

Aberdeenshire Council
elections 2012

“ politics is all about
people and the
issues that affect them ”



**Scottish
Conservatives**

Scottish Conservatives believe in local government. We believe that decisions should be taken as locally as possible; closest to the communities affected and with local people having a much greater say over the shape of local services.

That's why the Scottish Conservatives are standing on a manifesto of radically devolving power. We will devolve powers from the Scottish Parliament to local councils and we want councils in turn to pass as many of those powers as possible down to individual communities.

All across Scotland, Conservative Councillors are working hard, representing their communities and helping improve the quality of life for local people.

We are fighting for more efficient services and to hold down Council Tax bills. We are fighting for investment to improve local schools, for better leisure services, for good quality rented housing and to protect our environment.

A vote for the Scottish Conservatives on 3rd May is a vote to strengthen our local democracy. It's a vote for value for money, good quality services and to elect Conservative Councillors who care about and want to serve their communities.



Ruth Davidson MSP
Leader, Scottish Conservative Party

For nearly five years, the Conservative Group has run Aberdeenshire Council in partnership with our Liberal Democrat colleagues. We were a minority partner but played a major role in delivering a very successful administration.

We have had to deal with extremely difficult financial situations as we set ever more challenging budgets year on year. Difficult decisions had to be made but we made those decisions from a position of strength and having considered all of the available information. We agreed our priorities and we ensured that we supported those priorities first and foremost. We are in a period of local government financing that means that we can only spend money on what we have to do rather than what we would like to do. Behind all of these decisions of course is the knowledge that we are spending other people's money – your money. We have done our best to make sure that none of that money is wasted and that we get best value from every pound spent. That is a challenge that we have to take forward into the next council.

We want our council services to be the best available. In every aspect of the work of the council, we have ideas that will continue the good work that we have done over the past five years. We have a wide range of ideas, built on the solid foundations laid down during some tough years, which will reap benefits in the hopefully better years to come.



Councillor Jim Gifford
Conservative Group Leader, Aberdeenshire Council

Our priorities for the next five years are shown below with additional details contained on the following pages.

On finance and service delivery we will:

- Continue to campaign for a 'Fair Share' of Scottish Government Grant funding. Currently, Aberdeenshire only receives 87.5% of Scottish Government Grant and we will fight to ensure that there is a ceiling that no Council should receive either more than 110% or less than 90% of Grant. In the longer term, we will be campaigning for equality of payments across Scotland.
- Continue to seek out inefficiency and waste through detailed Service Reviews.
- Improve efficiency through Shared Services with the public sector, including sharing facilities.

To support employment we will:

- Ensure that Aberdeenshire is seen to be open for business by welcoming and encouraging new businesses.
- Work to develop High Speed Broadband throughout Aberdeenshire.
- Provide help and advice to Aberdeenshire businesses and support business schemes such as 'Support for Aberdeenshire Business', 'Survive and Thrive' and the 'First Employee Grant Scheme'.

In our schools we will:

- Ensure high standards of literacy and numeracy.
- Improve the level of achievement for all children in Aberdeenshire.
- Support Head Teachers to achieve high standards of discipline, respect and responsibility.

To support the elderly we will:

- Enable older people to remain in their homes as long as possible.
- Support early intervention.
- Introduce personal budgets and individual support plans for everyone receiving council funded social care.

To support quality development we will:

- Implement the new Local Development Plan. (LDP)
- Speed up planning decisions whilst maintaining the quality of decision making.
- Strengthen planning enforcement against planning infringements.

To deliver quality housing we will:

- Review housing allocations policy giving more emphasis to local residents – *Local Homes for Local People*
- Work with partners to help with fuel poverty by insulating homes and maximising benefit entitlement
- Work with MSP colleagues to ensure that we receive adequate funding to allow as many affordable houses to be built as possible in order to reduce our housing waiting list



To support sustainable development we will:

- Encourage sustainability in planning policy: i.e. inclusion of renewable energy systems and ensuring the highest standards of energy conservation for new buildings.
- Develop renewable energy projects in Council properties and encourage communities to develop sustainable energy projects to reduce energy usage.
- Pressurise and lobby the Scottish Government to develop a policy on cumulative impact of wind turbines as soon as possible.

To Keep Aberdeenshire moving we will:

- Support the delivery of major transportation projects vital to the North East:-
 - The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road (AWPR)
 - Dualling the A90 Balmedie to Tipperty
 - Dualling the A96
 - Inverurie Eastern Bypass
 - Laurencekirk Flyover
 - Inveramsay Bridge
 - Bottlenecks between Aberdeenshire and the City like the Bridge of Dee, Bridge of Don and the Haudagain Roundabout
- Improve local transport services in partnership with NESTRANS and Transport Operators.
- Commit resources to maintain and improve existing roads.

On health & wellbeing we will:

- Work to address the health and social impacts of young people drinking
- Tackle alcohol misuse in all age groups
- Work in partnership with the Health Service to provide more outreach centres

In leisure, culture and tourism we will:

- Provide transitional funding to support Sports, Leisure and Arts groups.
- Set up an 'arms length' Trust to manage the Council's leisure and cultural functions.
- Support projects that will enhance and promote the tourism infrastructure in Aberdeenshire.

To support our communities we will:

- Support the Local Policing initiative of 'Local Policing – closer to you.' We will require local policing teams to hold regular meetings within their community beat area so that residents can hold them to account.
- Ensure that local accountability is maintained under the new single tier Police Force and Fire & Rescue Service.
- Campaign with MSP colleagues to maintain existing Police Officer numbers.



Politics is all about people and the issues that affect them

Improving local services - Getting best value for the taxpayer

For five years the Conservative Group has worked hard to ensure that Aberdeenshire Council is efficient and effective. The budget process over the last few years has been extremely difficult; Services have had to find new ways of being more efficient as less money has been available. Tough decisions had to be made.

We want our Services to respond to the needs and aspirations of all our communities - cleaner streets, good schools offering the best education possible; a housing service that meets tenants needs; better sport, leisure and cultural facilities and support for local businesses.

We never forget that these services are paid for by the taxpayer. We will ensure maximum value for every pound spent.

We will:

- continue to campaign for a 'Fair Share' of Scottish Government Grant funding. Currently, Aberdeenshire only receives **87.5%** of Scottish Government Grant and we will fight to ensure that there is a ceiling that no Council should receive either more than 110% or less than 90% of Grant. In the longer term, we will be campaigning for equality of payments across Scotland.
- continue to seek out inefficiency and waste through detailed Service Reviews.
- improve efficiency through Shared services with the public sector, including sharing facilities.
- reinforce a strong "Residents First" approach
- reduce absence rates in Council staff
- support Continuous Improvement and Best Value activities such as Kaizen
- continue to invest in IT solutions to improve efficiency
- ensure that there is no gold plating in policy and regulation implementation
- ensure that all Council buildings are fit for purpose and dispose of those not needed.
- continue expansion of the WorkSmart programme
- continue to help community groups and social enterprises to take over Council assets and services
- push localism driving decision making and budget control to the lowest effective level

Jobs and the Economy - Unlocking the North East's potential

Aberdeenshire has a wealth of oil and gas related businesses and hundreds of other more traditional businesses. Farming, Fishing, Tourism, Food & Drink and Forestry also continue to be important industries. New and innovative projects like Energetica, Renewable Energy, Carbon Capture & Storage and Tourism projects are coming to fruition. Innovation and diversification is key. These and other projects need to be encouraged and Aberdeenshire Conservatives see the Council in the forefront of these acting as a facilitator and working in partnership with the Private Sector. Aberdeenshire is the jewel in Scotland's crown and we have to take full advantage of any and all opportunities that come our way.

We will:

- ensure that Aberdeenshire is seen to be open for business by welcoming and encouraging new businesses.
- work to develop High Speed Broadband throughout Aberdeenshire
- provide help and advice to Aberdeenshire businesses and support business schemes such as 'Support for Aberdeenshire Business', 'Survive and Thrive' and the 'First Employee Grant Scheme'
- champion modern apprenticeships, vocational qualifications and Enterprise and Entrepreneurship education, in cooperation with Further Education premises, like Banff & Buchan College
- encourage Town Centre regeneration and support rural partnerships to maintain the vibrancy of our communities.
- review Town Centre parking strategy to help support local businesses
- ensure the provision of low cost starter business units where there is demand
- continue to support the Oil and Gas Industry serving the UK Continental shelf and the rest of the world
- support Westhill as the global capital of subsea engineering excellence
- support the development of Energetica corridor
- ensure that Aberdeenshire is recognised as the centre for renewable energy
- continue to support carbon capture and storage
- continue to support the food and drink industry towards further innovation, added value and quality (Buy local/Eat Local). Work to maximise the added value of Aberdeenshire produced products e.g. Beef and Seafood

- continue to support the Agricultural, Fishing and Forestry industries
- ensure planning policies are geared to assist young people wishing to enter the agriculture industry and continue to live on the farm
- encourage business plans to modernise buildings and facilitate farm diversification
- develop initiatives to enhance the resilience of fishing communities

The best start in life - Schools fit for the 21st century

A good Primary and Secondary education is the key to a bright future for our children. It is a path to a rewarding and fulfilling career and to the opportunities of further education.

That is why we support continued investment in the fabric of our local schools and will ensure that teachers have the resources at their disposal to provide the best possible learning environment.

We will:

- ensure high standards of literacy and numeracy
- improve the level of achievement for all children in Aberdeenshire
- support Head Teachers to achieve high standards of discipline, respect and responsibility
- support our schools to be more than just places where children are educated
- ensure that all children get at least 2 hours of quality Physical Education every week
- strengthen relationships with schools and local businesses to develop work experience schemes
- monitor the 'Curriculum for Excellence' implementation to ensure the needs of every child are being met and educational standards are indeed improving
- review GLOW to ensure it is fit for purpose and that teachers, children and parents get full value from this innovative resource
- develop a volunteering ethos in our schools. Voluntary organisations are the lifeblood of our communities and we will ensure that the Council works closely with partner organisations, bringing them into the decision making process
- continued development of Community Campus
- minimise weather closures of schools



Care for the Elderly - the challenge of living longer

With an ever increasing elderly population, Aberdeenshire has a big role to play in ensuring that no one 'slips through the net' and suffers alone. Elderly people can be cared for through an increasingly varied combination of prevention, technology, family and state. Money is not the only answer to providing care. We need services that are modern, flexible & protect the dignity of our older folk.

We will:

- enable older people to remain in their homes as long as possible
- support early intervention
- introduce personal budgets and individual support plans for everyone receiving council funded social care
- continue to expand TeleCare and Telehealth projects
- protect the aids and adaptations and Care Home Service
- help people to down size the property they live in, if they want
- work to provide sheltered & very sheltered accommodation when the time is right
- work with the Health Service to improve arrangements for the discharge of elderly patients from Hospital to the community
- co-ordinate and work for the integration of Health provision where it interacts with the council's social services provision

Planning

Planning is key not only to the development of our economy, but also to conserve our heritage and unique environment

We will

- implement the new Local Development Plan (LDP)
- speed up planning decisions whilst maintaining the quality of decision making
- strengthen planning enforcement against planning infringements
- ensure the use of Master plans and development briefs for allocated development sites
- improve the quality of design by encouraging unique development with an appropriate and local sense of place, particularly in major housing developments
- ensure that there is an adequate number of Affordable Houses within all housing developments to ensure that as many affordable homes as possible come onto the market

Improve transport links - Aberdeenshire on the move

A good transport system is essential for Aberdeenshire to flourish. We need to make it easy as possible for people to get around by all methods of transport including the car, rail, bus, walking and cycling, as well as for businesses to move their goods and people around; locally, nationally and internationally. We want to improve journey times, reduce congestion and make our roads safer. We want to enable people to want to take public transport where they normally travel by car and make public transport cheaper, more comfortable and more efficient where they have to

We will:

- support the delivery of major transportation projects vital to the North East:-
 - the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Road (AWPR)
 - dualling A90 Balmedie to Tippetry
 - dualling A96
 - Inverurie Eastern Bypass
 - Laurencekirk Flyover
 - Inverramsey Bridge
 - Bottlenecks between Aberdeenshire and the City like the Bridge of Dee, Bridge of Don and the Haudagain Roundabout
- improve local transport services in partnership with NESTRANS and Transport Operators.
- commit adequate resources to maintain and improve existing roads
- will commit resources to ensure our high quality winter maintenance is maintained to keep Aberdeenshire on the move
- work to deliver a local rail service from Huntly to Laurencekirk via Aberdeen including re-development of Newtonhill Stations and a new station at Kintore
- implement measures to encourage a shift from car journeys to public transport
- Lobby for landing slots at Heathrow to be protected for flights from Aberdeen and for new air routes to Aberdeen. Work to increase the destinations from Aberdeen Airport
- deliver Road Safety initiatives to reduce accidents
- develop a modern and integrated transport network to help businesses move their goods and people; support population growth and sustain jobs and to help diversify the economy
- continue to pressurise and lobby the Scottish Government to deliver a Laurencekirk Flyover
- pressurise and lobby the Scottish Government to ensure that High Speed Rail is extended to Scotland
- investigate opportunities for use of low emission vehicles
- enforce the standards of utility company reinstatements on our road and pavements
- ensure our high quality winter maintenance is maintained to keep Aberdeenshire on the move
- work with Operators to develop a fares and ticketing strategy with incentives
- continue school travel planning and safe routes to school initiatives



Care for all – support where necessary, help as required

There will always be some people in our society who need additional support, help or guidance. Ensuring the right balance between a helping hand and a hand out is the eternal challenge for our social services.

We will:

- work to address the health and social impacts of young people drinking
- tackle alcohol misuse in all age groups
- work in partnership with the Health Service to provide more outreach centres
- As an alternative to attending day centres, arrange for handicapped persons and those with learning difficulties to be engaged in more stimulating outdoor centres
- ensure our cared-for young people receive the best accommodation, education and employment opportunities
- give priority to and provide accommodation for people with learning difficulties
- community justice

Leisure, Culture and Tourism - Improving local leisure services

We want to see the fullest range of first-class leisure facilities available to local people and visitors to our area. Whether it is libraries, sports pitches, swimming pools or leisure centres, our facilities must be the best that we can afford.

We will:

- provide transitional funding to support Sports, Leisure and Arts groups
- we will set up an 'arms length' Trust to manage the Council's leisure and cultural functions
- we will support projects that will enhance and promote the tourism infrastructure in Aberdeenshire
- encourage activity, sport and wildlife tourism
- ensure our leisure centres provide top quality services to the public
- encourage sport and leisure for all
- improve our parks - combating the scourges of litter, dog fouling and vandalism through enforcement
- provide extra funding for Youth in the Community, to promote more facilities and staff time to meet the local needs of young people, and to support vulnerable children
- continue to support the Countryside Ranger service

Community and Living – protecting the society we live in

What happens in your street, town or community is what matters most to most people. The little things become large problems if not dealt with quickly and efficiently. Our communities need to be supported and encouraged.

We will:

- support the Local Policing initiative of 'Local Policing – closer to you.' We will require local policing teams to hold regular meetings within their community beat area so that residents can hold them to account
- ensure that local accountability is maintained under the new single tier Police Force and Fire & Rescue Service
- campaign with MSP colleagues to maintain existing Police Officer numbers
- enable community groups to provide local learning and leisure opportunities through more efficient use of existing facilities
- continue to support Community Councils and other Community Groups
- review the effectiveness of Community Development Groups (CDG)
- continue to work with partner organisations and other voluntary groups in delivering quality services across Aberdeenshire
- tackle anti social behaviour, alcohol and drug misuse, litter and dog fouling
- continue to work with Community Planning Partners, NHS, Police, Fire Service, by working on joint initiatives.
- work with Community Health Partnership to improve Health and Social care
- continue to develop road safety initiatives like 'Safe Drive Stay Alive,' 'Pass Plus' and 'Driving Ambition'
- support initiatives that address anti social driving focusing on at risk group of drivers 17-25 year olds
- support local community groups to take over surplus Council assets with a view to creating more sustainable community facilities