

PUTTING SOMERSET FIRST

The Conservative Manifesto for Somerset



Somerset County Council Elections, 2nd May 2013



 **Vote Conservative**

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A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM JOHN OSMAN

Dear Resident

In 2009 the people of Somerset voted overwhelmingly for change. They voted for the people and the party they could trust to move Somerset forward and take the difficult decisions that needed to be taken.

On May 2nd this year the people of Somerset will be able to choose again. This Manifesto outlines the positive steps we Conservatives have taken over the last 4 years and what we will achieve in the next four years.

Over the last four years local Conservatives have:

- Frozen the County Council's part of the Council Tax
- Reduced the Council's £350 million debt
- Raised standards of education and GCSE results
- Built new schools and classrooms
- Filled a record number of potholes
- Built and resurfaced a record number of roads
- Protected the most vulnerable people in our community

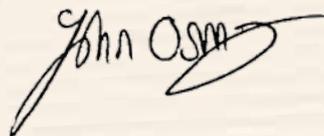
We are proud of what the Council and its staff have achieved in difficult financial times which included:

- The reduction of our income by £94 million from central government
- Having to pay £100,000 a day to finance the Lib Dem debt
- Poor Lib Dem decisions losing money in Icelandic investments and poor contractual management

Over the next four years we will continue to provide outstanding services, protect the vulnerable, create new prosperity, new jobs, new partnerships and improve the lives of all Somerset residents.

When you go to the polling station, please remember two things. Firstly the financial problems the Labour Government and Lib Dem Administration at County Hall inflicted on Somerset. Secondly, it is only the Conservatives that are addressing Somerset's problems and have a clear and credible plan to take Somerset forward.

I hope that on Thursday 2nd May I can count on your support for the next four years.



CLLR JOHN OSMAN
LEADER SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL

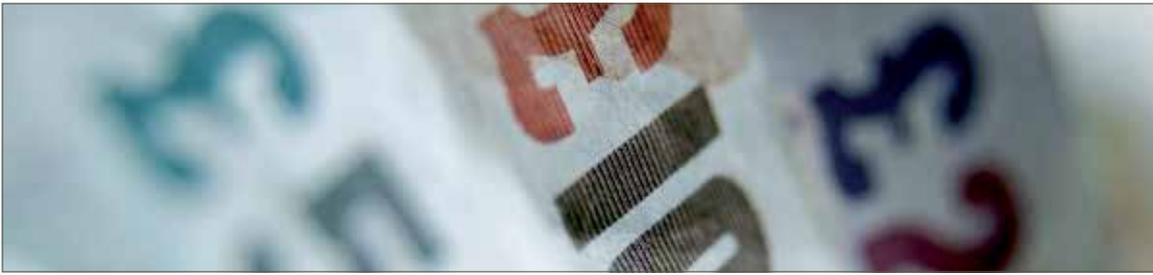


Cllr John Osman, Leader Somerset County Council

THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

HOW WE WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD A BETTER SOMERSET OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS

- 1** By freezing our part of the Council Tax we have saved local people £400 over the last four years. We will continue to freeze council tax.
- 2** Continuing to cut waste at County Hall and freeing up a further £10 million for front line services.
- 3** Investing £120 million in our schools, roads and frontline services.
- 4** Creating 15,000 new jobs and over 4,000 new apprenticeships.
- 5** Continuing to work with local people to provide library, youth and countryside services that meet the needs of local communities.
- 6** Protecting all that is special about rural Somerset and making Somerset a tourism destination of choice.
- 7** Continuing to protect the needs of vulnerable young and elderly people in our County.
- 8** Helping schools to deliver even better Key Stage, GCSE and A Level results for our young people.
- 9** Continuing to encourage our residents to recycle all forms of waste.
- 10** Working with local and national partners to reduce flooding in the County.



FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS

- **We said we would freeze the Council Tax for two years**

We have actually frozen for the last four years and now have the second lowest in the Country

- **We said we would reduce borrowing**

We have stopped borrowing completely and reduced debt

- **We said we would reduce the cost of running the Council**

We have reduced costs by over £90m during the last four years

We have recovered most of the unwise £25m Lib Dem investment in Icelandic Banks and sold surplus property to fund a modernisation programme in schools, highways and office accommodation.

OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, WE WILL

- **Continue to freeze the County Council's portion of the Council Tax**
- **Continue to reduce the Council's borrowing and bureaucracy**
- **Pay less interest to the banks and more on services, especially children and adults in our care**
- **Rapidly work towards a more "joined up" local government, working with district and town council partners to provide more efficient services across Somerset**

DON'T GO BACK TO THE LIB DEMS WHO

- **Left debt totaling over £350 million, costing £100,000 a day**
- **Doubled council tax from 1997 to 2009**
- **Lost £25 million in unwise investments**



ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH

OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS, WE SAID

- **We would work with the NHS and care providers to improve conditions for adults in social care**

Working with the NHS we have developed successful Independent Living Teams

- **We would increase the choice for adults in our care**

The number of people using Personal Budgets has doubled in the last four years

- **We would support carers financially and socially**

We now have Carer Champions in almost all of our GP Practices

- **We would support improved community transport schemes**

We have financially supported Community Transport Schemes across the County

OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, WE WILL

- **Spend more money and improve outcomes for adults in social care**
- **Ensure that looking after the vulnerable will remain a top priority**
- **Support an ever increasing number of elderly residents to live as independently as possible**
- **Signpost Carers and Families to help them get the help and information they need**
- **Build strong partnerships with the NHS to improve the health of all Somerset residents**

DON'T GO BACK TO THE LIB DEMS WHO

- **Scrapped the Meals on Wheels service**
- **Slashed grants made available to voluntary organisations**
- **Closed care homes**



CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS, WE HAVE

- **Improved numeracy and literacy in our schools**

Keystage 1 and 2 standards have risen to above the national average with Keystage 2 results increasing by 5.9% since 2010

- **Increased the number of pupils obtaining 5 A* to C grades at GCSEs**

Pupils obtaining 5 A to C Grades have increased by 12%*

- **Freed up teachers to maintain appropriate discipline in the classroom and improve standards**

We have cut unnecessary County Council reporting requirements for teachers, allowing them to spend more time teaching

- **Replaced temporary classrooms**

We have built new schools and classrooms in Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea, Oake, Yeovil and will soon be starting on a new school near Castle Cary

OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, WE WILL

- **Spend more money and improve outcomes for our vulnerable children**

- **Again increase the number of pupils obtaining 5 A* to C Grades at GCSE**

- **Build more new schools and replace more temporary classrooms**

- **Work with Schools, so they are the ones making decisions about their future, not County Hall**

DON'T GO BACK TO THE LIB DEMS WHO

- **Imposed record levels of local bureaucracy on our schools**

- **Failed the children of Somerset by not allowing the teachers to teach**

- **Dictated to schools, rather than sought their views, after all the schools are the experts not the Lib Dems**

- **Presided over some of the worst GCSE results in the entire country**



HIGHWAYS

OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS, WE HAVE

- **Fixed a record 83,000 potholes**

We repaired over 30,000 more potholes in the last four years than the Lib Dems managed before in 2005 - 09

- **Resurfaced a record number of roads**

In 2012 alone we have resurfaced enough roads to cover both sides of the M5 from Taunton to Bristol and back again

- **Reduced the number of ugly and unnecessary road signs**

Thousands of signs have been removed that cluttered up our roads

- **Worked with parish councils on new road schemes**

More than 50 Road Safety schemes, specifically requested by local communities, have been implemented

OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, WE WILL

- **Invest at least £20 million a year in improving our roads and pavements**
- **Fix potholes as they are reported with a target of 28 days maximum**
- **Invest significantly in drainage and flood prevention support**
- **Continue to work with local councils to tackle winter weather**
- **Work with our contractors to implement more flexible and responsive ways of working, to improve repairs and gully emptying**

DON'T GO BACK TO THE LIB DEMS WHO

- **Failed to deal with the County's backlog of highway repairs, meaning hundreds of road repairs were ignored**
- **Were deemed to have the worst quality pavements in the South West**
- **Cut the drainage budget which was vital to prevent flooding**



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

OVER THE LAST FOUR YEARS, WE HAVE

- **Promoted Somerset as a “move to” location for business**

We have enabled over 70 businesses to relocate to Somerset and developed new enterprise hubs for new businesses

- **Promoted Somerset as a destination of choice for tourism**

We have enhanced museums and tourist facilities in Somerset, attracting tourists from across the UK, Europe and China

- **Supported the building of Hinkley C and negotiated more than £90 million of benefits for the Somerset Community**

We have negotiated a deal to benefit the villages, towns and Somerset as a whole

- **Created and enabled more jobs and apprenticeship opportunities**

Over 1,400 apprenticeships have been taken up in the last four years

- **Taken the A303 upgrade scheme forward**

We have met with ministers, carried out feasibility studies, and assembled the business case

OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, WE WILL

- **Deliver superfast broadband to at least 90% of Somerset’s residents**

- **Create and enable 15,000 new jobs and over 4,000 apprenticeships**

- **Work to obtain funding to dual the A303**

- **Maximise the benefit of Hinkley Point to Somerset, by bringing further inward investment and prosperity to the County**

- **Work with business to deliver prosperity for Somerset**

DON'T GO BACK TO THE LIB DEMS WHO

- **Are anti-nuclear and have opposed Hinkley Point in the past. They could jeopardise the 8,000 jobs and £90 million it brings to Somerset**

- **Did not promote the County effectively and failed to encourage investment and jobs in the County**



LOCALISM

OVER THE LAST YEAR, WE HAVE

Created a new function in the County Council, called Customers & Communities, with its own Cabinet Member and Director.

This emphasises the importance we Conservatives attach to listening to local communities and responding to their needs. Various events have been held during the year. More than 200 parish, town & district council members have met County Council officers and members at a series of Local Choices events, one being held in each District.

Customers & Communities has been liaising closely with other groups, including voluntary organisations, to establish local hubs in several towns whereby a number of different organisations are housed under one roof, making it easier and quicker for Somerset residents to obtain better information.

OVER THE NEXT FOUR YEARS, WE WILL

■ Listen to your needs and ideas

We will consult you on a wide range of topics using our website, 'Your Somerset', YouTube and social media

■ Work together

Many Voluntary Groups are already working together in Somerset. We will encourage further co-operation and will strengthen links between the County Council, the District Councils and the Town and Parish Councils

■ Encourage Volunteers

We welcome the drive, energy and initiative of Somerset's volunteers and we will help increase their numbers to benefit all of Somerset

■ Provide Community Funding

We introduced local funding packages totalling more than £1 million in the last year. They have benefitted many organisations, large and small. If re-elected, we will introduce similar schemes, to benefit local communities

DELIVERING OUR PLEDGES TO YOU



IN 2009, AFTER 16 YEARS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRAT CONTROL, LOCAL CONSERVATIVES OFFERED A DIFFERENT, POSITIVE VISION FOR SOMERSET.

WE PROMISED

WE'VE DELIVERED

To FREEZE the County Council's portion of the Council Tax

The County Council has not increased its portion of the Council Tax at all.

Recover the £25 million lost by the Lib Dems in Icelandic Banks

To date we have recovered £20 million.

Reduce the number of office buildings used by Somerset County Council

Plans are progressing to reduce from 33 to 5 offices. This will save £1 million every year.

Reduce borrowing and not to borrow more

We have reduced the Council's debt by £60 million and not borrowed anymore.

Bring Super fast broadband to Somerset

We have secured £30 million investment and BT have been contracted to start the upgrading.

Create apprenticeships for our young people

In 2011 and 2012 over 1,400 new apprenticeships were created.

Support new businesses

We have supported 70 new businesses coming to Somerset which has created 700 new jobs.

£592,000 has also been invested into the Market Enterprise Centre in Wheddon Cross and a new scheme will be starting soon in Burnham-on-Sea.

Get the best deal from Hinkley Point

We have negotiated a £94 million package of benefits for Somerset.

Raise standards and attainment in schools

We have freed schools and teachers to teach rather than an engage in bureaucracy. GCSE and other examination grades have increased by over 3% year on year since 2009.

Improve school conditions

We have spent over £30 million improving school buildings and are building new schools in Bridgwater, Burnham-on-Sea, Oake and Yeovil.

WE PROMISED

WE'VE DELIVERED

New children's facilities	We have opened new children's centres to provide services to children and their parents.
Invest in children's social care	We have raised the budget by 10% and have cared for more children than in any other time in Somerset's history.
Increase foster carers' allowance	We have increased the allowance paid to foster carers.
Support adults in care	We have put our vulnerable and elderly residents needs first and have supported residents financially and with new facilities.
Build new roads	We have delivered the Third Way in Taunton to ease traffic congestion at a cost of £7.5 million.
Fix the potholes	We have fixed 83,000 potholes over the last 4 years and resurfaced in the last year an area of road which would cover both carriageways of the M5 motorway from Taunton to Bristol and back again.
Reduce unnecessary road signs	We have removed 1000s of road signs that were cluttering our countryside.
Ease congestion	We have introduced civil parking enforcement officers to patrol the roads and ensure that illegal parking is eliminated.
Keep our roads clear during Winter	We have developed a thorough system of tackling adverse winter weather which involves working with parishes and town councils to provide grit bins and resident self help schemes. We have gritted 1000s of miles of road to keep Somerset moving.
Support our Armed Services	We are proud to have led in the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant which will encourage greater understanding between the military and the community.
Protect Rural Life	We have fought to save local pubs, post offices, village halls and schools.
Reduce the effect of flooding	We have spent an extra £200,000 and obtained £160,000 of European funding to help residents and businesses be more prepared for flooding events and to reduce the risk of future flooding.

In the last 4 years Conservatives have taken Somerset forward.

But there is still more to do.

Vote Conservative on Thursday 2nd May 2013.

