

A RECORD OF ACTION A PROMISE OF MORE

**The Conservative Manifesto for Cornwall
Council elections on 2 May 2013**



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

**Kingsley Village, Penhale, Fraddon, St Columb, Cornwall TR9 6NA
01726 891541
office@cornwallconservatives.com
cornwallconservatives.com**

A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP LEADER



Group Leader Cllr Fiona Ferguson

Dear Resident

In these difficult economic times it is important that our council is in safe hands. The old Liberal Democrat run County Council handed over services which were judged, by independent watchdogs, to be failing. We had a failing fire service and failing children's services. It just was not acceptable.

The Conservatives knew this had to be turned around and I am pleased to report that these services are no longer failing.

We also knew that the people of Cornwall were suffering in these difficult economic times and we had to halt the higher than inflation increases in Council tax that the previous administrations had inflicted upon us. During the last 4 years we have saved £170 million from our budget. On top of that we have ensured that Council Tax will be frozen from 2010 to 2014.

But there is still much to do. We want to improve Council services to make them as good as they can possibly be with the money available to us. In particular, we need to improve health outcomes and ensure the care of the elderly by working ever more closely with all health bodies in Cornwall. Overall, we will insist on good value for the money we are spending on your behalf and continue to contain council taxes.

We will boost the Cornish economy by securing new investment in infrastructure. We expect to deliver the upgrading of the A30 and capitalise on high speed broadband to create new industries with good wages.

We have not always got things right. I am sorry for the difficulties residents experienced when the new waste contract was introduced. It saved millions of pounds and enabled us to give everybody the same service throughout Cornwall but we have learnt lessons in managing large changes. And we have not yet got parking charges right. Sorry! We froze them at the end of last year rather than raise them by 3 per cent as our partners, the Independents, urged us to do and a root and branch review will be undertaken.

Making decisions as to whether the Council should work with private sector partners (the deal with BT), whether to freeze council tax or where to make savings in the depths of a recession, is not easy. Every member of our group has not always agreed on the right way forward. Three (out of 47) members have decided to become 'independents'. Ideally, none of this would have happened. However, what you are seeing is a group which is doing its best to find solutions to these difficult issues. We are in uncharted territory in terms of the scale of the challenges we face. It is so much easier to be united in opposition. Cornwall will benefit from the fact that we have acted decisively to deal with these challenges- and, we would like, with your backing, to continue this work.

What I ask is that you judge us by our achievements. Others will ask you to judge them by their promises- I urge you to question where they are finding the money to fund them.

Fiona Ferguson

CLLR FIONA FERGUSON
CONSERVATIVE GROUP LEADER, CORNWALL COUNCIL

INHERITING A NEW COUNCIL - AND MANY PROBLEMS



- In areas that carried out a referendum around 80% said no to forming a Unitary Council.
- Ofsted were ruling our Children's services as inadequate
- Four years ago, Cornwall Council was in the bottom 4 percent of the worst performing councils in the country. Now it is rated as one of the most improved.
- Newquay airport was closed without notice with attendant costs.

There is very little doubt that the Liberal Democrats, with their goal of a Unitary Authority, took their eye off the ball and failed to focus on the issues that really matter.

A number of Districts held referendums on the move to a Unitary Authority. Even though there was a massive NO vote for such a move the results were ignored by the Liberal Democrat controlled County Council who pushed ahead with it.

The Unitary Authority is often seen as remote from many parts of Cornwall. Community Network areas have in no way replaced the more focused District and Borough Councils.

In September 2009 an inspection of Contact, Referral and Assessment arrangements of children's services identified areas requiring priority action which were deemed of sufficient weakness to rate these services as performing poorly.

The 2009 Cornwall Council Organisational Assessment said *"the Council, together with its partners, needs to do more to help older people live independently"* it continued, *"there is a lot more to do before it can provide a similar range and quality of services as the best performing councils. This is a serious concern because of the predicted increase in the number of older people living in Cornwall."*

In January 2009 the then ruling Liberal Democrat group launched a new logo, at great cost and fanfare, to promote the new authority only to drop it after overwhelming criticism.

When the Liberal Democrats were in power Council Tax was rising inexorably by around 5% every year - well above the level of inflation and impacting the living costs of residents more and more each year.

A RECORD OF ACTION - 4 YEARS OF DELIVERY

SERVICES TURNED ROUND - AND COSTS REDUCED CONSIDERABLY

- We have delivered savings of £170 million over 4 years with almost no cuts to services
- We have frozen Council Tax from 2010 to 2014
- We have delivered on affordable housing for local people
- We have improved ratings for Adult care and Children's services
- The fire service is improving strongly

CORNWALL HAS 'CAN DO' COUNCIL

Combined as best as possible 1 County and 6 District Councils into single body with turnover of well over £1 billion, prudent reserves, fewer offices & better staff working conditions.

Achieved efficiency savings of £170 million over 4 years despite severe cuts in Government grant by acting early.

Nationally recognised for:

- Innovative Bursary Scheme for hard pressed Cornwall based students.
- Local Enterprise Partnership with business for investment and growth in well paid jobs.
- Superfast Broadband project providing competitive advantage to small business and community enhancement.

Delivered substantially improved services after failures by previous Lib Dem run Council:

- 'Safeguarding Children' improvements confirmed by OFSTED Report.
- Better 'Adult Care' evidenced by Independent Inspectors.
- Established new Housing Company providing & managing homes for Council tenants.
- Transferred leisure services to a new trust and prevented any library closures.
- Robust governance & control now confirmed by Audit Commission.

Outstanding opportunities for:

- Maritime activities with major developments in Hayle and Falmouth.
- Economic growth through new European Funding.
- Continued efficient Council management, despite ongoing Government grant cuts.
- Working closer with Town and Parish Councils.

A PROMISE OF MORE - A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

LOOKING FORWARD TO A COUNCIL THAT CAN DELIVER

- We will safeguard our road network which is vital to us all
- Safeguard our precious landscape by ensuring that development and is done in a sensitive and sustainable way
- Better leisure facilities for young people and more safe cycle routes
- We will ensure better value for money
- We will boost the Cornish economy by securing investment in infrastructure
- We will look to improve our schools and will be campaigning for better funding

We will boost the Cornish economy by securing new investment in infrastructure. We want to deliver the upgrading of the A30 and capitalise on high speed broadband to create new industries. We will also look at the condition of our roads making improvements where possible.

As Cornwall is amongst one of the poorest funded areas per pupil Cornwall Conservatives support the F40, the group campaigning for fairer school funding, which has submitted figures to the Secretary of State for Education for an immediate £99m uplift of funding for the worst funded schools and pupils in England. Whilst we recognise that a full rebalance immediately is not possible in the current economic climate we do believe that the current gap is indefensible and that some action should be taken without delay. A Conservative led Council is best placed to push for this from a Conservative Secretary of State and the coalition government. Independents simply do not have this influence.



We want to capitalise on the localism agenda to ensure that our planning is sustainable, relevant, sensible and sensitive. We want to protect our important green spaces encouraging instead the use of brownfield land. We want the local Parish, Town and City Councils to play an important part in saying how local communities evolve through Neighbourhood plans.

We are very concerned about the effect of large scale wind and solar installations on our precious landscape (and on our tourism industry). We will endeavour to bring in supplementary planning guidance to control these installations and we will lobby the Coalition Government that decisions on these will be made locally (and those decisions must stay local).



There will be a need for new housing but that in turn creates a need for more infrastructure. We intend to give, to communities who have significant new housing, a say in the spending of the 'new homes' bonus. Under our plans, local councils will not just be consulted, they will be making decisions.

We are concerned that having a 5 year 'land supply' for the whole of Cornwall may have an adverse effect on communities where there is pressure from developers to build new homes (for example, in coastal communities) in circumstances in which other areas do not build as many

homes as expected. We will lobby the Coalition Government so that Cornwall, which is a vast and diverse area, is not adversely effected by this.

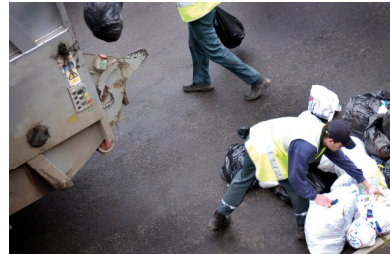
We want to improve leisure facilities for young people and have more safe cycle routes.

We will ensure there is a root and branch review of our parking charges and public toilet provision to safeguard our town centres and our tourist industry.

We need to keep the costs at Cornwall Council under review to reduce them further. We must end the high pay culture.

We will look at new technologies including making the best use of superfast broadband and work on 'not spots' where needed. We will also look at new energy production such as tidal and geothermal technologies.

We will look at increasing recycling rates and look at rewarding communities which improve their recycling through a scheme of community payback.



When spending public money, we obviously need to have a zero tolerance attitude to fraud. However, we believe that this can and must be done without resorting to the use of lie detector 'technology'.

We want to work with partners to secure the best services at an affordable cost. In particular, we will be looking at working with other organisations to keep down our costs and improve services - true community budgeting.

We are hoping to work with the post office as an outlet for council services. Protecting these valuable amenities.



We will seek to help all areas of Cornwall with spending on economic investment. We will work with cross border authorities where appropriate in the East of Cornwall.



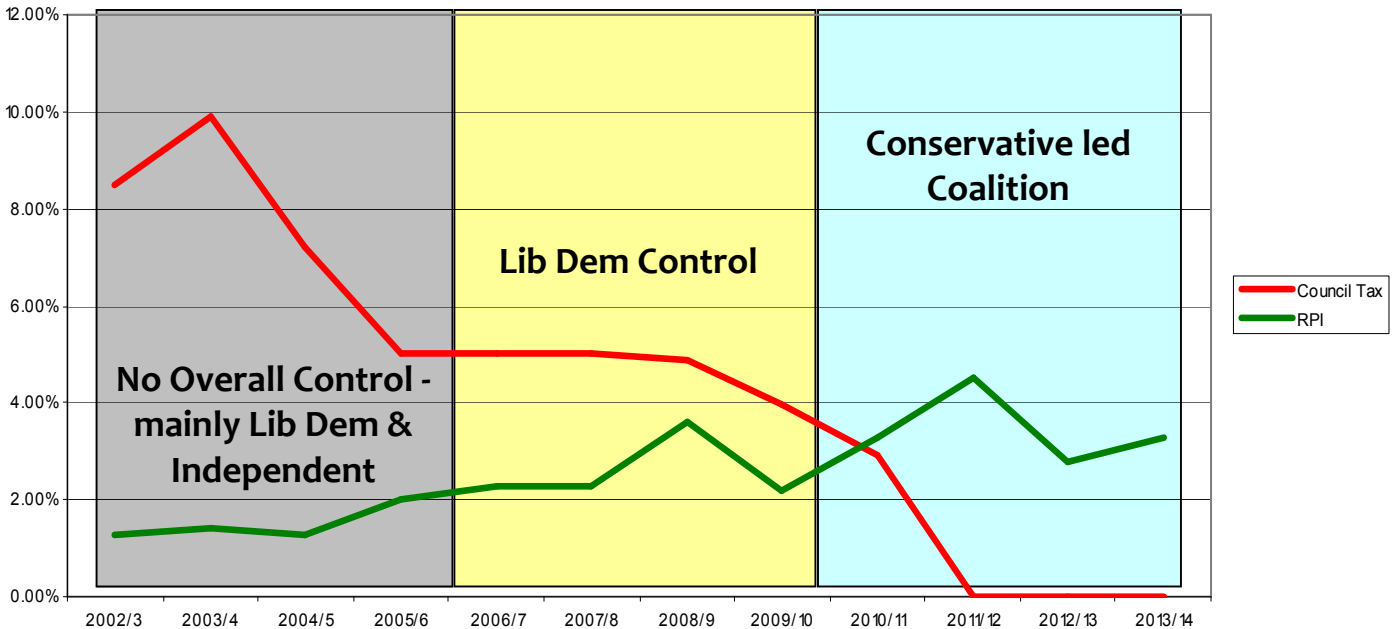
We will work more closely with our partners to improve people's health in Cornwall and to make the best use of our resources, particularly with the increasing number of elderly people in Cornwall. Our joint working would extend also to the voluntary sector, which have an incredibly important role here - for example, the Changing Lives Initiative of Volunteer Cornwall and Age Concern.

We will help groups around Cornwall prepare their Community Flood plans, and target money and the specialist skills of council staff toward the areas of greatest risk. We will work with our MPs to focus Government attention to flooding and land instability. Ministerial visits have raised the profile of flooding on the national agenda. Conservatives will continue to support the effective partnerships which have been built up, and we will help community flood planners access the funding which is becoming available.



COUNCIL TAX - KEEPING THE COSTS DOWN

Cornwall Council Tax Rises



We are determined to keep costs and local Council tax down. For too long local Council Tax went up year after year even when inflation is taken into account.

Conservatives have been determined to turn this around. In the last four years we have seen Council Tax fall in real terms when you take inflation into account. In the last 3 budgets Council Tax has been frozen so whilst other bills go up - the Council tax hasn't. This is a real relief for the hardworking families of Cornwall.

Conservative Councillors have voted to support a tax freeze at Cornwall Council in line with their group policy.

Conservative Group Leader Fiona Ferguson explained, "We had decided in group that it was a priority to freeze Council tax to protect hard working families in Cornwall from a Council tax hike. Whilst we submitted a proposal that would have protected front line services it was clear that we just did not have the number of Councillors to get it through. We were left with two options: A cabinet proposal to increase Council tax or a Liberal Democrat proposal which froze Council Tax but affected some front line services. The majority of the Conservative Group backed the Cornish taxpayer and voted for a freeze."

Fiona continued, "Our proposal would have taken most of the savings required from the Chief Executives Department. However, with the Government offering Cornwall Council a freeze grant of almost £5m, we simply could not see how we could justify refusing this and ask the local taxpayer to foot the bill instead. We will take prompt action to review the impact of the Lib Dem amendment after the election to minimise any adverse affect on services."

