

Nick Rushton's Speech launching the 2013 Conservative Manifesto - *Going for Growth : The Right Future for Leicestershire.* 12th April 2013

Introduction

- May I warmly welcome Members seeking re-election and candidates present here today. My thanks too, go to the Rt Hon Andrew Robathan MP (Minister of State for the Armed Forces) and Emma McClarkin MEP (Conservative MEP for the East Midlands). Both have been beavering away helping our candidates win election to the County Council, and I'm grateful for your support.

Tribute to Baroness Thatcher

- I would also like to say a few words about Baroness Thatcher, whose death came as a shock and with great sadness to all Conservatives. She was, quite simply, a towering figure amongst politicians. She commanded the respect of political friend or foe- quite an achievement in itself. For me, a truly inspirational leader, *a great Briton*, dedicated to putting country first. I doubt we shall see the likes of her kind again for quite some time. I can confirm that I shall be asking all candidates not to campaign on the day of the funeral (Wed 17th April) as the final tribute we can pay to one of our greatest prime ministers. Can I ask everyone present to be upstanding for a minute's silence please.

Manifesto Speech

- These are the most important County Elections in a generation and the first "stand alone" elections since 1993. It is vital we convince people out there of our record, our achievements and, through this Manifesto, of our plans to put Leicestershire back on track to prosperity and growth.
- Compared to the weak efforts of the Opposition, this manifesto proves we are the only serious political party fighting these elections. It is clear this manifesto contains the detailed plans, ideas and strategies needed to rise to the challenges we face. Even the Labour party have accepted our tax and spending strategies. As for the Lib Dems, it depends who you ask to find out what they stand for. And to field only 42 candidates in these elections proves just how much they really care about all the people of this County.
- This leads me to the bigger picture. The overriding theme of the Conservative Manifesto for 2013-17 is to do whatever we can to get this County's economy back on track. To support economic development; investment in infrastructure; a comprehensive set of plans supporting job creation and getting young people the skills they need to compete in a global economy.

- It is also about doing what we can with the resources we have to do the right thing: helping people buy their first home or help finding an affordable home; help to get people to their job through the Wheels to Work scheme; paying down debt and dedicating £174 million (PER YEAR) of council spending directly supporting local small firms and businesses. Coupled with the Government's changes to the labour market, this is a powerful incentive for local employers to rise to the challenge. I intend to go further: I want the Council I lead to do everything within its power to help Leicestershire go for growth and get the economy moving again.
- Let me conclude by outlining some of the many achievements I am particularly proud :
 - A four year freeze in Council tax and a promise future rises will be below inflation.
 - Being one of the first Councils in the country to fully integrate public health into our organisation and convincing Government to devolve funding for public health to the local level. Our manifesto has plans for a lasting Olympic legacy in promoting healthier lifestyles.
 - Continue to invest in improved care for the elderly, with better links with the NHS and social care and help developing more extra care housing facilities.
 - Having some of the safest communities in the Country, through minimising crime and support the victims of crime. Joe Orson has done an amazing job on this front.
 - 83% of our schools rated good or outstanding, despite being the lowest funded authority for education in the country. Only Ivan Ould could have delivered this (though he will hate me for saying it!)
 - I also want to reiterate that under my leadership, the Conservative Group has acted quickly and decisively where there has been any breach of the Group Rules on conduct and behaviour. I give an absolute commitment that this will continue to be the case.

Conclusions

Let's face it, we are an effective team at County Hall! We get the job done and we govern on behalf of all the people of this County. Let me finally thank Kevin Feltham and his team for overseeing the election this time, particularly producing this excellent manifesto. When people see our plans set out in this document, they will realise that it is only through voting Conservative that we can secure ***The Right Future for Leicestershire.***