

BARNET CONSERVATIVES



MANIFESTO MAY 2006

CONSERVATIVES



Change
to Win

Win for
Britain

SUPPORTING SUCCESSFUL SUBURBS

On 4th May electors in Barnet will elect a new Council.

Barnet is once again the foremost North London suburb where people choose to live and work. Only Conservatives in Barnet have recognised the importance of the suburbs for our people and pledge to fight to support everything that is best about the suburbs and will strive to make the benefits available to all our residents.

Conservative candidates will offer the people a pledge to build on the successes of the last 4 years.

Conservatives in Barnet will have 5 key priorities for the next 4 years: -

- ◆ A Cleaner, Greener and Safer Barnet
- ◆ First Class Education Services
- ◆ Looking After the Vulnerable
- ◆ A Stronger and Healthier Barnet
- ◆ Support for Successful Suburbs

4 years ago, in May 2002, we inherited a Council which after 8 years of control by a Labour/Liberal administration had become a shambles.

The finances could not have been in worse shape. The previous administration had used up all the Councils reserves to reduce the Council Tax rise ahead of the 2002 elections. Confidential warnings had been given, that their actions would add a minimum burden to the following years council Tax Bill of an extra 10%.

The Education service was in chaos. Having been severely criticised by Ofsted, an action plan had been drawn up, but not enacted. It was found gathering dust in a drawer. More and more schools were heading towards special measures. Children with special educational needs were being let down by inaction and delay.

The Housing service was rudderless, lacking in any direction and with no plans for how to meet the government target for decent homes and with no appreciable policies or plans for meeting a growing tide of homelessness.

The Planning service was on the brink of collapse facing the likely intervention by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Adult and Children's social services were failing their client groups with mounting budget deficits, high staff vacancies, lack of coordination and IT.

Our roads and pavements were a disgrace as a result of an almost complete lack of investment.

Recycling initiatives had been started with a long-term contract with ECT (to 2008), which did not allow for the doorstep collection of cardboard or plastics. The public were barely engaged in the process and the collection rates were poor.

Plans for the **regeneration of Cricklewood** had barely progressed in the 8 years of the Labour/Liberal administration.

Crime, the number one agenda for the public, was barely mentioned in the Council chamber and no-one from the administration was speaking up for the majority who wanted more police on our streets.

Barnet Conservatives regained control of the Council. We had been elected with 5 key priorities...

- ◆ **Supporting the Vulnerable**
- ◆ **Improving Roads and Pavements**
- ◆ **A Cleaner and Greener Barnet**
- ◆ **Tackling Crime**
- ◆ **A First Class Education Service.**

Actions taken and hard decisions were necessary and the Conservative administration took those decisions and Barnet Council is now regarded by those in the local government world to be at the forefront of improving councils and leading proponents of innovative change and sound management.

In 2006 after 4 years of a Conservative administration the picture is very different.

Control of the Council's finances has been regained and we have been able for the 3rd year running to bring in a Council Tax rise at a level at or below the rate of inflation. That, despite appalling financial settlements and increased responsibilities from central government. Investments made in IT in particular have saved over £100 million in the 4 years with much more promised for future years. The number of senior managers has been reduced from 31 in 2002 to 14 in 2006.

The savings have been achieved with minimal impact on front line services.

We consolidated staff onto 3 main sites instead of 23, releasing surplus assets, allowing staff to work under 'one' roof thus increased efficiency.

We have increased the number of payments by which residents can choose to pay their Council Tax by direct debit from 10 to 11 thus allowing them to spread payments over a longer period.

The Housing service has seen the biggest transformation in service delivery of any service in the 42 years that Barnet has been a Borough. The setting up of Barnet Homes to deliver housing management services to our council tenants and

leaseholders has invigorated the service and enabled the Council to embark on a massive improvement programme that should ensure that all our homes meet the decent homes standard by 2010. The actions taken levered in an extra £89 million of capital, which would not have been available without a change of direction.

An out of hours repairs service has been introduced to make it easier for working tenants to get repairs done at a time that suits them.

Homelessness has been kept under control and Barnet was amongst the first authorities in London to stop using bed and breakfast accommodation for families with children. The change from gatekeepers to options advisors has been critical to the success in this area.

The introduction of Choice Based lettings has transformed the letting of homes to people in housing needs, ensuring that people live in homes that are where they want to be, not where a council officer tells them they must live.

Adult social services continue to improve and excellent relationships have developed between the Borough, the health authorities and the voluntary sector.

Indeed, we have set up a range of services and support to eliminate such delays.

We have provided new residential homes for the elderly, two have opened since 2002, and a third will be operational in 2007.

We have set up a partnership with the Red Cross to provide equipment to vulnerable people in their own homes. 15,000 such facilities were provided last year.

Children's' Social Services also continue to improve and the work done by the Borough with our provision for Looked After Children regarded as an example of best practice to be copied by others.

The unique mentoring "Champions" to Looked After Children has seen the GCSE results of children in our care improve.

We embarked on a groundbreaking campaign that dramatically increased the numbers of foster carers in Barnet, cutting the number of children in care.

Our Youth Offending Team is now rated above average having been one of the worst. Youth crime fell between 2005/06 by 14%.

We have refurbished the children's homes to high, modern standards and introduced healthy and organic food options.

The removal of road humps from many of our roads has been broadly welcomed.

There can be no doubt that Barnet is a far cleaner and greener Borough than it was 4 years ago. The work done to improve the environment is recognised by everyone and our record on improving re-cycling has gained us national and international recognition.

A Three Strand approach to planning has been adopted. We are committed Protecting and Enhancing our suburbs whilst the Borough grows in a sustainable way Protecting the green belt has been paramount and no planning permissions have been granted by the Borough in the last 4 years that breach our commitment. We happily re-state that commitment. Our Planning Department, (the 2nd busiest in London), has moved from being one of the worst to being one of the best, as acknowledged by the ODPM. Our Unitary Development Plan, the planning bible for the Borough, is about to be approved.

Relationships with the Police are ever improving. Crime remains a high priority for the public and our campaign for more police on the streets is succeeding (slowly) and our campaign for a more equitable distribution of police resources should also pay dividends. The fact that The Leader of the Council chairs the Community Safety Partnership is evidence of the seriousness that we as Conservatives attach to this agenda.

Barnet's Conservative administration has taken a lead in combating crime. We have rolled out CCTV, established Alcohol Free Zones and Dispersal Zones. We are therefore determined to ensure the Borough receives its fair allocation of Police Officers to deal with anti-social behaviour and drive the criminal element from our streets.

Barnet's Education service is once again highly regarded. Only one school is now in special measures. Plans have been unveiled for the largest re-building programme for primary schools in the history of the Borough. Almost all of our community primary schools will be re-built and made fit for the coming century. Many of our secondary schools have been re-built or have major building works programmed. The London Academy is about to move in to a brand new Norman

Foster designed building. Approval in principle has been given for a new Reform Jewish secondary school in East Barnet and the former Christ Church School will be re-opened as another new City Academy. Ashmole School has been re-built and is flourishing in its new setting. East Barnet School is about to be re-built on one site. Akiva, a new Jewish primary school is the latest to become voluntary aided. Long term we look forward to more schools of different faiths become voluntary aided schools.

21st Century Libraries

We have re-built Hendon library and are re-providing a new library in South Friern.

Regeneration

Plans for the re-building of our 4 largest council estates where people resent moving to, are well under way. Work on Grahame Park and Stonegrove/Spur Road is underway or about to start. The Development agreement for West Hendon is due to be signed soon and work should commence there very soon. Dollis Valley is not that far behind and there is light at the end of the tunnel for residents on all those estates that they will be able to move to new homes.

Developments elsewhere in the Borough will also provide additional affordable housing that will alleviate the misery of sub-standard and temporary accommodation for many people.

Progress on the Cricklewood/Brent X development has continued and there is now the feel of an 'end play' to our discussions with the developers. They are keen to progress and a timetable leading to a planning decision in 2006/7 has been agreed.

Barnet is a fast changing Borough and good relationships between the various communities in Barnet is paramount to our success. Recognition of the work done in this field was given by the government with a Beacon Council award for Community Cohesion.

Much effort has been made to enhance our relationships with other partners in health, the business community, the voluntary sector, Barnet College, Middlesex University and others. The success of our Local Strategic Partnership owes much to those efforts.

We have opened up the Council from the disconnected, bureaucratic mess we inherited. We have made our financial monitoring reports public for the first time. We

introduced firstcontact@barnet to allow residents to get in touch at one click of a mouse.

On the London wide and national stages, a positive effort has been made to enhance our status as a Borough and to get recognition that we are more than just a leafy suburb on the corner of London.

CONSERVATIVES



Change
to Win

Win for
Britain

A re-elected Conservative administration in Barnet will build on the successes of the last 4 years.

We will be committed to

- ◆ A Cleaner, Greener and Safer Borough.
- ◆ First Class Education Services
- ◆ Looking After the Vulnerable
- ◆ A Stronger and Healthier Barnet
- ◆ Support for Successful Suburbs

A Cleaner Greener and Safer Borough.

- ◆ We will continue with ground-breaking initiatives in the field of re-cycling. We will also aim to reduce overall waste and will set further stretched targets for the 32% of waste recycled by Barnet residents in 2006/7 rising to 40% by 2011
- ◆ We will work with flat owners to make arrangements for the collections of recyclable materials.
- ◆ We will make arrangements for the doorstep collection of cardboard and plastics.
- ◆ We will continue to maintain our roads, and will now turn our attention to improving our pavements
- ◆ We will continue to review the use road humps and traffic calming measures.
- ◆ We will introduce a 'hot line' to report any broken pavements or potholes that may appear.
- ◆ We will stage a borough wide review of those roads where pavement parking has become the custom and practice to legitimise the position in those roads.
- ◆ We will continue to invest in our Premier parks and leisure facilities.
- ◆ We will instigate a reward scheme to help catch and prosecute vandals.
- ◆ Having greatly improved the situation with graffiti, we will focus even more attention on tackling the problems of litter.

First Class Education Services

- ◆ We will build on the success of our Education service and will deliver on our plans for the future of our school estate, notably the Primary School Capital Programme, which will give children of this Borough the facilities they deserve. We will work with community schools, schools of all denominations and all other schools in the Borough to improve the services they offer the community and the results achieved by their pupils.
- ◆ We will defend our grammar schools, expect excellence from all our schools and where possible will ensure local people have priority in admissions to our schools.
- ◆ We will build on the work done to date to maximise the use of school buildings outside of school core hours. We will work towards an after school club in every school.
- ◆ We will ensure all schools have Safer Route to Schools within the next three years.
- ◆ We will help the local voluntary and community provision of youth services by creating council information and working with voluntary sector, police, religious providers and others to ensure that their excellent work is known and accessible to most young people through web, leaflets etc.
- ◆ We will ensure the voice of Young People is heard through school councils, an annual forum at the Town Hall and through our Youth Board.
- ◆ We will build on the success of our Libraries and ensure that they meet the needs of the 21st century.
- ◆ We will ensure that healthy school meals are served.
- ◆ We will roll out a programme for the introduction of children's centres.

Looking After the Vulnerable

- ◆ We will give vulnerable adults in Barnet's care more choice and control over the services offered to them.
- ◆ We will increase the use of technology to enable more vulnerable people to stay in their homes longer, particularly the installation of the "Telecare" project that enables individuals to summon help if required.
- ◆ We will build even better relationships with our partners to ensure the seamless delivery of services to the people of Barnet.
- ◆ We will build on the success of Barnet Homes and Barnet Homeseekers to improve the quality of housing for all.
- ◆ We will continue to give priority in allocating available housing to Barnet residents, and will encourage and incentivise those willing to trade down to do so, and will give them priority in the allocation of newly built homes.
- ◆ We will build on the plans for regeneration of our 4 major estates to turn the plans in to reality to improve the quality of life in those areas. We will ensure highest quality of design and building. We will work with the police to ensure that wherever possible crime is reduced and designed out of our estates and from new developments
- ◆ We will ensure that Barnet Homes continues to thrive and that all our council owned homes (outside of the regeneration estates) meet the decent homes standard by 2010.
- ◆ We will work to ensure that all our young families have access to affordable childcare and good schools.
- ◆ We will replace the street lighting in our streets.

A Stronger and Healthier Barnet

- ◆ We will build on the work done to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in the Borough, using all the tools available to us including Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).
- ◆ We will continue to campaign for more police resources for Barnet.
- ◆ We will place community safety at the top of our agenda when making decisions about planning, redevelopment.
- ◆ We will continue to roll out our programme of CCTV to improve public confidence and to fight crime
- ◆ We will support the further roll out of 'Alcohol Free zones' as and when the police feel able to enforce such measures.
- ◆ We will use our powers to help control crime and disorder in our town centres.
- ◆ We will work closely with the PCT and other health providers to improve the health and health care of Barnet residents.
- ◆ We will continue to support the voluntary sector in Barnet who have done so much to improve the quality of life for so many of our citizens.
- ◆ We will support the new Volunteer Service for those who have time to spare.
- ◆ We will continue to value the contribution made to our community by the many different ethnic and religious groups and will work with them to ensure that Barnet remains the harmonious and tolerant borough that it is.

Support for Successful Suburbs

- ◆ We will protect our Green Belt and Metropolitan Open Space from the plans that the Government has to develop every piece of land.
- ◆ We will build on the success of our planning service to further develop detailed planning guidance aimed at securing the success of our 3 strand policies, key to which is the protection and enhancement of our suburbs.
- ◆ We will work with all the infrastructure providers to ensure the long-term success of developments.
- ◆ We will do everything in our power to prevent the further destruction of family housing to make way for flatted accommodation. We will insist on the highest standards of design and build in new developments.
- ◆ We agree with Barnet residents that Barnet needs more houses than flats.
- ◆ We will use our powers to support small shops and will work with local residents to improve the attractiveness of our town centres.
- ◆ We will press the case for recognition of the importance of successful suburbs to the well being of London.

In Addition

- ◆ Barnet Conservatives will support Barnet FC to help them to succeed and to play a full part in our community.
- ◆ Barnet Conservatives will continue to strive for excellence in the provision of all services. We will continue to improve the efficiency of the Council to reduce costs for our chargepayers
- ◆ We will keep increases in Council Tax to the lowest levels possible without jeopardising the provision of front line services.
- ◆ Barnet Conservatives will continue to strive to impress on our residents the need for 'civic pride' and will respect and uphold the traditions of the Council and the Mayoralty.
- ◆ We will campaign to get the benefits from the Olympics for the people of Barnet and will encourage young people with Olympic aspirations to fulfil their potential.
- ◆ We will promote active participation in sport.
- ◆ We will continue to campaign for the improvement of the North Circular Road, The Northern Line and for safer stations on Network Rail.
- ◆ Barnet Council will work with any other parties or partners that share our commitment to improving the lives of Barnet residents.