Swindon Conservatives – Building Back Better

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted every member of our community this year. We were hit by a deadly disease that separated us from our friends, family and loved ones and touched every part of our lives. We have seen enourmous changes to our satisfaction with life, our physical and mental well-being, our economic well-being, access to education and jobs and our relationships with the environment. With little notice, businesses were forced to shut, many of us had to remain at home and we all had to adjust to a 'new normal' overnight. Young people especially, have been affected by the insecurities arising from the pandemic.

However, out of the darkness of the pandemic we saw hope through the selfless acts of our community coming together to care for each other alongside our key workers protecting and supporting us throughout the crisis.

Swindon Conservatives believe that our town is already a great place to live and we spend our lives talking up and promoting our town, and work, and we will accelerate our commitment to create a **fairer, greener** and **healthier** Swindon. We will do this by continuing to develop a thriving town where everyone has access to world-class opportunities through employment, business creation and education. By investing in infrastructure alongside our leisure, heritage and cultural facilities, our commitment to Swindon is to '**Build Back Better'.**

The Pandemic also shone a light on issues that exist in our community. We believe we must not go 'back to normal' as we move into next year. Our commitment to you in the face of National and local challenges is to continue to keep your Council Tax as low as possible, to focus on strong financial management and to listen to residents to ensure the services people need have the right priority and resources are delivered by the right people for the job.

Above all, we will always remember that it is your money we are spending, and we will continue to do so prudently.

Work is already underway. We are delivering:

- A Government funded £100m road improvement programme – the biggest investment in a generation.
- Investment and job creation in our Town Centre with the first new office building in two decades now under construction.
- £400m private sector investment and 2,000 new jobs created in the New Eastern Villages.
- The biggest affordable housebuilding programme in a generation.
- We are already the Greenest Town on the M4 Corridor and are going further to make Swindon greener and more sustainable.
- A protected and enhanced heritage through initiatives such as the Heritage Action Zone, which has already delivered improvements and secured investment in the Mechanics Institute, Milton Road Baths and Railway Village.
- A new Waste Strategy to improve bin collections and recycling rates and to reduce fly tipping to provide cleaner and greener streets.
- A fair and affordable Council Tax, which is £150-200 lower than Bristol, Oxford and Reading

More can be done so we will:

1. **Build an economy that works for you:** creating more well paid jobs, attracting further investment in our town and making Swindon a great place to start and grow businesses.

2. **Protect and enhance our heritage, cultural and leisure facilities:** delivering improvements now and securing long-term investment.

3. **Deliver sustainable growth:** through high quality affordable homes alongside infrastructure to support our growing town.

4. **Equip all our young people with the education and skills they need:** through additional and enhanced skills and higher education opportunities.

5. **Make Swindon greener and more sustainable:** we will help residents reduce their environmental impact and as a Council, we will be carbon neutral by 2030.

6. **Make Swindon safer, fairer and healthier:** by supporting our must vulnerable residents, tackling crime and anti-social behaviour and increasing health and wellbeing facilities.

How we will do this:

1. **We will build an economy that works for you:**

   - By making Swindon one of the best digitally connected places in the Country with huge private investment in fibre broadband so that every home has a Fibre/Gigabit Internet and access to 5G by 2030 to enable working and studying from home

   - Ensuring there is a job for everyone by continuing to create the right conditions to build on our success at attracting private sector companies to invest in our Borough, securing existing jobs and creating new ones, and supporting retraining opportunities.

   - Investing over £100m in our town centre within 4 years to support the high street as it changes to meet the impact of Covid and online retail shopping.

   - Publishing and delivering a plan to promote opportunities for people living and working in central Swindon.

   - Continuing to grow our Credibility with Industry and attracting thousands of new jobs as employment sites such as the Honda site are upgraded.

   - Taking the opportunity to be the economic heartland at the centre of the M4 corridor and increasing the capacity of the A420 through our work with England's Economic Heartland (EEH).

2. **We will protect and enhance our heritage, cultural and leisure facilities:**
    - By delivering a Parks' strategy that will include the building of a new Café/Restaurant and "Changing places" Play area at Coate by 2022.
    - Working with Historic England and other partners to protect and enhance our heritage such as:
        - Achieving visible progress on restoring the Mechanics Institute and the Corn Exchange by 2025.
        - Refurbishing and restoring, the historically important Health Hydro and Turkish Baths.
    - Work with arts organisations to improve our cultural offer by:
        - Building a new Wyvern Theatre, with double the capacity, with residents enjoying the best regional and national shows by 2030.
        - Delivering a new Museum and Art Gallery in the town centre as part of a new Cultural Quarter.
        - Encouraging every child to visit the Council's museums including the Swindon Museum and Art Gallery as a learning opportunity while they are at school. Continue to work with the Science Museum at Wroughton, prioritising visits from local schools.

3. **We will deliver sustainable growth:**

- By attracting further Investment by Government and other public bodies enabling us to build new roads, public realm, schools and other infrastructure ensuring our town continues to thrive.

- Improving Junction 15, White Hart Roundabout and installing a Smart Urban Traffic Management System along Great Western Way to keep traffic moving especially at rush hour.

- By delivering hundreds more quality new homes including building our own via Swindon Housing Company, including homes for residents with specialist needs.

- By always fighting against inappropriate development and ensuring infrastructure is in place before housing and by championing the rights of local people to make local representations in the Planning Process.

4. **We will equip all our young people with the education and skills they need:**

- By continuing to build new schools to meet the needs of our growing population including a new Secondary & Primary School at Wichelstowe and seven to come at the New Eastern Villages.
- In partnership with New College Swindon, developing the Institute of Technology that will provide degree level qualifications for vocational jobs.
- Supporting local businesses to provide apprenticeships to enable people to learn new skills or to upskill, thereby increasing their earning potential.
- Attracting and supporting further Higher Education providers including The Royal Agricultural University, to meet the needs of local businesses and the Country.
- Encouraging and assisting education providers to expand the range of qualifications offered locally so that our residents can work and study in Swindon.

5. We will make Swindon greener and more sustainable:

- By ensure that every area is “clean, safe and cared for” with residents having the tools to improve their communities.
- Continuing our war on potholes to ensure that our roads are safe for both cyclists and drivers and do all we can to improve our roads and car parks.
- Reaffirming our commitment to the climate change agenda which is already impressive but which must go much further:
    - Work with organisations in the Green Economy to enhance Swindon’s reputation as a sustainable energy exemplar, by exploring technology that converts energy from waste, facilitating the move to electrified transport, and delivering opportunities to invest in renewable energy to reduce carbon footprint.
    - Ensure that Swindon continues to be at the forefront of the Hydrogen Highway.
    - Demand the Installation of EV charging points in all new homes and work with suppliers to install charging points all across the Borough.
    - Continue our push for Electric Buses to be operating in the Town and deliver Active Travel schemes to improve access to cycling and walking.
    - Bring forward a Greener Waste strategy and roll out weekly food waste collections across the Borough.
    - Plant 3 Wildflower meadows and 350 hectares of trees to ensure 30% tree coverage in the Borough.
    - Create “Bee bus stops” and wildflower verges.
    - Generate local renewable energy equivalent to 100% of the electricity used by homes.
    - Ensure that Swindon Council leads the way in securing net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and make Swindon as a whole net zero no later than 2050.

We will make Swindon safer, fairer and healthier:

- By continuing to protect our residents from COVID19 with all appropriate measures and respond quickly to any local outbreaks.
- Building homes for our vulnerable residents to ensure people can live in their own homes as long as possible.
- Delivering a borough-wide approach to increase the impact of volunteering, enabling more people to be active in supporting vulnerable people.
- Developing or finding accommodation for vulnerable children and adults to ensure they can live near friends and families with the right support in place.
- Supporting the NHS to deliver a massive extension to the Great Western Hospital and push for parity in the importance and excellence of mental health care, which has too often been treated as a secondary concern.
- Delivering new GP Surgeries in Wichelstowe & Tadpole Garden Village.
- Working with the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable to deliver real community policing to improve the safety of our residents by maintaining good public order, reducing anti-social behaviour and combating drug related crime.
- Taking a stand against all those who try to exploit vulnerable children & adults, however induced, whether by criminal exploitation, county lines and dangerous drug networks, modern slavery, extremism, or other means.

- Further increasing the number of foster carers in Swindon so that every ‘child looked after’ is placed in their home borough when they should be.
- Working in partnership with local organisations to provide support and, where required, accommodation to anyone experiencing domestic abuse.
- Delivering housing services that encourage and support rough sleepers to come off the streets and into safe accommodation.
- Re-affirming our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant.
- Providing early support so that Swindon residents are financially included and avoid getting into debt.

Swindon Conservatives – Building Back Better