

**LEICESTER INDEPENDENT
COUNCILLORS AGAINST CUTS**

**2015 ELECTION
MANIFESTO**



INTRODUCTION

For many years I served the people of Leicester as a Labour councillor. Yet the Labour Party no longer meets the needs of the ordinary people who live in our great city. This is why I felt forced to leave the party last year, in order to work with local members of the national Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC).

Because I was first elected to fight against austerity and cuts to public services, along with Councillor Wayne Naylor, I felt that we needed to create a new political group to represent the concerns of ordinary working-class people. This new group is called Leicester Independent Councillors Against Cuts (LICAC), which is nationally registered as part of TUSC. Since then, we have publicly fought alongside unions and community groups against the vicious cuts being inflicted upon some of the most vulnerable residents of our city.



We believe strongly in an anti-cuts stand against continuing austerity measures being proposed by both the Conservative and Labour parties. Make the billionaires who pay no tax and the bankers who get massive bonuses pay for the crisis! This is why I am standing for mayor, why we have LICAC candidates in most of the wards in the city, and why we have TUSC candidates standing in the parliamentary elections.

Last October we held a “people’s budget conference” to work out the issues which were most important to Leicester’s residents.



Repeatedly, people said they wanted representatives who fought against the Tories’ cuts agenda. As a result of this, I moved an amendment to the Labour Party’s city budget this year to demand that no further cuts be made to council services.

Despite our budget being approved by the city’s finance officer as viable, every Labour Party councillor rejected our amendment and passed Mayor Soulsby’s cuts budget. Such cuts have led, for example, to the decimation of our city’s children’s services, leading to the loss of valuable trained staff, and leaving children’s lives in chaos.

At the same time as vital services were being slashed, £6.9 million of your money was put back into the bank (council reserves). That money should have been used to prevent further cuts right now!

It doesn’t matter who wins the General Election, things are going to get worse. Leicester needs a Mayor who will fight hard for the people to get the best deal for the city, enabling us to save services and support people wherever possible.

The Government will still make cuts in funding to the city, but we will show a different approach to managing this issue. For the last five years Government cuts have been accepted by the city’s Labour Group without challenge. We say it is time to fight back.

The people of Leicester are its most precious asset; all of you make our city the place it is. It is only right and fair that we build a much stronger partnership between the city’s politics

and its people so that one is a true reflection of the other. Do you want politics that support 99% of people, not the 1% richest? Do you want a Mayor and City Councillors who will fight against cuts rather than individuals who will deliver them? Do you want a Mayor who will give you the opportunity to vote on the continuation of the Mayoral System in the City? Are council services important to you? If the answer to these questions (and possibly a few more!) is "yes" then please consider giving us your support on May 7th!

Likewise, you can use your vote in the Parliamentary elections to support our candidates who have all pledged to take an average workers wage if elected. They will then donate the rest of the money they are paid to support anti-cuts campaigns in the city, helping us all build a mass movement that can prove to the Government that Leicester rejects their hated program of escalating poverty.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbie Potter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barbie Potter

LICAC's candidate for City Mayor, 2015

PREPARING THE LICAC MANIFESTO

Last October around 60 people gathered to contribute to Leicester's first ever People's Budget Conference. The event was organised by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), along with Barbara Potter and Wayne Naylor, who left the Labour Party last year to work with TUSC to oppose all council cuts. The creation of this manifesto thus stand in stark contrast to the city's Labour Councils cynical 'consulting' on escalating austerity.

"Leaving the Labour Party was a big thing," Cllr Potter said, "all my family have always voted Labour. But they're no longer the party who stick up for ordinary people. We all need to stick together, the People's Budget marks an opportunity to create something new."



Central to this conference was a series of public workshops, where diverse ideas were collected and discussed to form the basis of an alternative budget based on what local residents need. Cllr Naylor voiced frustration over his time in the Labour Party and the pressure he felt of having to accept the Council's vicious cuts. Cut which have now left his ward with 800 residents reliant upon food banks. He is now adamant that "the city needs councillors who will fight and make a difference. People's needs must go before anything else." Yet the fact remains that while thousands struggle to make ends meet the Council has millions of pounds in reserves.

Southampton's re-elected TUSC Councillor Keith Morrell spoke of his admiration for the local independent Councillors at the conference. "It's difficult to stand against the estab-

lishment, and can be isolating." Along with the strength of having the local community behind him, TUSC support gave him much needed confidence.



Dave Nellist, a former Labour MP who has 14 years of experience as a socialist councillor in Coventry also attended the event. He emphasised that a Labour victory won't make any difference to ordinary people. After all, we'll still face the same cuts. "It doesn't matter if the cuts are carried out enthusiastically by the Tories or with a heavy heart by Labour. When services go, people suffer. LICAC refuses to accept that there is no choice." He described Cllr's Barbara Potter and Wayne Naylor as presenting an inspiring example for the future.

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**FIGHTING FOR A DEMOCRATIC
FUTURE FOR OUR CHILDREN**

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

A DEMOCRATICALLY PLANNED EDUCATION SYSTEM

With a LICAC City Mayor and Council, Leicester City Council will regain control over our schools in order that a free and democratically planned education is available for all, under local authority control. LICAC will oppose cuts and privatisation and demand a good quality education for every child. We stand for free education for all: for grants not fees. That's why TUSC fully endorse the National Union of Teachers (NUT's) Manifesto for Education which sets out a different direction for education in England and Wales.

LICAC recognise the divisive way in which academies and 'free schools' act to undermine the ethos of a free and fair education system. A National Audit Office study published in 2014 pointed out that "[n]early half of academy trusts have paid millions of pounds in public money towards the private businesses of directors, trustees and relatives." Grace Academy Trust in the Midlands, set up by big Tory backer Lord Edmiston, paid £1 million to, or through companies, with either direct or indirect connections to Edmiston himself, or one of his Academy's trustees.

In Leicester, successful pie-magnate and well-connected Tory industrialist, Sir David Samworth, is the proud owner of two academies, Samworth Enterprise Academy (which replaced May Linwood Comprehensive School), and Samworth Church Academy (which is situated in the old Sherwood Hall School buildings). Opening in 2007, Samworth Enterprise Academy has the misfortune of being Leicester's first academy.

It is apparent that academisation takes accountability away from local authorities, takes money out of education, and threatens the pay and conditions of teachers and other staff. Academies do not give children a better education and are often elitist, taking "far less than their fair share of disadvantaged pupils" as one school governor admitted in an official report. League tables and attempts to standardize teaching and learning devalue the teaching profession. Free schools, academies and the use of teaching assistants opens up

the door to unqualified staff. State schools are being privatised by turning them into privately governed schools. This must stop!

LICAC calls for (1) free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age; (2) no to creeping privatisation: bring academies and 'free schools' back into public ownership; (3) abolishing university tuition fees now, introducing a living grant, and reinstating the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA); (4) full funding of vocational and artistic courses alongside traditional academic subjects; and (5) a campaign to abolish Ofsted: for democratic accountability of schools to teachers, parents and communities -- not political tools to undermine state education.



LICAC will have an unrelenting focus on improving the education system. We recognize that more schools must be constructed in order to meet demand for places. Needless to say we would not be facing this problem -- or the fact that our schools are in need of urgent redevelopment -- if tax-payers money had been used to support public need rather than corporate greed. There is no room for profiteering at the expense of both workers and students within our education system.

IMPROVING YOUTH SERVICES

We will create well-paid apprenticeship programs that lead-on to full-time paid employment. In order to do this, LICAC will work towards creating a society where there are jobs for everyone, not just an increasing number of jobs with poor pay and conditions. In the short-term, we will provide accessible advice and guidance services across the city that work closely in cooperation with our schools and colleges to make sure that young people who

are struggling are directly towards the help they need. It is an outrage that youth unemployment remains so high.

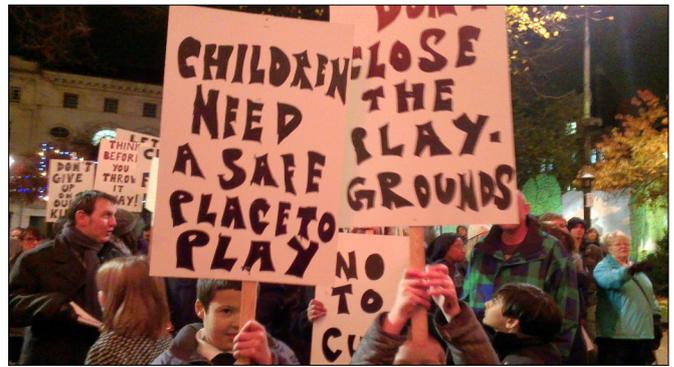
We are firmly committed to reversing all the cuts that the Labour Council have made to Youth and Children's services since 2010. All children and young people must have the support they need to do their best, and special efforts will be made to ensure that aid is targeted at those with special educational needs and disabilities, along with their parents and carers.



We believe we need to expand the network of Children's Centres across the city. This is why LICAC supported last years "pushchair protest" against the cuts being made by the Council to children's centres, when around a third of the staff at the centres were being axed. What angered people most, was that services were being cut whilst the Council was simultaneously spending tens of millions of pounds on rebuilding parts of the city centre. As one parent told us, "I'm all for the city centre being made to look nice, but what kind of priorities does the Mayor have when services like this are being devastated?"

Our city needs more brilliant community services like those provided by the dedicated staff and volunteers who run our Adventure Playgrounds. There is plenty of money in society, and given that children did not cause this economic crisis, they most certainly should not be made to pay for it. The Labour Party in Leicester does not always see things this way, and when they tried to cut the funding of our city's Adventure Playgrounds in late 2013 massive protests were sparked, with hundreds descending upon the Council to voice their anger.

Young people proudly displayed their ability and willingness to influence their future. An enthused and empowered protest of adults,



united with children, loudly chanted "Shame on Labour" and "No to Cuts!" at the city's Labour Councillors as they arrived at the town hall to discuss slashing £300,000 from the budget to run supervised schemes across Leicester. This Labour-led attack was dumped on the city's nine supervised play schemes with no warning or consultation.

This was not the first time that the Council has attempted to undermine the provision of child-care facilities in Leicester, and it is not the first time that Leicester's residents have been forced to vocally defend their services. Ironically, the last time such cuts to the city's adventure playgrounds were fought, the Council was controlled by the Tories and the Liberal Democrats, with the opposition group of Labour Councillors acting as part of the protest "opposing the cuts"; while now they are inside voting for them.

Although the Labour Party has backed away from undermining the financial viability of the city's playgrounds, they have still done nothing to address the fact that the amount of money they have given to the playgrounds has been frozen for years. Thus we have the dire situation where for the past ten years the already meagre operating budgets of these playgrounds has been fixed at around £100,000 per year (for each centre), this



equates to year on year effective cuts to their funding.

LICAC will fight to ensure that all youth services receive the public support that they need in order to thrive and grow. Locally we will continue to vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services, and ongoing efforts to transfer of council services to 'social enterprises' or 'arms-length' management organisations, which are first steps to privatisation.

Much needs to be done, and outstanding youth services like those formerly provided by the Watershed Youth Centre (which has just been sold to DeMonfort University), or the One Voice Young People's Centre on Belgrave Road which was closed down amidst protests last year.

LICAC will start from the position of determining what children's services are needed. This will enable us to then calculate how much money will be required, and then will endeavour to make sure that we get adequate funding from Westminster to enable us to provide the types of services that all children deserve.

In determining the level of need, we support the idea of a youth council being elected from service users and providers to oversee the effective running of youth services. Although we value the role played by volunteers in providing public services, LICAC believes that skilled and trained workers who help coordinate activities in such areas should be paid. Finally, non-profit groups should not be forced to compete for ever-decreasing pots of money, from both the Council and private sector providers, but should be given enough financial stability so they can get on and do what they do best, help people.

FIGHTING CHILDHOOD POVERTY

One of our main priorities is to ensure that children in Leicester no longer grow up living in poverty. According to the *Leicester Mercury* in 2014, "nearly 40 per cent of children in the city are classed as being in poverty", with Leicester ranking "among the 10 worst areas for child poverty in the UK with more than 26,500 city children living below the poverty line." When asked to explain why child poverty

— which runs as high as 48% in Spinney Hills — was increasing here in Leicester, Labour deputy mayor Rory Palmer simply blamed the Government's cuts.

Yet with only five Labour MP's (none from Leicester) opposing plans to cut another £30 billion from Government funding, things are only get worse. Estimates based on the Government's own data, collated last year by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, indicate that the full impact of attacks on the working-class -- otherwise known as welfare "reforms" -- will mean a further £123 million cut from our city's annual welfare budget. This is a staggering figure and demonstrates just how much we need Councillors that are willing to fight to build a mass public campaign to resist fight these cuts being driven by Westminster.

Here in Leicester, the biggest attacks on welfare will come through a reduction in Child Tax Credit and Working Families Tax Credit, which will effect 36,400 households and will represent a local loss of benefit-related income amounting to £30 million a year. Moreover further organized-looting of welfare provision to Leicester families involves the enforcement of a three-year freeze on Child Benefits which is set to affect 43,100 households (income lost by these families amounting to £14 million).

The second most significant cut in terms of monetary value involves the slashing of £28 million from the local welfare budget, which derives from the coercive replacement of Incapacity Benefit and related benefits by Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) -- affecting 8,100 households. These attacks on our citizens are then compounded by a reduction in annual up-rating of the value of most working-age benefits, which effectively means that the city will be losing £25 million a year from their welfare budget.

Other attacks include replacement of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) by Personal Independence Payments (PIP), which punishes 2,900 households and will mean £9 million less will be spent each year to help the disabled. Then there will be changes to the rules governing assistance with the cost of housing for low-income households in the private rented sector, which involve a £8 million budget reduction which will affect 9,100 households.

It is clear to LICAC that such cumulative attacks on Leicester's citizens must not be tolerated by our elected political representatives. LICAC Councillors will therefore stand up for the people who elect them, and begin the process of openly publicizing and condemning the murderous cuts being made to local welfare provision.

**HEALTHCARE IS A RIGHT,
NOT A PRIVILEGE**

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

... IN RETIREMENT

People who have worked their entire lives should be entitled to a high standard of living in old age. Yet this is something that many people can no longer take for granted. Goals regarding the age of retirement are constantly put back, while state pensions have been under attack for years. LICAC believes that this is totally unreasonable, as much for our city's firefighters as for anyone else.

We acknowledge that services for older people, people with disabilities and other vulnerable people will continue to change. However, we believe that the only changes that should be made to such services should be ones to ensure that they are improving. It is a well-known fact that high quality, publicly owned and run, care homes are the most cost-effective and reliable means of caring for people in old age. This fact is something that the Labour Party would have always agreed with, but with the so-called pressure of austerity they have changed their mind.

In late 2013 here in Leicester the Labour Council committed to ridding themselves of our much-loved Council-run care homes. Short-term thinking and the necessity of making cuts seems to preside in the Labour Party, and in September 2013 Labour Councillors voted to shut down four of Leicester City Council's eight Elderly Persons Homes, and sell the others to a private company. This was not without protest, and three petitions were handed in with a total of some 2,400 signatories opposing the Council's latest attack on Leicester's most vulnerable residents.

According to the Council the cuts were justified because: (1) demand was falling and fewer people were choosing to be housed in Council-run homes compared to previous years; (2) the homes were not fully occupied; and (3) it is cheaper to house people in private sector homes. On the first two points a concerned resident of Leicester explained to the Councillors that:

"It is not the number of people choosing Council run homes that is falling. The Council is effectively managing referrals to prevent further permanent admissions, as it is outlined in the Council's Adult Social Care



Transformation report. And while the council may say this was a just a proposal, and that it was never put into practice, that is not what the council's admissions data suggests. Permanent admissions to council-run homes fell to zero from March 2011, the same month the effective management of referrals to prevent further admissions was proposed to start; and the number of permanent admissions remained zero in the months after, quite a coincidence if the proposal was not to be put into practice, don't you think?"

OPPOSING NHS PRIVATIZATION

LICAC believes that the dangerous cuts being made to healthcare services here in Leicester are primarily being driven by the politics of austerity. So contrary to Labour Party spin, their efforts to significantly re-organise the NHS and embrace of the Government's so-called "Better Care Together Plan" only serve to undermine the health outcomes of the people of Leicester. Indeed, members of the Leicester Campaign Against NHS Privatization have already pointed out that this "Better Care" program is connected to the proposed closure of hundreds of NHS hospital beds locally. This is why LICAC will fight to ensure that all profiteers are kicked out of the NHS immediately.

A good local example of profiteers in the NHS is provided by Arriva, who since 2012 have been providing non-emergency patient transport for Leicestershire, Rutland, Nottinghamshire and Bassetlaw. Arriva had

previously bought out the East Midlands non-emergency ambulance service by undercutting the “in-house” bid, which they were able to do only by reducing the number of estimated ambulance journeys by 35%. Thus, despite receiving a handsome £26 million contract to take patients to and from hospital appointments, in 2013 it was reported in the *Leicester Mercury* that Arriva have “failed to meet all its target times.”

Our ambulance services must be taken back under public control immediately, and provision not only reinstated to previous levels, but improved to meet increasing demand.



LICAC will protect vital public services and take these out of the hands of profiteers like Richard Branson, whose Virgin Healthcare threatens to take over swathes of NHS services. We cannot afford the fiasco of tens of millions of pounds being lost due to the tendering process in the railways being repeated in our health service. We cannot afford people dying because their nearest ambulance is miles away and cannot reach them in time.

Members of TUSC in Leicester have always proudly stood on picket lines alongside NHS workers who have been forced, especially over the past year, into taking strike action. With such critically important workers tirelessly providing life-giving care around the clock, their ongoing dispute over poor pay is well-supported by the public -- with their real pay having fallen by over 12% in the last four years. Yet it is clear that this issue is over more than fair pay, with the onslaught of underfunding, cuts, and privatisations, providing more than enough reason for health workers to go on strike to save our NHS.



We demand that the NHS is brought back into complete public ownership under democratic control, with compensation to private companies only on the basis of proven need. When it was set up in 1948, the NHS was intended to provide a “comprehensive” healthcare service. This responsibility was torn up under the Tories’ infamous 2013 Health and Care Act. But would Labour do anything any different? Labour introduced Foundation Trusts, making hospitals compete with each other for funding and opening up the NHS to the private market, rather than cooperating to deliver the best possible care.

Labour also expanded the use of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) – sarcastically dubbed ‘Profit From Illness’ – privatisation schemes. Such schemes have allowed private companies to take over the running of NHS facilities and services. PFI has generated enormous profits for companies such as Capita, Serco and Interserve, while leading to a ‘debt’ crisis in our hospitals. Moreover, the increasingly target-driven culture within care provision means it is getting harder by the day for health practitioners to help patients by spending quality time with them: this is clearly an essential part of the healing process.

With the Labour Party proposing no concrete and meaningful solutions to the destruction of the NHS, more than ever it is evident that we also need a new workers’ party that defends the NHS. This is why LICAC calls for: (1) cancelling Private Finance Initiative (PFI) debt – return the money to local health services and staff pay, rather than generate massive profits for multinationals; (2) stopping privatisation and marketization of the NHS – end private companies profiting from ill health. End

expensive tendering for services every three years; and (3) nationalising big pharma and returning the profits to the NHS. There is plenty of will and plenty of money in society to implement such an audacious program. The only problem being that the super-rich tend to be somewhat tax-shy -- shy to the extent of over £120 billion each year..

UNITED ACTION AGAINST PROFITEERS

LICAC believe that the working-class of Leicester need political representatives who fight alongside them in ensuring that everyone is paid a fair wage. This is why LICAC have supported the industrial action being undertaken by NHS workers. Problems of poor pay within the NHS are not the only issue, however, with cuts and privatisation meaning that many in the care professions being worked to the bone in a highly stressful working environment. Commenting on the root cause of this in the Council last year, LICAC Councillor Wayne Naylor pointed out that "Labour introduced the private-finance initiatives that created the marketized NHS trusts," adding how "Labour to that extent probably has as much blood on its hands as the other parties."

LICAC believe that ultimately it is through organising such united action across different workplaces that unions are best able to address the collective problems facing all workers in the private and public sector alike. This is amply demonstrated by last year's successful strike action against management harassment at Gateway College (in Humberstone) and through the private sector strike over low pay at the Trelleborg engineering factory (in Beaumont Ley's).

STRENGTHENING LOCAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

LICAC will work closely with voluntary and community sector service providers who are playing an important role in meeting the needs of people across our communities. We will ensure that such groups obtain the funding that

they need, and make sure that their activities complement the health service provision that is provided by a properly funded public sector care system. Elected representatives from such groups could then work alongside trade union representatives in promoting the smooth and effective provision of free world-class health care for all.

We promise not to ignore the critical importance of recovery services, which have been side-lined by the city Council. Such services have been serially underfunded, which is leading to the tragic situation where both the criminal justice system and our hospitals are having to deal with these problems. Service providers like Widening Horizons, for example, provide a much cheaper and sustainable source of recovery services than crisis care services. In this way groups like Widening Horizons end up costing less to the taxpayer while simultaneously working to improve the lives of people in need of recovery services, helping them to help themselves and others to reintegrate into society again.

IMPLEMENTING UNISON'S ETHICAL CARE CHARTER

Under LICAC's guidance the city Council will move to immediately sign-up to support Unison's Ethical Care Charter (2012), to guarantee that all the city's care workers are paid fairly, and are not abused on zero-hour contracts, as so many currently are. Previously the Labour Council had introduced the Living Wage for most of its workforce, and had estimated that for a further £10 million a year they could ensure a Living Wage is paid to all adult social care contract employees as well. However, they have not actually signed-up to the Ethical Care Charter because they say they cannot afford this sum of money.

PRIORITISING DISABILITY

Ongoing attacks upon the disabled community, as highlighted by community groups like Leicester Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) will be brought to an end immediately. Nationally and locally TUSC has supported

DPAC's successful campaign against the infamous DWP contractor, Atos. This national campaign saw over one hundred and forty Atos offices across the country, picketed by disabled protesters and their supporters, who numbered a hundred strong here in Leicester. It was exactly this sort of public pressure which led to Atos eventually cancelling their contract with the Government. Taking on and then winning victories like this over a multinational giant with a £7.1 billion yearly revenue is a clear illustration of what ordinary working class people can achieve when we fight together.



In a contract worth £110 million per year, Atos, had first been brought into the DWP by the previous Labour government, and since then have been carrying out ruthless disability benefit examinations, which have resulted in tens of thousands of disabled people being thrown into poverty. Tragically, last year a freedom of information request submitted to the DWP revealed that 10,600 disabled people had died within six weeks of being declared fit for work by Atos (in 2011 alone). The response of Atos and the DWP to this revelation was to stop counting the number of dead people who had previously been classified “fit for work”. Such so-called disability assessments still continue, although they are now undertaken by another multinational corporation known as Maximus.

LICAC will kick all companies that profit from harassing the disabled out of the benefits system, and ensure that all financial incentives for removing people's disability benefit are removed. In opposition to recent Government-mandated policies, LICAC will promote inclusive policies to enable disabled people to participate in, and have equal access to, education, employment, housing, transport and according to needs: equal pay for equal work.

welfare provision. We also support measures to ensure disabled people receive a level of income

A BALANCED APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health problems should be recognized as disabilities. Rather than stigmatizing people suffering from mental health issues, LICAC recognizes that mental health problems are intimately connected to inequality and the nature of our class society. People should not be simply pathologised as individuals, but their mental conditions must be considered holistically in relation to the social and economic factors that impinge upon their well-being.

It is a truism that maintaining a balanced and nutritious diet is an integral part of promoting general good health. Yet with many families living on the bread-line and increasing numbers relying on food-banks it is clear that, for many, the need to make ends meet must be prioritized over healthy eating. Indeed, with continuing cuts to public services and workplace pay and conditions, frequently the first thing that people do to save money is buy cheaper lower-quality food. People in disadvantaged and marginalised communities, which are unfortunately commonplace in Leicester, are thus more likely to suffer from cancer, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease and mental health problems. They are more likely to be diagnosed late, to have more years of poor health and to die prematurely. To re-emphasize the point, it is more than apparent that health inequalities are largely driven by social inequalities.

This is exactly why fighting against the lies of austerity is so central to improving the health and life expectancy of people in Leicester. This holistic approach will enable our health system to begin to address many of the causative factors that lead to poor health, by focusing on preventative measures, rather than always dealing with problems only when they arise.

Finally, the health benefits of having the spare time to work in the fresh air should be available to all. Thus, public spaces and parks

should be protected and enhanced, and provided with regularly maintained (and open) public toilet facilities. Space allocated to allotments should be maintained and extended in order to allow more people to have regular access to open spaces which are managed communally for the common good.

A FAIRER ECONOMY FOR ALL

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

HELPING WORKERS AND LOCAL BUSINESSES

Growing Leicester's economy, creating jobs and apprenticeships that pay a real living wage (£10 an hour) and backing local businesses are key to securing prosperity and improving living standards in our communities. LICAC will make sure that human need is placed firmly before corporate greed. We will make it easier for small businesses to flourish in Leicester by opposing corporate welfare that sees some of the biggest corporations in the region getting Government handouts while they still get away with paying their employees poverty-pay.

We acknowledge the vital economic and social role played by maintaining a vibrant arts community. Although the benefits of the arts extend well beyond economic benefits, it is important to remember that the arts contribute £7 to the economy for every £1 of public investment. We will therefore fight to restore and expand funding for arts projects across our city, and support national campaigns to reverse all cuts made to Arts Council budgets since 2010. We also support calls for public ownership of more theatres and concert halls, with artistic directors to be elected by local communities and arts professionals.

We want everyone to be able to contribute towards our city economic growth in whatever way they can. This means we are committed to fighting to create well-paid unionised jobs, with proper contracts which include sick and holiday pay. LICAC is committed to creating a thriving city centre, but not at the expense of the rest of the city. Regeneration plans across the Leicester suburbs should therefore be decided democratically, with full public involvement.

We would create more jobs by reducing the working week without loss of pay (to 35 hours) and share out the work. LICAC would make cheap loans available for small businesses to expand, and we would invest in a major environmentally friendly house building programme, tackling the housing shortage and creating many jobs at the same time. We would ban zero hour contracts and offer a

triple guarantee: an education, an apprenticeship or a job. In the fifth richest economy on the planet we should be able to organise society so that people's needs are taken care of once they leave school.

The Labour Council continue to make multi-million-pound cuts to vital public services, while at the same time vying to attract the super-rich 1% to Leicester. Thus just this year we've learned that IBM, Hastings Insurance Services and the Tejani family (estimated wealth £140 million) have been given £1 million each in Government grants to set up major operations in Leicester. And, another £3 million has been spent by Leicester City Council on refurbishing the city centre office block that IBM will occupy.

Such big business activism on the part of our political leaders is the logical result of their frenetic courting of the super-rich which never seems to end. In March 2013, for example, it was reported in the *Leicester Mercury* that City Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby and Leicestershire County Council leader Nick Rushton "head[ed] a 25-strong delegation at MIPIM in Cannes to showcase 29 development sites in the city and county" to multi-national corporations. (MIPIM is a 4-day real estate exhibition, conference and networking event gathering 21,000 international property professionals.)

Clearly if the super-rich corporations that Mayor Soulsby wined and dined actually paid their way in society, then few people would query our political representatives encouraging them to settle in our region. But it seems that many of the businesses owned by the 1% don't make as positive a contribution to society as we might hope, certainly when compared to smaller local businesses that are not likely to attract £1 million state handouts!

IBM is a case in point. Do we really need to attract a multi-national corporation to our city that so regularly treats their employees with contempt? Remember this is the same IBM that routinely flaunts labour laws in China by forcing their factory workers to work 15-hour shifts, with a total break time of 1.5 hours. This when Chinese laws limit the maximum hours in a work day to 12 hours, including overtime and 1.5 hours in break time.

TAX JUSTICE FOR ALL

With the HSBC scandal rocking the world (again), it is worth considering why Leicester's Labour dominated Council is so keen to get into bed with big business when the benefits they might accrue to the city are debatable to say the least. Indeed, a recent PCS study demonstrated that some £120 billion a year in tax is evaded nationally by the super-rich.

LICAC Councillors recently demanded that the city's Labour Council sign-up to a national campaign called Towns Against Tax Dodging. Although it has not been reported in the media, the Council actually voted to support this important motion. Soon after this success LICAC took the fight directly to one of our city's most prolific tax dodgers, Boots the chemist.

We calculated that over £6 million has been stolen from the people of Leicester by Boots since 2007. A shocking sum that was calculated based on national figures that estimated that Boots failed to pay some £1.2 billion in tax over the past seven years. Seeking to redress this injustice, LICAC therefore organized a successful protest on Gallowtree Gate outside of Boots' main store in town earlier this year.



As LICAC Councillor Wayne Naylor said at the time: "Tax justice is a critical issue for the people of Leicester. The same laws should apply to everyone, be they rich or poor. In this day and age there is no reason why the super-rich should refuse to pay their tax. As Boots gets more than 40% of its UK revenue from the taxpayer, through NHS prescription dispensing and wholesale services, it is

particularly troubling that the government continues to tell us there is no money left to fund the NHS."

Yet alongside LICAC's pledge to rid our city of corporate thieves like Boots, LICAC is clear in their support for the staff at Boots. LICAC sent a message of solidarity to the thousands of Boots employees who have spent the last six years fighting to have their own independent union (the Pharmacists' Defence Association, PDA) recognized by their bullying management.

ENDING MODERN-DAY SLAVERY IN LEICESTER

Improving the pay and conditions of Leicester's workers will provide a massive boost to our local economy, allowing people who presently have little disposable income, but who live locally, to spend locally. The issue of low pay is all the more important in Leicester given the report published earlier this year by researchers at the University of Leicester with the support of the Ethical Trading Initiative -- an alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs that promotes respect for workers' rights around the globe.

This shocking local study on the prevalence of modern-day slavery in Leicester found that the majority of the people employed in the city's garment sector earn less than half the legal hourly rate, which is £6.50 for those aged 21 or over. This works out as a meagre £3 an hour! As about 5,000 of the East Midlands garment workers are based in Leicester, small garment factory owners are currently defrauding Leicester city out of around £400,000 a week, or £20 million a year in underpaid wages.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) currently has operational responsibility for enforcing the minimum wage in Leicester. But it is clear that just "urging HMRC to investigate" the findings of the slavery report (as the Labour Party are doing) is simply not good enough, especially because of the poor position that the HMRC is in to make a real difference without strong political support. LICAC would fight against all Government-led attacks on unionised workers within HMRC, and immediately take concrete

efforts to stamp out wage slavery in Leicester.

One way we would do this would be to launch a minimum wage enforcement program modelled upon a successful (but now unfunded) local enforcement project that the Council ran between 2001 and 2005. This initiative was trialled in the Highfields area of the city in partnership with HMRC and the then Department of Trade and Industry. This project was successful in building the confidence of workers, predominantly Asian Women, to make complaints to enforcement agencies and recover unpaid wages. During this period, the project identified 39 employers in the city that were not paying the minimum wage and recovered in excess of £118,000 in wages for nearly 500 workers.

Despite this critical issue of modern-day slavery having been the feature of a Channel 4 Dispatches program just a few years ago, Mayor Soulsby has expressed scepticism about the existence of sweatshops on his home turf. "I'd want to look very closely at the data they have got to see what they have based their figures on," Sir Peter said to the *Leicester Mercury* in the wake of the release of the Ethical Trade Initiative study.

LICAC by contrast are well aware of the existence of sweatshops in Leicester, and have already campaigned against such modern-day slavery. A good example of such activism was the motion our Councillors put forward to the Labour council last year to oppose the use of exploitative workfare schemes in Leicester — a motion that was quickly rejected by all Labour councillors. LICAC echo the comments made by Ian Hodson, the national president of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union's (BFAWU) who says:

"Businesses and companies have the ability to enrich people's lives and make a valuable contribution to society, yet so many of them have decided to tread the path of exploitation and misery, forcing those who work for them into a cycle of debt that they will never be able to get out of. If that were not bad enough, the government has targeted those at the lowest end of the pay scale and systematically demonised those in need of support — the sick the disabled and the unemployed — while protecting the companies that choose to operate

in a grossly immoral fashion. We believe that the way to improve society is to make work pay and the minimum wage should be at least £10 an hour. We don't believe [that] it's pie in the sky, it's a living wage."

Workfare schemes are ultimately an attack on the human rights of everyone in Leicester, whether they are unemployed or employed. The simple although severely problematic idea underpinning workfare is that people claiming benefits should be forced to work for nothing — under the threat of having their benefit payments cut.

So far, hundreds of companies and charities have outright rejected these workfare schemes. And while twenty or so enlightened Councils across the country have pledged to boycott this archaic form of exploitation, Leicester City Council is not amongst them. LICAC believes that Leicester can do much better than this.

A fair day's work always deserves a fair days pay. Private employers should not be getting a public subsidy to make profits, especially given the fact that such workfare schemes further contribute toward joblessness and undermine the position of all workers to earn a living. What is needed are proper jobs with proper pay and conditions, not government-imposed hard labour. In a familiar story, not one of Leicester's three Labour MP's voted against the introduction of the workfare scheme when it was discussed in Parliament last year.

We live in one of the richest countries in the world, yet all the Coalition can offer us is another £30 billion worth of cuts, including £12 billion from welfare. With increasing demand for pay-day lenders, and queues at food banks growing, people need an alternative to austerity. There is plenty of money in society. We just have to make sure that the super-rich pay the billions of pounds of tax that they owe us. This is something that LICAC promises to do. It is revealing that in January this year not one of Leicester's three elected Labour MP's voted against the Coalition Government's 'Budget Responsibility Charter' — which meant they all agreed on the necessity for another £30 billion to be cut from the budget.

FAIR PAY AND AN END TO ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS

In April LICAC supported a protest outside McDonald's in Leicester city centre called by the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union's (BFAWU) union to oppose the use of zero-hour contracts, which was part of a global fast food rights day of action.



BFAWU regional organizer, George Atwall, had actually invited Jon Ashworth (Leicester South) and Keith Vaz (Leicester East) to the planned protest over two weeks prior to the event. However, despite the Labour Party's alleged commitment to scrapping zero-hour, both MPs refused to even respond to the union's request for help. By way of a contrast, LICAC stands shoulder-to-shoulder with all trade unions who fight all the mean attempts by bosses to reduce workers' share of profits. Poverty pay is a particularly severe problem within the Leicester East constituency, where nearly third of people earn less than the current already inadequate living wage, while in some areas of Leicester up to 48% of children are growing up in poverty.

A recent report produced by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership illustrated the level of poverty on our own doorstep, pointing out how: (1) average earnings in some areas of the sub-region are well below those for the East Midlands region and England as a whole; and (2) according to the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation, Leicester is the 25th most deprived local authority in the country. Moreover, it is apparent that wages have not kept pace with the cost of living. After taking account of inflation, the average full-time worker's wage in England fell by 8 per cent between 2010 and 2014. However, real wages in our city have fallen by 9.1 per cent.

LICAC believes that the only reason for maintaining low pay and zero-hour contracts is to appease greedy bosses. We know that is what the Tories have always been about, but unfortunately the same is now true of the Labour Party. Labour has moved its pledge of an £8 an hour minimum wage forward to 2019 — it shows that there is pressure on wages but they don't offer a real solution like LICAC does: £10 now with no exemptions.

Lessons should be learned from the successes of workers in other countries. For example, in the US city of Seattle this month thousands of workers received a major pay increase as the \$15 minimum wage is phased in. That was won by workers — in the unions, the workplaces and in the city council where socialist council member Kshama Sawant has led the battle. That's our model — a struggle for decent living conditions in the unions, in the workplaces and by being workers' representatives on worker's wages fighting for all working class people.

If workers were paid a decent living wage, and the working week was capped at 35 hours with no loss of pay, the majority of people in Leicester would no longer need to worry about paying their bills and figuring out how to put dinner on the table every day. This is why the fight for increased pay is a central pillar of LICAC's work.

NO TO SECRET TRADE AGREEMENTS

Although it may seem obvious, LICAC supports local campaigns that work to oppose secretive international trade agreements that only promote the needs of the super-rich. In April 2015, LICAC supported local campaigners working with the campaigning group 38 Degrees who held a protest in town to oppose the anti-democratic nature of the little-known Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). In Leicester TUSC was the only political party take part in this Global Day of Action against TTIP. Unlike the three major parties, which all support TTIP, TUSC is completely opposed to it.

At our 2015 national conference we agreed our general election platform which included:

'No to TTIP and all secret austerity treaties'. Amongst the many serious problems associated with TTIP is the fact that this so-called agreement aims to further open up our public services (particularly the NHS) to be privatised and run in the interests of profit, rather than the public. Probably the most dangerous aspect of TTIP is the investor-state dispute settlement which would allow corporations to bring legal claims against states whenever they feel that their business interests have been adversely affected by national laws or policies. TTIP is yet another example of how we need to change the type of society we live in – which is run in the interests of the 1% not the 99%.



LICAC will continue to campaign for a democratic socialist society run in the interests of ordinary working people, not millionaires. For bringing into democratic public ownership the major companies and banks that dominate the economy, so that production and services can be planned to meet the needs of all and to protect the environment.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The only way to prevent further global warming and all the devastating effects predicted is to begin to rapidly phase out fossil fuels. Technological innovation has already provided the possibility of retooling our economy and our societies with clean, renewable energy from the sun, wind, and water. There is no need for new breakthroughs to achieve this. No new technology or ideas are required to grow enough food to feed humanity while preserving the soil (and the rainforests) for future generations. We already know how to do that.

The only thing standing in the way is big business and the elite 1% who refuse to apply this knowledge.

Unfortunately all the mainstream parties advocate a market-based solution to climate change. As far as they are concerned, large-scale public solutions are out of the question. This just does not make sense given the environmental crisis facing our planet. LICAC will thus work to promote the uptake of renewable energy and sustainable manufacturing within our city, and will coordinate with national and international efforts to share best practice on these matters.

Energy and resource use under socialist planning would be substantially more efficient than the current trash-pile-creating system of capitalism, with its reliance on planned obsolescence, a profit scheme of manufacturing products designed to be consumed, thrown away, and then replaced. Products would be manufactured to be durable, not disposable.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN PUBLIC CONTROL

TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS

PUBLICLY OWNED, AFFORDABLE TRANSPORT

Investing to improve the city's public transport infrastructure is a priority for LICAC. Support for the renationalisation of vital public services is running high – high, that is, outside of mainstream political parties. The latest spell of profiteering by leading public service privatiser, Richard Branson, provides even more fuel for this cost-effective argument.

Since John Major's Conservative government broke up British Rail some 20 years ago, the public subsidy for running our rail networks has actually increased. A recent interview with James Abbott, the editor of *Modern Railways* – a popular magazine aimed at railway professionals – suggested that renationalising railways now would not be difficult at all.

As Ian Taylor, author of the 2012 trade union report, *Rebuilding Rail*, correctly points out: "The biggest obstacle to renationalising the railways is the prevailing dogma – the assumption that marketisation and competition must be best." Their union study demonstrated that by removing the profit motive from our rail network, £1 billion could be saved annually for the benefit of wider society.

The purpose of the railway system should primarily be to provide a public service not service private profits. Bringing the rail industry into democratic public ownership is not difficult, but finding any political will to seriously carry out this task is a problem. LICAC, and TUSC more broadly, therefore call for the full renationalisation of our rail system in order that our train services may be extended and improved to serve public need, in contrast to private greed.

The same is true for our city bus companies in Leicester. Here in Leicester, public transport costs have seen massive increases in recent years – faster, even, than the cost of running a car. Over the past five years the average annual growth-rate for bus fares was 5 percent, which was only slightly slower than for rail fares (at 5.8 percent per year). By comparison, over the past year to June 2014, the price of purchasing a motor vehicle was

unchanged and the price of petrol and oil dropped by 3.1 percent.

Many low-paid workers face limited access by bus to employment centres outside the principal urban areas, such as business parks; a problem compounded by the fact that evening and weekend bus services are less frequent than at other times which can be particularly problematic for employees doing shift-work. There also remain problems for lower income households in the County's more rural communities, which may struggle to access labour markets without incurring the significant cost of running a car.

LICAC will take all Leicester bus companies back into public ownership, and work to make bus travel an affordable, comfortable, and convenient means of travel for all. Needless to say, no one would disagree that bus prices in Leicester are already ridiculously high and that further price hikes should be opposed. But controlling the price of public transport is best done through public ownership of the means of travel. The Labour Party disagree on this, which is why on January 28th 2015, Labour MP Keith Vaz (Leicester East) tabled an early day motion on public transport. He noted:

"That this House is concerned that First has increased bus prices in Leicester by an average of 10 pence a ticket; notes that these price hikes come during a huge fall in the price of crude oil; further notes that competitor company Arriva is freezing the price of all single bus tickets; supports bus usage as an environmentally beneficial and affordable alternative to driving; and calls on First to review its pricing structure in Leicester." (Early day motion 742)

Labour have apparently ruled out renationalising public transport, which leaves them in the problematic position of begging bus companies to review their pricing structures. Of course, private companies have no obligation to do this.

Like Arriva, which is owned by Deutsche Bahn, First Buses is owned by a corporation which is considered to be the leading transport operator in the UK and North America with revenues of over £6.5 billion per annum. But that First's owners should place their

own profits before the needs of their employees and customers is not too surprising, especially given the fact that the chairman of their board of directors is the former head of Citibank's exploitative operations in the UK.

This is why begging for profit-driven corporations to restrain themselves from profiteering at the hands of their customers is futile. It is certainly not a useful solution for addressing the root cause of the crisis in public transport that has long been facing this country and our city. This is why nationally, TUSC pledges to re-nationalise all rail, bus and ferry services to build an integrated, low-pollution and affordable public transport system. Here in Leicester we also believe that pensioners and those in education should enjoy the right to free public transport.

It is great that the city now has invested in re-viving the Haymarket Bus Station, but where are the extra bus services? LICAC would connect all parts of Leicester and ensure that everyone benefits from a low-cost regular bus service that enables people to commute across the city both night and day. Affordable, regular public transport will have the additional benefit of taking the strain off our roads, easing congestion, and will make our roads safer for cyclists.

Upgrading Leicester's public transport infrastructure will have additional environmental benefits, which connect with LICAC's commitment to acting to support action against climate change. LICAC aims to work towards building a future where sustainability comes before profit. This is an important part of ensuring that Leicester is a caring city, which does not needlessly contribute towards environmentally destructive activities. Having an efficient, user-friendly transport network will also work improve the air quality in our city.

BUILDING COUNCIL HOUSES AND COMMUNITIES

TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS

A RETURN TO COUNCIL HOMES

The National Housing Federation released a report last October titled 'Broken Markets, Broken Dream' which concluded that the East Midlands "is not building enough new homes to keep up with demand." According to their figures, simply keeping pace with housing demand in Leicester requires that at least 1,400 new housing units are constructed each year. Given that the construction of affordable housing has apparently been an urgent priority for Leicester, many would have previously welcomed the Labour Council's 2008 target of committing to build 790 affordable housing units annually.

But owing to cuts, the Council never came close to achieving these targets. At the same time, nationally, all the mainstream parties have been content passing hundreds of billions of pounds worth of public funds over to private landlords: with a recent GMB union study putting this figure at £411 billion in payouts to rich landlords since they Thatcher government came to power. This is why LICAC will fight for Council-run not-for-profit letting agencies, and will make full use of council powers to regulate the private rented sector.

As noted in the June 2014 briefing report by the Labour Council's resident housing authority, "the current predicted output [of affordable housing units] for 2015/18 is estimated at 160 per annum compared with the average 200 achieved per annum over the last 7 years." Evidently, this is a major problem, which is compounded by the Council's own recent admission that "[t]he Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 identified that Leicester's net affordable housing need is 496 additional homes per year for the next 25 years to meet current and future demand from households who cannot afford to enter the private housing market."

It is clear that Labour has no answer to solving Leicester's housing crisis. Tragically there were 9,223 household on the housing register in April 2012, a figure which rose to 10,549 by last October, and seems only likely to go up in the years ahead. In a desperate social climate of increasing unemployment and poverty, where there is already a massive waiting list for council housing, it is obvious to all that

handing over further control of the housing market to the private sector is far from sane.

It is for precisely these reasons that LICAC supports the demands of the Unite Housing Workers' Manifesto, which argues in favour of more council housing and to bring an end to the 'right to buy scheme', which only serves to remove homes from the council stock.



Rather than building the council houses that our city needs so much, here in Leicester (as elsewhere) the Labour Party prefer to commit themselves to using Housing Associations to build what they refer to as "affordable" homes. According to Labour, "affordable" is defined at up to 80% of market prices – so not very affordable after all. By contrast with social housing, where rent collected by the Council can be used to fund the construction of yet more council houses, non-profit Housing Associations have no democratic mandate and are still run as private operations. Housing Associations are therefore used to smooth the ongoing privatisation of housing stock.

When asked by LICAC Councillor Wayne Naylor, whether the Labour council would "commit to a progressive program of rebuilding council houses rather than sinking more public money into private hands for profit?", the Council responded with a stony silence. It is clear that the Council should immediately start a mass building programme of affordable, good quality public housing, if it is serious about solving the enormous shortage that exists. Furthermore, rents in both public and private sector should be capped at a genuinely affordable level, and councils should act proactively to check this.

There are many reasons why the Council should provide affordable good quality housing for all of Leicester's citizens. To take just

one example, housing issues are clearly related to an individual's likelihood to be prosecuted for criminal offences. Sadly, according to a council report, "50% of Leicestershire offenders, entering prison, have been assessed as having housing problems, prior to sentencing, and 30% of those leaving prison, had no fixed address to return to." A tragic problem that could be remedied if there was the political will to do so.

For an example of Labour's misguided housing strategy, one need only look to the example of their latest building venture taking place on the 13-acre former allotment site off Safroon Lane. Here, the Council are in the process of enabling the East Midlands Housing Association (Emh homes) and Westleigh Developments to build 50 so-called "affordable" eco-homes. In this instance, not only is the Labour Council using Housing Associations to house the poor, not council homes, it can also boast of selling publicly owned land worth some £1.5 million for just £1.

CARING FOR THE HOMELESS

According to a Labour report, budget cuts are a "positive opportunity to modernise our homeless services"; i.e. to allow homeless services to be taken over ("opened out") to "providers from the third sector, social enterprises and the private sector..." By contrast, LICAC councillors vow to vote against the privatisation of council jobs and services, or the transfer of council services to 'social enterprises' or 'arms-length' management organisations, which are first steps to privatisation.

Given recent figures, the Council's September 2012 Homelessness Review predicted that by the end of 2012/13 their Housing Options Service will have dealt with over 2,350 households facing homelessness, that is, almost 20% more than the number dealt with in 2010/11. This is a serious issue that demands serious solutions: like perhaps the building of new council homes, or the nationalization of the many private rental properties currently sitting vacant. The extent of the latter problem is actually illustrated elsewhere in the review, as more than a quarter are of the 22,400 privately rented properties in Leicester are presently empty — with 25% being empty for at least 18 months.

We have been told by the Labour Council that it is not democratic decision-making that is "driving the review of public sector services" but "the current financial environment"; by which they mean, it is the bankers who are "dictating that staying as we are is not an option." There are "clear indicators that something is not working" with the current system of dealing with homelessness, they add, with many front-line staff frustrated by "a lack of resources..." The failure of the Labour Party to stand up for ordinary people is the failure of the democratic process itself.

Rather than looking for political solutions that would create a fairer more equitable economy — one that provides full employment and cheap housing for all — the Labour Council has followed the Tories in blaming homelessness on policies which help the poor. Indeed, the Labour Council has overseen the cutting of Leicester's homelessness budget by a third.

If the profiteering house-builders say they can't or won't build the high quality and affordable Council homes that our city urgently needs, then LICAC will work nationally with TUSC to take these companies into democratic public ownership. Of course we could pay compensation — but only on the basis of proven need and not to the fat-cat shareholders. Likewise, following the example of the Unite Housing Workers' Manifesto, LICAC supports the nationalisation of the banks. If this were done, socially necessary projects such as the construction of decent social housing could easily be financed. LICAC would give the 99% a voice in our city by acting in their interest — not pandering to the greed of the super-rich 1%.

Needless to say, LICAC will refuse to implement the Bedroom Tax. We would write off all Bedroom Tax-related arrears, withdraw all court proceedings and eviction orders where the Bedroom Tax has been a factor, and call on Housing Associations to do the same. TUSC members in Leicester played a central role in lobbying the local Labour Party to do something concrete about the Bedroom Tax — like, for example, guaranteeing that they would not evict anyone who could not afford to pay this vile tariff. The Labour Council failed even to do this.

Whilst the Labour council have cut council tax benefit by 20%, LICAC rejects increases in council tax, rent and service charges to compensate for government cuts. We will also make sure that there are adequate staff to provide rapid response repairs to our cities soon to be expanding council housing stock.



LICAC believe that local residents should have a say in shaping their local communities. We reject private tendering, and acknowledge that increased funding for renovating and building new community hubs is necessary, which is why we are committed to fighting against cuts and to use the unpaid tax we collect from the super-rich to ensure that money is available to benefit the rest of us. A focus on provision of local employment and traineeships on estates is also essential.

Provision of essential services in our communities should not primarily rely upon goodwill and volunteers, which sadly is the central thrust of Labour's policy of facilitating "Community Asset Transfers." Funding for such services must be demanded from central Government, and LICAC are willing to help lead a mass-based public campaign to help ensure that this happens.

Dressing up public sector cuts with positive spin about helping local communities, as Labour are prone to do, is the ultimate sign of political cowardice. Here in Leicester, the Council now refer to their cuts as "Transforming Neighbourhood Services." "Significant cuts in government funding" we are told, means the Council wants "to work with communities to make changes now, before it becomes critical." "We want to work with you to make these services fit for the future." But if neighbourhood services are to fit

for the future it is essential that they receive continued and growing levels of financial support from our Council; and if that means that our Councillors have to spend Council reserves to do so, and to also actively oppose the Government to get the necessary money from the super-rich to prevent service provision becoming a "critical" issue then so be it!

Of course, given the Council's contemptible failure to oppose cuts, it is totally understandable why local community groups are stepping forward to run community centres. However, ultimately taking on the burden of running such services will not serve to improve vital community provision in the city. Instead, local communities across the city must strive to come together to fight for an alternative to such attacks on all the public services that we all know and love (many of which have sadly already been destroyed in recent years).

INVESTING IN LEISURE

Last year the Council "consulted" about their plans to cut funding for maintaining Leicester's Council owned golf courses. Thousands of people voiced their opposition to the proposed cuts with the *Leicester Mercury* reporting that "The vast majority of them [saying] the council should keep subsidising both courses." Even those residents of Leicester who did not use the golf courses recognized their broader importance in serving the people of Leicester, with the majority of non-golfers spoken to during the consultation (51%) saying that they were in favour of continuing the subsidies. Despite protestations, the Council moved to close Western Parks Golf Course.

LICAC believes that publicly owned leisure services that provide cheap and locally based access to sporting facilities, fulfil a vital role in strengthening our communities, allowing us to participate in our own chosen leisure pursuits at minimal cost. LICAC say that increasing public investment in sporting facilities like the Saffron Lane Athletics Stadium is essential, not a luxury. This is why we are committed to making sure that the super-rich pay the tax they owe, in order that we can free up the necessary money to allow the much-needed investment in sports in Leicester. Having worked for their entire lives to benefit society LICAC believes that access to sporting facilities should be free for pensioners.

FIGHTING RACISM IN LEICESTER

LICAC is firmly committed to countering the lies perpetuated by the mainstream political parties that serve to divide the working-class. For example, despite Leicester being a proudly multi-racial city, which has a long history of actively opposing racism, all of the mainstream political party's share some degree of responsibility in perpetuating racial tensions across Leicester. Instead of using their positions to point the finger at the wealthy tax-dodgers, elected officials attempt to divide the working classes.

Recent and ongoing examples of racism continue to plague the mainstream parties in Leicester and surrounding counties. In 2009, current Conservative councillor for Groby and Ratby, Robert Fraser, was fined £250 and temporarily suspended for delivering a racist public rant against Romanians, saying that they would "stick a knife in you as soon as look at you". While earlier this year, the secretary of the UKIP South Leicestershire branch was outed in the national media for his disgusting comments on Facebook, where he was quoted as saying that Leicester was "Britain's biggest shithole", which was "full of pakis". The Labour Party have also courted controversy for standing a candidate, Teresa Aldred, in Leicester's Thurncourt ward who appears to have been a fellow traveller of the BNP. Ms Aldred's apparent connections with the BNP are particularly worrying given the significant role played by far-right groups in stirring up racial hatred in her ward in the recent past.

Here in Leicester, the Labour Party continues to do nothing to address the real concerns of normal people, concerns which include job insecurity, a lack of affordable housing, stretched public services, and a race-to-the-bottom in pay and working conditions. UKIP on the other hand, capitalises at every turn on the fears of working class people – particularly those about immigration, while diverting blame over collapsing living standards from the bankers, big business and the super-rich. Labour fails to take up such issues with any degree of success and so we have the sad situation that many voters who support political policies which are to the left of Labour will support UKIP to punish all the mainstream parties.

Recent polls have demonstrated that when asked many UKIP voters support left policies. For example, YouGov found that 74% of UKIP voters support nationalising the energy companies; and 72% of UKIP supporters are pro-nationalisation of the rail companies. Of course, these are not the policies of UKIP. This yet another reason why TUSC believes so strongly in the need to create a new party for ordinary people. One of the most effective ways to undermine the racist politics of all the mainstream parties is to present a clear working-class alternative to the public that can inspire people to once again get involved in politics. Only the bosses win when we're divided.

Leicester is one of the few cities left in the UK with a Race Equality Centre, yet our Council is currently in the process of cutting their funding. This is despite the fact that the Leicester Race Equality Centre (TREC) has worked to give advice and support to an estimated 150,000 people over the last fifty years. In Leicester, TREC provides a unique service, responsive to the needs of diverse communities in the city, often working with extremely deprived and vulnerable people. It has also worked to improve relations between communities in the face of far-right attempts to increase racial tension – as has happened in Thurnby Lodge and with the EDL protests that took place in recent years. In both these cases, TREC have been involved in combating racist ideas and developing dialogue between different ethnic groups. Between 2013 and 2014, TREC dealt with 794 enquiries, and faced a 70% increase in cases of harassment.

Mayor Soulsby has acknowledged the good work done by voluntary services in the city. However, last year he sought to blame the Tories for the cuts, rather than taking any responsibility himself for their implementation. He said that services had to go out to tender, as this was "the way of the world", and that the council had no choice except to cut the overall funding pot. Mayor Soulsby admitted that a total of 18 other services were having to go through similar reviews, such as children and adult services. Indeed, the cuts being made by the Council are widespread and affect the most vulnerable people in our society disproportionately – in the case of TREC, asylum seekers, refugees and people experiencing discrimination or harassment. LICAC would scrap the tendering process. Instead of

services wasting resources in drawing up tender documents and having to justify themselves to the council, they should simply be able to get on with the job they are supposed to do.

Instead of opposing unnecessary attacks on the most vulnerable sections of society, the Leicester Labour Council have continually plead that their hands are tied. “We had to bail out the bankers”, we are told, and needless to say, the “cuts have to be made.” This is a vicious lie: the Council can resist the attacks, but they would prefer not to — what on earth do they think the Labour Council did in Liverpool during the 1980s, where they built more council homes than the rest of the country combined? This massive lie, however, is not surprising given that the Labour Party are committed to the same cuts agenda as the Conservatives, albeit proceeding at a slightly slower pace.

DO WE EVEN NEED A MAYOR?

**TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS**

DOES LEICESTER EVEN NEED AN EXECUTIVE MAYOR?

In 2011, Leicester elected an executive mayor. Today, this one person has more power over council services than all of the 54 equally democratically elected councillors. The previous system, where the councillors elected their own leadership and had more power to make decisions, was replaced without asking the people of Leicester. In other cities, a referendum was held to decide on the change, most deciding against. In Leicester, we did not get the opportunity to vote.

Yes, the executive mayor is an elected position, but in his four-year term of office he can do virtually what he wants. Councillors are relegated to “scrutinising” decisions. It is true decisions can be overturned, but only if two-thirds of councillors agree. Why should one individual have so much power anyway? It is far harder for people to lobby and influence the all-powerful mayor than their local councillor. It means fewer checks on decisions, such as which organisations will benefit from the sale of council land or buildings for £1, for example. It means when services are cut, people have less of a say.

In the USA, many cities are run by “big personality” mayors, supervised only by elected “boards” which meet once a year to hand out contracts for public services to private providers. It’s far easier, in such a system, for one person to take unpopular decisions to cut services – or to favour big business interests.

Services in Leicester are being brutally cut, particularly hitting the most vulnerable. The mayor is cutting vital services such as children’s centres, adventure playgrounds and hostel beds for the homeless, as well as closing and selling off old peoples’ homes. At the same time, he is spending millions of pounds on capital projects, mainly in the city centre, such as Jubilee Square. Yes, cuts are being made by national government. But they could be fought against by local politicians if they chose, by:

Using the city’s millions of pounds of reserves, the £23 million being gained from the sale of council land and buildings and borrowing

powers if necessary, to maintain vital services. Building a massive campaign to defend our services and demand more from the Government.

Removing the city mayor position in itself will not solve all the problems. But it at least gives us a system more responsive to people’s needs.

WHAT COUNCILS CAN DO NOW...

TUSC
AGAINST
CUTS

There is no dispute that councils face a dire financial situation. Even the Tory chair of the Local Government Association, Sir Merrick Cockell, has warned that the current funding levels for local councils “will not see us through for very much longer”. Such complaints from a Tory politician are hypocritical but they reflect the real crisis facing local council services.

LICAC believes that councils should not meekly accept the cuts to local authority funding made by the Con-Dem government. In the first instance councils have the means to avoid making cuts by using their reserves and borrowing powers. This would buy them time to build a campaign to force the government – either this one or the next – to properly fund local government. This stance is one of the core policies of TUSC, which will be supported by all our candidates in the May local elections.

But we also believe that councils could better mobilise support for a campaign for more resources if they used the powers that they have to implement policies that would positively improve the position of millions of people struggling to survive in ‘austerity Britain’.

Below is a list of just such policies. And councils have the legal powers to implement them. What is unique about the policies below is that at least one council somewhere in Britain has implemented at least one of them in some form in the recent period:

- Restore full council tax rebates, to be funded from council reserves not council tax rises, and campaign for government to reimburse councils that do so.
- Support free school meals for every primary school pupil.
- Introduce local replacements for the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) for 16-18 year-olds staying on in education.
- Reinstate childcare provision in Sure Start centres where this has been cut and re-open the 550 centres closed since 2010.
- Support parents and teachers who oppose the Con-Dems’ enforced academisation of schools by using councils’ powers to refuse to issue ‘warning notices’ against schools that are working to improve their performance.

- Use councils’ powers to compulsorily register private landlords and set-up council-run lettings agencies to tackle repair standards, high rents, over-occupancy, extortionate letting fees etc for private rented homes.
- Build council homes now. Use councils’ borrowing powers for capital spending to build council homes, while campaigning for the government to divert its subsidy for private developers to finance a mass programme of public housing.
- Implement the UNISON trade union’s ethical care charter to end ‘15-minute maximum’ visiting slots, zero-hour contracts, and unpaid travel time for home care workers.
- Use councils’ powers to exclude firms that have participated in blacklisting from tendering for public contracts.

The question is, why couldn’t councils implement *all* of these policies? Wouldn’t that give a clear example of what difference councils can make – and compelling reasons for people to support them taking a stand in favour of proper funding for local services?

Government funding of local councils is being cut by £7.6 billion between 2011 and 2015 (with a further £2.1 billion cut planned for 2015-16). Yet Britain’s top companies have an estimated cash pile of £750 billion accumulated profits which they are refusing to invest. Meanwhile the number of billionaires in Britain rose from 77 in 2012 to 88 last year. The question is not ‘is the money there?’ but how can a campaign be won for the money to defend and improve local public services. LICAC is proud to be a part of the biggest ever left-of-Labour trade unionist and socialist challenge in local council elections. We will fight these elections on a policy of opposition to all cuts to present council services. But we will also highlight what more councils could do. And that councillors can make a difference – but only if they are prepared to fight.

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Promoted by Michael Barker, 30 Hextall Road, Leicester LE5 6AF, on behalf
of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition and Leicester Independent
Councillors Against Cuts