

## Southampton Conservatives

# Manifesto 2012

# Our Contract With Southampton



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## Local Conservatives - Strong Leadership and Vision for Southampton

### 1. Foreword:

From Councillor Royston Smith, Leader of Southampton City Council



The local elections in May 2012 will be crucial for Southampton, and residents will have a clear choice about what sort of council they want and what sort of political leadership they want for the city.

**Despite the enormous challenge of having to find £75m of savings between 2010 and 2014, Southampton Conservatives are committed to doing everything possible to protect front line services, to keep costs down for local residents and to continue to move the city forward and bring in business and jobs.**

We are ensuring that important front line services are maintained, **keeping OPEN all our Sure Start centres, libraries and leisure centres** and **protecting the weekly bin collections** and budgets for looking after vulnerable residents and repairing the roads and pavements.

**We will freeze Council Tax for a second year running** and avoid hiking up charges for council services like parking charges and adult social care charges.

We are continuing to invest in the city's public realm and infrastructure and despite the gloomy financial outlook nationally **we are attracting businesses and jobs to the city.**

We are cutting out waste in the council and reducing back office costs. We have cut the numbers of directors at the council in half and have reduced the numbers of senior managers by a quarter. At the same time we are protecting jobs at the front line so they can deliver important services to the public.

The Conservatives have been in office in Southampton since 2008 (with a period of minority administration in 2007) and we have stuck to **ALL** the promises we made to Southampton residents. We have done what we said we would do, we have been honest with residents and we have dealt with the significant challenges the city faces in a responsible and robust way. We have not made promises we could not keep and we do not intend to do so now. However with key elections in May it is important that we set out our new commitments to the city as we ask residents to vote for us again, to run the city until the next set of local elections in 2014. This document is a manifesto for 2012 – 2014 and it is our contract with Southampton.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Royston Smith', written in a cursive style.

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### 2. A Fairer Deal for Southampton:

- 🌳 We will keep Council Tax down. **We froze Council Tax in 2011 and will freeze it again in 2012.**
- 🌳 **We will keep the 10% pensioner Council Tax discount**, as pensioners have suffered disproportionately as a result of the big Council Tax increases during the Labour years.
- 🌳 We will continue to **deliver more efficient ways of working at the City Council** and protect front line services to local residents. We will build on some already successful partnership working that we have with other councils like Hampshire County Council, the Isle of Wight, Fareham and Eastleigh and where appropriate develop more and deeper joint service arrangements.
- 🌳 We continue to drive out savings through **more effective and joined up purchasing and procurement**. We have saved millions of pounds already on larger contracts and will also focus on achieving savings from the £80m of annual council spend on contracts worth less than £100,000.
- 🌳 We will dispose of council land assets that are not strategically important or generating a good rent for the council and the taxpayer.
- 🌳 We will make sure that the council is open and transparent about how it spends public money and we have already published details of all council expenditure over £500 on the City Council's website.

***Labour in Southampton are committed to big Council Tax rises for the city and have pledged an extra hike in Council Tax for 8,000 city pensioners. When Labour ran the city last they doubled Council Tax and in their last year of office increased it by 19.5%!***

### 3. Economic Growth and Jobs for Southampton:

- 🌳 We have published a [Masterplan for the city centre](#), providing a vision for future developments over the next 25 years, which would see **£3b of inward investment and 24,000 new jobs**. Key developments will progress in the next few years and we will work hard and be proactive to keep these on track.
- 🌳 We are committed to the **completion of the Cultural Quarter in Northern Above Bar, bringing 2,000 new jobs**. The planned Southampton New Arts Complex has attracted over £7m in Arts Council funding, which we will not allow to be put at risk.
- 🌳 We will take forward plans to redevelop the old Town Depot site in Endle Street (near Ocean Village) and to market the site for redevelopment for mixed and leisure use – including a **'Snow Dome' ski centre** which will rival that in Milton Keynes.
- 🌳 We will open the new **Sea City Museum** on 10<sup>th</sup> April, utilising the £5M we secured from the Heritage Lottery and external fundraising, creating 40 new jobs and providing a permanent exhibition for the Titanic in time for the centenary commemorations.
- 🌳 We will work to secure the **completion of Ocean Village**, with the Allied residential scheme (which has recently gained a planning approval) and the new 70 bed spa hotel including a Michelin star restaurant.
- 🌳 We will take forward the planned **redevelopment of the waterfront at Royal Pier and Mayflower Park** and create more green space and open up the waterfront for residents and visitors.
- 🌳 We will encourage businesses to invest in our city as this will benefit the community in the long run, creating jobs and wealth for local people. We will have a proactive,

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open door approach. In the pipeline we have **Lloyd's Register** (bringing 400 new jobs), **new manufacturing businesses for Woolston**, the new **Morrisons in East Street**, which will see the old East Street Centre pulled down and **Apprentice Training Ltd** moving to the old Eastpoint site, to provide training for the construction industry.

- 🌳 **We will stand up for the Port of Southampton and the local cruise industry**, which sustains thousands of local jobs and brings 350 cruise ships to the city every year. We will oppose any unfair treatment of the port versus its rivals like Liverpool.
- 🌳 We will progress plans to introduce a **free city centre WiFi network** in Southampton.
- 🌳 Just as in 2011 there will be **no increase in parking charges for 2012**, to support residents and businesses.
- 🌳 We will **introduce free parking for the first 10 minutes** for on street parking in the city centre to help local traders and support jobs (for instance in Bedford Place and East Street) and we will **extend FREE on street parking on Sundays to 1pm**, to encourage more shoppers to the city.
- 🌳 We will **keep FREE evening parking** on street and in the council surface level car parks.
- 🌳 We will **launch a 'Southampton Connect Card'** for local people to use local services and by working with retailers and businesses we will obtain discounts for residents.

***It is vital that we keep Southampton on track. A Labour council would undermine all the progress we are making and risk jobs and growth. Labour opposed the council contract that facilitated the redevelopment of the old C&A site and the development of the new 1 Guildhall Square. Labour pulled funding from the award winning Guildhall Square redevelopment and if they had their way the Northern Above Bar Quarter regeneration would never have proceeded.***

### 4. Travel, Transport and Highways:

- 🌳 The **Conservatives have doubled the annual investment into our roads and pavements** and we will protect this important area of council spending. We will work with the council's commercial partner Balfour Beatty to continue to improve the city's infrastructure.
- 🌳 We will take forward the scheme to **redesign Platform Road** to allow better and quicker access to the docks, following our successful application to government for grant funding.
- 🌳 We will **complete the repaving works in Oxford Street**, to protect the 400 jobs there and enhance future employment opportunities.
- 🌳 We will continue to invest in the city centre public realm as this attracts businesses and jobs. Works completed in **London Road, Bedford Place**, the **QE2 Mile** and the new **Guildhall Square** have transformed the city centre.
- 🌳 We will automate the toll booths on the Itchen Bridge and hold toll fares down.
- 🌳 Following our successful £3.9m bid for government money for public transport we will **create a London style "Oyster Card"** leading to closer working with bus operators in the city.
- 🌳 We will introduce radical improvements in real time information about public transport.
- 🌳 We will **keep the 9am start time for free bus travel** for pensioners and those on Disability Living Allowance.

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- 🌳 We will deliver our **planned improvements to Central Station** and have a longer term vision to redevelop the central station quarter, with new office developments.

***For purely ideological reasons Labour opposed the new contract we put in place for highways that is saving the council millions of pounds and delivering improvements to our roads and pavements.***

### 5. Leisure, Culture and Heritage:

- 🌳 **We will keep open ALL the city's libraries.**
- 🌳 **We will keep open ALL the city's swimming pools and leisure centres.**
- 🌳 We will work with developers and town planners to **provide a new Oaklands Swimming Pool** as part of the **redevelopment of Lordshill district centre.**
- 🌳 We will support the **continuation of under 8s free swimming.**
- 🌳 We will generate £1m of extra investment into our outdoor sports pitches.
- 🌳 We will **protect the provision of extra after school sports coaching** that we introduced.
- 🌳 We will make a success of the newly reopened and refurbished **Tudor House** museum.
- 🌳 We will champion the **Spitfire Tribute Foundation** and support their efforts to build the first national memorial to the Spitfire.
- 🌳 We will have the evening stay over in Southampton for the Olympic Torch on 14<sup>th</sup> July.
- 🌳 We have brought back the **Clipper Race** and will host its return to the city in July 2012.
- 🌳 We will host important events in 2012, such as the **SkyRide, Race for Life and the Sport Relief Mile.**
- 🌳 We will relocate the Tourist Information Centre to the Bargate.
- 🌳 The Council, in Partnership with The Royal British Legion and Chamber of Commerce, built the city's **new Memorial Walls at the Cenotaph.** These are a dignified and fitting tribute to the city's brave men and women who served in the armed forces and the Merchant Navy and paid the ultimate sacrifice for their Country in the two world wars and subsequent conflicts. We will continue to ensure that the debt of gratitude that we owe our service veterans is properly recognised.



***Where Labour run cities in other parts of the country (like Manchester and Liverpool) they have taken an axe to key services, shutting libraries and local facilities and their plans to cut hundreds of council jobs in Southampton will jeopardise our local services.***

### 6. Environment:

- 🌳 **We will keep the weekly bin (residual waste) collections.**
- 🌳 We will **keep green waste collections FREE.**
- 🌳 We will encourage more recycling at the **new City Depot in Millbrook** with its Household Waste Recycling Centre, improving on current recycling rates there of over 90%! We will continue to invest in and increase recycling, saving the council hundreds of thousands of pounds a year.
- 🌳 We will **oppose any inappropriate schemes from Helius Energy for the Western Docks.** We think that their proposal for a huge biomass power station









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would damage communities like Freemantle and Regents Park, Millbrook and Shirley.

-  We will support the **creation and delivery of the Green Economy**. Initiatives include:
  - The continued **roll out of Solar PV on the roofs of council buildings and schools**.
  - Expansion of Combined Heat and Power.
  - Retro fitting of council housing stock for tenants.
  - Reducing council fuel bills from diesel, electricity and gas. This year we are **saving the local taxpayer £690,000 through energy efficiency measures**.
  - A council/business joint group to establish jobs and investment into Southampton's Green Economy.
-  We will **protect Monks Brook from development**.


***We cannot trust Labour to keep our bin collections weekly. Their group leader favours moving collections to fortnightly.***

### 7. Planning and Enforcement:

-  **We will increase planning enforcement** – increasing resources to tackle rogue developers by a third.
-  We will take action to better manage **Houses in Multiple Occupation**, with the introduction of an **Article 4 Direction** and a new planning policy with increased parking requirements.
-  We will make greater use of housing powers and planning powers (e.g. more use of section 215 of the Town & Country Planning Act) to tackle landlords and tenants who do not keep their properties up together.
-  We will support groups of residents who want new residents' parking schemes in their area and **we will keep first permits in residents parking zones FREE**.
-  We will crack down on rogue businesses, such as those illegally selling alcohol or not carrying out proper food hygiene.
-  Our new parking standards will help to ensure **proper parking provision for new developments**.
-  We will oppose building on back gardens, so-called "garden grab", and the loss of family homes in the city to flats. Our **flagship local Family Homes policy** and the Conservative government's changes to the definition of garden land will make this possible.
-  We will protect the valued council out of hours noise service.

***Labour has consistently failed to protect family housing and their policy of preventing proper parking provision for new developments has proved a disaster in Southampton.***

### 8. Schools and Childrens' Services:

-  We will invest in new primary school places across the city and in improvements to our school buildings. We will complete the two new Academy buildings for Mayfield and Lord's Hill in 2012. We will **rebuild both Banister and Wordsworth schools** and **remodel Moorlands** in 2013.

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- 🌳 We will work with schools to **ensure that the extra £5.7m that Southampton receives in Pupil Premium in 2012 is put to best use** in supporting disadvantaged children in our local schools.
- 🌳 We will ensure **no service cuts to council services for children and young people** in 2012/13 and fund all savings through more efficient ways of working.
- 🌳 We will **support ALL schools in the city**, whether they are council maintained schools, academies or free schools.
- 🌳 We will work **with parents and charities who want to set up Free Schools**, providing advice and support.
- 🌳 We will work with parents, head teachers and governors to **improve quality and choice in Southampton schools, building on record GCSE and KS2 results**. Southampton's schools have soared up the national league table in the past 4 years.
- 🌳 We will encourage **more children in the city to take a language at GCSE** and promote and support Southampton's excellent Community Languages Service.
- 🌳 We will continue to roll out the new Junior Road Safety scheme in Junior and Primary schools in 2012.
- 🌳 We will introduce a **new Southampton Scholarship for disadvantaged Southampton young people** to provide financial support to several hundred students to study at Southampton University and Southampton Solent University.
- 🌳 We will **maintain our Young Person's Travel Card** – which provides free transport on all Southampton buses to disadvantaged college students and which provides for discounted travel to other young people.
- 🌳 We support the government proposals to give headteachers more say over their staff and the ability to dismiss consistently underperforming teachers.
- 🌳 **We will keep open ALL of Southampton's 14 SureStart Centres.**
- 🌳 We will **protect funding to childrens' social services** and continue to invest more in protecting vulnerable children in danger from harm or abuse. We will work to encourage **more foster placements** and to **speed up adoptions**.
- 🌳 We will continue to **campaign to keep open the General Hospital's Childrens' Heart Unit.**

***Labour opposes more choice in education and we cannot allow ideology and politics to get in the way of school progress. Their plans to axe hundreds of council jobs puts at risk effective local services like our Sure Start centres.***

### 9. Older People:

- 🌳 **We will keep the 10% pensioner Council Tax discount**, as pensioners have suffered disproportionately as a result of the big Council Tax increases during the Labour years.
- 🌳 **We will not increase in the cost of Meals on Wheels to customers.**
- 🌳 There will be no increase in adult social care charges in 2012.
- 🌳 **We will not reduce the threshold of need in the city for people to qualify to receive care.**
- 🌳 We will **protect the service level for those who qualify for care.**
- 🌳 Our re-enablement service will continue to provide up to **six weeks FREE care to help a person recover independence following a health crisis.**
- 🌳 **Our 60+ Project** will work towards supporting people to remain independent in their own homes and living their lives to the full; a **FREE service that is open to everybody over 60.**

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- 🌳 We will support the opening of **more Extra Care homes** for those who need 24/7 care but who want to live independently; planning more particularly for those who have dementia or are caring for a partner suffering from dementia.

***Labour hiked up care charges when they ran the council and their plans to axe hundreds of jobs will put vulnerable people in the city at risk.***

### 10. Housing:

- 🌳 We will take forward **our flagship Estate Regeneration policy**, which has already seen the redevelopment of **Hinkler Parade in Thornhill**. New developments are planned for **Cumbrian Way, Weston, Townhill Park, Laxton Close and Harefield**. The Estate Regeneration programme will be the biggest in the city for 40 years and will **create 3,000 new homes**.
- 🌳 We will carry out the **re-cladding of the Weston Tower Blocks**, introduce a new communal heating system and install Solar energy.
- 🌳 We will put in place a 30 year improvement plan for the council's housing stock.
- 🌳 We will invest **£127M in council housing improvements over the next 4 years**, utilising the additional resources that will become available to Southampton when the government brings in its new scheme for financing council housing, allowing local councils like **Southampton to retain all of our tenants' rents**. This extra investment will not be borne by the Council Taxpayer.
- 🌳 We will actively dispose of many small sites for quick building.
- 🌳 We will speed up and improve the repairs & maintenance of council housing.
- 🌳 We will progress the residential developments at **Woolston Riverside**.
- 🌳 We will provide **more parking spaces for residents on our estates** by redeveloping grass verges where appropriate. We have already created hundreds of new spaces in the last 2 years.
- 🌳 We will **ensure that our military personnel are prioritised** on the council housing waiting list.
- 🌳 We will increase the proportion of family homes in the city, using the new family housing planning policy that we introduced in 2009.

***Labour pulled money from the Hinkler Parade regeneration scheme and undermined our efforts to take forward our Estate Regeneration programme. The last Labour government took millions of pounds from local council tenants to spend in their Labour heartlands in the North of England.***

### 11. Community Safety:

- 🌳 We will **fight to keep front desks open in our community Police Stations**.
- 🌳 We will continue our programme of **replacing worn out street lights and lamp columns across the city**, installing more cost effective and environmentally friendly upgrades and providing better lighting.
- 🌳 We will **keep the 100% Council Tax discount for Special Police Constables** who live in Southampton and work as a Special in the city, as they do a fantastic job in helping to keep our streets safe.
- 🌳 We will continue to **support the excellent work of the city's Street Pastors** and back the introduction this year of the new School Pastors.

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- 🌳 We continue to support the **Community SpeedWatch** initiative to help reduce speeding traffic in the city.
- 🌳 We will **support Street Watch** – where local residents help their neighbourhood by patrolling their own streets, providing visible reassurance and engaging with their local community.
- 🌳 We will **support The Blue Lamp Trust** – which through the 'Bobby Scheme' will visit homes to provide advice on fire safety and security. When required, they will fit security devices and smoke alarms.
- 🌳 We will make **greater use of Community Payback**, so that offenders give something back to their local community.
- 🌳 We will **introduce 'no cold calling zones'** to protect residents from unwanted visitors.

***Labour's Chairman of the Hampshire Police Authority (a Southampton Labour Councillor) voted to close Shirley and Portswood Police Stations and refused to commit to providing front desk facilities for replacements. Labour are committed to axing the Special Constable Council Tax discount.***

### 12. Southampton's Big Society:

- 🌳 We will introduce new ways to **reward good tenants and penalise poor behaviour amongst tenants**. For instance tenants who volunteer in their community or have children with good school attendance will be able to earn more housing points.
- 🌳 We will **keep the 100% Council Tax discount for Special Police Constables** who live in Southampton and work as a Special in the city, as they do a fantastic job in helping to keep our streets safe.
- 🌳 We will protect council grants to the voluntary sector for 2012/13.
- 🌳 We will create and look after **more conservation areas**, to protect areas of sensitivity and/or character and we will work with interested communities to **produce neighbourhood plans**.
- 🌳 We will look into **introducing new ways to reward work** for those on council housing waiting list.
- 🌳 We will rebuild **Woolston Community Centre**.

***Labour are committed to axing the Special Constable Council Tax discount.***