

Southwark Labour 2006

“Southwark is a great place to live. Its diverse and thriving communities enrich everyday life. Labour respects the contribution of every individual in all our communities and it is our core belief that everyone should be treated fairly and equally regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, age, religion, disability or sexuality.

As a Council all of the services that we will provide and the decisions we will take will be informed by listening to your wishes; as we believe that by working together, we can build a better Southwark.

“To create a better Southwark we will ensure that our council staff provide you with the best service, by ensuring they are properly trained, supported and motivated to do a good job. Low standards, or a lack of respect towards anyone will not be tolerated.

“We also know how hard you work, and that you expect your council to be careful with your money. That is why Labour pledges to use your council tax wisely: consulting you before we spend on major projects, capping council tax rises at or below the level of inflation until 2009 – the end of the decade - and cutting the amount spent on councillor’s allowances.

“We will work in partnership with the Labour Government to get the basics right:

- *a Council that provides value for money,*
- *more police to tackle crime,*
- *good housing,*
- *excellent schools,*
- *clean streets,*
- *and high quality health and social care.*

“We will work with other boroughs to improve recycling rates, and we will become a Fair-Trade borough so that our choices can help people in other countries.

“Labour understands that the work our voluntary groups, charities, community organisations and co-operative societies do is an invaluable asset to us all, and a major source of knowledge and expertise. We will use our available resources to support these groups and seek their views to inform our policies and plans.

“Labour will lead the regeneration of Southwark. On all projects we will make it a priority to ensure that regeneration benefits the people who already live here.

“This is our promise, which can only be delivered by a Labour-run Southwark Council working to deliver your priorities.”

Cllr Peter John, Leader Southwark Labour Group

Your Priorities

Safer streets, safer communities

Labour guarantees that every council ward will have a dedicated police team of at least six uniformed officers, who know the area, and are known and contactable by local residents. We will introduce more community support officers (CSOs) to work directly for the police to help in the fight against crime and antisocial behaviour.

As part of our commitment to expand our local police force we will continue our campaign to reach 1000 police officers in Southwark, compared to the 890 officers we have today.

We will make full use of the anti-social behaviour laws introduced by the Labour Government. To clamp down on problems like street drinking, litter, graffiti and nuisance noise we will issue anti-social behaviour orders to stop unacceptable behaviour which makes life a misery for far too many people. Where appropriate, we will publicly name the recipients of ASBOs and publicise the terms of their orders.

Labour will work to reduce the number of children and teenagers who are involved in anti-social behaviour. We recognise that it is always better for the entire community to help young people steer clear of trouble by making sure they feel valued, respected and have the facilities they need. We will provide good youth services, improved vocational training, and better opportunities to take part in sports, by renewing our sports centres and swimming pools. We will invest in more after-school activities and provide the type of facilities that young people want to see.

To help reverse Southwark's poor record on gun and knife crime, Labour will work closely with the police to protect our communities. Community groups that work to steer young people away from gang culture and crime will be given support and funding.

We will give the council's anti-social behaviour unit the funding it needs to improve, so that it does a good job and properly investigate complaints. We will ensure it works closely with the housing department, to tackle nuisance behaviour on housing estates and properly enforce tenancy agreements. We will work with the police to clamp down on 'mini-motos' being ridden on streets and housing estates: we will make full use of our powers including applying for ASBOs against persistent offenders, enforcing trading standards rules preventing the sale of petrol to under 16s and running publicity campaigns to discourage parents from buying these bikes. We will also lobby for a change in the law to require registration of these bikes.

Labour will give local people the opportunity to ban street drinking, by allowing the creation of 'alcohol control areas' where alcohol cannot be consumed in the street. We will introduce these zones when residents ask for them and where there is a demonstrated problem.

We will encourage wardens and CSOs to use their powers to issue fines to people dumping rubbish and littering, and we will clamp down on graffiti – with a specialist graffiti hit squad. Labour will invest in better street lighting and CCTV across the borough. At the moment, roughly one in seven of our CCTV cameras are broken. This is not acceptable and we will ensure they are repaired.

When building new housing estates, we will make community safety a priority and 'design out crime' – getting rid of dangerous walkways and underpasses – and 'design in' youth and community facilities.

Labour will reintroduce uniformed park wardens - a 'parks constabulary' to make our parks safer, and give local residents the right to close parks at night if they are hotspots for crime and nuisance noise.

Fairness for Tenants and Leaseholders

A newly-elected Labour council would put the provision of a high quality service to our 58,000 tenants and leaseholders at the top of our agenda. We believe that the housing department should provide value for money, high standards and good customer service. Tenants should be treated with respect and courtesy, and should have a greater say in the management of their homes. On estates, lifts should work and repairs should be carried out quickly and efficiently.

Labour will bring all council houses in Southwark up to the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. We will make sure that engineers attend to broken-down lifts on the day they are reported, and provide clear information about what is happening and when the lift will be fixed. Where possible we will introduce an estate-based lift repairs service. We will keep shared areas on estates clean and safe, and we will make sure that security doors are in good working order.

Labour will ask staff to manage council homes as if they were their own homes. We will provide good training and support for staff in our housing offices and at the call centre so that they can give tenants the best service. We will monitor contractors more closely to ensure repairs are completed to a high standard.

We will make sure the housing call centre meets basic targets, such as shorter times before calls are answered and better trained staff so that repair requests are accurately recorded. We will also make sure that tenants can easily report repairs out-of-hours. For older residents we will introduce a 'Gold Service' priority hotline to offer advice and support at home when things go wrong with any council service.

Labour will conduct a review of the neighbourhood cash offices: we will make the service we have already got work properly and open more local offices if needed.

To tackle antisocial behaviour on estates, we will make sure that all residents know how to contact their local community police team and the council's anti-social behaviour team. We will also properly enforce the terms of tenancy agreements to tackle anti-social or abusive tenant behaviour – if necessary, evicting troublesome residents.

We believe that the organisations set up to represent tenants and leaseholders have been neglected and their views over-ridden by this Lib Dem council. For too long feedback from TRAs has been willfully ignored and changes forced through despite protests from residents. Labour will value the knowledge and expertise of members of Tenants and Residents Associations. We will properly listen and respond to ideas and feedback, and we will work in partnership with residents to improve our housing service. We will create a Street Properties Forum to represent the views of those tenants and leaseholders who do not live on an estate.

Better homes

Our priority is to make sure that everyone has a decent home to live in. A Labour council will work with tenants and leaseholders to find the best way of obtaining funding to improve local homes.

Where estates are subject to major regeneration, we will make sure that residents have high quality temporary accommodation available and a choice over where they move to. We will not allow estates to become dangerous and run down as they are emptied. As people leave, we will use empty flats to provide a base for local wardens and police, and we will continue to clean blocks and repair CCTV and lighting right until the last resident leaves. Most importantly, we will listen to resident's views and put their needs first.

Labour also recognises the importance of providing more affordable housing. The average cost of a property in Southwark is £256,100, whilst the average wage is just £17,600. To help people get onto the property ladder, a Labour council will back the government's HomeBuy and KeyWorker schemes. We would also make sure that developers build affordable housing on new estates, with a target of 50% affordable housing on new estates. We will also ensure that all homes built by social landlords are 'lifetime homes' compliant.

Almost half of all dependent children in Southwark live in overcrowded accommodation, yet at the same time, thousands of tenants live in properties with spare bedrooms. We believe this must end. Almost 6000 houses in Southwark are 'underoccupied' but just 300 people have used the Lib Dem's housing plan to move into smaller flats to free up the larger properties. Labour will help people who are underoccupying to move to smaller properties, and offer better incentives for them to do so - including higher cash payments and reduced bureaucracy. We will also open the scheme to people who have just one spare bedroom.

Labour backs the new Choice Based Lettings system, which allows people to see all available council houses, and 'bid' for a transfer. Labour will lobby to expand the Choice Based Lettings scheme to the whole of London, so that residents can choose properties across borough boundaries.

A better deal for Leaseholders

Under the Liberal Democrats, leaseholders have been presented with massive rises of up to 180% in service charges, and expensive (and sometime unnecessary) repairs. 65% of leaseholders are unhappy with the way the council treats them. Labour will give leaseholders a better deal, and provide value for money for major works – so that as a leaseholder you don't pay more than you would to your own choice of contractor. We will provide a clear breakdown on all bills, so that people know exactly what they are paying for. We will keep leaseholders up to date with repair work, keep charges as low as possible, and provide estimates of costs at an early stage. We will make sure that there are clear schemes in place to help leaseholders pay their charges over longer periods of time.

Equalities in Southwark

Labour is committed to equality and diversity in Southwark. We believe that any form of discrimination or harassment is unacceptable. We will treat all residents, tenants and council staff with respect. Labour will promote and develop an environment where everyone can reach their potential regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, nationality, age, religion, disability or sexual orientation.

Labour will ensure that minority and 'hard to reach' groups are fully included when the Council consults local people over plans and policies. We will work to develop better links with community groups to help us improve the Council's services. Labour will also introduce a specific equalities scrutiny committee to enable councillors to evaluate the impact of Council policies on the diverse groups within our community, and make improvements where necessary.

We believe Southwark Council should set the standard for good equalities practices, not only as a policy maker but also as a major employer. We will fully implement the recommendations of the Ouseley report, which examined the council's equalities policies. These recommendations include providing meaningful equalities training for council officers and addressing the deficit of BME staff in senior positions at the council.

Labour will also work to make sure that the Council manage regeneration projects with proper respect and consideration for all tenants, residents and business owners affected. We will tackle the culture which has left some groups, for example BME owned businesses, feeling excluded and discriminated against.

There are currently wide variations in educational achievement between young people from different ethnic backgrounds. Labour believe this is an unacceptable inequality, and will work to close the gaps in achievement to allow all pupils to reach their potential.

We also know that young people from our BME communities, especially young black men, are disproportionately likely to be both the perpetrators and victims of gun and knife enabled crime. Labour will work with the local police to tackle violent crime, and we will work to provide high quality youth facilities to steer young people away from crime, gangs and drugs.

(For more on Labour's BME equalities policies please see our BME mini manifesto)

Better schools at the heart of our community

Since a Labour government came to power, Southwark Council has received record funding for education: the amount of money given to the council for each pupil has risen by over £1700, and the government have invested over £25 million to help rebuild our schools. Yet despite this, with the Lib Dems in charge of the local council, our children are still being let down. They have failed to take the opportunity to improve given the record funding for Southwark's schools.

Southwark's results at Key Stage 2 (age 11) in 2004 were the lowest in the country. Our GCSE results are also still far behind the national average: last year not even half of our students achieved 5 or more GCSEs at A-C level (44% compared to 59% nationally) We have the highest primary school truancy rate in England, and a high rate for secondary schools.

Labour believes that Southwark's children deserve better schools and raised expectations. Our aim is to make Southwark's schools the first choice for local parents and pupils.

Our first priority will be to raise standards, Labour will not tolerate schools which are failing our children: struggling schools must be rapidly turned around. Labour will demand better leadership, providing support and training for governors and head teachers. We will judge the success of our schools not just against 'value-added' measurements, and comparisons with similar boroughs; but we will aim higher and measure ourselves against national averages.

We will complete the new academy proposed for Geoffrey Chaucer and Joseph Lancaster schools, and the academy proposed for Aylwin School. In addition, we will build a new school for East Dulwich and Nunhead: the 'EDEN' Academy opening for girls in September 2006 and boys in September 2007 and work to create a new City Academy for Walworth.

We will push forward other school building projects. Labour will lobby to ensure that the government's successful 'Building Schools for the Future' programme is extended to primary schools in the borough.

Labour will make sure that every child in Southwark has access to an 'extended school', offering activities and childcare before and after traditional school hours. This will help parents juggle the demands of home and work, whilst giving children access to a range of extra activities in a safe environment. As part of this scheme, Labour will ensure that every child in Southwark who requires it has access to a free breakfast club before school.

We will work to raise the achievement of BME boys at school by using methods that have proved successful in other parts of the country, including a borough-wide mentoring programme to raise aspirations and provide positive role models. We will also work to increase the number of BME teachers and school governors.

Major building projects will be taking place in Southwark over the next 10 years. Southwark's school leavers should be able to take advantage of the employment opportunities these projects present and Labour will do this by creating a building skills college in the borough.

To tackle Southwark's high truancy rate, we will make sure that there are regular truancy sweeps during the day to catch truants, and send them back to school. We will continue the government's 'Fast Track to Attendance' programme, targeting persistent truants, and issuing penalties to parents who do not work with the education authority to get their children back to school. We will also encourage parents not to take their children out of school for holidays.

We will encourage the borough's private schools to share their facilities with the local community.

Labour is also committed to providing healthier school meals for children. We will access funding from the £220 million made available by the Labour Government so that schools spend more per head on meals and we will work to make our school kitchens GM free.

We will help all schools to create School Transport Plans, to promote safe routes to school and to encourage children to walk or cycle. To encourage children to walk to school, we will promote the 'Walking Bus' scheme, which enables children to walk safely in a group.

Cleaner and greener Southwark

Labour will crack down on litter and ensure our streets are regularly cleaned. We will fine people caught littering, take swift action to remove dumped cars, and ask businesses to help clean up any mess that they create on the streets. We will set up a specialist team to effectively tackle fly-posting and graffiti.

Every year Southwark generates 137,000 tonnes of rubbish – enough to fill 'The Den'. To reduce this mountain and improve the environment Labour will:

- Collect waste regularly, increase the number and range of recycling points, and make sure that there is clear information about how to recycle.
- Make recycling easier for those living in blocks of flats by allowing people to put all their recyclable items into one single bag. Where possible, we will offer incentives for recycling.
- Make sure that children learn about the importance of recycling. Encouraging all schools to recycle, and to compete to be the school with the highest recycling rate.
- Take a lead in reducing the amount of rubbish produced in the first place – encouraging reuse of items.
- Provide free skips for public use, to stop people dumping larger items of rubbish in the street. We will give residents notice of where their local skip will be, and how long it will be there for. We will then remove it and dispose of the contents.

Environmentally friendly energy and hot water

Labour believes that the Town Hall and other public buildings should take the lead in using new forms of energy, such as wind turbines, biomass and solar panels. We will use these new technologies at the two sites that the Mayor of London has designated 'Energy Action areas': Elephant and Castle, and the Aylesbury Estate. Working with the Mayor, we will plan the development at Elephant and Castle to be carbon neutral.

We will support homeowners to install solar panels for hot water and heating – working with the council's partner schemes such as Solar for London, which offers grants of up to £750.

Labour backs the use of community heating systems to generate electricity and heat simultaneously for local residents – Combined Heat and Power plants (CHP). These systems reduce harmful emissions, and cut bills for residents. Where appropriate, we will build these systems in to newly redeveloped estates.

A Labour council would introduce tough standards for energy efficiency in new council housing, and help homeowner's access information and grants to improve the energy efficiency of their current homes.

Better public transport and roads

Labour is committed to good public transport. We will engage with Transport for London to make sure that bus routes meet the needs of the community, reaching areas that are currently isolated.

We back the proposed tram link from Kings Cross to Peckham and support a new overland rail station for Camberwell. Labour is pushing for to the earliest completion of the next phase of the East London railway line, linking Denmark Hill and Peckham Rye with Surrey Quays, and routes north of the river. We are campaigning for a link from East Dulwich to Wimbledon and will continue to campaign for a tube link to Camberwell.

We will also challenge train companies to secure disabled access to stations such as Denmark Hill, Peckham Rye and Queens Road at the earliest opportunity.

With Transport for London, we will also implement the London Cycle Network, and make sure that routes are clearly marked, and safe to use.

By encouraging people to walk, cycle, or use public transport, we will work towards the Mayor of London's target of reducing traffic in central London by 15%, and reducing traffic growth to zero. This will in time reduce road congestion and improve air quality. We will also maintain the council's fleet of gas powered vehicles.

To improve road safety, we will give Community Councils the choice to introduce 20mph zones in their areas. We will also make sure that road traffic regulations are enforced with safety, not revenue collection, as the first priority.

Labour pledges not to introduce any Controlled Parking Zones unless residents actually want them. We will insist that companies do not dig up roads time and again, clamping down on contractors who overrun deadlines.

Better Health and Social Care

The Labour government is investing more in health and social care than ever before. Here in Southwark, the difference is clear to see: In our health authority, we now have 3798 more nurses and over 1300 more doctors. Waiting lists have been dramatically cut, and now everybody is able to see their GP within two days; if they want to do so.

Labour will provide the strong leadership needed at a local level to make the most of the Government's record investment in health care in Southwark. At the same time, we will ensure that local people play a real part in decision making. We will work to make sure that health services and social care services are more 'joined up': for example, in making sure that vulnerable people leaving hospital get the best possible home-care package, and in creating services which assist users to lead full and independent lives.

We will push for a new community hospital at Dulwich, making sure any excess land made available is used for the local community. We will also campaign for a NHS Walk-In Centre to provide easy access to health advice.

Labour will make it a priority to tackle Southwark's high teenage pregnancy rate, which is double the rate for the rest of the country.

Respect for Older People

Labour believes that older people should have the services they need to live life to the full, and that everyone deserves dignity in old age. In government, Labour introduced the pension tax credit, the winter fuel allowance, and free eye tests and TV licenses. At the Town Hall, we will keep the needs of older people at the top of the agenda.

Labour will introduce 'Older People's Champions' for services across the borough, to represent the views of our older residents. The team of Champions will include an elected member of the council's executive, health professionals and older Southwark citizens. They will sit on NHS boards and Patient's Forums to make sure that the views of older people are heard. In addition, they will also be responsible for working with the Council to improve services for older people, and providing feedback on policy changes. We will also ensure that our Champions are given proper training and support to address the specific needs of our older BME citizens.

Where it is needed, Labour will bring in more warden cover for sheltered accommodation. We will also make sure that schemes like the Community Alarm Scheme are properly funded and resourced.

We will clamp down on low standards of home care provision, and take a zero tolerance approach to bad providers. We will reduce the time for care assessments to be carried out, so that people are not left waiting for help.

Labour recognises the valuable work that charity and volunteer groups do, especially in helping vulnerable people lead active, independent lives. We will make sure that we use our available funding to support these groups, so that they can continue their invaluable work. A Labour Council is committed to working in partnership with voluntary and community organisations.

Supporting families and communities

High quality childcare

Over the past four years, the Lib Dems have made savage cuts of £3.5 million from Southwark Council's 'Early Years' budget. Fees for places at the council's early years centres have gone up from £100 per week to £165, and local nurseries have had their budgets slashed. The result is that 10% fewer 3 and 4 year olds access nursery care now, compared to 2002.

Labour will increase the number of affordable childcare places and subsidise nurseries so that parents can find the high quality provision that is right for their needs.

Labour will invest in early years' services and make sure that every family can access an affordable, local childcare place. We will immediately cut the cost of a place at our Early Years Centres by up to £10 per week. We will also ensure that nurseries are regularly inspected to ensure high standards.

Labour will introduce a SureStart children's centre in every community. These centres offer education, childcare and health advice and much more, all in one place.

Valuing our children and teenagers

Young people are responsible citizens who deserve to be treated with respect; the actions of a small minority should not overshadow the behaviour of the rest. Labour will work to develop and enhance participation in the Youth Forums. Labour will take the views of young people seriously. Our Executive Member for Children's Services and the Leader of the Council will meet regularly with the Southwark Youth Forum and we will devolve a budget to the Forum to enable them to develop the projects they want – not the ones we think they should have.

Labour will work closely with other London Boroughs and the Mayor of London to develop Youth Opportunity Cards providing discounts on activities with top up credits for participation in positive activities such as volunteering, but that can have credit withdrawn if the young person takes part in anti-social behaviour. Labour will work towards a scheme that can be used not just in Southwark but all across the capital, allowing our young people to enjoy all the cultural and sporting opportunities the city has to offer.

We know that young people are often the victims of crime and anti-social behaviour rather than the perpetrators. However, too many of our teenagers are being drawn towards drug-use, alcohol abuse and gangs, endangering

themselves and others. We will continue the good work of the Youth Offending Team, but also extend the work of the youth service to identify and assist children at risk.

Involving and supporting parents

Whilst public bodies can play their part, it is parents that are central to the development of young people's lives. Labour will appoint a senior "parents champion" to ensure that parents are fully involved in the development of all our services for children and young people.

We will also provide better support for parents, particularly teenage parents. Children born to teenage parents are particularly likely to experience poor outcomes in later life, including low educational attainment and are more likely to become teenage parents themselves. We will provide parenting classes to teenagers who become pregnant and support such as extended Education Maintenance Allowances and help with childcare costs to help them continue their own education.

Sadly, not all parents take their responsibilities towards their children seriously. When necessary we will make use of parenting contracts and orders.

Better libraries and leisure centres

Labour will open new libraries for Camberwell, Elephant and Castle, and Canada Water and will refurbish or rebuild existing libraries where needed.

We will make sure that our libraries have a good stock of books and DVDs. Labour will introduce adult education services to libraries to help people improve their literacy and numeracy, and gain qualifications. We will provide areas for studying and reading; ensuring there is a library in every community offering homework clubs and reading groups for children. Labour will let residents use their local library as a real link with the council in order to give feedback and access services such as Choice Based lettings.

Southwark needs better leisure centres. Labour will immediately review the council's relationship with 'Fusion', the organisation that runs Southwark's leisure centres; finding the best way to carry out the urgently needed repairs and renovations at our existing centres such as Camberwell, Peckham and Dulwich. We will also make sure that high quality new sports centres are built at Elephant and Castle and at Canada Water as part of the regeneration projects.

We will also work to widen access to sports facilities. As part of this strategy, we will make swimming free for all children under 16.

We will also work to ensure that all council buildings, libraries and leisure centres are accessible for disabled users.

We will recruit an officer to act as an 'Olympic Motivator' to take full advantage of the opportunities offered to Southwark by the 2012 Olympics.

A vision for Southwark

Over the next ten years, the opportunity exists for the borough to revive its town and shopping centres and build modern, decent homes across the borough. We will be guided by local people on these projects; as we believe regeneration must benefit existing residents. As part of the regeneration strategy, we will ask the businesses involved in the regeneration to make sure that they provide employment opportunities for local people, including apprenticeships for school leavers.

We will make Southwark a centre for business and enterprise – continuing our tradition of street markets and small shops, whilst attracting larger firms and big names to the borough. We will regenerate the Elephant and Castle to make it the number one choice for shoppers in South London. To help small businesses affected by the

project, Labour will introduce Council Business Representatives to offer specialised help and advice to every business. Labour will also support our market traders, and carry out urgent improvements to our markets such as Choumert Road and East Street.

Labour believes in the value of social enterprise – where the community comes together to provide some of the services it needs. We will encourage the development of these schemes and work to develop other forms of co-operative solutions to local issues.

Labour will reinvigorate town centres such as Peckham, Nunhead, Elephant and Camberwell and use renewal areas to focus investment in specific locations, building on the success of the Bellenden Renewal Area.

Labour will review the operation of the council's property department, in particular the policy on shop rents (where the council is the landlord) to support local businesses and help them stay viable. Many shops which rent their premises from the council have recently seen massive and unjustified rent increases, sometimes backdated. This has forced businesses to close, and left communities with abandoned and empty buildings.

Improved Community Councils

Labour will improve the way Community Councils work. We will empower them to give feedback on major issues such as council tax levels and community strategies. We will expand the role of the councils to include a scrutiny function over local projects and initiatives, and we will amend the council's constitution to allow Community Councils to refer items to the council's Executive, ensuring a real dialogue with the council's leadership.

Labour will also work to ensure that a wider and more diverse group of people attend Community Councils. We will publicise them properly, make sure that agendas are driven by local priorities and encourage specific themed meetings focussing on issues such as road safety, or issues affecting older people.

Labour will also make community councils more cost effective, making sure that extra officers only attend meetings where actually necessary, and that when at the meetings they are properly prepared and ready to take questions from local people

We will do all this and more, but it can only happen with a Labour Council, and that can only happen with your support. So when voting in the council elections, cast your vote for change: a new borough that meets your aspirations and supports the communities you want to live in. Vote Labour on May 4th.