community that makes up our great town of Crawley. We are 'One Nation' and 'One Crawley'.



GENUINE ENGAGEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY

Conservatives believe in listening to people and having meaningful engagement. We enabled local people to set up neighbourhood forums that were supported by the Council and we will work to ensure that it is easy and straightforward for everyone to be able to engage with the Council, with no 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

We will maintain traditional approaches for community engagement, but will also look for more innovative methods, to enable better engagement with young people and with busy working people. A new Conservative administration will consult on budget priorities and look to refresh the way the Council gets public feedback on its performance, so that we can be confident that the Council's policies have your support.

Within a review of getting the best out of our grants to the community, we will look for ways that local residents in conjunction with their local Councillors can seek funding for additional small scale neighbourhood improvements that will benefit their local area. We will ensure people are aware of how to engage with us and how to get involved with events in the community. We will end Labour's local practice of routinely using community engagement to promote their Councillors who are seeking election to higher office. Community engagement will be all about you - not all about us.



YOUR LOCAL CONSERVATIVE TEAM

Putting Crawley First



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This year we do not have Crawley Borough Council elections in Furnace Green or Northgate. If you would like to get in touch with us regarding issues you have in these neighbourhoods, please email: office@crawleyconservatives.org.uk