



# Kingston Borough Liberal Democrats

2014-2018 Manifesto



**“Liberal Democrats will put local families and the community at the heart of our services, protecting them for the future, whilst bringing you value for money.”**

**Cllr Liz Green, Leader, Kingston Liberal Democrats**

## **Our key pledges:**

- 1. Build four new primary schools and a much needed new secondary school**
- 2. Create more and better facilities for our elderly to meet the growing need for dementia care**
- 3. Build vital affordable homes so our young people can stay in the borough**
- 4. Continue to protect and enhance our natural heritage, encourage biodiversity and defend our Green Belt**
- 5. Invest in our roads and deliver the £30 million 'Mini-Holland' programme to make Kingston the best and safest place to cycle in London**
- 6. Push Neighbourhood committees to introduce more free parking periods to help small shopping parades and expand 20 mph zones across residential roads in Kingston**
- 7. Continue to keep your Council Tax down and deliver value for money services**

# Letter from the Leader



Dear *Friend*,

For well over a generation, the Liberal Democrats have campaigned with local people to make Kingston one of the best places to live, work and raise a family.

We know the last four years have been a challenging time for people across the borough, with rising prices and tightened pay packets. That's why, once again, we're freezing your Council Tax bills for the year ahead, despite cuts in our government funding.

**And with Liberal Democrats at the Guildhall, Kingston is now officially London's safest borough, our schools are among the very best in the country and our care for the environment is the envy of London, with our local parks being some of the best in the country.**

These things don't happen by accident. Neighbouring Conservative councils have slashed and burned – cutting services to the elderly, closing libraries and threatening green spaces – here in Kingston, local Tories have tried to stop new schools being built, want to see decisions centralised at the Guildhall and have welcomed big budget cuts with open arms.

In contrast, our vision will continue to be a borough where people of all ages feel safe, where we put local families and the community at the heart of our services, bringing value for money and protecting services for the future, *not cutting them*.

**With your continued support over the next few years, Liberal Democrats plan to:**

- **build four new primary schools**
- **build a much needed new secondary school**
- **create more and better facilities for our elderly to meet the growing need for dementia care**
- **build vital affordable homes so our young people can stay in the borough**
- **continue to protect our environment, including our Green Belt**

In the last three years we have delivered savings of almost £40 million whilst protecting frontline services. We are reducing costs in a strategic way working with our partners to make sure we get the best value out of every pound spent, whilst still protecting our most vulnerable residents. As a result we recently won the government's Transformation Challenge Award for cutting duplication and joining up services for local people.

Meanwhile, our five-year £65 million 'Better Homes' programme is transforming thousands of families' homes across the borough.

Finding further savings in the coming years will not be easy and there will be difficult choices ahead, but with your support we will continue to work hard to manage our squeezed budget whilst doing our utmost to protect local services for the community.

**We believe it is vital to put local families and the community at the heart of our services, protecting them for the future, whilst bringing you value for money.**

Sincerely

**Councillor Liz Green  
Leader of the Council**

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# Families and Community

## Investing in Education

Liberal Democrats are committed to investing in education to ensure that every child in Kingston is offered a place at a local school.

That's why as a council, to meet our growing need, we've built two new primary schools and refurbished or expanded twelve existing schools. Local Liberal Democrats also campaigned with local parents to secure a new secondary school which will open by 2015.

***We will: build 4 more schools and a secondary school to continue to ensure enough school places for every child in Kingston.***

**Lib Dems in Government have secured funds for free school meals for every child aged 4-7, saving families on average £400 a year per child.**

**And the Lib Dem Pupil Premium has given an extra £3.4 million to our schools to help 3,690 of the most vulnerable children with more than £900 each for extra tuition & after school activities.**

## Looking After Our Older Residents

In the last four years we have invested an additional £2 million into local services for older people. And we have pioneered a scheme endorsed by Age Concern Kingston to help elderly people stay in their own homes for as long as possible.

***We will: Build a new dementia care home to ensure we meet the growing need for care in the borough, when people can no longer stay in their own homes.***

## Building New and Better Affordable Housing

Liberal Democrats believe in ensuring decent, affordable homes for our residents. That's why Kingston Lib Dems have delivered a Fairer Deal on Housing and secured £65 million of investment to refurbish and improve 5,500 homes.

We have also worked closely with local housing associations to ensure 1000 new affordable homes will be built for local people. And we have successfully campaigned against a new Tesco store in Tolworth in favour of more housing for local people.

***We will: deliver over 2000 new affordable homes for the borough over the next ten years and ensure hundreds of new homes are built on the Tolworth site previously planned for a Tesco superstore.***

## Helping Private Renters

Liberal Democrats believe that the growing number of tenants in the private rental sector deserve a fairer deal. That's why we want to be one of the first councils to work with Generation Rent and other key stakeholders to develop a private rental sector strategy. The strategy will seek to help the growing numbers of private renters in Kingston with better living conditions and fairer letting fees. As part of that we will also develop proposals for a private tenants' forum and letting agent accreditation.

***We will: Work with key stakeholders to develop a private rental sector strategy that will seek to help the growing numbers of private renters in Kingston with better living conditions and fairer letting fees.***

## **Keeping Kingston the Safest Borough in London**

Liberal Democrats on Kingston Council have been leading the way on cutting crime. Even the Conservative Deputy Mayor admits the success of our partnership working is setting an example for the rest of London.

We have:

- Been awarded a purple flag award for our night time policing
- Pioneered the Safer Kingston Partnership that's cutting crime year on year
- Developed an award winning CCTV centre
- Introduced new powers for the police to help crack down on rogue drink-related crime and anti-social behaviour in Kingston town centre
- Closed 2 problem nightclubs in the town centre

But the Conservative Mayor for London seems happy to put our low crime rate at risk with cuts to local police numbers.

***We will: protect our successful record on cutting crime to make Kingston safer still and will fight the Conservative London Mayor's cuts to our policing.***

## **Building a Stronger Local Economy**

Kingston was one of the first areas in the country to see a dramatic drop in youth unemployment, which fell by 22% last year.

Liberal Democrats have invested in apprenticeships, won millions in inward investment and are dedicated to building and maintaining strong partnerships with local businesses and the voluntary sector.

We have also invested in the cultural life of the borough in the Rose Theatre which attracts millions of pounds each year from visitors.

***We will: continue to protect and build the stronger local economy needed in Kingston to help more of our residents to get on in life.***

# Protecting Services

Lib Dems have protected Kingston's frontline services for local residents, through hard work and innovation, whilst nearby Labour and Tory councils have made savage cuts causing closures to libraries and leisure centres and the decline of services for local people.

We've also protected the Rose Theatre, invested in the new Kingston Environment Centre and successfully campaigned to protect and improve the services at local post offices.

## **Investing in our Libraries and Leisure Centres**

We have protected our libraries whilst other Conservative and Labour Boroughs have cut them. Not only that but we've invested in longer opening hours and new facilities for many of our local libraries.

We've also invested money in our leisure centres, improving changing rooms and buying new equipment.

***We will: continue to ensure our library service and leisure centres are invested in and protected for future generations.***

## **Investing in Road Maintenance**

Over the last four years we have invested £11 million in road maintenance, to resurface over 20 miles of Kingston's roads and 10 miles of our pavements.

Over the last four years we've committed millions of pounds to improving our roads, including increased repairs for damage caused by the exceptionally bad weather. And we're improving our pothole response service to ensure we can tackle road repairs quicker in the future.

For example, from 1st of January 2014 to 13th March 2014 we were able to complete a total of 1,235 pothole repairs thanks to the improved system.

In contrast, the Conservative Mayor of London, who runs many of our major roads, has let them deteriorate over the last 8 years whilst putting up fares at record rates. His engineers also caused problems over the changes to Tolworth Broadway by delaying the necessary work to traffic lights.

***We will: invest millions more in our roads and fight for those roads run by the Tory Mayor of London to be better maintained.***

## **Investing in Children's Services**

We're investing in a pioneering new programme with Richmond Council to improve our Children's services. The programme called 'Achieving for Children' will help us cut costs and re-invest money to improve the service.

The programme is breaking new ground and was described by the Children's Minister recently as "a truly innovative model" and "a great achievement", that we should all be proud of.

***We will: support the Achieving for Children programme and deliver real improvements in our Children's services.***

## **Protecting Our Neighbourhoods**

Liberal Democrats believe that people should have a real say over their areas, that's why we introduced the Neighbourhoods system and that's why we aim to protect it for the future.

Devolving decisions to local Neighbourhoods helps us understand the priorities of local areas and protect the services that really matter to people.

It means that decisions on everything from parking charges, planning matters through road maintenance to our local parks and green spaces are decided at neighbourhood level and you can have a real say in your area.

Lib Dems plan to introduce more 20mph zones in residential areas and more free parking periods to help small shopping parades. We will do this at a local level instead of it being imposed across the borough from the Guildhall.

**Conservatives want to abolish Neighbourhoods but Liberal Democrats will always protect your right to have a say over council services.**



# Bringing Value for money

Over the last four years we have delivered value for money by keeping costs under control and investing in shared services in everything from waste services, through IT and HR to our pioneering Achieving for Children programme.

Over that time, we have managed to make savings of almost £40 million. We are reducing costs in a strategic, planned way by working with our partners to make sure we get the best value out of every pound spent, whilst still protecting the most vulnerable in our community.

This has meant that despite huge cuts to our government grants, we have been able to protect frontline services **whilst freezing Council Tax for 3 out of the last four years**. We have also invested in services; we have extended some existing services and introduced new ones.

**Lib Dems in Government have raised the personal income tax allowance to £10,000. Giving 21 million people a tax cut of £700.**

Being stronger together and working in partnership is central to our philosophy. We consistently achieve better run local services by working with a range of partners from the voluntary and community sector to the police and health services.

By doing this we have kept important frontline services going and:

- **saved nearly £40 million** over 4 years
- **cut over £1 million** from our senior management pay bill
- ensured that Kingston **Councillors receive the lowest basic allowances** in London
- celebrated and **invested in the work of our voluntary sector**
- protected Council Tax support money to **stop huge hikes in Council Tax for the most vulnerable**

Also, we have the best collection rates for Council Tax in London, which means the burden of Council Tax is spread more evenly and fairly across the borough than anywhere else in London.

## **We will:**

- **Ensure value for money so your Council Tax is always spent wisely on local services**
- **Continue making savings without cutting frontline services**
- **Protect the most vulnerable from big Council Tax rises through maintaining Council Tax support**
- **Ensure we continue to have the best Council Tax collection rates in London to keep your bills down**

# Caring for our Environment

Liberal Democrats in Kingston naturally want to tackle the challenges of climate change and protect and enhance the environment for us and for future generations.

## **Defending our Green Belt**

Thanks to our long record of standing up to reckless development, local residents know that Liberal Democrats will protect our Green Belt.

But now the Conservatives could put all that at risk by refusing to rule out the 're-designation' of our Green Belt for thousands upon thousands of houses.

***We will: oppose this threat and defend our Green Belt from developers.***

## **New Energy Centre - cutting carbon emissions**

Kingston Liberal Democrats are investing £40,000 in plans to produce a new heating system for Kingston town centre, which if successful could cut costs and carbon emissions for local businesses and council buildings. We remain committed to energy generation and have already installed measures on some of our public buildings and plan to install more at locations such as the Guildhall complex, local centres and on our car parks.

Investing in local energy generation and energy efficiency are important priorities for local Liberal Democrats.

The plan is to create a Combined Heat and Power system; an efficient technology that uses gas to produce electricity and captures waste heat which is then used in the network of buildings.

***We are: committed to developing the plans for the new energy centre, which will heat buildings in Kingston town centre.***

## **Campaigning against Heathrow Expansion**

Liberal Democrats are united against the plans to expand Heathrow and have been at the forefront of campaigns to stop a third runway.

***We will: stand against any future plans for Heathrow expansion.***

## **The Best Recycling Rates in London**

Liberal Democrats are always looking at ways that we can recycle more, cut waste and help our environment. And thanks to our hard work Kingston now has one of the best recycling rates in London.

***We will: work to maintain and improve our recycling rates so we continue to be one of the best Boroughs in London for recycling.***

## **Green flag for Kingston Parks**

Under Lib Dem stewardship, three of Kingston's parks have been rated among the country's best kept green spaces.

Canbury Gardens, Surbiton's Fishponds Park and Manor Park have all been awarded a 'Green Flag' award by the Keep Britain Tidy campaign.

***We are fortunate to have such a range of green spaces and Liberal Democrats are committed to ensuring they are nurtured, so that they continue to provide the benefits of health & wellbeing for future generations.***

# Supporting the Voluntary Sector

## Working together to ensure we continue to make a difference

Kingston is fortunate indeed to have such a thriving voluntary and community sector. We are blessed with so many good people willing to give freely of their time and their talent to help create and develop a strong and caring society.

We have protected the grants to our voluntary sector and will continue to do so. We have also funded “capacity building” to help groups attract and retain their volunteers.

As Liberal Democrats we are proud to play our part in that development. Families and community are at the very heart of our beliefs and we will ensure that more Council services are delivered through expanded partnership working devolved to be close to the people who value them and who they most closely affect.

We strongly support the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy agreed with our partners this year and to the action plan and compact that accompanies that strategy. But we want to go further. We are launching the Kingston Community Charter that will recognise every community in Kingston Borough as having a role to play in building and strengthening our society. Through our Neighbourhood structure we will build on existing strategic and local partnerships to better enable us all in shaping the services that we value most and to caring for our local communities.

The detail of the Kingston Community Charter is appended to this manifesto.

Kingston Borough Liberal Democrats pledge our support to this Community Charter and for the specific campaigns and organisations mentioned below. The superb work of the voluntary and community sector should never be a hostage to political fortune and we hope that all other parties and candidates will also pledge their support to this Charter and to the work of the sector.

These are just some of the local campaigns, community actions and organisations that we will help support and protect through the Community Charter:

- **Backing Express CIC to provide autism services**  
In the next four years we will work closely with Express CIC to help them deliver more services for children and young adults with autism, including the community asset transfer of the former Fairmead Nursery site.
- **Investing in our Credit Union – Kingston Savers**  
We’ve invested in Credit Union Surrey Save to help them set up Kingston Savers, which is serving the whole of Kingston. We’re also backing plans for a new Kingston pound, which will help the credit union and local businesses.
- **Investing in our Environment Centre**  
We’ve invested in the Kingston Environment Centre, which promotes environmental action, education and community work. The charity aims to increase understanding of the natural environment and is a lead part of the London-wide ‘Capital growth’ project to help get more people growing their own food locally.
- **Small grants for local charities**  
The majority of our charity grants are small amounts of money that go to small local groups to help in the community or support community events. For example, last year we supported the week-long Surbiton Festival: The Surbiton Neighbourhood Committee grant helped to cover a range of

expenses including marshals, stages, and seating areas earmarked for families and older people.

- **Celebrating cultural differences that bring us closer together**  
We work closely with Kingston Racial Equalities Council to stamp out racism in all guises. We support Kingston Carnival to celebrate all cultures.
- **Age UK & Age Concern Kingston**  
We have provided grants to Age Concern Kingston for several years to support older people in the Borough and we have now signed up to the Age UK manifesto to improve services for older people.
- **Community Fund for local improvements**  
Kingston Liberal Democrats will set up a community fund for environmental and community projects that will be paid for by developers.

***We will: Continue to support our local voluntary sector through our new Community Charter and protect our grants programme from Tory cuts.***

# Building a Real Olympic Legacy

Liberal Democrats secured the participation of Kingston as an Olympic Borough and the hard work paid off; in 2012 we delivered the Olympic Cycling Road Races and Time Trials. Residents were able to witness Lizzie Armistead on her way to winning a silver medal and Sir Bradley Wiggins on his way to winning a gold medal. Liberal Democrats thank everyone, especially the volunteers, for doing such marvellous work to make it happen.

## Olympic Legacy

Liberal Democrats are leading the way in promoting cycling in Kingston by delivering real investment and innovation. Determined to capture the special atmosphere of that day and build a sustainable Olympic legacy, last year we hosted the RideLondon 100 and Classic events. The people of Kingston embraced this event and we look forward to welcoming RideLondon again this August. Our first step was to secure funding for a new cycle track in Chessington to increase disabled participation and the second, much bigger step, is the Mini-Holland programme.

## 'Mini Holland' Cycling Bid

We are a cycle-loving borough with a proud cycling heritage and delighted to have secured funding to the tune of £30 million from the Mayor of London to transform the cycling infrastructure in Kingston in the coming years. This will transform our borough, providing a real boost for cycling as it will benefit both pedestrians and motorists by increasing segregation along major routes and reducing the potential for conflict.

The bid is one of the most ambitious projects of its kind for cycling in London and was acknowledged as the best bid to win this important funding. Whilst the GLA are yet to confirm the full list of projects that will be funded, proposals contained in Kingston's winning bid include:

- A landmark project for a fixed, cycle-only boardway on the banks of the river between Thameside near John Lewis to Queens Promenade at Town End Parade, with improved boat moorings.
- A new transformed plaza outside Kingston railway station to create more space for cyclists and pedestrians.
- A new town square at Surbiton station, created by relocating the taxi rank and car park.
- Cycling 'superhubs' at Kingston and Surbiton railway stations, with parking spaces for 750 bikes initially (with future plans to add 1,500 more spaces at Surbiton station and a third 1,000-space hub in Kingston town centre.)
- A Dutch-style roundabout at the Fountain, New Malden with segregated cycle lanes.
- A 'bike bypass' on Kingston's ring road at Wheatfield Way - a 750-metre segregated cycle lane from the railway station to Denmark Road.
- A new cycle route and footpath between New Malden and Raynes Park with connections to central London.

***We will: Ensure the success of the 'Mini-Holland' programme and continue the work to be the most cycle friendly borough in London.***