

2001 Local Council Elections

Local Liberal Policies

Finance

Liberals would replace the Council Tax with a local income tax and a local rate based on land values. Performance Review Units and importing of best practice would ensure quality services, best value for money and consequently acceptable levels of local taxation. Land value taxes would also deter long-term ownership of derelict land and buildings.

Housing

Liberals oppose the depletion of council housing stock by both Labour and Conservative Governments. Liberals envisage an enhanced role for local councils in the provision of rented housing, sheltered accommodation and housing advice centres. Housing Benefit and Funding rules should treat councils and Housing Associations on an equal footing.

Education

Liberal education policy seeks to maximise self-fulfilment of every individual. Liberal philosophy opposes centralised directives such as the national curriculum and promotes comprehensive systems of education and small, community based schools sharing resources with neighbouring schools as appropriate. Increased and sustained investment in teachers, buildings and equipment will require extra funding.

Libraries

Liberals oppose library closures, recognising that public lending libraries are an invaluable source of learning, information and pleasure to the local communities they serve. Internet access and maintaining an up to date stock of reference material such as maps, directories and encyclopædias would be our priority.

Arts Leisure & Heritage

Grants combined with low-cost access to public buildings for theatre, music, poetry and arts groups provide best value for money. Sport would be likewise supported through community-based facilities and amateur clubs. Local heritage would be sustained with vibrant museum and archive services, restoration grants and projects to protect traditional skills.

Environmental Service

Liberals deplore the continuing loss of open spaces, parkland and wildlife areas and we would act to reverse this trend. All council functions would be subject to a "Green Audit" and incorporate programmes of repair, restoration, reclamation and recycling and a review of energy consumption.

Planning

Liberals would encourage the integration of industry, commerce, shopping and housing, in an effort to reduce needless commuting. We would halt the wholesale destruction of our architectural heritage, preferring rehabilitation of existing buildings for residential use, shops, small businesses and workshops.

Emergency Services

Liberals have long campaigned to reinforce community involvement and accountability of both police, fire brigade and ambulance services, deploying them in such a way as to be perceived by the community as being different

components of one benign and local emergency service. We oppose centralisation and consequent diminution of these services.

Social Services

Care in the Community is a liberal concept but it must be properly funded and should enhance, not replace, individual/community effort. We would prioritise the welfare of children, spend more on qualified social workers who deliver services on the ground and would spend less on needless layers of management.

Transport

We would spend less on new roads and more on improving existing highways, which would be of benefit to all road users, including cyclists and pedestrians. We would institute a properly co-ordinated and well advertised network of buses, together with improvement of local rail routes. Liberals champion the concept of free local public transport.

Economic Development

Liberals support local enterprise agencies to provide counselling for new and existing businesses, training courses and a "one-stop" shop for business enquiries. Liberals also favour Local Exchange Trading Systems and support day centres for the unemployed.