

East Suffolk Conservative Group.

Manifesto pledges at the District Council election to be held on 4th May 2023

1. Finance

A renewed Conservative administration will continue to put the Council tax-payer at the heart of all financial decisions. The Finance team will always be looking for and prioritising projects in the Capital programme which provide additional income to the Council in order to relieve the burden of the Council taxpayer.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved by the present Council, shows a decrease in the percentage increase in Council Tax over next four years.

The present administration, having successfully lobbied the Government to close the loophole allowing 2nd homeowners to avoid paying both Council tax and Business rates, a renewed Conservative administration is committed to charging a 100% Council tax premium on second and empty homes unless established as bona fide businesses.

2. Climate Emergency

Our focus will be on renewable energy, energy security and saving CO2 output. Our waste disposal fleet will be renewed with more fuel-efficient vehicles. Through our decarbonisation programme we will be installing solar panels on our leisure centres, buildings and car parks to produce low-cost energy sources. Will we invest in Hydrogen fuel technology to find a possible long-term replacement to Diesel.

We will continue to encourage individual residents to make their homes more energy efficient through grant schemes for solar panels and insulation. We will be introducing a programme of upgrading the energy efficiency of our housing stock

3. Economic Development

The present administration provided COVID support both financially and with advice. Over £130million in grants was distributed which acted quickly and clearly to assist our business community.

New grant schemes will be introduced to continue the ethos of adaption including incorporating Net Zero and digital support. Including supporting our free wifi zones within high streets.

We were successful in our joint bid to government for Freeport status - one of only 7 in the country – as lead authority we will continue to support this project and see that the £25million seed capital benefits are felt as widely as possible.

Cultural lead regeneration – our First Light Festival is going from strength to strength; gaining National Portfolio Status from Arts Council England. While we were not successful in our bid for City of Culture our determination has not faltered our district-wide Cultural strategy will bring further creatives to the district and bring greater breath and strength to our economy.

We successfully bid for the government's Town Fund scheme, securing £25million. This administration will see further development in Lowestoft, leveraging that £25million and building on further investments such as gigabit broadband installed in the town and, bring the former Post Office back into use with innovative new ideas. We will continue to support the Gull Wing Bridge, Lowestoft's 3rd river crossing. This much needed bridge is under construction and due to be completed shortly.

Energy projects

Whilst we are not the developer nor the decision-maker for these large important projects we will continue to work with the developer to get the best deal we can for residents. With Scottish Power Renewables EA1N and EA2 Nationally Significant Infrastructure project we were able to secure improvements to the construction, design and further mitigation and compensation for our district; this included £500,000 for an environmental exemplar project. With EDF the size of the compensation and mitigation is approximately £250million, with

£100million for the creation of an environmental land trust. Securing commitments to local supply chain and employment.

4. Enabling Communities

We are committed to continuing to enable our communities to invest in themselves through our Community Partnerships Board and its eight geographical committees. This initiative, introduced by this Conservative administration, is open to Town and Parish Councillors and local stakeholders who decide how a budget of £500,000 is spent over the next four years on community-based initiatives. In addition, each Councillor, of all parties, will, again, be given an Enabling Community budget of £7,500 each year to fund personally supported projects in their Wards.

5. Housing.

Because of the pandemic and lockdowns, it was impossible to meet our housing targets for the last four years. However, despite this we did build 113 new homes with a further 125 nearing completions. Permissions are already in place to meet our targets of an average of 50 new houses per year over the next four years including 41 council houses built to passive house standards in Deben Fields.

6. Health and Wellbeing

Renovations have been carried out to all of our Leisure Centres with new equipment and facilities being installed. We have granted additional funding to our Leisure providers to enable them to meet the additional energy costs particularly for our swimming pools.

A renewed Conservative administration will see the introduction of a new Leisure Centre and new bowls and cricket facilities in Felixstowe and a continuation of the investment in the well-being of our residents.

7. Local Rural Transport.

Finding a solution to rural public transport is a key objective in all of our communities. The Katch Bus project between Framlingham and Wickham Market enjoyed limited success mainly due to the disruption caused by Covid. East Suffolk Council are now renewing this project, driving it from

the two wards most benefiting from the service and working with businesses, visitor attractions and stakeholders to create an efficient and reliable on-demand local mini-bus service. Links will also be created with other local providers to extend the routes which can be covered as the project progresses.

8. Investment in our coastal communities.

With grants of over £43m we have built tidal flood walls to protect Lowestoft and work continues the design of a tidal barrier.

An additional grant of £8.3m will be used to create a resilient coast from Lowestoft to Felixstowe.

Over £15m has been allocated to work with Southwold Town Council and a Stakeholder group to improve the amenities and facilities at Southwold Harbour and Caravan site.

Our key strategic objectives remain:

Maintaining Financial Sustainability

Caring for our Environment

Growing the Economy

Enabling our Communities

Delivering Digital Transformation

Full details of the Key Performance Indicators for each objective can be found at <https://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/yourcouncil/performance-reports/>

Only a renewed Conservative administration can provide the strong leadership required to deliver on our key objectives.

None of the opposition parties have put forward enough candidates to form an administration themselves, choosing instead to do cross party deals with others simply to remove the Conservatives. There is no thought as to who or how they would lead and direct an administration, especially since most leave meetings of Full Council well before the conclusion of important debates.

A mish mash of Liberal Democrats, Greens and Independents will never be able to agree on policy direction. For example, Greens are promising to curb

developers yet Lib-Dems are promising to build 500 more council houses. Such contradictions would render any administration unworkable to the detriment of every resident.

Craig Rivett

**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member with
responsibility for Economic Development**

Maurice Cook

**Cabinet Member with responsibility
for Finance and Resources.**