Our 5 pledges to the people of Derbyshire

- **A Derbyshire that works.** Building a strong economy that creates jobs, grows businesses and provides a future for our young people.

- **A healthy Derbyshire.** Defending the NHS and tackling health inequalities.

- **A safer Derbyshire.** Fighting crime and building stronger communities.

- **A Derbyshire that cares.** Practical support for children and families and high-quality council-run services for the elderly, disabled and their carers.

- **A local Derbyshire.** Putting communities at the heart of decision-making.
In 2009 the people of Derbyshire elected a Conservative County Council. In 2013 we invite you to play your part in reversing that decision.

We in the Derbyshire Labour Group have used the past four years wisely and constructively; building up relationships with organisations and groups in Derbyshire and nationally, seeking out good practice from other councils and evaluating how the County Council needs to change to serve people well in these difficult times.

We have challenged the Conservatives at County Hall about their weak political leadership, lack of a clear sense of purpose and about the services they have chosen to cut. How perverse in 2011 to cut £1 million from the winter gritting budget after the two worst winters of the past decade. How short-sighted to cut the road maintenance budget by over £5 million (32%) leaving our roads and pavements scarred with potholes. How cruel to threaten to cut the county Youth Service at a time when young people’s life-chances are being undermined by record levels of youth unemployment, tuition fee increases and the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance.

The world is gripped by the deepest economic crisis since the 1930s. Despite advice from bodies such as the IMF, the Conservative-led government is driving on with its programme of austerity, hitting hardest those with the least whilst giving millionaires a tax cut. Most of us are facing a triple-whammy: static or falling incomes; rising costs of food, heating and petrol; and cuts to essential public services at a time when more people need them. By 2015, council budgets will have been cut by one-third.

In times like these, it would be easy to despair. But adversity gives the chance to question, challenge and re-define what the County Council is and what it does. Serving the people of Derbyshire involves listening to what people say, understanding what they need, and delivering services that meet those needs. But the Council should be more than just a provider of services. It should champion the county; our heritage, our people, our environment all make Derbyshire a great place to live and to work. Derbyshire deserves a County Council with ambition to transform our local economies and compassion to care for those in need.

We offer strong political leadership. We will fight for a fair deal for Derbyshire, not meekly accept that cuts of the present scale are inevitable.

Derbyshire needs a County Council with a vision for Derbyshire’s future – a place with a thriving economy, where hard work is properly rewarded and our children have a bright future; a place where people feel safe and supported; a place where all are valued and all feel that their voice is heard.

Derbyshire Labour has the ambition, the vision and the political will to bring Derbyshire through these tough times and build a better future.

Anne Western
Labour Group Leader, Derbyshire County Council
A Derbyshire that works

Building a strong economy that creates jobs, grows businesses and provides a future for our young people

Derbyshire Labour’s vision is to put our county, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, back at the heart of the British economy. Together with partners in commerce and industry, education, transport and the public sector, we will create the right environment to grow businesses, create new jobs, develop skills and lift wages, ensuring everyone is included.

We cannot sit back and wait for the government to act: their austerity cuts have caused the national and local economy to stall. We must seize the initiative and use the powers and influence we have collectively to seek investment and shape our own future.

The first task will be to develop an economic strategy for Derbyshire. Unless we understand our existing strengths and identify potential opportunities, we will not be able to focus our efforts and will achieve very little. We will seek to encourage and facilitate investment in traditional and developing sectors including:

- engineering and manufacturing, especially aero, train and automotive industries, carbon fibre, textiles and ceramics
- tourism and the rural economy
- food and drink
- creative industries
- green technology

Derbyshire has some large international companies, but the economy is built mainly on small businesses, many employing less than 10 people. Many of these play a vital role in the supply chains for larger employers. We will use our resources to work with these companies to create indigenous growth, which will bring quality jobs and develop a career path for our young people.

Wage levels in Derbyshire fall below the national and East Midlands averages. People should be rewarded fairly for the work they do. We want Derbyshire to be a Living Wage county. This makes sound economic sense because the modest amount more that this puts into the pockets and purses of people on lower pay will be spent in the local economy.

The track record of the Conservatives on economic development has been woeful. They have alienated the boroughs and district councils, some of whom have joined Sheffield City region where they feel they are treated as true partners. It is up to Labour to mend that broken relationship and work with them to help deliver regeneration and economic growth.

The so called “mean, lean” Local Enterprise Partnership has delivered very little for the county. The Markham Vale Enterprise Zone was only established due to the support of Sheffield City Region. Derbyshire Labour will work with other Labour administrations in Nottinghamshire, Nottingham and Derby to improve the LEP and ensure it can compete for resources and investment.
Unlike the Conservative administration, Derbyshire Labour is acutely aware of the Greater Manchester City region and Sheffield City Region on our borders and the economic opportunities and jobs they bring to our county. Where it is beneficial for Derbyshire we will strategically collaborate with them, for example in the area of transport and regeneration.

We will:

- Develop an economic development strategy for Derbyshire
- Re-design the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership to make it more effective in promoting economic growth and to incorporate the emerging Derbyshire economic strategy. Its membership must be broadened to include district and borough councils as key partners in generating employment and growth
- Work with key sectors to build on and promote existing cluster strengths
- Offer practical business support and networking opportunities for new and developing businesses
- Refocus the Digital Derbyshire plans so that the limited money available is invested to support the economic strategy and to have the biggest impact
- Work better with our neighbours in the Sheffield and Manchester City Regions, as well as our D2N2 partners to develop regional infrastructure and lobby for government and European funding
- Introduce the Living Wage for Derbyshire County Council employees and encourage other Derbyshire employers to do the same
- Develop a progressive procurement policy that encourages Derbyshire firms to do business with the County Council and with each other
- Support and broaden our successful tourism industry to promote the whole of Derbyshire as a destination for visitors and as a conference venue for businesses.
- Develop the green technology sector and reduce Derbyshire’s carbon footprint
- Bring new energy to the development of Markham Vale

Transport

A thriving economy needs an efficient transport network. Derbyshire has good access to airports at East Midlands, Manchester, Robin Hood and Birmingham; main line rail services from Chesterfield and Derby; access to the Manchester conurbation from Buxton and Glossop; and the M1 and trunk road network.

However, there are major capacity problems with the motorway and main A roads, such as the A61 in Chesterfield and the A628 to the North of Glossop, where congestion and delays are a regular feature. We will lobby for the resources to address these issues.
Public transport services within the county are patchy. The main towns have frequent bus services, but many places in Derbyshire are not so well served. Some communities have seen significant reductions in services in the past few years.

There are many voluntary and community providers who provide a wider range of transport options than those offered by public transport. Many of these are supported by the County Council. We will undertake a review of this sector to ensure that gaps in provision are identified and to ensure that, in these economically austere times, Derbyshire County Council gets an efficient and responsive service in return for its investment.

Similarly, in terms of subsidised bus routes, Derbyshire Labour will undertake a review of all spending to ensure it meets the aspiration of a Derbyshire that works. We will also look to see if there are alternative schemes that can be put in place that might offer a better solution than subsidising under used bus routes.

Buses play an important role in getting people to work, shops, services and leisure. We want to encourage more people to use them. We will work with the bus companies to introduce multi-operator ticketing so that one ticket covers the bus journey no matter how many changes there are. We will also explore introducing a smart card scheme similar to the Oyster card in London, so paying for transport becomes easier.

At the moment, the young person’s B-line card is only available to young people in 12 hours education per week. We will work with the bus operators to see if this scheme can be extended to cover young people in training and apprenticeships as well as young people looking for work.

In the neighbouring cities of Sheffield and Nottingham there are tram networks. We would support any bid to extend these into Derbyshire to give workers better access to the job opportunities there and to help with economic regeneration in the north and east of the county.

In 2009, improving the county’s roads was a key pledge in the Derbyshire Conservative manifesto. They have failed to keep this pledge, having cut the road maintenance budget by £5.2million (32%) over their four years in office, far more than they have cut other services. The latest cut of £1.9m was made on 6th February 2013. Less than a month later, on 5th March 2013, faced with rapidly deteriorating roads and escalating insurance claims, the Conservatives did a last minute U-turn and agreed to spend £824,000 in the eight week period prior to the county council elections. Panic measures such as this are not cost-effective or efficient. We will, as previously stated, conduct an urgent review of the condition of the roads and pavements and make better quality repairs that do not fail within a matter of weeks as happens currently.

Similarly with winter gritting, the Conservatives cut £1million from the budget in 2011 immediately after the two bad winters at either end of 2010. The result has been evident: fewer gritters in the fleet and fewer roads cleared.

Roads are not just about cars. They are used by pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders and motor cyclists, all who have their own needs. We will enter into a dialogue with all road users to ensure their needs are taken into consideration.

Trains play an important role in getting people to work, for example, from the High Peak into Manchester, and from North East Derbyshire into Sheffield, Nottingham, Derby and Birmingham. We
support the plan, which Labour initiated, for a new station at Ilkeston and will work with partners to try and bring about a new station at Gamesley.

HS2 offers new economic opportunities for the county, but this must not be at the cost of existing services. We will campaign for the proposed station at Toton to link in with the existing rail network to widen the benefits of HS2. The decision about HS2 is outside of the county council’s control. We recognise it will have a negative impact on many of our communities and we will fight to minimise these impacts and get the best deal for Derbyshire.

Derbyshire is lucky to have an extensive network of canals throughout the county which offer opportunities for tourism and economic growth. We will support the Canals and Rivers Trust in their work, and also offer practical support to the volunteers that are working to restore disused waterways such as the Derby, Cromford and Chesterfield Canals.

The climate is changing and extreme weather events - droughts, floods and heavy snow – are becoming more frequent. We need to make our economy, services and communities better prepared and more resilient so that people can get to work, and companies can continue to do business.

We will:

- Improve the A61 and associated roads in Chesterfield and NE Derbyshire to support the Waterside and Avenue regeneration projects
- Use the HS2 development to encourage inward investment and open up new markets for Derbyshire businesses, whilst mitigating the negative impact of the line on homes, the road and canal networks and on the Markham Vale development
- Press for government funding for Ilkeston and Gamesley rail stations
- Support the development of the Glossop spur and Tintwistle by-pass
- Seek improvements to bus services through robust discussions with bus companies – the right routes at the right times and at a fair price
- Develop the B_Line scheme to include young people in training, apprenticeships and those seeking employment
- Put back the missing £1million in the winter gritting budget
- Commit £1m to repairing damaged roads and pavements, using unspent money from the Community Buildings Grant fund
- Take a lead on adapting to and mitigating the impact of climate change
- Develop the network of cycle routes, particularly those around schools

Skills and opportunities

Our young people are facing a very uncertain future. The things that previous generations took for granted are now slipping out of the reach of this generation – a decent job, a home of their own, security to raise a family. Working together, we can turn this around.
Derbyshire Labour will work with schools, colleges, universities and employers to make sure our
young people have the skills, knowledge and practical support to benefit from the jobs we will
create.

In 2012, Derbyshire Labour held a Young People’s Summit. We brought together young people from
across the county to listen to their concerns and aspirations. They told us that the transition from
education into employment was hard, that they felt a lot of pressure to combine work and study,
that the scrapping of Education Maintenance Allowance made it expensive to get to college and that
sometimes they felt unsupported and exploited in their part-time jobs.

Some young people struggle with complex problems during their teenage years. This affects their
education and job prospects. Projects such as Raising Aspirations have made a massive difference to
the lives of our most vulnerable young people.

Adults with learning disabilities are also facing an uncertain future. Derbyshire County Council has
had a good track record of developing supported employment projects, such as the excellent
Bolsover Woodlands Enterprise, which trains people in woodland conservation and land
management work. Ironically, as funding is cut and distributed through personal budgets, these
employment schemes are under threat. The people who go there feel as though they are being
expected to pay to go to work.

We will:

- Review and, where practical, expand the current Derbyshire
  Apprenticeship scheme to ensure it offers proper training, support and
  job prospects
- Develop a training and work placement package for young people to
  learn and practise the skills needed to get a job and succeed at work
- Develop a Trusted Employer register for employers that offer good
  quality part-time jobs for young people still at school or college
- Work with bus companies to offer discounted fares for young people
  seeking work
- Secure the future of Bolsover Woodlands Enterprise and create more
  supported employment projects across the county
- Expand the Raising Aspirations project
A healthy Derbyshire

Defending the NHS and tackling health inequalities

The NHS in Derbyshire is changing radically as a result of the biggest national top-down re-organisation in its history. This is putting massive pressure on the service at a time when budgets for health and social care are the tightest they’ve ever been.

Derbyshire Labour has signed the Labour Party’s national pledge to be the last line of defence for the NHS. We believe in protecting the NHS founding values: available to all; based on clinical need, not the ability to pay; and free at the point of delivery.

The new NHS structures will take time to establish and where the real power lies remains to be seen. The Health and Wellbeing Board, which becomes a committee of the county council in April 2013, brings together the new Clinical Commissioning Groups, Healthwatch, adult and children’s social care services, district and borough councils and other partners, and will have strategic influence over commissioning decisions across health and social care. We will be using this new Board to develop a shared understanding of the health and social care needs of Derbyshire citizens and to create a more effective and responsive local health and care system. The current Health and Wellbeing Strategy will be revised and strengthened. We will support changes where there is clear evidence that this will improve services, but stand against those that are driven solely by government funding cuts or that put profits before patients. We will lobby the government for a fairer funding formula for health based on need.

We are committed to working with the Labour shadow health team on developing Andy Burnham MP’s proposals on whole-person care; integrating services to provide for people’s physical, mental and social care needs.

Derbyshire County Council also has powers to scrutinise health services and in particular any proposed changes. Under the Conservatives, the capacity to do this effectively has been weakened. We will restore this capacity and work with Healthwatch, district and borough council scrutiny members and the public to ensure there is a robust examination of changes to service delivery.

In April, the public health service transfers into Derbyshire County Council, which will become responsible for tackling the huge inequalities in health within the county. There are massive and unacceptable differences between the areas where people enjoy the best of health and those where people don’t. For example, there is a gap of twelve years in life expectancy between different parts of Derbyshire. We must target the resources we have to reduce this gap.

Education, housing, employment and the environment all influence the health of an individual. Derbyshire Labour will work with district and borough councils and other organisations to ensure that together we make the biggest difference. For example, much good work has been done in recent years in Bolsover district where the local council has been investing innovatively in health improvement with remarkable success. We will learn from this approach and roll out this good practice to other parts of the county.

Mental health services, whilst often providing good care for the individual, are not always well integrated with other services and may not take account of the impact of mental health problems on
the person’s family, particularly their children. We will encourage mental health services to adopt a ‘Think Family’ approach and to participate in our whole-person care initiatives. We will promote better awareness of mental health issues and develop a programme of information and activities to enable people to maintain good mental health throughout their lives.

We will:

- Review the Health and Wellbeing Strategy to focus more clearly on health needs and priorities
- Create a new Health Scrutiny committee, working with partners and the public, to challenge and test proposals made by the local NHS
- Work with district and borough councils to identify and support their health improvement work
- Work with Labour nationally to pilot whole-person care initiatives
- Improve mental health awareness
A safer Derbyshire
Fighting crime and building stronger communities

Safer communities

November 2012 saw the election of Derbyshire’s first Police and Crime Commissioner, Labour’s Alan Charles. We welcome Alan to this new role and will work closely with him to keep Derbyshire a safe place to live.

The establishment of neighbourhood police teams by the Labour Government in the last decade has created a stronger relationship between the police force and communities. It has reduced the fear of crime as well as contributing to nine years of falling crime rates. Similarly, district and borough councils play an important role in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour. We will work in partnership with them and local people to understand the particular problems of each community so we can tackle them together.

Domestic abuse is a major problem, affecting many women, and some men, and blighting the lives of children who witness such abuse. Many of the support and advice services for victims and survivors of abuse are provided by voluntary and community groups who are doing an amazing job, especially in the current climate, with increasing demand for their services conflicting with funding cuts. The responsibility for tackling domestic abuse is shared over several departments within the County Council. We will ensure that this is better coordinated and person-centred.

Similarly, victims of crime and people subjected to hate crime will be given a higher priority. We will work with the police and other partners to offer better support and protection.

Alcohol and drug abuse destroy people’s lives, threaten communities and are a major drain on council, police and NHS budgets. The majority of A&E attendances on Friday and Saturday nights are alcohol related. This problem also needs a coordinated approach.

The government cuts are having a profoundly detrimental effect, not just on councils but also on Derbyshire Police and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service. We will lobby for a fair deal for all Derbyshire’s public services and work with them on joint initiatives to keep people safe. We will oppose attempts to privatise the fire service.

We will:

- Work with Derbyshire’s Police and Crime Commissioner to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour
- Streamline DCC’s approach to domestic abuse and invest in voluntary sector organisations such as Women’s Aid
- Offer better support and protection to victims, especially those suffering hate crime
- Support the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Alcohol Summit, to tackle all aspects of alcohol abuse
Supporting people in hard times

Community cohesion declines in times of economic hardship. Financial stresses on families can lead to ill-health and family breakdown. In the current economic climate, households in Derbyshire are facing increased hardship and uncertainty, with ever-rising bills for heating, food and transport.

Unthinkable in 21st Century Britain, we have thousands of people turning to food banks to feed themselves and their families. Food banks have sprung up across Derbyshire in response to the growing need. Many people are making a daily choice between heating their home and eating a decent meal. We will offer practical support to food banks where we can, whilst striving to eradicate the poverty that has created the need for them. We will also focus on key groups such as children and the elderly, by supporting school breakfast clubs and older people’s luncheon clubs.

In April, the ‘bedroom tax’ and cuts to tax credits and council tax benefit will hit thousands of Derbyshire people. Derbyshire Labour will support community-based advice services and strengthen the DCC Welfare Rights team so that we can run a Quids In campaign to make sure people are getting all the help they’re entitled to.

A particular concern is the proliferation of payday lenders and loan sharks. We will work with Financial Inclusion Derbyshire to promote Credit Unions as a safe and ethical source of loans and support the development of ‘jam-jar’ bank accounts that help people to budget. We will provide support for families to manage their household budgets through our network of Children’s Centres. We will work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to tackle loan sharks.

There are many voluntary organisations and community groups which are helping individuals and families. We value the enormous contribution they make and will continue to work in partnership with them.

We will:

- Support school breakfast clubs and older people’s luncheon clubs
- Run a Quids In Campaign
- Invest in community-based advice services and DCC’s Welfare Rights service
- Promote credit unions, tackle loan sharks and help families to manage their budgets.

Green and sustainable communities

Our beautiful natural environment makes Derbyshire the great place it is. At the heart of this is the Peak District, the UK’s first National Park, but in all corners of the county there are green spaces, woods, parks, lakes, rivers and canals that we all enjoy and cherish.

UNESCO has already recognised the importance of the Derwent Valley and its Mills as a World Heritage Site. We will continue to work with local groups to promote and protect the area, recognising its importance role in giving birth to the Industrial Revolution.
Creswell Crags is also applying for World Heritage site and Derbyshire Labour is fully behind the bid. The Crags are part of a unique Magnesian Limestone landscape above the Vale of Scarsdale, that stretches from the halls at Hardwick and mills at Pleasley, past Bolsover Castle and through agricultural hamlets, on to Markland Grips and Creswell Crags itself. Derbyshire Labour will seek to protect the landscape along the escarpment so the bid for World Heritage status is not compromised by unsightly development.

Derbyshire Labour will examine closely the energy efficiency of county council buildings. We will invest in energy efficiency measures where the cost will be paid back by reduced energy bills. Where this is not cost effective we will seek to move to alternative premises.

We will work with district and borough councils to reduce fuel poverty by improving the energy efficiency of people’s homes.

The recent horsemeat scandal has focused public attention on the quality and sources of the food we eat. We will continue to support the animal health and food safety work of the Trading Standards department and encourage shoppers to buy local.

We will:

- Increase the energy efficiency of county council buildings
- Improve energy efficiency in domestic properties
- Continue to encourage recycling to reduce landfill
- Support the work of animal health and food safety officers and launch a ‘Buy Local’ scheme
A Derbyshire that cares

Practical support for children and families and high-quality council-run services for the elderly, disabled and their carers

Children, young people and families

We owe a duty of care to every child in Derbyshire. Every child should have the best start in life, a safe and happy childhood, and an education that allows them to grow up to achieve their full potential.

Throughout their life journey we will seek to support young people and their families. Derbyshire Labour will make no compromises on safeguarding. Keeping our children safe and healthy is at the very heart of what we do. We will work to support families in difficulty, but when children have to come into the council’s care, we will find safe and supportive foster homes or children's homes. We will do all we can to be good corporate parents and ensure children thrive whilst they are in our care. When it is in a child’s best interests to be adopted, we will find safe and loving homes with the minimum delay.

Parents need support, and Derbyshire County Council will continue to do this via a network of Multi Agency Teams and Children’s Centres. There is currently a review taking place of their activities to ensure that they are meeting the communities’ specific needs. We will review child care provision so we can support working parents by improving provision and access. We do not support the recent Government proposal to alter the ratio of adults to children in pre-school settings. We will strive to keep high-quality, child-centred care.

Families with disabled children have to deal with a complex web of services and the transition to adult services is not always smooth. We will work with partners, families and disabled young people to streamline processes and provide better information. The forthcoming benefit changes will affect disabled children as well as adults. We will provide advice to families through our Welfare Rights Service, Citizens Advice Bureaux, children’s centres, schools and other voluntary organisations.

Some of Derbyshire’s schools have chosen to become academies, which means that the County Council’s role in supporting them is diminishing. However Derbyshire Labour believes that we have an obligation to ensure that every school is a good school, and will be robust in challenging under-performing schools, whatever type they may be. We will actively encourage schools to stay within the local authority through the quality support the County offers. We will, as far as funding allows, invest in improving school buildings.

The current Conservative administration sought to dismantle the in-house County Youth Service but over 16,000 people signed a petition against this proposal, forcing them to alter their plans. Derbyshire Labour worked closely with the young people leading the campaign and heard how strongly they value the support that youth workers give them. We will ensure that Derbyshire County Council continues to provide youth services as well as working with other providers to develop a broad offer to young people. We will increase youth provision in areas of deprivation and under attainment. We will use community buildings where appropriate, but strive to upgrade youth centre buildings that are well-used but in poor condition.
Adults with physical and learning disabilities

Over the past decade, support services for adults with disabilities have gradually improved, enabling people to live more independent lives. This independence is built on a network of support – financial, social and practical – that is being stripped away by benefits changes and service cuts.

Derbyshire County Council is currently running a Community Lives project, through which everyone who receives a service is being assessed and given an individual budget. The principles of Community Lives are sound; to give people with disabilities more choice and control over their lives by increasing educational, leisure and employment opportunities as well as more involvement with their local community. However the reality is more problematic and feedback we have received reveals the following issues:

- People are being assessed by workers who don’t know them very well and so the assessment doesn’t properly reflect them or their needs and wishes
- The process feels rushed and is unclear to those being assessed and their carers
- The process is hiding budget cuts – people are being given indicative budgets that don’t cover the costs of the services they currently use or want to use in future
- This is putting the future of some day services at risk because people can no longer afford to use them
- The process is causing anxiety and stress
- The Community Connectors programme is inhibited because people don’t have sufficient income to take up the choices offered and 12 weeks is not long enough to establish new relationships in the community

We will investigate these issues and listen to people’s concerns. We will ensure there is enough time and information for people to have more confidence in the process. We will increase advocacy support and ensure through our Welfare Rights Service that people are receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled.

Many carers have their own health and social care needs or would benefit from a break from their caring responsibilities. We will ensure that carers’ needs are taken into account and appropriate
support built in. We will work with carers and carers’ organisations to determine the types of support that people want.

We will:

- Review the assessment process and address the concerns noted above.
- Provide an advocacy service
- Provide Welfare Rights advice
- Work with carers and carers’ organisations to develop better support
- Work more closely with health services on a whole-person approach
- Take the lead in offering employment opportunities to disabled people

Older People

Of all the services which Derbyshire County Council provides, the Conservatives have made the most radical changes to older people’s care. Charges have been introduced for the home help service and the threshold for access to a service has been raised. Personal budgets and a brokerage system have created a market approach to providing care, which has effectively steered people away from using the in-house service. The meals and laundry services have been cut and charges introduced for stair lift maintenance.

Whilst millions of pounds extra have gone into the budget, it is not transparent where this money is being spent. Personalised budgets, as for people with disabilities, are not always sufficient to pay for what people need or want.

The Conservatives have also announced big changes to residential care for older people. They are putting together contracts to a total of £200 million to invest in extracare housing and specialist provision for people with dementia. They have also announced that they will close all but four of the DCC residential homes, casting a blight on these homes and causing anxiety for staff, residents and their families. In all the consultations on residential home closures so far, there has been very strong support for council-run residential care.

Derbyshire Labour supports the concept of extracare housing and specialist centres for dementia but we will also continue to provide and invest in residential care.

Last November, Derbyshire Labour held a conference on the Future of Older People’s Care. We learned that:

- Older people value independence, safety, health and quality of life and when they eventually need support, services should be built on these principles
- People value council-run services because of the perceived quality and reliability
- People value continuity – knowing who their care worker will be
- Care calls should be of a reasonable duration – 15 minutes is not enough
- Whilst people recognise the benefits of extracare housing, it is not suitable for all needs
There is still a demand for DCC-run residential homes

Derbyshire Labour will organise an urgent independent review of all aspects of older people’s care services. We will pause the extracare project whilst we consult with individual communities about the best mix of residential provision in their area, subject to the constraints of the contracts.

We will ensure that care services respect people’s dignity. We will work with Unison to adopt their Ethical Care Charter to establish a minimum baseline for the safety, quality and dignity of home care, for both the cared for and the care workers.

Derbyshire Labour will ensure that private care providers are subject to verifiable quality standards. We will strengthen the checks that take place on the use of direct payments to protect vulnerable people from potential abuse.

We will campaign for a sustainable national system of funding social care in the future.

We will:

- Hold an urgent external review of older people’s care services
- Consult on a new residential strategy to offer a choice that includes DCC residential care, subject to the constraints of contracts signed before the election
- Commit to maintain the DCC home help service
- Work towards adopting Unison’s Ethical Care Charter
- Tighten the quality checks on private agencies and direct payments
- Lobby for a sustainable national funding formula for social care
A local Derbyshire

Putting communities at the heart of decision making

In these austere times, it is natural to feel pessimistic; that life will inevitably get worse, that our hopes for ourselves and our children will not be achieved. Whilst we know that the next few years will be difficult, Derbyshire Labour believes that the county council can still make a positive difference for our citizens. Even after the savage government cuts, the county council will still be a large and powerful force for good in people’s lives.

Increasingly people feel alienated from the political process and believe that they are unable to influence decision-making. We believe Derbyshire County Council has a duty to reverse this trend and increase participation in the democratic process.

In order to achieve this, the culture of the county council needs to change.

Fresh thinking is needed to tackle these problems. We have identified 5 major areas in need of change:

- **The council must regain sight of its core purpose, which is to serve the people of Derbyshire.**
  For a long time, Derbyshire County Council has had a good reputation for delivering quality services. But the council has not responded well to the pressures it currently faces. Cuts have been managed in a way that causes least pain to the organisation, but that doesn’t evaluate the pain caused to Derbyshire citizens. The organisation’s thinking is in terms of services and departments rather than people, communities and impact.

- **The council has become over-centralised and remote and needs to re-connect with people**
  Although the work of Derbyshire County Council affects every single citizen every day – from the roads and pavements, to the schools, libraries and care services - people more readily relate to their parish or district council, rather than the county council. This is partly because Derbyshire is such a big county and the administrative centre at Matlock is not easy to access for the majority of the county’s residents; and partly because, for understandable reasons of efficiency and cost-cutting, services have tended to become centralised. The vast majority of enquiries, complaints and requests for a service are now channelled through the council’s website or the call centre, Call Derbyshire. For some people this works, but for many others it does not.

- **The council must genuinely engage with Derbyshire citizens**
  Over the four years of the Conservative administration at Derbyshire, radical changes to services have been introduced but the consultation with the public has been ineffective, generally using traditional methods such as questionnaires in council publications or on the website. Where consultation meetings have been held, as with the youth service proposals...
and residential home closures, the changes have been presented as a fait accompli, a done deal, which only serves to further alienate and anger people. There is also much public cynicism about ‘Derbyshire First’, the council’s newspaper, and other publications. The way that the council communicates with the public and other stakeholders needs to be more open and interactive with less ‘spin’.

➢ **The council should make better use of the skills and creativity of its workforce.**

There is a huge morale problem among county council staff. Cuts, job losses and a pay freeze are largely responsible for this, but there are also problems within the way the council works that need to be addressed. The last Employee Survey showed that while staff believe the council is a good place to work, they also thought the council was poor at communication, management of change and leadership. Many felt that their skills were not being fully utilised and that they were not able to speak up and challenge the way things are done. There is also a feeling of unfairness in the way that terms and conditions of employment have been altered in the ‘Derbyshire Package’.

➢ **The role of the county councillor has been diminished and should be restored.**

It is the democratic right of Derbyshire citizens to elect a county councillor every four years. All 64 councillors have a duty to represent their communities and the people within them. But they are often excluded from decisions about resources and services that affect their areas. Even getting information about local issues is sometimes very difficult. Support for councillors to deal with local constituents’ problems is not adequate and councillors spend too much time progress-chasing in order to get an answer to their constituents’ enquiries. This all adds to the public cynicism with politics and the sense of alienation from the democratic process.

We believe it is possible to change and to develop a new and stronger relationship between the council and Derbyshire citizens and between the council and its staff. We will challenge this government’s unfair and draconian cuts, currently estimated at £127 million, being imposed upon the authority. We recognise that this will involve some very difficult decisions and so we will develop priority-based budgets and outcomes-based performance monitoring. That way we can be assured that money spent is serving people well, offers value for money and achieves the outcomes that we need. We will, where appropriate, devolve decision-making and budgets down to the local level and involve local people and organisations in this. In particular we will ensure that young people can influence and scrutinise decisions which affect them.

Labour Durham County Council has developed such a model and recently had 1,400 residents of a small town attend a community budget event. We will broaden public access by enhancing the role of libraries and other outlets to be contact points and one-stop shops for information and advice. We will create community teams of officers from different departments who know an area and work together across organisational boundaries and who support the local councillor. We will address the issues raised by staff to restore a sense of purpose, involvement and confidence. To make these changes and inject a sense of energy and purpose we will modernise the structure of the council.

In other parts of the country Labour councils are leading the way through innovation, public engagement and social justice. With your support, we can make Derbyshire one of the best.
We will:

- Introduce a new council structure to deliver the new council priorities
- Develop libraries and other outlets as one-stop shops for information and advice
- Develop priority-based budgets and present an emergency budget to council in September re-balancing spending towards needs
- Develop an outcomes-based performance system
- Decentralise decision-making and devolve local budgets. Begin by re-introducing Local Area Committees
- Rethink the council’s communications strategy and methods
- Expect councillors to take on the role of community leaders supported by officer teams
- Tackle the issues raised in the Employee Survey
- Identify opportunities for staff to develop and use their skills more fully
- Encourage trade union membership and other mechanisms for staff engagement
- Review the council’s appeals mechanism and restore employees’ right of appeal to elected members
- Undertake the promised review of the Derbyshire Package, in particular the adverse weather and medical appointments policies