

Going for Gold

The Liberal Democrat Manifesto for the Cambridgeshire County Council Elections



Services for young people

- ✓ **Promote quality in local schools** - people want good schools near where they live rather than 'choice' with high travel costs.
- ✓ **Allocate better funding for youth service** - currently funded well below government targets, the youth service is failing our young people.
- ✓ **Pursue adequate grants from central government** - we will continue to fight for fair funding to meet the increasing demands for a better service.
- ✓ **Support initiatives for healthier school dinners**



Anne Kent, Education Spokes



Council Tax hits lower paid residents hard. How much would you pay with a Local Income Tax?

Services for older people

- ✓ **Encourage older people to live at home, with support** - Carers and voluntary organisations looking after older people deserve a better deal.
- ✓ **Set an honest budget and improve management** - The Social Services overspend must be brought under control.
- ✓ **Improve the occupational therapy service** - People should not have to wait so long for equipment and home improvements.

Transport and environment

- ✓ **Make the buses more reliable, efficient and competitive** - better monitoring of the reliability & punctuality of County Council funded services
- ✓ **Develop new cycling routes** - cycling is healthy, good for the environment and cuts congestion.
- ✓ **Support traffic management schemes to make roads safer**
We will continue to fight for stricter speed limits, especially through villages, and their vigorous enforcement.



Cllr. Peter Downes shows Alex Reid, Lib Dem Spokes on Transport, how poor bus information can be.



Judy Broadway, Police Spokes

Community safety, service and value for money

- ✓ **Press for more Bobbies on the Beat** - anti-social behaviour must be tackled firmly.
- ✓ **Improve the Library service** - the book stock has been allowed to run down to unacceptable levels.
- ✓ **Encourage voluntary organisations** - grants have been frozen this year.
- ✓ **Campaign for a fairer system of local taxation** - big annual increases penalise those on low and fixed incomes.

For more information, please contact:

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Anne Kent, Education Spokes on 01223 353811

Monday, April 4th 2005



Dear Fellow Resident,

The Liberal Democrats want Cambridgeshire to be a successful county, providing excellent services for all who live and work here. We believe that our schools should be the best in the country; our transport the greenest, and our communities the safest.

Cambridgeshire is a county of huge disparity of wealth and educational achievement. Yet the current Council spends less per pupil on education than any other county in England. As a result we have schools that are failing to give children the opportunity to develop their full potential.

Cambridgeshire is a county of science and innovation, yet the County Council has missed opportunities to develop environmentally sustainable transport options. We will promote walking, cycling and the use of non-polluting vehicles, and improve the public transport network.

Cambridgeshire is generally a pleasant, safe county in which to live. But the Cambridgeshire Constabulary is officially one of the five worst police forces in the country, despite doubling the Police Council Tax since 1997.

And on libraries, the youth service and mental health care, the Conservatives have badly let down the people of Cambridgeshire.

It doesn't need to be this way. A Liberal Democrat-run Cambridgeshire will ...

- ✓ **Increase funding for education, towards the national average**
- ✓ **Increase the number of police on our streets as fast as the budget increases**
- ✓ **Invest in preventative social services rather than waiting for crises**
- ✓ **Increase funding to the Youth Service by £ 1 million**
- ✓ **Make the bus network more reliable, efficient and competitive**
- ✓ **Provide good value for taxpayers' money**
- ✓ **Keep existing libraries open, extend opening hours and improve book stock**
- ✓ **Give the public the right to ask questions at Council meetings**
- ✓ **Promote schemes to support walking and cycling**
- ✓ **Oppose the Guided Bus project**
- ✓ **Provide more grants for voluntary organisations, helping with mental health care and the disabled**

Yours sincerely,

Julian Huppert

Leader of the Liberal Democrats; Cambridgeshire County Council

Education



By far and away the largest share of the County Council is spent on Education and Childrens services. Much of this must be spent according to instructions from central government; but we still think there are many ways to do things better.

Liberal Democrats believe that a good education is the single most important thing the County Council provides for its residents. We believe that education starts early, and continues throughout life.

Currently, Cambridgeshire spends the least per pupil on education of any county council. As a result, some of our children are being let down, with consequences which will last for the rest of their lives. 4% failed last year to get even a single GCSE or equivalent.

We will:

- ✓ Provide more money for education, and prevent further cuts
- ✓ Fund more specialist teachers in technology, music and sports
- ✓ Expand access to childcare
- ✓ Improve access to vocational training for 14-19 year olds
- ✓ Work with schools to ensure children receive healthy and well-balanced meals

Environment and Transport

Liberal Democrats believe that we have no alternative but to take serious steps to protect the environment. We must reduce carbon emissions and other pollutants, both for the sake of the planet and for our own health. One of the main contributors to these problems is transportation. For this reason we support walking, cycling, rail and buses as forms of transport.

The bus service in Cambridgeshire is inadequate, and many people do not have access to a regular, reliable service. The service in Cambridge City has improved, where the Liberal Democrat-run City Council has provided successful bus services in the evenings and at night. A massive amount of council energy has been diverted to the Guided Bus scheme, rather than to the design of other environmentally-friendly transport options.

We will:

- ✓ Oppose the Guided Bus project
- ✓ Make the bus network more reliable, efficient and competitive
- ✓ Develop new cycling routes where they are needed
- ✓ Reduce the county's dependence on landfill
- ✓ Insist on infrastructure improvements before more housing development



The County Council has a relatively small budget for aiding non-viable bus services. We want to see more work done to improving services and timetabling; less work done on the unpopular guided bus.

POLICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY



The Liberal Democrats want the people of Cambridgeshire to be able to go about their daily lives with little risk of being affected by crime or the fear of crime.

Under the Conservative chairmanship of the Police Authority since 1997, the Council Tax rates doubled, the number of police on the beat didn't increase, and the success rate of the police collapsed. They were recently rated among the worst police forces in the country.

We will:

- ✓ Increase the number of police on the street by as much as the police budget
- ✓ Support the job of the local bobby and community policing
- ✓ Strive to ensure that the Police spend money efficiently and effectively
- ✓ Extend the eCops email information scheme to other areas
- ✓ Ensure that the police work with other agencies to prevent criminal activity

Openness and Democracy

The Liberal Democrats believe in open and accountable local government. The public should have the right to challenge decisions made by the Council, to gain access to information on which decisions are made, and to influence the decisions before they are made.

Instead, Cambridgeshire is secretive and autocratic. The Council behaves as if it knows best, and the public are an unwelcome distraction. The public have very limited rights to address Councillors, and no opportunity to ask questions.

We will:

- ✓ Introduce public question time at Council Meetings
- ✓ Expand petition rights to the Council and Cabinet
- ✓ Reduce the number of meetings held in secret

LIBRARIES



The Liberal Democrats believe that libraries are an essential service for the people of Cambridgeshire. They can act as a focus for the community, as well as for learning and study.

The Conservatives took an axe to the libraries, resulting in library closures, short

opening hours and poor book stock.

We will:

- ✓ Keep all existing county libraries open
- ✓ Improve the quality and quantity of books and other items
- ✓ Look at novel ways to expand the use of libraries
- ✓ Support local volunteer libraries

Taxation

The Liberal Democrats believe that the Council Tax is unfair and should be scrapped. It is inequitable, complicated and expensive to collect. It should be replaced by a local Income Tax, collected by the Inland Revenue and set by local councils.

We will take a sensible approach to setting the levels of Council Tax. Essential services such as schools, transport and the police are too important to be cut for the political gain of offering tax cuts. However, taxpayers have a right to expect their Councillors to demand value for money and not to increase levels of tax without good reason and after full consultation.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The Liberal Democrats believe that we should deal with problems as early as possible, when they are relatively simple and easier to deal with, rather than waiting for them to become a full-blown crisis. We believe elderly people and the disabled would prefer to live in their own home with some support, rather than being forced into a home.

Under the Conservative administration, massive overspends occurred in the social Services budget, because they lost control of the finances. The Conservative short-sighted cost-cutting has served only to build up greater costs. By short-changing the county's foster carers, the Council has driven them to work for agencies, who then

hire them back to the Council at increased rates. They have doubled the charges for home care for the elderly, a group who can ill afford to pay such fees.

We will:

- ✓ Increase the cost of home care no faster than the rate of increase in the pension
- ✓ Provide more support for those who care for the elderly and disabled
- ✓ Improve the occupational therapy service and ensure that basic equipment to help people live at home is available quickly
- ✓ Set an honest budget and deal with the Council's financial mismanagement



Geoff Heathcock, our Group Leader on the Fire Authority during a recent visit to a Fire Station. Geoff is determined to see the County Council take more fire prevention measures.

FIRE

The Liberal Democrats believe that the cost of the damage caused by fires cannot be measured in money alone. We believe in investing in preventative measures, such as fire sprinklers. In a rural county such as Cambridgeshire, we rely not only on full-time firefighters but also part-time retained firefighters, and we must support and encourage these people.

We will:

- ✓ Install fire sprinklers in new and refurbished schools and high-risk premises
- ✓ Support and train the network of retained firefighters

YOUNG PEOPLE

The Liberal Democrats believe that young people have a lot to contribute to the community, and their opinions as emerging citizens should be listened to. We also believe that growing up is not easy. Young people who face difficulties and are not helped to overcome them will have life-long problems and disadvantage and our communities will suffer as well.

Just as the Conservatives are letting down the county's schools, they are letting down young people outside school as well. The County's Youth Service has been officially classified by Ofsted as 'unsatisfactory' and 'poor value for money'. Failure to provide a decent Youth Service leads to increasing problems such as

graffiti and vandalism, a rise in mental health problems and lower educational achievement. The Council currently spends on the youth service half of what the government gives it for that purpose.

We will:

- ✓ Give the youth service more money – increasing towards the government norm
- ✓ Involve the Youth Parliament in decision-making and consultation
- ✓ Support projects to provide activities for young people, such as multisport activity areas and skateboard parks

10 GOOD REASONS TO VOTE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT

WE OPPOSE: PUTTING TARGETS FIRST

WE PROPOSE: PUTTING PATIENTS FIRST

Faster diagnosis so your NHS treatment can start more quickly

WE OPPOSE: TUITION FEES & TOP UP FEES

WE PROPOSE: SCRAPPING STUDENT FEES

Further education affordable to every student

WE OPPOSE: COMPULSORY I.D. CARDS

WE PROPOSE: SPENDING THE MONEY ON 10,000 MORE POLICE

Funded by scrapping compulsory I.D. cards

WE OPPOSE: SELLING YOUR HOME TO PAY FOR CARE

WE PROPOSE: FREE PERSONAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

No one forced to sell their home to pay for care

WE OPPOSE: IGNORING CLIMATE CHANGE

WE PROPOSE: CLEANER TRANSPORT & CLEANER ENERGY

Cleaner transport, cleaner energy and a clean environment

WE OPPOSE: £1.5 BILLION ON THE CHILD TRUST FUND

WE PROPOSE: £1.5 BILLION TOWARDS REDUCING CLASS SIZES

Spend the £1.5 billion Child Trust Fund when it matters most

WE OPPOSE: MEANS-TESTING PENSIONERS

WE PROPOSE: £100 EXTRA PER MONTH STARTING WITH THE OVER 75s

A million pensioners off means-testing

WE OPPOSE: HIDDEN TAX INCREASES

WE PROPOSE: ONLY ONE TAX INCREASE - ON INCOME ABOVE £100,000 PER YEAR

Only one tax increase on income over £100,000

WE OPPOSE: UNFAIR COUNCIL TAX

WE PROPOSE: LOCAL INCOME TAX, SAVING THE AVERAGE FAMILY £450 PER YEAR

Local Income Tax is both fair and affordable

WE OPPOSE: BUSH & BLAIR ON IRAQ

WE PROPOSE: NEVER AGAIN

It's time to restore trust in government

Support the REAL alternative

It's time to stand up and be counted!



- I can help the Liberal Democrats get elected
- I could help deliver some leaflets
- I could help on election day
- I can display a poster
- I would like to join the Liberal Democrats

Name

Address

Tel:

email:



Please return the reply slip to:

Liberal Democrats,
FREEPOST ANG 30067,
Brampton, Huntingdon,
PE28 4BR

or phone our hotline:



08707 650064

The Rt. Hon. Charles Kennedy
MP during a recent interview
with Sir David Frost.