

NEXT STEPS FOR BROMSGROVE DISTRICT

**The Conservative Manifesto for
the Bromsgrove District Council
elections on 7 May 2015**



Conservatives

**“And miles around they’ll say that I
Am quite myself again.”**

– A.E. Housman

CONTENTS

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP LEADER	2
KEEPING COUNCIL TAX LOW FOR RESIDENTS	3
PROTECTING THE COUNCIL'S FRONTLINE SERVICES	4
A CLEAN AND SAFE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT	5
PROVIDING THINGS TO SEE AND DO	5
BUILDING NEW HOUSES FOR OUR RESIDENTS IN THE DISTRICT	6
DELIVERING THE NEW HOMES BONUS	6
BACKING LOCAL BUSINESSES	7
A REVITALISED TOWN CENTRE FOR BROMSGROVE	8
REVIEWING CAR PARKING TO BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY	9

For more information about the policies contained in this manifesto, please contact us:

**Bromsgrove Conservatives, 37 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, B61 7DN
01527 835635
office@bromsgroveconservatives.org.uk
www.bromsgroveconservatives.org.uk**

Promoted by Ellis Wiggins, on behalf of Bromsgrove Conservatives, both of 37 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, B61 7DN.

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP LEADER

Over the last four years, Bromsgrove District Council has faced a difficult challenge: delivering savings without cutting back on our services.

But by demonstrating prudence in our spending, this Conservative Council has achieved these savings whilst protecting frontline services.

We have also been able to give back to the hardworking residents of Bromsgrove - a £2million redevelopment of the High Street, free evening parking, and Council Tax frozen for two of the last four years.

We now want to build on what we have started. This manifesto is an ambitious plan for the next steps in renewing Bromsgrove District.

Margaret Sherrey.



MARGARET SHERREY
LEADER, BROMSGROVE DISTRICT CONSERVATIVE GROUP

KEEPING COUNCIL TAX LOW FOR RESIDENTS

The Conservatives in Bromsgrove believe it is a fundamental duty of the Council to keep taxes as low as possible, without threatening the services we provide.

Since we were re-elected as the controlling Group on the Council in 2011, we have frozen the District Council's share of Council Tax for two out of four years.

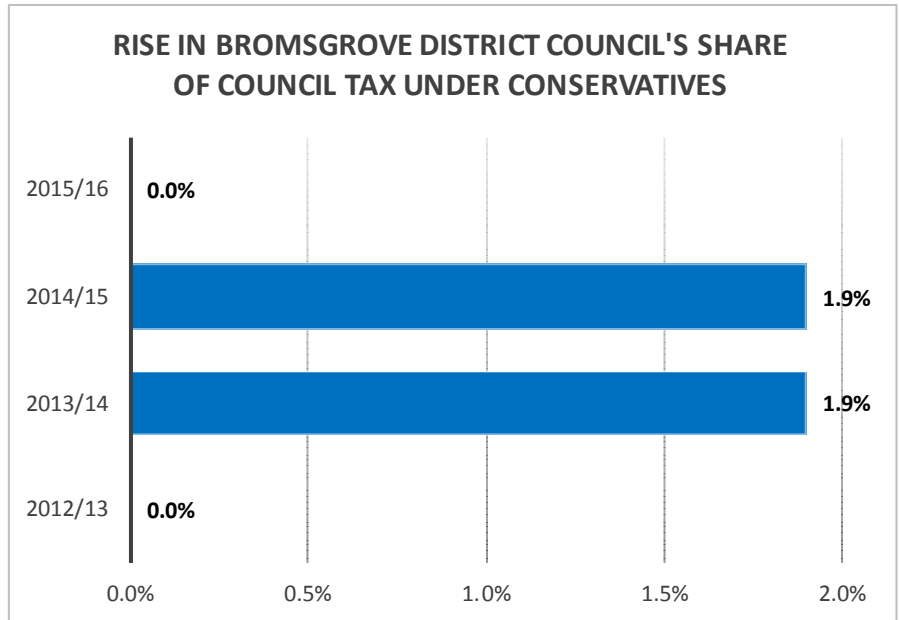
This has been possible because of a grant provided by the Conservative-led Government to encourage local authorities to freeze Council Tax.

We made sure that we were able to fully fund a freeze in Council Tax before seeking to announce it.

The other parties chose to press for a freeze without any plan of how the shortfall would be met.

We believe it is right to give back to the residents who continue to fight the effects of Labour's great recession. It would be irresponsible for a Council to raise Council Tax simply to line its coffers.

That is why, in the past we have only raised Council Tax to protect frontline services - the most vital duty we perform for Bromsgrove's public.



OUR PLEDGES:

- Whilst Central Government continues to provide a grant for freezing Council Tax, we will commit to reviewing whether Bromsgrove can provide a Council Tax freeze year-on-year.
- We will keep Council Tax as low as possible, and ensure that the money raised is spent wisely on frontline services.

CONSERVATIVES VS THE OTHER PARTIES

- **Labour** committed themselves to freezing Council Tax before knowing what the Council's financial situation would be like for 2015/16.
- **The Conservatives** did not believe this would be wise, and we only announced a freeze when we knew we could pay for it.
- **The Liberal Democrats** said that "an increase of 1.9 per cent... would not be a burden on local residents" (*Bromsgrove Standard*, 20/02/15).
- **The Conservatives** believe that it is right that our residents get something back from their Council.



THE GATEWAY TO BROMSGROVE

PROTECTING THE COUNCIL'S FRONTLINE SERVICES

JUST SOME OF THE SERVICES THE COUNCIL PROVIDES:

- Facilitating new homes, and dealing with planning applications.
- Supporting local businesses and managing licences.
- Collecting waste and keeping the streets clean.
- Regulating parking across the District.
- Maintaining leisure centres and recreation areas.
- Overseeing larger developments, such as the regeneration of Bromsgrove High Street.

Because of the financial mismanagement by the last Labour Government, the Coalition has had to reduce the funding to local authorities.

Despite this, we have managed to not only protect frontline services, but also to increase spending on them.

We recognise that the provision of frontline services to the public is an essential duty for the District Council. That is why we have consistently refused to force frontline services to bear the brunt of savings that this Council has had to make.

We aim to continue with this policy.

OUR PLEDGES:

- We will continue to guard frontline services in Bromsgrove District.
- Frontline services will remain the Council's top priority in our spending commitments.

A CLEAN AND SAFE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Keeping Bromsgrove clean is one of the most basic, and yet central, priorities of the Conservatives for the District.

Our residents deserve to have a healthy and tidy environment in which to live and work.

Over the past four years, we have introduced rapid-response cleaning teams to address concerns regarding rubbish in their local area.

OUR PLEDGES:

- We will continue to build on the success of recycling and garden waste collection across Bromsgrove District.
- We will prioritise providing a safe and healthy environment for all of our residents.

PROVIDING THINGS TO SEE AND DO

The Conservatives in Bromsgrove recognise the importance of parks, play areas and open spaces for local residents.

We have worked diligently to ensure that leisure areas across the District are maintained to the highest standard, and have promoted schemes such as the arboretum in Sanders Park.

Leisure centres are also a vital part of our community. The Dolphin Centre in Bromsgrove affects the health and wellbeing of the *whole* District, and

increases the footfall in the Town Centre.

OUR PLEDGES:

- We will continue with the investment of £11.5million in a leisure centre to replace the Dolphin Centre, which will include a main pool and a fitness suite.
- We will work with local schools in the District to provide sports hall facilities in Bromsgrove, saving the taxpayer around £1.5million.

INDEPENDENTS WOULD SUSPEND DOLPHIN CENTRE REPLACEMENT

- The Independent Alliance announced in its alternative budget for 2015/16 that it would suspend the replacement of the Dolphin Centre, if the Group was elected to control the Council.
- The Conservatives believe that this is completely irresponsible, and shows that the Independents are unable to see issues across the District as a whole.
- A vote for the Independents is a vote against the Dolphin Centre.

BUILDING NEW HOMES FOR OUR RESIDENTS IN THE DISTRICT

Over the last four years, the Conservatives have continued to secure more homes for Bromsgrove residents, whilst respecting the needs of local communities.

Every person in the District should be helped to get on to, and to climb up, the property ladder.

OUR PLEDGES:

- We are committed to enabling more homes for residents in Bromsgrove District over the next four years.
- We will continue to work in consultation with local communities to ensure that housing developments reflect local needs, and are sympathetic to the local environment.

DELIVERING THE NEW HOMES BONUS

WHAT IS THE NEW HOMES BONUS?

- A grant paid by central government to local councils for increasing the number of homes and their use.
- Paid each year for six years, based on the amount of extra Council Tax raised for new-build homes.
- Local councils can decide on how to spend the money, in consultation with communities.
- The Labour Party under Ed Miliband have committed to abolishing the New Homes Bonus if elected to Government.

Up until this year, all income received from the New Homes Bonus grant has been used within the General Funds of the Council to offset the pressures facing the Council in the medium term.

However, following consultation with local residents as part of the New Homes Bonus Working Group, the Conservative leadership agreed to committing a percentage of the grant to a scheme for local communities.

On top of this, these communities continue to benefit from spending

projects in their areas, and they can continue to make spending application bids to the District Council.

OUR PLEDGES:

- We are committed to undertaking a review every 12 months of the percentage of the grant allocated to the scheme.
- We will continue to take on board the views of local communities on how the money allocated to the scheme should be spent.

BACKING LOCAL BUSINESSES

Since 2010, there have been 1,880 business start-ups in Bromsgrove District.

Thanks to Conservative measures such as extending small business rate relief and investing in transport infrastructure, businesses are thriving in our area.

Local small and medium sized businesses are the lifeblood of Bromsgrove's economy.

These businesses are not just bringing money and commerce to Bromsgrove District, they are giving residents the security of a stable job. Thanks to businesses flourishing in our area, unemployment in the District has fallen to just 1.1 percent.

That is why the Conservatives in Bromsgrove believe in supporting local businesses. Strong businesses mean a strong local economy.



LOCAL COUNCILLORS AND ACTIVISTS AT A STREET SURGERY WITH SAJID JAVID ON BROMSGROVE'S BUSY HIGH STREET

OUR PLEDGES:

- We will commit additional funding to help start-up businesses in the District, to ensure a healthy local economy.
- We will continue to support businesses by promoting Bromsgrove District to attract outside investment.

A BOOMING LOCAL ECONOMY

- Unemployment has more than halved in Bromsgrove District since 2010, and youth unemployment has fallen by more than two-thirds.
- More than 3,400 apprenticeships have been taken up in the District since May 2010.
- Over £400million has been invested by the Government since July 2014 in skills and infrastructure in Worcestershire.



THE NEWLY REFURBISHED HIGH STREET

A REVITALISED TOWN CENTRE FOR BROMSGROVE

JUST SOME OF THE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HIGH STREET:

- Complete repaving of the High Street, with extra lighting, and new street furniture.
- Broken drains have been replaced and new ones installed to tackle flooding along the street.
- Major refurbishment of a number of the shops, including conversion for residential accommodation on the top floors.

Over the last four years, we have invested around £2million in the redevelopment of Bromsgrove's Town Centre.

The repaving of the High Street is now complete, and the market is flourishing in its new home there. On top of this, new businesses are opening all the time.

But there is still more work to do.

We need to continue to bring businesses back to the High Street, and carry on the development of some

buildings to include more residential accommodation to help young people on to the property ladder.

OUR PLEDGES:

- We will continue to operate alongside local businesses and developers to fill the remaining empty shops in the Town Centre.
- We will continue to listen to businesses and local residents on ways to make our Town Centre even better.

REVIEWING CAR PARKING TO BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The Conservatives recognise the importance of affordable parking to the local economy and local residents.

In the Council’s original Area Action Plan for the Town Centre, we set out our plans to introduce free parking in the evenings in Bromsgrove, once specific stages of the redevelopment of the Town Centre had been completed.

This measure was introduced in February of this year by the Conservative-led Council in Bromsgrove, in order to boost the evening economy for local businesses. Free evening parking will run for a trial period of 12 months.



OUR PLEDGES:

- The Conservatives in Bromsgrove are committed to undertaking a review of free evening parking at the end of the trial period, with a view to implementing the scheme on a more permanent basis.
- We will also review car parking charges more generally following the Town Centre developments to help improve local trade in the town.

LOCAL AUTHORITY	UP TO 30 MINS	UP TO 1HR	UP TO 2HRS	ALL DAY	PARTY IN CONTROL
Bromsgrove District Council	£0.40	£1.00	£2.00	£5.00	Conservative
Birmingham City	N/A	£1.30	£2.60	£11.00	Labour
Wyre Forest District Council	£0.70	£1.20	£1.50	£4.80	No overall control

*Maximum charges for Council car parks.

THE CONSERVATIVES: WORKING HARD FOR EVERY PART OF BROMSGROVE DISTRICT



**Bromsgrove
Conservatives**

*Working for the community,
all year round*

Promoted by Ellis Wiggins, on behalf of Bromsgrove Conservatives, both of 37 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, B61 7DN.