

# “Caring and Campaigning for the Staffordshire Moorlands”



The Conservative Manifesto  
District Elections May 2nd 2019

# Foreword

This manifesto is an important document for Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. It sets out the direction of travel and priorities for the next four years under a Conservative administration, and it will shape the Council's Corporate Plan and its operational targets.

Since 2015 significant progress has been made in many areas, and much has been achieved.

Our aspirations for the next four years have been shaped by the last four and the many consultations that have taken place to find out what the people of the Moorlands want from their local council.

## **Our priorities for the future are:**

- To encourage and develop tourism
- To create a cleaner, safer and healthier environment in which our population live and work.
- Continue to work to create a strong economy driven by the further regeneration of our towns and villages.
- To plan for community development, including affordable housing.

Now is the time to build on the progress we have made over the last decade, that even whilst facing significant financial pressures, we have been able to maintain and improve local services.

This is a plan for everyone in the Moorlands. Let us continue the work together.



**Cllr. Sybil Ralphs MBE**  
Leader

Staffordshire Moorlands  
District Council



# Communities

The actions that we have taken, in conjunction with the Police and other partnership agencies, have ensured that the Staffordshire Moorlands enjoys a **very low level of crime**. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that this crime level remains **one of the lowest in the country**.

We will **continue to improve CCTV coverage** with an upgrade of equipment that is technologically more efficient and cost effective. This will result in an annual saving of around £150,000.

Our programme of Affordable Housing schemes will continue to run across the Moorlands, along with our policy of bringing **long term empty properties** back into use. At the same time, our recently introduced Homelessness Policy will continue to help those who are, or who are under threat of being, homeless.

To this end, we have made two council owned properties available as temporary accommodation, until a more permanent solution can be found.

We will carry forward our Beat the Cold initiative, which ensures that residents can access the means to stay warm in winter. We will combat illegal money lenders such as loan sharks and a new system for the distribution of the Disabled Facilities Grant will ensure that those in need have the best and quickest route to benefits.

Over the last year, Tourism has contributed more than **£277million** to the local economy, a **rise of 6.3%**, and supported over **3,500 jobs**, a **rise of 3.5%**. This is because of a 4.5% increase in visitor numbers and 4.4% increase in visitor days. **We are committed to increasing this ever further.**

*We are committed to increasing the contribution Tourism makes to our local economy.*

# Environmental Services

We are committed to improving waste and recycling across the District, providing a **first class refuse service** and recycling facilities.

We will continue to assist the business community with a better range of Commercial Waste collection options.

Street care and cleansing will remain a **high priority**, as will the provision and care of public toilets.

We will continue to ensure the **safety of Moorlands residents** by regular inspection of all food outlets, ensuring safety and the highest levels of cleanliness in all food premises.

We will continue to enforce a **zero tolerance policy on fly-tipping, littering, and anti social activities**.

We will continue to reduce the District Council's energy consumption and costs for the betterment of the environment and the operating efficiency of the Council.

We will continue to oppose any closure or reduction in hours at the recycling sites across the Moorlands.

We will enforce a **zero tolerance policy on dog fouling**, and will always prosecute wherever possible with higher fines to deter offenders.

*We will enforce Zero-tolerance on dog fouling, fly-tipping, littering and anti-social activities.*

# Customer Services

Our vision is to provide **high quality services**, shaped to respond to our diverse communities, meeting their expectations and aspirations with a 'can do' outlook.

We will continue to offer a variety of ways to access our Council, tailored to our customers' needs, 'right first time', and **simple to use**.

Working with various partner organisations, we will continue to deliver services in cost efficient, new and innovative ways, providing the most agile business model for Customer Services, and a positive and satisfying experience for our users.

# Planning and Markets

The forward planning for applications (people's plans) has seen a steady increase in more **plans being approved at their first time of applying**. We will ensure our planning officers have regular contact with agents and applicants, and in addition the continuing outlook is for planning officers to be fully involved with the applicants advisors.

Our markets continue to show growth, giving people a **variety of local shopping experiences**, whilst supporting the economy in our market towns and the retail shops.

In Leek we have achieved a **20% increase** in outdoor gazebo market retail space and held the first Twilight Market in the indoor market in December 2018. Paid for stalls on the Wednesday Indoor Trestle Market are up 25% on last year and up 23% for the Saturday Indoor Trestle Market.

*We will continue to invest in our markets in Cheadle, Leek and Biddulph.*

# Leisure, Sports and Parks

Throughout the next four years we are looking at further development of Sporting and Leisure activities and facilities across the District.

We have recently opened **newly constructed skateparks/BMX circuits** in Leek and Cheadle, upgraded or built Play Areas in Biddulph Moor, Upper Tean, Woodcroft, Wallbridge, Newshaw, Ball Haye Recreation Ground, Haregate Hall and The Waste.

Following consultation with parents and with the agreement of Leek Tennis Club, we will be re-locating the Brough Park Play Area into the largely redundant tennis court in the near future. **We will make Brough Park a focal point** for outdoor activities for both local residents and visitors alike.

We have already embarked on a **comprehensive clearance programme** to open up areas covered in unwanted, invasive vegetation and are making plans to dredge the pond.

Discussions are taking place with Rethink and The Meadows School with the aim of **enhancing and making greater use of John Hall Gardens**. It is envisaged that the gardens will be open daily, throughout the week, and better connections will be constructed to Brough Park, in order to make them more inclusive.

We will continue to **increase the participation** in all Sports & Leisure Centres through health driven agendas, doing more to help the people of the Moorlands attain a higher level of health and fitness, whilst assisting those already suffering with health problems to improve their quality of life through participation in sporting and leisure activities.

*We will invest in our leisure facilities across the District and drive up participation.*



All our Leisure Centres exceed national growth expectations for footfall and participation.

We will be working with partners to **increase the Sports and Leisure operations** of all three Sports and Leisure Centres in the District whilst reducing substantially the amount of money spent in subsidising these District owned assets.

In order to do this, there will be a **comprehensive programme of refurbishment**, enhancement and, in some cases, replacement, which will increase the level of attraction and participation.

**Subsidised membership for our three Leisure Centres will continue to all serving members of the Armed Forces.**

We will continue to work with the many schools, clubs and community groups where we have established links and will seek to widen our network, especially with young people, the disabled and other vulnerable groups.

*We will rebuild, enhance and refurbish our three sports and leisure centres.*



# Finance and Council Tax

The Conservative Party is a party of **low taxation**. The Staffordshire Moorlands Conservative Administration **embraces lower taxes both nationally and locally**.

**We are committed to keeping council tax in the Moorlands to an absolute minimum.** In addition we intend to develop new and innovative ways to generate revenue including increased partnership working and identification of new and existing funding streams.

Against a backdrop of continuing financial challenges facing local government, we have provided our residents and customers with reliable and value for money services shaped around customer need. This is the start of a programme of partnerships that will deliver improved services across our local communities.

We have successfully transferred SMDC's waste and recycling collection services to AES, one element of a wider project which will help to deliver a predicted **£1.4m in savings** over the first 4 years.

We have achieved a further £20,000 saving across Post/Print team as we promote electronic forms of communication across the Alliance. We have saved nearly £10,000 by encouraging residents to self serve online which has led to SMDC receiving 120,648 webpage hits in December 2018.

2018 also marked the 10th anniversary of our alliance with High Peak BC, which has enabled **£12m of savings to be made with no loss of services**, and improved performance and increased satisfaction. This enabled us to keep council tax increases at zero for 7 years in a row.

*We commit to keeping council tax in the Moorlands to an absolute minimum via cost efficiencies.*



# Regeneration

The return of the **railway into Leek** is now at an advanced stage. Work is about to start in April 2019, on clearing the land on which the track is to be laid. A site for the new station has now been identified and this exciting project is now moving forward.

This will have a significant benefit to tourism in the Moorlands, and will drive jobs, and additional footfall and investment in our local towns and businesses.

Plans are ongoing for a link-road at Cornhill in Leek.



*We continue to support the Churnet Valley Railway with their plans to bring trains back to Leek.*

# Roads and Parking

**Working with local partners** including haulage companies, bus and coach operators and local residents we will bring pressure on Local Highways Authorities, the Department of Transport and where applicable the Highways Agency, to improve the flow of traffic into and through the towns of the Staffordshire Moorlands.

In Biddulph we will strive to **improve town centre accessibility and parking**.

We have commissioned Tunstall Road and Wharf Road master plans to support future delivery of employment and housing.

In Cheadle we will work with the Town Council and Staffordshire County Council on a **traffic management and parking plan**.

We will seek to get improved town centre traffic flow arrangements to reduce queuing for prolonged periods by people wishing to gain access to the town centre shops.

In Leek we will work with all interested partners to devise a Town Centre system to improve both access to the town centre and **improve traffic flow** for through traffic.

We will then lobby the appropriate authorities to consult on, and implement such a system.

We will explore all potential sites for **additional town centre parking**

Across the district we will **strenuously oppose** the imposition of all new on-street parking charges.

*We oppose the imposition of on-street parking charges across our towns and rural areas.*

# Supporting our Community

We recognise that isolation in our rural areas is an issue that affects many of our residents and to that end will work with partners **to improve the provision of bus services** which connect our villages with our three market towns for services, shopping and leisure.

We will continue to work to our policy of **job creation**, particularly in the rural areas.

**In Leek we will campaign to retain and enhance all existing health services and clinics at the Leek & Moorlands Community Hospital, and ensure that the provision of rehabilitation beds remains in the Moorlands. We believe in Moorlands beds for Moorlands people.**

We will campaign to establish a **Centre for Dementia patients** in the Moorlands.

We will continue to seek to identify potential funding opportunities and we will make bids where appropriate.

Our ongoing working partnership with Staffordshire County Council on the Growth Deal will be expanded. This could potentially bring **millions of pounds** of investment to the County and to the Staffordshire Moorlands.

*We will improve the provision of bus services to connect our villages to the Moorlands towns.*



# “Working together for everyone in the Staffordshire Moorlands”

