



# INFORMATION PACK FOR COUNCIL CANDIDATES IN 2018

## Contents

WHAT DO LIBERAL DEMOCRATS BELIEVE? .....	2
I AM A MEMBER OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS – WHAT NEXT?.....	3
WHAT ARE THE NATIONAL LIBERAL DEMOCRAT POLICIES? .....	5
HOW IS THE LOCAL PARTY STRUCTURED? .....	5
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A LIBERAL DEMOCRAT COUNCILLOR IN KINGSTON? .....	6
WHAT IS CAMPAIGNING ALL ABOUT?.....	8
HOW DO I BECOME A CANDIDATE IN KINGSTON?.....	9

## WHAT DO LIBERAL DEMOCRATS BELIEVE?

### *Preamble to the Constitution of the Liberal Democrats*

The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity. We champion the freedom, dignity and well-being of individuals, we acknowledge and respect their right to freedom of conscience and their right to develop their talents to the full. We aim to disperse power, to foster diversity and to nurture creativity. We believe that the role of the state is to enable all citizens to attain these ideals, to contribute fully to their communities and to take part in the decisions which affect their lives.

We look forward to a world in which all people share the same basic rights, in which they live together in peace and in which their different cultures will be able to develop freely. We believe that each generation is responsible for the fate of our planet and, by safeguarding the balance of nature and the environment, for the long term continuity of life in all its forms.

Upholding these values of individual and social justice, we reject all prejudice and discrimination based upon race, colour, religion, age, disability, sex or sexual orientation and oppose all forms of entrenched privilege and inequality. Recognising that the quest for freedom and justice can never end, we promote human rights and open government, a sustainable economy which serves genuine need, public services of the highest quality, international action based on a recognition of the interdependence of all the world's peoples and responsible stewardship of the earth and its resources.

We believe that people should be involved in running their communities. We are determined to strengthen the democratic process and ensure that there is a just and representative system of government with effective Parliamentary institutions, freedom of information, decisions taken at the lowest practicable level and a fair voting system for all elections. We will at all times defend the right to speak, write, worship, associate and vote freely, and we will protect the right of citizens to enjoy privacy in their own lives and homes. We believe that sovereignty rests with the people and that authority in a democracy derives from the people. We therefore acknowledge their right to determine the form of government best suited to their needs and commit ourselves to the promotion of a democratic federal framework within which as much power as feasible is exercised by the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. We similarly commit ourselves to the promotion of a flourishing system of democratic local government in which decisions are taken and services delivered at the most local level which is viable.

We will foster a strong and sustainable economy which encourages the necessary wealth creating processes, develops and uses the skills of the people and works to the benefit of all, with a just distribution of the rewards of success. We want to see democracy, participation and the co-operative principle in industry and commerce within a competitive environment in which the state allows the market to operate freely where possible but intervenes where necessary. We will promote scientific research and innovation and will harness technological change to human advantage.

We will work for a sense of partnership and community in all areas of life. We recognise that the independence of individuals is safeguarded by their personal ownership of property, but that the market alone does not distribute wealth or income fairly. We support the widest possible distribution of wealth and promote the rights of all citizens to social provision and cultural activity. We seek to

make public services responsive to the people they serve, to encourage variety and innovation within them and to make them available on equal terms to all.

Our responsibility for justice and liberty cannot be confined by national boundaries; we are committed to fight poverty, oppression, hunger, ignorance, disease and aggression wherever they occur and to promote the free movement of ideas, people, goods and services. Setting aside national sovereignty when necessary, we will work with other countries towards an equitable and peaceful international order and a durable system of common security. Within the European Community we affirm the values of federalism and integration and work for unity based on these principles. We will contribute to the process of peace and disarmament, the elimination of world poverty and the collective safeguarding of democracy by playing a full and constructive role in international organisations which share similar aims and objectives.

These are the conditions of liberty and social justice which it is the responsibility of each citizen and the duty of the state to protect and enlarge. The Liberal Democrats consist of women and men working together for the achievement of these aims.

## **I AM A MEMBER OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS – WHAT NEXT?**

### **Check your membership**

It might seem obvious to say that you must be a member of the Liberal Democrats if you want to stand as a candidate for the party. But it is all too easy to let your membership slip, so do make sure you keep your membership up to date, by renewing when prompted. Better still, take out a direct debit so you don't have to worry about unintentionally ruling yourself out of the running.

### **Use the Members' online resources**

As a member you can register with the Members section on the national website on [www.libdems.org.uk/members](http://www.libdems.org.uk/members). This will give you access to some useful information and online training. You should use the email address that is held by the Membership department. If you have a problem with registering use the contact form or phone HQ on 020 7022 0988 and ask for the Membership department.

### **Embrace diversity**

We welcome candidates from across the community, so whatever your cultural, ethnic or religious background, whatever your gender or sexuality, whatever disability you may have, we hope you will feel comfortable within the local party and will feel encouraged to stand as a candidate. Please let the Approval and Selection team know if you need us to make any adaptations to enable you to participate fully.

The one criterion that we do enforce is that we expect you to have a good command of verbal and written English.

### **Become an activist**

You will only be approved as a candidate for a target ward if you have been actively campaigning locally. It is never too late to start so contact your ward team and find out how you can get involved.

If you don't know who to speak to, get in touch with our office at 21 Berrylands Road, Surbiton KT5 8QX or our Volunteer Co-ordinator, Sarah Hanson-Kahn, on [volunteer@kingstonlibdems.org](mailto:volunteer@kingstonlibdems.org). Also, ask to be put on the activists' mailing list.

### **Follow the Liberal Democrats on social media**

On Facebook, you can join a number of groups for Liberal Democrat members; some are for general discussion and others focus on particular interests. There is also a closed group for Kingston activists. If you are not sure how to join ask one of the local members who is active on Facebook.

On Twitter you can follow @LibDems, @timfarron, @KingstonLibDems, @CllrLizGreen or any of the local Liberal Democrat tweeters.

Liberal Democrat Voice is by far the most read Liberal Democrat blog. It covers breaking political news and a wide variety of opinions on [www.libdemvoice.org](http://www.libdemvoice.org).

### **Not online?**

All councillors are expected to be online and to conduct their communications with the Council by email. We would normally expect all candidates to be regular email users. If this is difficult for you, for any reason, please contact the Approval and Selection team who will help you.

## **WHAT ARE THE LOCAL LIBERAL DEMOCRAT POLICIES?**

The Liberal Democrat Councillors work within the borough party for policy and campaign development on a variety of issues. The list constantly changes as we need to react to Government and Kingston Conservatives' changes. We also form proactive policies on areas of concern.

### **Ward level issues**

Each ward will have campaigns specific to their geographical area, that may cross ward boundaries but will not be of interest to the wider borough. For example, Surbiton wards are campaigning for 20mph in all residential roads, to increase road safety.

### **Area based issues, but of greater interest**

Some campaigns and policies will have an impact in a specific geographical area but the ramifications of the decisions are much wider. For example, protecting the Green Belt in Chessington South Ward which has environmental considerations for many residents across the borough.

### **Specific interest groups across the borough**

Occasionally there will be policies we form that don't interest many people, but the effect on one specific group will be massive. The removal of 18-21 year olds from the Council tax benefit system is an example of this kind of work.

### **Large borough-wide issues**

There are many borough-wide issues that the Liberal Democrat Councillors and the wider borough

party form policy positions on, which can be loosely formed into the following groups (not a comprehensive list):

- **Environmental** - improving air quality, easier and better recycling, protecting open spaces and parks, encouraging cycling and walking.
- **Housing** – building more homes without destroying the green belt or overdeveloping Kingston town centre, affordable housing for real salaries, estate regeneration.
- **Schools** – building the right new schools in the right places, maintaining the superb quality of our schools, ensuring every child has opportunities to succeed.
- **Transport** – implications of Crossrail2, better bus access to health facilities, reducing overcrowding on our trains, rezoning Surbiton and Kingston stations to zone 5, more and better cycle lanes.
- **Financial** – maintaining a balanced budget whilst minimising the reduction in services and over burdening council tax payers, ensuring Councillors allowances do not become excessive, keeping parking charges reasonable.

## WHAT ARE THE NATIONAL LIBERAL DEMOCRAT POLICIES?

National policy is decided by the members who attend Federal Conference in Spring or Autumn each year. You can help to make policy by voting or speaking at Conference, writing a motion to Conference, submitting an amendment to someone else's motion, joining a policy working group, or submitting your ideas to a current policy consultation. See [www.libdems.org.uk/making\\_policy](http://www.libdems.org.uk/making_policy) for more information.

In the Members' section of the Liberal Democrat website, you can see a long list of policy papers that have been agreed by Conference since 1993, at [www.libdems.org.uk/policy\\_information](http://www.libdems.org.uk/policy_information) . More recent papers can be seen in the conference section of the main website: [www.libdems.org.uk/conference\\_papers](http://www.libdems.org.uk/conference_papers)

Every five years the key policies are gathered together to create the manifesto for the General Election. You can read the 2015 manifesto here: [www.libdems.org.uk/read-the-full-manifesto](http://www.libdems.org.uk/read-the-full-manifesto)

Since the election in 2015 the party has been reviewing its fundamental values and principles, which will guide its policymaking over the period until the next General Election in 2020. You can read about current progress here: [www.libdems.org.uk/agenda2020](http://www.libdems.org.uk/agenda2020)

## HOW IS THE LOCAL PARTY STRUCTURED?

The local party is Kingston Borough Liberal Democrats, and as its name suggests, covers the whole of the Royal Borough. There are 16 wards, of which 12 make up the Parliamentary constituency of Kingston & Surbiton. The remaining four wards lie in the constituency of Richmond Park which stretches northwards into Richmond Borough.

For most of the time our campaigning is organised on a borough-wide basis, but during the General Election period we tend to campaign at a constituency level.

The local party has an Executive Committee. It has the usual officers: Chair (currently David Ryder-Mills), Secretary, Treasurer, plus a Data Officer who deals with Liberal Democrat HQ, a Membership Development Officer and some elected and co-opted Committee members. In addition, each ward sends a representative to the meetings. The Borough Executive meets on alternative months and holds its AGM in November.

Alongside the Borough Executive there is a Campaign Strategy Group, currently chaired by Ed Davey, which co-ordinates all the campaigning activities of the local party, both on the ground and online.

Each ward can form its own branch of Kingston Liberal Democrats; sometimes two or three wards join together to form a branch. Branches elect their own officers and also hold AGMs in November.

You can view the local party constitution at [www.kingstonlibdems.org/constitution](http://www.kingstonlibdems.org/constitution)

Kingston Liberal Democrats have taken over the property at 21 Berrylands Road which they previously shared with Ed Davey. The Property Management Team ensures that it is opened and staffed by volunteers, and that leaflets get printed, folded and distributed.

There is an ongoing need to raise funds to run the property as well as our campaigning so we enjoy a number of fundraising events during the year. You can see these and social events at [www.kingstonlibdems.org/events](http://www.kingstonlibdems.org/events).

In the other direction, Kingston Liberal Democrats are part of London Region, which runs its own annual conference and co-ordinates campaigning activities across the local parties, especially for the London Elections. London Region is accountable to the English party. The national party is itself a Federation of State parties, and should always be referred to as The Liberal Democrats, not 'The Liberal Democrat party'.

## **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A LIBERAL DEMOCRAT COUNCILLOR IN KINGSTON?**

The great Mohandas K. Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world".

One of the things that makes Liberal Democrat Councillors different from those of other political parties in Kingston – apart from what we believe in and what we stand for – is that we try to be that change; in what we do and how we act; not just in what we say and how we vote at the Guildhall.

Liberal Democrat Councillors are campaigners and community champions; activists and advocates; imaginative problem solvers; we will ask not why, but why not? We believe that the best way to create a liberal society is a take and share power throughout our communities; to help ordinary people understand how things work and then give them the power to make things work for them.

There are two sorts of people who go into local politics: those who want to be something; and those who want to do something. Liberal Democrats have no time for the first and lots of time for the latter.

### **Campaigning**

To get elected, and stay elected, a candidate must actively campaign in their ward. You will be

approved by the Borough party and selected by a ward only if you have a solid track record of campaigning well before any election. For a Liberal Democrat Councillor campaigning is about talking to residents, finding out what concerns them and taking action to help them, and helping them to help themselves.

Once elected, we expect all Liberal Democrat Councillors to continue to campaign just as hard as when they were candidates. It's not a ploy to get elected; it's a way of life. We keep in contact with our residents all year round, not just at elections.

### **Community Leadership**

Many potential candidates ask about the time commitments of meetings and decision-making at the Guildhall. Whilst this is understandable, the greatest commitment a Councillor makes is to be a community leader for their ward. This involves taking what residents say and helping make it happen; supporting residents associations and other volunteer organisations in the ward; working with residents to shape a vision for the area; working with partners in schools, transport, police, health and business.

With reducing Council budgets and a Conservative administration, delivery of local services is more dependent on the help of local residents than ever before. The community leadership role of a Liberal Democrat Councillor has expanded over the last few years and an ability to work with local people and volunteers is essential to maintaining the high standards we have all been used to receiving.

### **Casework**

Some of the most rewarding work that you will undertake as a Councillor will be individual casework for residents. Councillors can be called upon by residents to help with any Council related issue from housing to potholes; from recycling to dementia care; from parks to road signs. Residents contact Councillors by email, phone and post and the list of issues is virtually endless. Some Councillors hold advice surgeries, other choose to meet residents separately by appointment.

When first elected, casework can be daunting, but there is support available from other Councillors, the Liberal Democrat Group office and Council officers. One of the most important attribute as a Councillor is a desire to help, an ability to listen and the tenacity to follow through to a conclusion. It is also vital that Councillors understand the confidentiality required by this aspect of the work.

### **Communication**

One of the biggest issues facing local government today is the lack of residents' knowledge about what we do; this results in very low turnouts for elections. If we are to address this, we need to make sure that we communicate effectively with all residents, using all formats. Of course, leaflets and door-knocking are often the most effective, but increasingly digital communications and social media are the best way to engage with some residents.

With a Conservative administration in Kingston and Conservative Government, it is often necessary to react quickly as issues and policies emerge.

Whilst not ever Councillor and campaigner will be proficient in all aspects of communication, there needs to be a balance across each ward. Training is available in all aspects of communications including speaking at public forums, leaflet writing and production, social media and video.

Email is the main channel for communications between Council officers and councillors, so we do expect all councillors to be able to use email proficiently. Support will be given if you are not confident in the use of email.

## **Committees**

This is often the first question a candidate asks, but we have put it last as the other four areas are more important. Some candidates, when elected, believe that the work they do at the Guildhall is everything, but actually it can lead to them losing touch with their residents. That is not to say that the work of the Council is not vitally important, but it has to be seen as just part of the overall role.

All Councillors sit on a variety of committees. It is difficult to give averages but it is reasonably safe to assume that you will attend 1-2 midweek evenings per week and occasional meetings during the day-time (if you are available) and at weekends. A [list of committees](#) can be found on the Kingston Council website.

The Conservatives have recently modified the committee structure, making it more centralised and by-passing our beloved Neighbourhood system which moved decision-making closer to the residents it affects. They have also reduced the role of opposition Councillors in the decision-making process and tried (and failed) to increase participation in the consultation events. We don't know how many more changes will be made before the elections in 2018. We would reinstate the role of Neighbourhoods, so the number and type of committee you would be asked to attend will change again in 2018.

## **Councillors' allowances**

If you are elected as a councillor in Kingston you will receive an annual allowance, paid monthly. The basic allowance for all councillors (in January 2016) is £7771. This is index-linked so will be updated each year. Additional responsibility allowances are paid to portfolio holders, chairs of committees and opposition spokespersons.

The Council also pays a Dependents Allowance to help cover care costs.

## **Could this be you?**

You may also like to work through a short online training module provided by the party nationally. You can find it here: [www.libdems.org.uk/being\\_lib\\_dem\\_councillor](http://www.libdems.org.uk/being_lib_dem_councillor). If you haven't done so already you will have to sign up to the Members section of the national website.

## **WHAT IS CAMPAIGNING ALL ABOUT?**

Kingston Liberal Democrats have a proud history of campaigning reaching back over fifty years. You might think that the term 'campaigning' refers to our activity at election time, but that is only a small part of what we do.

As Liberal Democrats we believe in empowering communities to bring about the changes they want. That means that all of us, whether councillors or not, should be listening to residents, identifying issues and leading or supporting campaigns to change things.

Research has shown that voters are more likely to vote for us if they have received leaflets and personal visits OUTSIDE election time.

The main method of campaigning is simply knocking on doors and talking to people. We give full training and can pair you up with an experienced campaigner so that you are supported, particularly at the beginning. We often use structured questions on surveys and ask a mixture of questions about street level, borough, London-wide or national questions. We also use petitions to help highlight concerns on major issues. And of course we regularly work with residents groups and local organisations to get things done.

As well as knocking on doors, the other important method we use to communicate with residents is our literature. We produce street-letters, ward Focus, Borough Newspaper and Council reviews. All are produced and delivered without any cost to the tax payer. To do this we fundraise and rely on our volunteer deliverers to get this through letterboxes. All candidates will be expected to take an active role in social events, fundraising and supporting members and deliverers. This may include financial donations and actively delivering, although no candidate should be put off by this as it is more about attitude to campaigning and individual circumstances are taken into account.

A lot of campaigning also happens online and through email where we can reach large numbers of people very quickly. But we need to use a variety of communication channels in parallel in order to reach the maximum number of people with our messages; the only way to ensure that every home gets the information is to deliver leaflets to them.

We can never rely on the national or local media to report what we are doing so we have to take on that responsibility ourselves. As David Penhaligon MP once said: "If you've got something to say, put it on a piece of paper and stick it through a letterbox."

Although there are many activists in Kingston, councillors have a special role in giving leadership for the campaigning in their wards, because they are usually the people who know what is going on. The Campaign Strategy Group brings together some key activists and co-ordinates all the campaigning activities.

As a candidate and campaigner you will gain a lot of value from joining the Association of Liberal Democrat Campaigners and Councillors. See [www.aldc.org](http://www.aldc.org).

## HOW DO I BECOME A CANDIDATE IN KINGSTON?

If you're thinking about standing as a candidate in council elections, you might be wondering how you move from being interested to being an actual candidate. Here is a brief overview of how approval and selection usually work in Kingston – a process overseen by the borough party's Approval and Selection Team.

Note that this is a two stage process:

- **Approval:** potential candidates are approved by the local party as suitable to represent the Liberal Democrats in Kingston
- **Selection:** each ward selects its candidates from the pool of people who have been approved

## Approval process

Everyone who wishes to stand will be asked to complete an **application** to be included in the list of approved candidates. This form will ask you basic questions about yourself, your skills, your party involvement and questions that will confirm you are eligible to stand as a candidate in Kingston.

In addition to the application form you will be asked to complete a **supplementary form** in which you will show your agreement to taking part in the activity required by a local election campaign (such as door-knocking, delivering, telephone canvassing, fundraising and/or administration). You will also need to provide a one-page **summary of activities** that sets out your recent involvement in campaigning, ward activities, policy reading, casework and meetings attendance (if you're new to the party – don't panic – you can ask for a few extra months to work on this). Finally, you will be asked to provide details of **two referees**.

## Approval interview

Assuming your paperwork is in order, you will be invited to attend an **interview** with two members of the Approval and Selection Team (usually one person who has been a Councillor and one person who is an active campaigner). The interview lasts about half an hour and will be an opportunity for there to be mutual discussion about your application.

We aren't going to tell you the exact questions in advance but it is certainly worth coming to the interview prepared to say why you want to be a councillor and what you think you will be able to contribute to the council, the community and the local party. Please also come armed with questions – it's OK to be confused about some aspects of local government!

A day or two after the interview, you will get a call from someone on the team with a **decision**. You will either be approved, conditionally approved (ie you will be approved as long as you fulfil certain criteria such as learning specific aspects of campaigning) or not approved (if you are not approved and you think that decision is unfair, you are able to appeal). All those who are approved are added to the borough's **list of approved candidates**.

## Selection

Once on the approved candidates list, you will begin to receive emails letting you know which wards are looking to select candidates and what qualities / skills they are particularly seeking in such candidates. When you apply you may have a specific ward in mind (or the campaign team might have a specific ward in mind for you!) but you are free to express an interest in any ward selection process.

If you are interested in standing in a ward you should fill in a **nomination form** for that ward and return it to their Returning Officer. You will then need to attend the ward **hustings** evening – this is a chance for the ward members to meet you and ask you questions. You will be asked to give a five minute talk at the hustings in which you can set out why you think you would be a good candidate for that ward. At the end of the hustings, there is a **vote** (which will include votes cast by post before the hustings). Normally the returning officer will announce the **results** of the vote at the end of the evening. If you are not selected, you are welcome to fill out a nomination form for another ward. If you are **selected**, the real hard work (and fun) begins!

Full details of these procedures can be found at: [www.kingstonlibdems.org/procedures](http://www.kingstonlibdems.org/procedures)