



EDINBURGH
LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Ambitious for Edinburgh



We will make your
council work better
for you.

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Edinburgh's Liberal Democrats will make your council work better for you.

Liberal Democrats in Edinburgh are on the rise again and intent on winning more seats in the council elections. Liberal Democrats swept to victory in the Scottish Parliament elections in Edinburgh Western against the pundits' predictions and people are recognising that our hard work, enthusiasm and common sense approach to politics are needed more than ever.

Underpinning all of our work is a commitment to make a real difference in the communities we represent: listening, offering feedback and keeping in touch with local people all year round and campaigning on issues which are important to the community.

We believe in people and their potential. Local decision-making and support for local people and their communities is at the heart of Liberal Democrat campaigning.

More than that, we are ambitious for Edinburgh as an outward-looking, international capital city and the engine of the Scottish economy. Following the EU Referendum, it is more important than ever that Edinburgh is a shining example of modern outward-looking internationalism and remains a fantastic diverse place to live in, visit, study in or do business in. Liberal Democrats are ambitious for our city and will work hard to enhance its reputation at home and abroad.

Jobs and Business

Liberal Democrats are ambitious for Edinburgh as the engine of growth in the Scottish economy. We will work closely with businesses (large, medium and small), the academic sector and the tourist industry to ensure Edinburgh's economy thrives. Edinburgh has a diverse and thriving voluntary sector. Liberal Democrats will work closely in partnership with that sector and seek to provide it with stability to develop and sustain services.

To underpin our economic activity, Liberal Democrats will champion Edinburgh as a digital leader in the UK and as a diverse tolerant and liberal city which actively welcomes and includes people from all backgrounds.

Liberal Democrats will build on our reputation as one of the world's most beautiful cities, protecting and enhancing our World Heritage status and building on our international reputation for our broad range of world class festivals and events.

Liberal Democrats will put the interests of all citizens at the heart of our decisions, and will seek fairness across the whole city. We will build on the Edinburgh Guarantee, which the Liberal Democrat-led administration introduced in 2011, to ensure that as many young people as possible leave school to positive destinations in work, apprenticeships, college or university.

Getting the basics right

Liberal Democrats believe that 5 years of Labour/SNP control have damaged our city's reputation and our quality of life. It's time to get the basics right.

Our refuse collection service has deteriorated to a state which is unacceptable. Roads are pitted with potholes making travelling dangerous and uncomfortable for motorists, cyclists and bus passengers. Pavements are in an equally dangerous state. Our social care system has deteriorated from one of the best to one in urgent need of improvement. Our schools have faced one of the biggest structural problems any local authority has seen. Our parks are being neglected, public toilets closed without adequate replacement provision.

Too many people see the council as distant, consultations as meaningless and are frustrated that complaints seem to get nowhere. Nobody seems to listen.

It's time to be ambitious for all our essential services and make the council work better for you. It's time to make sure that the council is transparent, easily accessible and clearly accountable.

Greater powers to local communities

Liberal Democrats believe that local communities know their areas best. We believe that more decisions about spending priorities on council services should be taken locally with more of the council budget devolved to local areas. We support the involvement, in particular, of young people in decision-making about services which affect them. We support the greatest possible transparency and accountability for decisions.

At a time of limited finances, Liberal Democrats believe that local decision-making means that money will be spent where it is needed most in each locality.

Liberal Democrats will encourage greater joint working between the council, voluntary groups, community groups and others, to provide the best possible services.

Improve our finances to improve our city

As Edinburgh expands and people live longer, there are increasing pressures on the council's spending. Local government funding needs reform. Cuts from the SNP Government, including a freeze for 9 years on how much the council can raise through local taxation, have taken their toll. Nationally and locally, Liberal Democrats believe local government financing desperately needs reform.

Liberal Democrats believe Edinburgh should have the power to levy a modest tourist hotel bed tax, to help meet the costs of our festivals and events so that they maintain their reputation as world leaders.

In any decision to raise or lower local taxation, such as the council tax, Liberal Democrats will examine what is required to maintain good-quality services. Our decisions will be practical and not based on dogma or ideology.

We support sound city finances. In our period jointly running the city, Liberal Democrats ensured for the first time in decades that council departments kept to their budgets. Finance is tight and Liberal Democrats will ensure budgets are ambitious and realistic, but also closely controlled. Liberal Democrats believe that not every service has to be delivered by the council itself. Our view is that Edinburgh citizens deserve the highest-quality services on a 'best value' basis.

Liberal Democrats will be open to working with other partners to deliver important projects for the city. We will work closely with neighbouring authorities to deliver a thriving city which is a magnet for jobs, students and tourists and is a great place to live, work in and visit.

We will investigate an Edinburgh Residents' discount card, for use in city amenities where Edinburgh residents will be able to access services more cheaply than visitors.

Ambitious for Education, Children and Families

Liberal Democrats are ambitious for our education and children's services. We particularly value early year's work which can set up young people for success.

Edinburgh's school pupil population is growing rapidly. Liberal Democrats support devolving considerable elements of school budgets to head teachers in co-operation with parents. We believe that the local authority has a crucial role to drive up standards across the city and that every pupil has the opportunity to thrive and achieve their maximum potential. Liberal Democrats particularly value additional support for learning to enable all pupils to meet their maximum potential.

Liberal Democrats will ensure that skills are valued as much as academic success.

Liberal Democrats will seek to invest in better early-years services and early intervention for young people who may be at risk.

Liberal Democrats will pay particular focus on ensuring that young people who are looked after by the local authority achieve better outcomes and are valued by the Council as their 'corporate parent'.

Liberal Democrats will seek to work with public health and the voluntary sector, as well as the Children's and Families Department, to extend free or affordable activities - such as PE - on Friday afternoons, whilst teachers are involved in essential administration, to ensure that constructive use is made of the full school week for all pupils.

Edinburgh has a unique mix of schools. Within the council's own estate there is a mix of schools which are owned and maintained by the local authority and those which were built under the Private Finance Initiative. To complement that, Edinburgh has a

significant proportion of children who attend private schools. Liberal Democrats will seek to maximise the use of school buildings and resources, both before and after school hours, for community benefit and will encourage all sectors to work closely together to maximise their potential.

Edinburgh's Instrumental Music Service is a jewel in the crown of the education service, affording free music tuition to pupils who wish it. It makes a valued contribution to ensuring Edinburgh school pupils have a rounded education and contribute to an area of excellence, and we will continue to support it.

Ambitious for Transport

We want to make it easier for people to get around our great city, whether by walking, cycling, getting around by public transport and using the car when appropriate. It means ensuring that the city is accessible for all, regardless of physical or sensory ability. Liberal Democrats will work with others to ensure the city improves the experience for people who walk in the city.

Liberal Democrats are proud to have introduced the annually increasing proportion of the council's transport budget devoted to cycling, which is resulting in ever-greater numbers of people choosing to cycle in the city, and will maintain the walking and cycling element of our transport budget at 10%.

We will work with others to develop bike-hire schemes and ensure that roads and cycle-paths and-lanes are well maintained and safe, to encourage more people to cycle and to do so considerately, especially where space is shared with pedestrians. We will develop more safe bike-storage and investigate developing a grant scheme for this.

Our publicly owned and award-winning bus company is the envy of many cities. Liberal Democrats will keep it in public ownership and as shareholder, encourage the maintenance of a modern bus fleet which minimises air pollution. We believe Edinburgh requires a 21st-Century modern public transport network of rail, tram and bus to ensure our growing population and those who commute can get around the city easily, producing the minimum levels of air pollution.

We believe that Edinburgh ultimately may need a tram network and will examine the business case for any expansion carefully, learning from past experience, before committing to new developments.

We will work with Transport for Edinburgh, the rail companies and the airport to develop an integrated public transport system to ensure that public transport links make it easy for commuters to get to and from their places of work taking into account new and developing commuter routes. We will support new bus priority measures where required and seek to develop the Lothianburn Park and Ride and others where required.

Most importantly we will focus on the basics. Under the Liberal Democrat-led council, Edinburgh's roads and pavements improved from 2nd worst in Scotland to 11th. Under the Labour/SNP coalition the city has fallen back again. Using the 'Getting it Right First Time' approach we will have a focus on repairing potholes in the city and deteriorating pavements. We will develop work with the major utilities to ensure road repairs are

carried out quickly and efficiently and roads are reinstated to a high standard. We will clear redundant signage.

We will review the 20mph roll out after a full year of operation and, after listening to all stakeholders, make amendments where appropriate.

For those who use cars, we will improve provision of charging points for electric vehicles.

Ambitious for the Environment

Edinburgh is a beautiful city with large areas of green space, incorporating a World Heritage Site which we are committed to retain. Our parks and green spaces are essential to our health, wellbeing and our success as a city.

Liberal Democrats will ensure every public park has a management plan. We will seek to add to the number of Green Flag parks in the city and work with community and 'friends' groups to maximise the potential of our parks.

Edinburgh has pockets of poor air quality which are damaging to the health of those who live, work or visit those areas. Liberal Democrats will seek the means from the Scottish Government to implement Low Emission Zones in parts of the city where polluting vehicles will be prohibited. We will seek enforcement action on unnecessary engine idling which contributes to poor air quality. We will ensure that Edinburgh Council is an exemplar in the way it manages its own fleet of vehicles.

Our refuse collection and recycling service is poor. Liberal Democrats will, as a priority, investigate means of making a dramatic improvement to its efficiency and reliability. The Labour/SNP regime has failed to meet its recycling targets. Liberal Democrats will put renewed priority on increasing substantially the proportion of refuse which is recycled or re-used. Most importantly we will support initiatives to reduce the production of waste where possible.

Edinburgh needs cleaner streets. Liberal Democrats will develop local control over street-cleaning squads and environmental wardens to ensure that streets are kept clean and that dog-fouling is both discouraged and subject to fixed-penalty notices.

Liberal Democrats have a proud record of campaigning to preserve and protect our Green Belt. We value green spaces both within and around the city and will preserve Edinburgh's unique environment.

Liberal Democrats are ambitious for Edinburgh's environment and will make Edinburgh Council an exemplar for reducing its carbon footprint. We will work with other major employers in the city towards a co-ordinated approach to a target of a carbon-neutral city.

Ambitious for Health, Social Care and Housing

There are enormous opportunities arising from the integration of health and social care in the city. There are also considerable challenges as our population ages and more people are in need of care and support.

In the previous Liberal Democrat-led administration of the city, the Social Work service was regarded as one of the best in Scotland. Its reputation has dropped drastically. We are ambitious for our Health and Social care services and will seek to reinstate Edinburgh's services as amongst the best in the country.

Liberal Democrats fully support the further development of Self Directed Support where those who need a service can choose the supplier of that service. We also support moving the balance of care towards care at home where possible. We recognise this needs a joint approach between the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. We recognise that urgent action is required to address the issue of bed blocking.

Liberal Democrats nationally and locally believe that there should be 'parity' between mental health and physical health services, including services in the community. Liberal Democrats are ambitious for mental health provision in Edinburgh and aim to make it the best in Scotland.

Liberal Democrats are aware of a growing number of people who are isolated and lonely in their homes and will work with all statutory and voluntary groups to develop an action plan to combat loneliness and isolation.

We will ensure in major planning decisions that provision of amenities, such as GP surgeries and schools, are included from the outset.

Edinburgh faces a growing demand for housing of all types, and especially affordable homes. As our population expands and our economy grows, it is essential to expand the supply of new homes and, especially, affordable rented accommodation. We will reinvigorate our Homelessness Strategy to work with partners to prevent and resolve homelessness in the city.

Liberal Democrats will seek to ensure that new housing developments complement existing communities and preserve their character as far as possible.

There has been a significant increase in the number of visitors opting for short-term lets in residential properties, which can change the nature of some residential communities, and some lets are problematic. Liberal Democrats will work with the Scottish Government to find a means of better regulating this growing sector.

Where possible, Liberal Democrats will seek to ensure that 'brown field' sites are developed first, with as much protection as possible for our green belt.

Ambitious for Culture, Leisure and Heritage

Edinburgh has a unique and thriving cultural appeal. At its heart are the many festivals and events. Liberal Democrats are ambitious for Edinburgh to be recognised as the world's greatest Festivals City.

Liberal Democrats believe that Edinburgh's diverse culture should offer something for everyone. It must be not only a magnet for visitors and those wishing to create jobs in the city, but also for people from all walks of life who currently live here. Liberal Democrats will seek to ensure our broad range of festivals have a stable future, with space to develop new areas.

Liberal Democrats wholeheartedly support the World Heritage status of the Old and New Towns. Edinburgh is a uniquely beautiful city, but also a city which must remain the engine of the Scottish economy. In planning decisions, Liberal Democrats will aim to strike a better balance between conservation and development.

Liberal Democrats have been champions of a modern library service in the city. We recognise that the role of libraries is changing dramatically and are ambitious for their role as hubs of information and access to council services, as well as centres of learning.

Governance of the City

Liberal Democrats believe the council should work better for its citizens. In all its business, Liberal Democrats will champion accountability, scrutiny and transparency. Our aim is a council which genuinely listens to its citizens and involves them, as far as possible, in setting priorities for service delivery. Liberal Democrats will champion local control of local services.

Do things differently

Liberal Democrats will look at innovative ways to deliver services more effectively. Often services can seem designed for the convenience of those who deliver them more than those who need them. We will make sure the council works better for its citizens by listening to people who use our services and making changes to meet their needs better.