

Making life
better



Conservatives

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One day in your life



7.00 am: Morning dawns. You hear the thud of your post as it hits the doormat. You open a brown envelope - it's a bill from the council. Your council tax has gone up for the fifth year running. Where does the money go?

Fact: Since 1997, council tax bills have soared by £287 a year (42 per cent) on Band D properties – an average rise of three times the rate of inflation every year. This year's council tax increase of 8.3 per cent is the biggest ever rise in the history of council tax.

Fact: Not everyone is paying extortionate rates - Conservative councils in England are better value for money. The average across different types of councils shows that Conservative councils charge £135 a year less on Band D bills than Labour councils and £159 a year less than Liberal Democrat councils.

You hear the rumble of the refuse collection truck outside. You look outside – and you groan. Half the contents of the dustbin bag have been dropped on the street.

Fact: According to independent Audit Commission figures, residents are more satisfied with the waste collection services, streets cleanliness and recycling facilities delivered by Conservative councils in England, than in councils held by other parties.

Fact: Conservative councils on average have the highest recycling rates.




8.00 am: You leave your house, and set off in the car to go to work or take your children to school. The main road's gridlocked. You hear on the radio, the council is thinking of introducing a new tax to drive into town. Having parked in the train station, you continue your commute into work. On the platform, a garbled voice from a loudspeaker announces signal problems – the train will be late.

Fact: Durham, Derbyshire and Bristol are all planning to introduce new 'toll taxes' to drive in town centres; Nottingham is to introduce a new tax to park at work. Other councils may follow. Vulnerable people will bear the brunt – according to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, drivers among the poorest fifth of the population already spend up to a quarter of all their total expenditure on running their car.

Fact: Since Railtrack was placed into administration, delays on the railways have increased by 40 per cent.

Fact: Conservatives are campaigning against these ineffective, extra taxes and crude anti-car measures which just cause more congestion. Instead, councils like Conservative-run Runnymede in Surrey have introduced US-style yellow school buses to cut down on traffic from the school run.




9.00 am: Meanwhile, across town, your children belatedly make their way into school. At the school gates, they are surrounded by a group of youths who seize their mobile phones.

Fact: Mobile phone theft has increased by 377 per cent in the last three years. Young people are the most vulnerable - almost half of phone theft victims are under 18, while two-thirds of offenders are typically under 18.

Fact: In the last five years, truancy in England's secondary schools has risen by 11 per cent. Truancy not only damages the education of children, and can lead to the start of a criminal lifestyle.

Fact: Conservative councils like Bexley in London have transformed youth services. They have increased social and recreational activities for young people, and created an integrated council-police team, based at a local police station, to tackle youth disorder.




10 am: Inside school, your children's day doesn't get much better. With so many teacher vacancies, they haven't had a regular teacher all term. The supply teacher is unable to keep control of the large, unwieldy class. A small group of troublemakers think they can get away with anything, disrupting all the lessons.

Fact: According to the Secondary Heads Association, teacher vacancies are 25 per cent up on the same period last year. The Head of Ofsted has warned that schools are facing the worst ever shortage of teachers and that up to 40 per cent of teacher with three years experience are leaving the profession.

Fact: Schools in councils held by other political parties are up to twice as likely to be subject to 'special measures' - i.e. judged by school inspectors as failing to provide a satisfactory education.

Fact: Conservative-run Surrey County Council turned round a failing school in Guildford in partnership with the private sector. A not-for-profit firm took over the King's Manor School, resulting in better standards, higher attendance and it leaving special measures status.




1 pm: At lunch time, you go for a walk in the local park. Rubbish is strewn across the path. You notice a burnt out car on the side of the street that wasn't there yesterday.

Fact: Conservative councils remove fly-tips more quickly and local streets are rated as the cleanest according to the Audit Commission.

Fact: The number of burnt out cars has already soared by 68 per cent across England since 1997. Yet due to new, poorly-drafted regulations on waste, the number of abandoned cars and fridges being dumped in our streets is expected to soar further.

Fact: Conservative councils like West Oxfordshire and Tandridge have set up a scheme to collect and dispose of old cars from residents free of charge to reduce illegally dumped vehicles.



6 pm: After work, you walk down the street towards the station for your long journey home. You pass a row of boarded up houses, and entering the station, a figure aggressively asks you for some money. You decline - but you have a nagging feeling about the number of people on the streets - and the growing number of people who can't afford to put a roof over their head.

Fact: Government figures show that priority homelessness in England has risen by 12,000 since 1997-98, and the number of vulnerable people in temporary Bed & Breakfast accommodation has trebled.

Fact: Conservative councils have fewer empty council houses, and re-let vacant housing more quickly than other councils.

Fact: Conservative Westminster council has introduced a new initiative to provide homeless families English language and IT training. In addition, its shared ownership scheme is making housing more accessible to key workers; over 800 affordable homes have been approved since 1997.

Fact: Conservative councils like Bradford have shifted the emphasis on new development from building on greenfields to redeveloping brownfield sites. Bradford stopped plans to turn school playing fields into a housing estate, while it is bringing in millions of pounds of new investment by transferring council housing to not-for-profit landlords in the voluntary sector.



7pm: Having driven back, you park your car in the street. It's getting dark – and it doesn't help that the street lights aren't working. As you return home, you find out that your elderly neighbour was mugged earlier outside your house – she's become another crime statistic.

Fact: In the last three years, robberies have risen by 42 per cent and total violent crime by 21 per cent.

Fact: Police numbers in England have fallen by 500 since 1997. Yet Conservative councils, like Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea in London, are introducing uniformed wardens to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour. Kent County Council has introduced rural 'community wardens' in partnership with Kent Police to be the eyes and ears of the police in the countryside.

Fact: Conservative councils spend more on street lighting than councils held by other political parties.



9pm: Concerned about your neighbour who was admitted as an emergency admission to hospital, you decide to visit her. You find her on a trolley in the Accident & Emergency ward. She's been there for hours – and is still waiting to be seen. She's been told it could be a long wait.

Fact: Accident & Emergency waits are getting longer. Audit Commission figures show that in 1996, 73 per cent of hospital patients were seen by a doctor within an hour; this has now fallen to 53 per cent. Similarly, the proportion of patients admitted within four hours was 90 per cent - and that figure has now fallen to 76 per cent.

Fact: Almost 50,000 care home beds have been lost since 1997. Many vulnerable and elderly patients remain in hospital unnecessarily as a result. Up to 6,000 acute hospital beds are occupied at any one time by elderly patients who would be discharged if they had somewhere to be discharged.

All in all, it's far from being a perfect day.

Tony Blair once promised that 'things can only get better' – yet public services across England are in crisis. Only Conservative councils are tackling the declining quality of life that local residents are facing. A vote for the Conservatives is a vote to make your life better.



Iain Duncan Smith, Conservative Leader

“As this snapshot of one possible day illustrates, local residents' daily lives are marred by problems like crime, vandalism, lack of discipline in our schools and a failing transport system. Labour's political failure has hurt some of the most vulnerable people in our society - the poor, the homeless and the elderly. But there should be no 'no-go' areas for Conservatives - our councillors offer better public services for all - from the streets of our inner-cities, to leafy suburbs and rural villages.

Conservatives believe local people know what's best for their local community. Rather than issuing directives and red-tape from Whitehall bureaucrats, we believe life should be made better through neighbourhood initiatives delivered by local councils. Conservative councils are leading the way - showing how it can be done.

By voting Conservative on 2nd May, you can make a real difference to your local neighbourhood, and help make your and others' lives better.”

