



# Power to the People

A 2017 Vision for Fife





The Conservatives believe that the Council is elected to govern, not to rule. Once elected, the council needs to continue to listen, understand and act on that understanding; to deliver services that the people want and need – not just to deliver better the service it thinks people want and need.

We believe that Fifers know what is best for their communities and that the council does not consult enough, and when it does, it doesn't listen well enough – and even when it does listen, it doesn't always act on the needs expressed. We respect and support communities – and we are going to challenge Fife Council to do likewise - always to consult, to listen and to act on what it has heard.

We believe that the council can and must further enable a society that already wants to work, wants to do business and trade, wants a rounded education system that breeds good citizens and good citizenship – because responsible citizens are the bedrock of the just society we all want.

Such a council must be financially accountable and prudent, it must trust teachers to teach, enable social work and health services to deliver the best joined-up services they can. It must enable a diverse and effective transport system that serves communities – not dictates to them.



The council must continue to increase the number of good quality houses for affordable rent and first time buyers, in order to combat the scourges of homelessness and sub-standard housing. It must adapt and modify more houses to enable more elderly, infirm, disabled and long term sick to continue living at home, if they so wish and have satisfactory caring arrangements, instead of having to enter residential care.

The council must encourage housebuilding near centres of employment to reduce the need for commuting. It must improve infrastructure, transport and roads to enable people who have to commute to work to do so in an efficient, safe and environmentally friendly manner.

We think that communities are mature enough to know what local development is best for them and to balance contrasting factors.

The council can lag so far behind the aspirations of Fifers that it simply hinders Fife's communities – it needs to listen, understand and act.

We want a forward looking council with strategies that target areas of need, enable trade that can create employment and





ensure that Fifers get the services they need and invests to prevent need in the future.

This is the basis of our manifesto. We believe that too many decisions are taken away from and out of sight of the public. We will push for:



- **Localism** - devolving decision making & budgetary control to the lowest possible level consistent with ensuring proper democratic control – giving communities a real say
- **Consultation** - instructing council services to consult with the public as early as possible and to take local views on board before decisions are made
- **Accountable Decision-making** – transforming the decision-making process within the Council to make it more transparent
- **One Size Doesn't Fit All** – encouraging diversity within Fife, recognising that the right solution to a particular problem may vary from one locality to another





## The Role of Councillors

Councillors have two roles

- 1) Meeting in committees to set Council policy
- 2) Scrutinising the execution of Council policy

We believe it's important to keep a distance between these two. In particular, those who set a policy may not be best placed in searching out its failings. In addition, much Council policy is couched in terms that make it difficult to determine whether it has succeeded or not. In particular, success is often measured by the amount spent rather than what's achieved by that spend – “We have invested £X in Y”



The Conservative approach means:

- **Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)** - the Fife Partnership (the grouping of public bodies led by Fife Council) is tasked with producing and publishing a LOIP, probably towards the end of 2017. We believe that Fife Council and its new cohort of councillors should take stock at the start of their term to ensure that the Council goes forward with a plan that genuinely describes what is to be achieved, how it is to be achieved and how that achievement can be measured and determined. “We will make Fife a better place” is a laudable aim but it's not enough.
- **Scrutiny** - we will take forward the improvements in scrutiny introduced since 2012 by further enabling councillors to investigate in depth topics which they consider merit investigation. We will keep scrutiny as apolitical as possible.
- **Decision Making** - we will return elements of decision making from delegated officers to councillors. These will include aspects of departmental reorganisation and approval of business cases. While we recognise that it is not the place of councillors to manage Fife Council, council officers should be required to present for scrutiny proposals for significant changes so that councillors can assure themselves that there will be no adverse effect on the service to the public.





- **Business Cases** - as regards business cases, we would wish to see options beyond “Do this” v “Do nothing”.
- **Preferred Options** - we will not accept proposals from outside organisations such as SESPlan which come for consultation with preferred options already determined
- **Areas** - we will maintain the seven Areas and enhance their powers and capabilities
- **Voting** - we will call for the recording and publication of individual councillors’ votes on all non-procedural matters





## Finance & Accountability

The key to Fife Council's operation is how and where the money's spent. In the later sections we set out where we think money should be spent but here we deal with how Fife council's funding should be managed more effectively and used more wisely. Because the Council is such a huge operation - around £1billion per year - it's an enormous task to try and track expenditure, much of which goes on doing what was done last year. Nevertheless, councillors need to ensure greater value for money – because this means better support for Fife's communities.



The Conservative approach means:

- **Council Tax** – we will aim to keep the Council Tax as low as possible, with a long term aim to reduce it. However, we accept that the vagaries of central government funding require flexibility in setting the Council Tax from year to year.
- **Preventative Spend** - we promote preventative spending so that problems are addressed early, when solutions are often quicker and cheaper and avoid hardship and increased costs later. This will include looking at whole life costs of capital projects.
- **Competition** - we believe that competition is a positive force that generates innovation and improvement – the savings from which could make a real contribution to improving services; Fife Council has the resources and talent to compete and we will promote competition where it's to the benefit of Fifers
- **Accountability** – your councillors are elected by you to ensure that you get best value for money. We will enhance the scrutiny role of councillors so they can do this better. We will remind senior councillors that it is not their role to protect the Council from the public but to protect communities, from the Council if necessary.
- **Decentralisation** – we will take forward the devolution of budgetary control to the seven Areas. Where appropriate, we will enable Areas to commission services from the centre, thus combining local control with the economies of scale that an authority the size of Fife can offer





## Education

We trust teachers to educate our children and we believe they should be trusted also to run our schools. We want to empower teachers to change and innovate so as to get the best value from a large but ever-tightening budget – delivering the best, most rounded education for our children. We shouldn't worry if different parts of Fife come up with different ways of meeting the challenges.



The Conservative approach means:

- **Power to Schools** - we will look positively at proposals to further transfer power and budgetary responsibility to schools. We believe that a structure based on school clusters with an enhanced role for parents is worthy of consideration
- **Music Education** - we believe that music adds to quality of life so will examine ways of promoting and enhancing music education in Fife
- **School/College** - we will encourage greater co-operation amongst secondary schools and between schools & colleges to enable the provision of subjects which may not be viable in a single school or college
- **Active Children** – an active lifestyle contributes to the prevention of ill-health so we will examine and enhance efforts to encourage all children to lead a more active lifestyle – which they may be more likely to carry on in adulthood.
- **New Schools** – we will continue to support moves to provide new secondary schools in Dunfermline and Inverkeithing as well as the much awaited Madras replacement which now has an appropriate site





## Social Work

Social Work applies the greatest pressure on council funds, as people live longer and survive illnesses and conditions which would have proved fatal a few years ago.

We recognise and applaud the work already done to extract greatest value from a finite budget and would look to carry that work forward – but more can be done.



The Conservative approach means:

- **Integrated Joint Board** - we will look to scrutinise the work of the IJB to be sure that the benefits of integration are not lost in the inevitable tensions between Fife Council and NHS Fife.
- **GP Appointments** – we will investigate whether and how Fife Council can help bring about improved and faster access to GPs
- **Care Homes** – Council care homes don't represent value for money – which means fewer people can receive care as a result. We will take forward the Council's gradual disengagement from direct provision of care home places and will look closely at other areas of direct provision to see whether they can also be provided more cost-effectively from other sources without compromising quality. In the first instance, we will cancel plans for future Council care home builds.
- **Direct Payments** - we believe that choosing one's own care retains personal dignity and so will promote individual budgets for care provision where appropriate
- **Youth Work** – guiding young people down the path of positive contribution to society and away from negative, chaotic and destructive activity is vital at all ages so we will promote and resource youth work as a prime example of preventative spending





## Community Safety and Justice

Fife Council does a great deal of excellent work towards keeping our communities safe. Much of this work is under threat from reducing budgets. We believe it's important to defend those areas where a little effort can reap great rewards.



The Conservative approach means:

- **Community Payback** - we believe that many offenders would benefit from an opportunity to be seen to be making a positive contribution so we will encourage the use of Community Payback sentences and ensure that the team delivering them is adequately resourced
- **Closing the Loop** - we will encourage both Fife Council and the Police to "close the loop" so that a member of the public raising a complaint, reporting a problem or just making a comment will receive feedback if he or she wishes
- **High Cost Credit** – high cost credit often hits the poorest in our society hardest so we will campaign for measures to cap the obscenely high interest rates levied by some credit providers
- **Credit Unions** - we will promote Credit Unions as an alternative both for those who have difficulty obtaining credit and for the public at large. We will also promote other vehicles for similar purposes.
- **Restorative Justice** - facing the consequence of actions – understanding the impact on victims can be just the spur required to get offenders onto the right path so we will encourage schemes such as Restorative Justice, which are proven to reduce reoffending
- **Driver Education** - we will encourage initiatives such as "Safe Drive, Stay Alive" that seek to reduce accidents, injuries and deaths among young, newly-qualified drivers



- **Male Domestic Abuse** – we recognise that males can be victims of abuse and we will continue our campaign to ensure that male victims of domestic abuse receive the same level of support as other victims
- **NFLA** - we will withdraw from Nuclear Free Local Authorities, thus saving Fife taxpayers several thousand pounds per year.





## Economic Development

Economic development is the key to Fife's future. For too long, Fife has been seen as a dormitory for Edinburgh or as a location for lower skill, transitory jobs, often imported from abroad and re-exported once the grants run out. Fife needs to attract more employers and encourage existing businesses to expand when they can.



The Conservative approach means:

- **Helping Businesses** - we will support & encourage the setting up and growth of businesses in Fife. High levels of employment and strong local businesses mean a healthier and wealthier Fife.
- **Taxes on Business** - we want to reduce the burden of running or setting up a business in Fife so will seek to ensure that taxes & regulation don't excessively inhibit Fife businesses. We will lobby the Scottish & UK governments to minimise any such taxes or regulations.
- **Relocate to Fife** - we will encourage businesses of all sizes to locate in Fife - but not to the detriment of businesses already here. We will particularly encourage company headquarter operations as these bring high-quality, permanent jobs.
- **Rail Links** - we will support the reopening of the rail links, especially to Levenmouth – which is an example of how capital infrastructure can not only create jobs but give vital travel opportunities and alternatives to communities and businesses alike.
- **Modern Apprenticeships** - we will champion Modern Apprenticeships while ensuring that they remain a genuine and sustained training programme leading into a job that is needed.
- **Quality** - we look to emphasise long term, high quality jobs in the belief that these act as a catalyst for all manner of other ventures.



- **Town Centres** - we will carry forward the policy of supporting town centres after a review of what a 21st century town centre should be. We will look favourably at innovative ideas like business start-up units if those are the way to help town centres thrive. We believe there is more to regenerating town centres than laying fancy slabs.
- **Estate Rationalisation** - we will continue the process of rationalising the Council estate by disposing of redundant buildings and land as market conditions merit.
- **Derelict and Vacant Land** – we believe that derelict and vacant land can blight areas and that Fife council must increase the rate at which such land is brought back into environmental, commercial or housing use. The council must urgently address the more problematic long-term derelict sites. It must also develop and implement a strategy of preventing land from becoming vacant or derelict. This preventative strategy will reduce blight.
- **Wind Farms** - we will continue to ensure that applications for wind farm developments take full and proper account of their impact on their surroundings





## The Planning Process

The public see Planning as remote, mysterious and sometimes acting against the public interest. We would look to bring it out into the open and give the public a better opportunity for involvement.



The Conservative approach means:

- **City Regions** - we will monitor the development of City Regions as we remain concerned that Fife may be reduced to a dormitory for Edinburgh and Dundee.
- **Planning & Community Councils** – it is vital that communities have a say so we will investigate ways of making Community Councils statutory consultees on planning applications, removing the current 7 day rule
- **Planning Committees** - we will return the determination of planning applications to Areas so that all councillors are involved and able to bring the maximum level of local knowledge to bear
- **Planning Applications to Committees** - we will investigate amending the format of the reports on planning applications submitted to Council committees to no longer contain recommendations
- **Conservation Areas** - we will support communities wishing to promote amendments to Conservation Areas
- **Unauthorised Advertising** - we will promote a bye-law on unauthorised advertising hoardings
- **Charges for Enforcement** - we will consider the possibilities and merits of charging for the cost of enforcement of breaches of planning regulations.
- **Committee Decisions** - Councillors should regain the right to call for planning applications to be considered by Committee.





- **Developer Contributions** – we will take steps to better ensure that developer contributions are spent for the benefit of those impacted by the developments concerned





## Housing

Housing is fundamental. The Council is tasked and rightly so with ensuring that everyone has access to an adequate affordable home. Nevertheless, we need to be sure that the finite amount of money available is spent in the best possible way.

Housing is also unusual in Council terms in that it focusses on provision of affordable and especially Council-owned housing/ We will not forget the housing needs of the rest of the public.



The Conservative approach means:

- **Housing Adaptations** - we will continue to promote housing adaptations as a means of helping Fifers remain in their own homes rather than moving into expensive care accommodation
- **Energy Efficient Homes** – especially in these times of increasing fuel bills, we believe that Fife Council should be striving to ensure that all its properties are efficient and as cheap as possible to heat. We will support current and future initiatives in this area but will remain alive to the need to ensure value for money
- **Housing Repairs** - we will take steps to ensure that repairs to council houses are carried out more quickly and more effectively
- **Housing Repairs with Mixed Tenure** - we will continue to support measures to remove delays arising when the Council needs to repair houses in blocks in multiple ownership.
- **Right to Buy** – we continue to support the policy of Right to Buy and would encourage the council to reintroduce the policy with realistic discounts – even if in the first instance only for houses that are heat inefficient and where buyers would invest in upgrading.
- **Rent to Mortgage** - we will support innovative ideas which will enable people to own their house. We will commit council money to schemes we consider worthwhile.



- **Housing Allocation** - we will review the Council's Housing Allocations Policy, with particular emphasis on aspects that are seen as discriminating against local residents
- **Differential Rents** - we will consult on the idea of differential council house rents based on factors like energy efficiency (as measured by fuel bills) and location (as measured by demand).
- **Unauthorised Gypsy Traveller Encampments** - we will continue and accelerate engagement with the Scottish Government and others to make it easier, quicker and cheaper to remove unauthorised gypsy traveller encampments, including if necessary a further examination of the use of the 1865 Trespass Act
- **Estate Factoring** – we will investigate how the Council can support groups of owners who find themselves subject to unsatisfactory factoring agreements





## Transport

A good transport system is essential if Fife is to flourish. We need to make it as easy as possible for people to get around Fife by all methods of transport, including the private car.



The Conservative approach means:

- **Pro-Public Policy** - we recognise the right and need for the public to move readily and easily throughout Fife and will oppose any measures that restrict this on other than safety grounds.
- **Road Maintenance & Repair** - we will commit substantial resources to getting the roads up to scratch.
- **Buses** - we will investigate methods of providing cost-effective flexible bus services, particularly off-peak and in rural areas, including an examination of Section 22 operations.
- **Severe Winter Weather** - we will introduce a flexible, community-based scheme for dealing with the effects of severe winter weather along the lines of our Blueprint for Dealing with Ice & Snow.
- **Utility Companies** - we will investigate ways of reducing the disruption resulting from roadworks by utility companies.
- **Parking Charges** - we will commit resources to enable experiments with parking charges (e.g. parking charge holidays) in order to promote use of town centres.
- **Parking** - we will investigate ways to help meet communities' requests to deal with antisocial and dangerous driving and parking. In particular, we will look for a real solution to commuter parking in Inverkeithing





- **Speed Bumps** - we will introduce a presumption against further speed bumps and will promote the removal or substitution of existing speed bumps when resurfacing, except where there is clear public demand to the contrary.
- **Your Speed Is Signs** - we will deploy further "Your Speed Is" signs, recognising their popularity with the public.
- **Speed Limits** - we will oppose gratuitous reductions in speed limits, preferring to use speed limits as a means of alerting motorists to areas where lower speeds are most important
- **Rail Fares** - we support the idea of structured rail fares as a means of reducing pressure on choke points in the network
- **Taxis in Bus Lanes** - we will consider amending the Bye-Laws to allow taxis to use bus lanes in Fife
- **Concessionary Rail Fares** - we will look to retain the concessionary rail fares within Fife and will consider ways of reintroducing concessions to Edinburgh and Dundee.
- **Timetable Changes** - we will campaign for greater consultation on and earlier warning of changes to public transport timetables
- **A92 Upgrade** - we will support upgrading the A92 throughout Fife.
- **Rail Travel** - we will seek longer platforms and trains for Fife's long-suffering commuters along with maintaining or expanding existing numbers of trains.





- **Late Night Travel** - we will seek to improve late night/early morning public transport from Edinburgh and Dundee to Fife.
- **Unadopted Roads** – we will re-establish a budget for maintaining unadopted roads that were traditionally maintained by Fife Council and regarded by the public as de facto adopted





## Community & Environment

Conservatives believe that Fife can do more to reduce its carbon footprint. Fifers can lead on the issue of electric vehicles, greening their public buildings and housing and enabling district heat and power systems. However, there is more to the environment and the communities within it.



The Conservative approach means:

- **Trees** – we will introduce a Tree Policy to properly balance the amenity provided to all by trees and woodland against the loss of amenity experienced by those living next to ever taller trees. We will trial this in the new towns of Glenrothes and Dalgety Bay which have particular problems in this respect
- **Parks, Streets & Open Spaces** - we will reverse the worst of the budget cuts in this area and fully devolve control to Areas so that local services match local needs
- **Lochore Meadows** - we will review the operation and governance of Lochore Meadows, learning the lessons from the contentious Visitor Centre project
- **Dalgety Bay** - we will investigate the provision of a new community facility in Dalgety Bay not specifically linked to sport
- **Pricing** - we will review whether Council pricing policy is preventing children and teenagers from accessing Council facilities such as football pitches
- **Community-Based Programmes** - we will protect and enhance the sort of community-based programmes, including holiday provision, developed at “The Wing” in Inverkeithing





- **Silos** - we will end the artificial distinctions between services at a local level that mean that buildings providing similar community-facing services in an area are controlled by different remote management structures
- **Neighbourhood Resource Lists** - we will encourage localities to draw up Neighbourhood Resource Lists of those in the community able to offer particular skills and talents. We will trial this in a small number of locations.
- **Public Conveniences** - we will prioritise finding a solution to the vexed question of public conveniences, including analysing why the Comfort Scheme hasn't succeeded as hoped
- **Spill-Proof Dustbins** - we will investigate spill-proof dustbins for use in areas with a high incidence of bins tipping over on windy days





## Other

Here are some of our ideas that don't necessarily fit into the other categories.

Fife Conservative Manifesto 2017  
promoted & published by D Dempsey on behalf of FCUA  
both at Haig House, Haig Business Park, Balgonie Road, Markinch, KY7 6AQ



The Conservative approach means:

- **Community Councils** - we will support, encourage and enhance the work of Community Councils. We will work to create Community Councils in areas where none exist at present
- **Community Planning** – Fife council must involve more communities, Community Councils and a more diverse range of bodies in the Fife Partnership, better to reflect the needs and aspirations of the wider community
- **Consultants** - we will not take an ideological stance on the Council's use of external consultants. The Council should bring in consultants when it's the sensible thing to do
- **Pension Contributions** - we will seek to cap Fife Council's employer pension contributions as a multiple of employee contributions
- **Enhanced Retirement Packages** – we will cap the overall value of discretionary enhanced retirement packages offered to some departing employees
- **Contracts** - we will reinforce scrutiny of work done for the Council by outside organisations
- **Tenders** - within the constraints of legislation, we will favour local suppliers and believe that the 3rd sector (voluntary/charity/social enterprises) should have a right to bid
- **Civic Pride** - we will continue to support the various "Take a Pride in" groups throughout Fife

