

ST HELENS BOROUGH LABOUR GROUP



SUMMER 2022 REPORT



Welcome to our St Helens Borough Labour Group Summer Report.

This is our first report since May's local elections which I'm delighted to say Labour won with more than 50% of all votes cast. We thank everyone who voted for us for their support, and we don't take it for granted.

We're determined to work for the whole borough, and the next four years are all about delivery – from Glass Futures to transport improvements, town centre regeneration to new local jobs and skills, Children's Services improvements, climate change action and more.

Our manifesto for May's election is available online at <https://www.sthelenslabour.org/vote2022/> and will stay there so that residents can hold us to account. The commitments we made have been integrated into the Council's delivery plan and will be reported on regularly – we'll be shouting about our successes, as you'd expect, and we'll be honest about the challenges too.

It's been a packed few months since May, and the following report is just some of the highlights and headlines of our work being delivered with the support of our MPs Conor McGinn and Marie Rimmer, Metro Mayor Steve Rotheram and PCC Emily Spurrell. Our thanks as always go to council keyworkers for their outstanding efforts day in, day out.

You can stay up to date week in, week out by following us on social media at @StHLabour and online at www.sthelenslabour.org, and follow the Council's official channels on Twitter and Facebook.

Best wishes to all residents,

David

TWELVE YEARS OF TORY FAILURE

After 12 years of Tory rule many public services across the country are on their knees, from a £4billion black hole in social care funding to 800 libraries closed, youth services decimated, police, school and fire services cut, and not to mention longer waiting times for GPs, NHS, dentists and other vital health services.

As for the economy, most of us are now facing financial pressures with rising inflation and stagnant wages, and millions will be pushed into poverty this winter when energy bills rise yet again.

Places like St Helens have been hardest hit by this government, and you don't have to just take our word for it. At the start of August, ex-Chancellor and possible next PM Rishi Sunak was caught on film boasting to Tory members in Tunbridge Wells about how he had taken public money out of "deprived urban areas" like St Helens to help wealthy towns like theirs. And it's not just been him – it's what the Tories have been doing since 2010.

In our borough we've got outstanding community spirit, resilience and determination, and the potential to do great things. Labour will always do everything we can to protect the most vulnerable and grow our local economy for the good of all residents, but for 12 years we've been failed by government.

Whilst the Tories spend the summer fighting each other, Labour are fighting for you, and campaigning for action to help households now and in the long term – with commitments including a freeze on the energy price cap, a windfall tax on energy companies, a cut in VAT on home energy bills and insulation to lower bills for millions: <https://labour.org.uk/issue/britain-cannot-afford-the-tories/>.

LOCAL SUPPORT

There is support available locally, and we're always pushing for more help from government. For links to lots of advice and support please visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/sthelenstogether and www.sthelenslabour.org/advice, where you will find information about various support schemes including the Household Support Fund. The scheme, running until 31st March next year, is intended to provide help to residents who are struggling to afford energy, food and other essential bills. The Council will provide a direct award to you if you are in receipt of Council Tax Reduction or pension credit and provide vouchers during the school holidays for children in receipt of free school meals.

Cllr Martin Bond, Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance, says: *"The Tories are more interested in taking resources away from areas like ours and putting it into places like Tunbridge Wells. With the cost of living at a crisis point and the Government refusing to take action, St Helens Labour will use the resources we have to try and help our most vulnerable."*



**LABOUR WOULD
STOP THE
ENERGY
PRICE
CAP RISE**

“In our borough we’ve got outstanding community spirit, resilience and determination, and the potential to do great things. Labour will always do everything we can to protect the most vulnerable and grow our local economy for the good of all residents.”

DELIVERED TO YOU BY:



#STHELENSTOGETHER

SUPPORTING EACH OTHER AND OUR COMMUNITIES

NEED HELP?

CALL: 01744 676767



#StHelensTogether helped people through the pandemic – we’ll continue to support our most vulnerable through difficult times ahead

 **Labour**

NEW LIBRARY STRATEGY AGREED

In July, Cabinet agreed a new Library Strategy and Delivery Plan.

There are two reasons for reviewing library services now: first, we continue to have to deal with huge budget cuts and have no choice but to make savings across all council services. We've been in this situation since 2010 and simply cannot afford to run 13 library buildings any longer. Across the country around 800 libraries have closed since 2010 because of government funding cuts – it's a tragedy, and the blame for it lies at the door of the government that has systematically dismantled essential public services. The credit for keeping services running goes to the council and its keyworker staff who day in, day out are expected to do more with less.

Second, the way people access library services in general has shifted in recent years. More digital loans are made, and fewer hard copies. But libraries are more than books, and the other services they provide/host can increasingly, or potentially, be accessed elsewhere. The plans support our new Localities Model, and are intended to modernise the service and create an improved offer at seven hubs: Chester Lane, Eccleston, Haydock, Moss Bank, Newton le Willows, Thatto Heath, and a renovated and enhanced Gamble Building.

Cllr Anthony Burns, Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, Culture and Heritage, says: *"We know that many people cherish their library service, and we want more people to connect with it. Our library membership continues to fall and staying the same will only see the service stagnate further, so while this isn't an easy decision to make the fact is that we simply can't run services as we always have done if we don't have the funding for them. The strategy and delivery plan will modernise the service by having seven improved hubs with increased outreach work to target those most in need."*

You can read all the facts and background information in full here: www.sthelens.gov.uk/librarystrategy2022.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE HEROES RECOGNISED AND NEW INTEGRATED CARE SYSTEM INTRODUCED

The first ever St Helens Cares Recognition Awards took place on 9th June as part of the inaugural St Helens Cares Festival to pay tribute to people working across health and social care in the borough in both a paid and voluntary capacity.

On 1st July NHS Cheshire and Merseyside launched and officially replaced the clinical commissioning group (CCG) infrastructure. St Helens is in a strong place and already benefits from excellent relationships between our health and social care partners having set up St Helens Cares several years ago and established good practice through forums such as the People's Board.

Cllr Marlene Quinn, Cabinet Member for Integrated Care and Health, says: *"Making sure that everyone in St Helens gets the best possible care is a priority for us. We've already built a strong and successful integrated care system through St Helens Cares, and I want to thank all those providing health and social care services for their outstanding efforts day in, day out."*

Residents can visit www.sthelenscares.co.uk for all local health and care news and information.



"The Library Strategy and Delivery Plan will modernise the service by having seven improved hubs with increased outreach work to target those most in need."



In July at St Helens Central Link Children's Centre for the launch of our very first pop up library

 Labour

JOBS, HOMES, AND LOCAL ECONOMY LATEST

Plans to deliver new jobs, new homes and new opportunities for local residents and businesses are moving at pace with significant progress made on a number of huge projects.

In July the **LOCAL PLAN** was agreed after 6 years of public consultation, evidence gathering, and a lengthy and exhaustive public examination by two independent inspectors: <https://www.sthelenslabour.org/latest-news/2022/07/12/local-plan-for-new-jobs-new-homes-and-new-opportunities-agreed/>.

Cllr Richard McCauley, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Planning, says: *"We want St Helens to be a vibrant, attractive, and prosperous borough. We want local people to benefit from a good choice of quality and affordable homes, skilled local jobs, efficient infrastructure, beautiful open green spaces, good transport links and better health and wellbeing. These aspirations are at the heart of our Local Plan, and I'm delighted that it will now guide local growth and development for our borough over the coming years."*

The **TOWN DEAL** Board have signed off on business cases for 6 transformative projects for St Helens town centre including Glass Futures 2, bringing medical glass manufacturing to the town, and funding to support our wider regeneration plans with English Cities Fund: <https://www.sthelenslabour.org/latest-news/2022/07/15/towndead/>. We've also submitted two bids to government as part of the **LEVELLING UP** fund, supported by our Labour MPs Conor McGinn and Marie Rimmer: <https://www.sthelenslabour.org/latest-news/2022/08/06/levelling-up-bids-submitted-to-government/>.

Also in recent weeks: outline planning permission has been granted for our [Earlestown town centre masterplan](#), developed with our partners at English Cities Fund; planning permission has been granted for a ['box park' style development in St Helens town centre](#); planning permission has been granted for [Omega West](#); external repair work has been completed on the historic [Gamble Building](#), with internal works part of the Town Deal and Levelling Up bids; work has begun on the transformation of [Lea Green station](#); and we welcomed the Chair of the [Liverpool City Region Freeport](#) Tom O'Brien to Parkside to see work under way to unlock the huge potential that Freeport status for the site will bring.

As a Council we're determined to back local businesses. In June we announced support for the [extension of the 'Business Advocates' scheme](#), and in recent weeks we've been supporting the Shop Local campaign: <https://sthelens.gov.uk/shoplocal>.

Experienced local businessman and newly elected Councillor for Sutton North John Hodgkinson has also been appointed Member Champion for Local Business, supporting Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy, Business and Skills Cllr Kate Groucutt in making sure local businesses and residents benefit as much as possible from investment and new opportunities to come.

Cllr Kate Groucutt says: *"Delivering regeneration and creating opportunities for local workers and businesses to benefit from this investment are top priorities for us. Whether it's through our new Ways to Work hubs or getting out into schools and colleges – as we are already doing with partners including Glass Futures and for projects including Parkside – we're determined not just to grow the local economy but to make sure our residents and businesses are at the front of the queue for the opportunities being created."*





“Delivering regeneration and creating opportunities for local workers and businesses to benefit from this investment are top priorities for us.”



Cllr Richard McCauley viewing the Gamble restoration works

 **Labour**

NEW HOUSING STRATEGY AND ALLOCATIONS POLICY AGREED

In June Cabinet agreed a new Housing Strategy, which supports the Local Plan, our net zero and climate change ambitions, and more: www.sthelens.gov.uk/housingstrategy. 'Quality and accessible homes for all' is the vision at the heart of the strategy.

Cllr Jeanie Bell, Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities, says: *"With transformational regeneration planned for our town centres, a new Local Plan for the borough and clear priorities within our Borough Strategy, our Housing Strategy sets out the central role that housing will have in these plans and improving our borough. We have developed the strategy around the theme of 'quality and accessible homes for all' – quality in the homes that we build, the investment that we make to existing homes and the neighbourhoods that we live in, and homes that are accessible so that we all have opportunities to live in a home that meets our needs and aspirations."*

In July we also agreed a new Housing Allocations Policy. Social housing offered by Registered Housing Providers gives residents an affordable home in local communities, granting stability to individuals and families. While the council is no longer directly a landlord, it has a responsibility to co-ordinate the allocation of social housing in the borough. With over 8,000 applicants currently registered for re-housing, the council must set a framework that can meet the needs of residents who are in urgent circumstances and who require affordable accommodation: <https://www.sthelenslabour.org/latest-news/2022/07/15/housing-allocations-policy-agreed/>.

MAJOR HIGHWAYS STRATEGY APPROVED


An ambitious strategy which sets out how St Helens Borough Council will proactively manage, maintain, and invest in its highway and infrastructure network over the next five years was adopted at a Cabinet meeting this week.

The new Highways Infrastructure Asset Management Strategy has been developed following an announcement earlier this year that St Helens Borough is to receive more than £30m from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority over the next five-years to deliver local schemes, as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, helping to make journeys smoother, faster, greener and safer- whether you drive, walk, cycle, or use public transport. Find out more: <https://www.sthelenslabour.org/latest-news/2022/06/23/highways-2/>.

BUS LATEST – CALL ON ARRIVA TO END THE STRIKE; TIMETABLE CUTS OPPOSED

Over the summer bus operators Arriva and Stagecoach consulted on timetables changes which proposed scrapping and reducing several routes. [We opposed these cuts](#) and Cllr Andy Bowden, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, and Council Leader David Baines spoke strongly against them. The summer has also seen Arriva staff on strike for better pay and conditions – we stand with them, and joined Metro Mayor Steve Rotherham and other local leaders in calling on Arriva to act: <https://www.sthelenslabour.org/latest-news/2022/08/12/time-for-arriva-to-act/>. The sooner buses are back under greater public control, the better.



A group of five people, including Cllr Jeanie Bell and Torus officers, are standing in a wet, paved area in front of a new residential development. The development consists of several two-story brick houses with dark roofs and windows. The ground is wet, reflecting the overcast sky. The group is positioned in the center of the frame, with the houses forming the background.

“With transformational regeneration planned for our town centres, a new Local Plan for the borough and clear priorities within our Borough Strategy, our Housing Strategy sets out the central role that housing will have in these plans and improving our borough.”



Cllr Jeanie Bell with Council and Torus officers at the new Pennine Close development in Parr

 **Labour**

PLATINUM JUBILEE AND ARMED FORCES DAY CELEBRATED

In June we proudly celebrated Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. There were many fantastic events held across the borough including street parties and a beacon lighting at Taylor Park and Billinge Hill. We also held our first Armed Forces Day celebration since 2019. Mayor of St Helens Borough Cllr Sue Murphy, Deputy Mayor and Armed Forces Champion Cllr Lynn Clarke, and councillors attended the event in Victoria Park and we thank all the organisers and participants, especially of course our local veterans and serving armed forces personnel.

As a council and as a Labour Party we are extremely proud of our local military past and present, and will continue to do all we can to support them.

REFUGEE WEEK 2022

In June we marked Refugee Week with events across the borough. Refugee Week is a UK-wide festival highlighting the creativity and resilience of refugees and people seeking sanctuary. Through creativity and conversations under the theme of healing, Refugee Week 2022 is a celebration of community, mutual care, and the human ability to start again.

Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities Cllr Jeanie Bell says: *"With the ongoing crisis in Ukraine there is now more focus and public support for the plight of refugees, but it's vital to remember that there are people fleeing other conflicts around the world, all equally deserving of our compassion. We've worked hard to provide a safe home and a warm welcome to those who come to our borough in the greatest need. Refugee Week was a great chance to celebrate these successes and the journeys that all refugees have undertaken, and to learn about the different cultures of our neighbours that make up the fabric of our communities."*

ABBEYFORD SUCCESS AND FREE SUMMER FUN FOR FAMILIES ANNOUNCED

Council-run Abbeyford Children's Home in Windle – which provides respite for children and young people with complex health, learning and social communication needs – was awarded its fourth consecutive 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating in as many years. **Cabinet Member for Children and Young People Cllr Nova Charlton was among those in attendance at a special celebration, and she says:** *"As a council, our first priority is to ensure all children and young people have a positive start in life and fantastic facilities like Abbeyford are a shining example of what can be achieved."*

In July and with the school holidays approaching, a host of exciting activities and opportunities were announced to take place in council-run children's centres around the borough for all the family to enjoy. Suitable for children aged 0-11 years, the free events form part of the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF), a Department for Education-funded initiative – delivered by the Council's Early Help service – to support families eligible for free school meals during the summer holidays.

For more information and to book a place, visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/holidayfun, and to register your child at a children's centre or to find out more information, call 01744 673445 or 01744 671788. Alternatively, visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/childrenscentres or email childrenscentres@sthelens.gov.uk



"We've worked hard to provide a safe home and a warm welcome for those who come to our borough in the greatest need."



Refugee Week event at Sexton Avenue allotments in Parr

 Labour

ST HELENS PRIDE RETURNS

In July Pride returned after a two year break because of Covid, with events including live stage performances in Church Square and entertainment at the Citadel as well as a Pride parade walk, while St Helens Library also hosted activities.

Cllr Anthony Burns, Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, Culture and Heritage, says: *“As a council which recognises the importance of celebrating diversity, so we are delighted to see the return of St Helens Pride. I remember how successful the first event was back in 2019 when not even the bad weather could dampen spirits – so it’s excellent that we were able to hold Pride again this year. We’re proud that our borough is a place where everyone can be themselves, with no place for hate.”*

We thank all the organisers, and everyone who took part. Labour is proud to stand with you!

LGA REPORT FINDS MORE PROGRESS

In June, Cabinet welcomed the results of a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review six-month progress report, to evaluate the work that has been done to transform the organisation following a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) in 2019.

Cllr Sev Gomez-Aspron, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Transformation, says: *“The independent, expert Local Government Association spent time with us in September reviewing our council and our progress since their last visit in 2019. We’ve supported this process throughout, as we believe in being honest, open and transparent about our performance. This can only help us to achieve our priorities for the borough, and reach the high standards we have set for our organisation – standards which residents rightfully expect and deserve.*

The feedback we have received is again extremely positive, and the Cabinet and Labour Group are determined to keep improving.”

WORLD CUP COUNTDOWN WELL UNDERWAY

Special guests including Saints’ Australian legend and current Kangaroos boss Mal Meninga were among those welcomed to the Totally Wicked Stadium for a special event to start the countdown to the Rugby League World Cup. Three games will be held at Saints’ home ground this October and November, and the borough will also host the men’s Tonga and Italy teams for training.

World Cup organisers also visited Portico Vine ARLFC to see the completed new clubhouse funded by the tournament’s legacy fund in partnership with the Council and others. Find out more: <https://www.rlwc2021.com/socialimpact>.

Council Leader David Baines says: *“As a lifelong Saints and rugby league fan it was an honour to welcome Mal Meninga back to St Helens, and I can’t wait for the World Cup. It’s going to be a great event and we’re really looking forward to it.”*



"We're proud that our borough is a place where everyone can be themselves, with no place for hate."



Labour councillors and members at St Helens Pride

 Labour

COUNCIL REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In July the Council reinforced its commitment to supporting people with disabilities both in its workforce and in local communities, with the signing of the Disability Impact Pledge. The Pledge has been designed by the Disability Policy Centre, an independent social enterprise dedicated to improving public services and breaking down barriers.

Representatives from disability community organisations – including St Helens Mind, Deafness Resource Centre, and Buzz Hub – and disabled officers from the council's Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Network, were invited to attend and witness the signing by Council Leader David Baines, Chief Executive Kath O'Dwyer, and Equalities Champion and Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities Cllr Jeanie Bell. **Cllr Bell says:** *"As both a major employer and a lead organisation for St Helens, we are committed to creating a more welcoming, safe, and inclusive borough, based on the vision that everyone is included, has a voice, and is empowered to influence, through the values of trust, integrity, collaboration, innovation. For us, this pledge represents our continued commitment to advancing equality, valuing diversity and promoting inclusion for all in our communities."*



MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

In June our Public Health Team joined forces with local former professional boxer Martin Murray to launch an important new initiative to support men with their mental health. The St Helens born former WBA interim middleweight title holder helped to launch a new booklet, titled 'MENTal Strength', which will look to provide important tips and guidance for men to help keep their mental health in good shape.

Cllr Anthony Burns, Cabinet Member for Wellbeing, Culture and Heritage, and Cllr Michelle Sweeney, Member Champion for Mental Health, attended the launch and gave their backing to the project. **To view the new booklet online and find out more please visit www.sthelens.gov.uk/mentalhealth.** Thank you to Martin and the ThinkFAST Academy!




VICTORIA PARK WINS 8TH GREEN FLAG, AND MORE ACCESSIBLE EQUIPMENT INSTALLED

Good news for our parks this summer, with every single one protected in the Local Plan, Victoria Park winning the prestigious Green Flag Award for the eighth consecutive time, and more accessible play equipment being installed for children with disabilities at Rainhill Park, following on from roundabouts at Sherdley and Taylor Park. The play equipment is being funded from Section 106 funds secured from local housing developments.

Cllr Andy Bowden, Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport, says: *"The importance of our green spaces has never been clearer than in the last two years, granting us time in nature and away from urban life, and places in which to relax and exercise to improve our wellbeing. And we want all our children and young people to be able to enjoy our parks and playgrounds – that's why we've committed to installing accessible equipment and I'm delighted to see this happen."*





“The importance of our green spaces has never been clearer than in the last two years, granting us time in nature and away from urban life, and places in which to relax and exercise to improve our wellbeing.”



Green Flag award winning Victoria Park, Windle





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