



INFORMATION PACK FOR COUNCIL CANDIDATES IN 2022

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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.

Not a member yet?

If you are a registered supporter, or not signed up to the Liberal Democrats at all, then you will have to take out paid membership before you go any further.

You can join the party here: www.libdems.org.uk/join-local

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. 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 Membership Development Officer, Martine Dejeans, on membershipdev@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, @KingstonLibDems, @LondonLibDems, @EdwardJDavey, @SarahJOlney1, @CllrCarolineK 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.

Not online?

All councillors are expected to be online and to conduct their communications with the Council and fellow councillors 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.

The election campaign will be run using applications such as Google Drive, Zoom and WhatsApp, so you should be comfortable using these or similar. Training can be given if needed.

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 policies and to deliver on our manifesto commitments. We also form proactive local policies on areas of concern.

Ward level issues

Each ward will have specific campaigns in their area, such as the Cambridge Road Estate regeneration in Norbiton or the Seething Wells Filter Beds in St Marks. However, ward level issues can also become neighbourhood or area specific too.

Neighbourhood/area level issues

Each neighbourhood will have its own campaigns as well. For example, during the Coronavirus pandemic the New Malden wards created virtuallymalden.com, covering the wards of Beverley, St James and Coombe Vale (where we have councillors currently). Seething Wells Filter Beds and the Cambridge Road Estate regeneration can also be spoken about across the borough, to reinforce a proactive Lib Dem administration.

Specific interest groups across the borough

Some campaigns and policies will affect only a certain group of people, such as the calls for the Government not to scrap free travel for under-18s or restrict when older people can use their Freedom passes.

Borough-wide issues

The council group is currently working through the manifesto the Lib Dem administration was elected on in order to provide an update of what we have achieved in power. This will help to set out our position on key issues, and also lead to development of our 2022 manifesto as well.

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 for more information.

You can read summaries of the party's main policies at www.libdems.org.uk/manifesto, and you can read policy papers in more detail at www.libdems.org.uk/policy_papers.

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. At present 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.

The ward boundaries are under review by the Boundary Commission, which should be reporting their final proposals by early 2021. The new structures will operate for the local elections in 2022.

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 these officers: Chair (currently Charles Tugendhat), Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Development Officer, Data Officer, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Media and Communications Officer, plus 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 Group which co-ordinates all the campaigning activities of the local party, both on the ground and online. The Executive, Council Group and Ed Davey jointly employ a Campaigns Manager (currently JK Doran), who works with his colleague in Richmond Park.

You can view the local party constitution at www.kingstonlibdems.org/constitution

Kingston Liberal Democrats and Ed Davey MP share a property at 21 Berrylands Road, Surbiton KT5 8QX. There is an ongoing need to raise funds to run the property as well as for our campaigning, so we enjoy a number of fundraising events during the year. You can see details of these in the weekly members email newsletter.

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?

There's no single route to becoming a Liberal Democrat councillor. Some people have been actively involved in their communities for years and stand for election to increase their ability to influence what goes on in their area. Others are so appalled by what's happening in national politics they find themselves galvanised into active political engagement. One month you are knocking on doors to try to get Ed or Sarah back to Westminster; the next thing you know you are trying to persuade residents to vote for you to represent them yourself in local government.

Whatever your initial motivation, campaigning is the key to getting elected and to staying elected. For a Liberal Democrat Councillor that means talking to residents, finding out their concerns, taking action to help them, and helping them to help themselves. Once elected, we expect Liberal Democrat councillors to keep campaigning, staying in contact with residents all year round, not just at elections.

Being a councillor is a multi-faceted role. In their ward, councillors are expected to be community leaders and to encourage others to lead too. That may mean supporting residents' associations and volunteer groups and working with local organisations like schools, businesses or the police.

During the pandemic we have seen just how amazing Kingston's community spirit can be. We want to harness that energy for the long term and whether it is becoming a Foodbank street champ or organising a litter pick, councillors have a key role to play in encouraging people to enrich their own communities.

Residents can also call on their Councillors to help with any Council-related issue. From housing to potholes to parking, the list is almost endless. It's our role to be a helpful intermediary between the council bureaucracy and the individual resident. It's here that councillors can do some of their most

rewarding work. There is nothing to match the satisfaction of being able to help someone at a moment of real need.

Councillors normally sit on a variety of committees but Coronavirus has disrupted the usual cycle of meetings. Assuming things return to normal eventually it is safe to assume that you will attend around 1-2 midweek evenings per week and occasional meetings during the day-time (if you are available) and at weekends. A [calendar of committees](#) can be found on the Kingston Council website.

Of course, you need to make sure residents know about the good work you do as a councillor and, for that reason, communications always go hand in hand with campaigning. At the time of writing we can't knock on doors, but we can deliver leaflets and, of course, we have to get our messages across on social media. If this isn't your bag, don't worry. There's training available.

If you are elected as a councillor in Kingston you will receive an annual allowance of £8,248. Additional responsibility allowances are paid to portfolio holders, chairs of committees and opposition spokespersons.

If you think this is a role which might appeal to you, you might like to work through a short online training module provided by the party nationally: www.libdems.org.uk/councillor_curriculum. You would also be welcome to phone a current councillor to discuss the role.

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.

How we campaign

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 leaflets, Borough-wide newspapers 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, managing volunteers

in their wards 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 Group brings together some key activists and co-ordinates the campaigning strategy, while our Campaigns Manager takes overall control of our 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.

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 in 2022 (including existing councillors) will be asked to complete an application form to be included in the list of approved candidates. This form asks basic questions about yourself, your skills, your party involvement, plus questions that will confirm you are eligible to stand as a candidate in Kingston.

You will also be asked to list 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). It is a good idea to start keeping a record of such activities now. You should include any community volunteering that you undertook during lockdown, when campaigning was not possible.

At the end of the form you will find a list of campaigning commitments (such as door-knocking, delivering, telephone canvassing, fundraising and/or administration) that you should undertake if you are selected as a candidate in a target ward. The approval panel will discuss these with you.

Finally, you will be asked to provide contact details for two referees, who should be party members.

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 45 minutes and will be an opportunity for mutual discussion about your application.

You should come 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 an email from someone on the team with a decision. You will either be approved, conditionally approved (ie you will be approved after you have fulfilled 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 (including those who are conditionally 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 ready to select candidates, remembering that these will be based on the new ward boundaries. When you apply for approval you may have a specific ward in mind 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