

Liberal 
Democrats

Peterborough

**Manifesto for
Peterborough City
Council Elections 2019**

A VISION OF A MORE LIBERAL PETERBOROUGH

February 2019

Introduction

The Liberal Democrats want to create a fair, safe and sustainable Peterborough in which everyone is equally empowered to fulfil their ambitions and live a healthy life.

We believe that we have the ideas that Peterborough needs in order to build a society in which everyone - regardless of their age, gender or background - has the opportunity to fulfil their potential and get on in life.

Sadly, under the Conservatives, our city is falling backwards. Our council is over-centralised and secretive, our services are being cut, our roads are falling apart and the lack of affordable housing has become a major issue.

The Lib Dems believe that our city can have a bright future, but only with fresh ideas. The stale days of failing Conservative leadership need to make way for new and innovative ideas, such as those found in this document.

In recent years, Conservative Chancellors have cut Peterborough's grant from central government by 78%. The Lib Dems believe that the fight against these cuts should involve doing more than the Conservatives' 'Stand up for Peterborough' campaign which simply seeks to 'move the deck chairs around'. We believe that much more money needs to be invested in the vital services that local government provides.

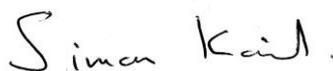
With the Conservatives set to lose council seats across the city, it looks increasingly likely that the city council will have 'no overall control' by any one party after the 2019 local elections. Politicians from all political parties will need to work together to protect and improve the services which many local residents rely on.

This document shows that the Lib Dems are more ready than ever before to help build a city that works for everyone.

Our commitment to the residents of Peterborough is that a council run by the Lib Dems will work to improve the lives of all residents by listening to you and working hard all year round.



Cllr Nick Sandford
Council Group Leader



Simon Kail
Local Party Chairman

Our priorities for Peterborough

1. Give residents a greater say on what happens in their area.

The Lib Dems will scrap secretive decision-making at the Town Hall, instead opting for a system which will be open and transparent to residents and giving councillors of all parties greater influence. We will set up parish councils for the whole Peterborough City Council area.

2. Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

The Lib Dems will end the current policy of prioritising policing in the city centre and establish more Prevention and Enforcement Teams to patrol neighbourhood areas and tackle local problems such as parking on pavements and speeding. We will promote and encourage local communities to establish Speedwatch and Neighbourhood Watch schemes to assist the police at a time when police budgets are being squeezed by central government. We will dedicate resources to reducing violent crime and preventing domestic abuse.

3. Protect and enhance our environment, invest in a sustainable future.

The Lib Dems are concerned by our Conservative administration's ineffective protection and enhancement of our environment. The Lib Dems will work to cut waste, for example through reusable water bottle and coffee cup schemes. We will prevent unnecessary burning and fly-tipping of waste by axing the Conservatives' unfair and unnecessary 'Brown Bin Tax' coupled with more targeted enforcement. We will tackle climate change by cutting CO2 and other dangerous emissions and by reducing the environmental impact of council-owned buildings, for example by installing solar panels. We will invest in electric vehicle charging networks and reduce pollution from public transport.

4. Build affordable houses, maintain roads, and improve our public transport.

The Lib Dems will work to introduce a new strategy which properly supports the increasing number of homeless people living on the streets of Peterborough. The Lib Dems will embark on a programme of social and affordable house building, either with existing partners or by establishing a council-owned housing company. The Lib Dems will increase investment in the bus network, end the Conservatives' 'pothole culture' by finally repairing our minor roads and explore options for enhancing our rail and cycling infrastructure so that they are fit for the 21st century. We will seek to secure Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority funding by influencing the Mayor's plans and electing a Liberal Democrat Mayor in 2021.

5. Tackle social exclusion and improve the care and health of our residents.

The Lib Dems will work to make Peterborough an age-friendly city, tackling barriers to older people living well in our city. As part of this project we will reduce social isolation and improve opportunities for older people to play a full and active part in their communities. The Lib Dems will work to improve the health of our residents by improving social care provision, investing in mental health programmes and improving access to health education programmes.

6. Improve education for all.

The Lib Dems support the development of an independent University in Peterborough to improve education standards for young people and to enable local people of all ages to expand their horizons and employability. We also support the Lib Dems national campaign to end the regime of teachers being forced to 'teach to the test' by scrapping SATs and at key stage 1 and key stage 2, giving primary school teachers more time to teach. We believe that rather than putting unnecessary exam pressure on 4 to 11-year old children we should be helping them fulfil their potential.

7. Deliver sustainable economic development and efficient services.

A thriving economy is essential because a city where people have 'money in their pockets' is a city that can support cultural, leisure and educational activities and finance investment in health and environmental improvements. We will support existing local businesses and help to create new ones through training, business advice, the supply of appropriate premises and assistance with finding investment capital. The Conservative-led council has wasted huge amounts of money through bad management and poor investment decisions. The Lib Dems will 'get a grip' on the management of the council to deliver services that are efficient, effective and value for money.

Communities and local government

The Lib Dems believe that the current decision-making process on Peterborough City Council is failing residents. We feel that power is held in the hands of too few 'senior' councillors and, as a result, decisions are often forced through without adequate consultation.

The Lib Dems want to change how decisions are made to make them more transparent and inclusive, while integrating the principle of subsidiarity - the idea that decisions should be made at the most immediate level - into how the council operates.

We also want to work with communities across Peterborough to ensure that everyone is able to play an active role within our city - whether at work, within a community organisation or when engaging with neighbours. We want the city council to take an increased role in promoting diversity and supporting wider integration.

The Lib Dems' top priorities:

- Move the council to a committee structure so that all key decisions are made in public.
- Create Area Committees with real powers, including the power to decide how money is spent within the community.
- Reverse Conservative cuts to local government budgets.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to develop the English language skills of those who speak other languages to ensure that they are better able to integrate into life in Peterborough.
- Promote and celebrate the diverse backgrounds of many of the residents of Peterborough through more cross-community events to lower the barriers to integration.
- Support the creation of new parish councils in areas which don't have them.

Background

Lib Dems think it is time to open the shutters at the Town Hall and let in some light, openness and democracy. To help do this we want to scrap the 'leader and cabinet system' and have all key decisions made by council committees that meet and hold debates in public.

We would also expand the role and powers of Full Council so that it once again becomes the 'Parliament of the City', rather than just being a piece of theatre or a talking shop.

We want to increase public engagement in the council decision-making process by giving members of the public speaking rights at every council committee meeting and move all meetings to the evenings to make it as easy as possible for residents to attend. Following the successful trial of the internet broadcasting of Full Council meetings we would widen the meetings which are broadcast to include all committee meetings so that residents can view meetings in the comfort of their own homes.

The Lib Dems believe that decisions should be taken at the most immediate level. To help do this we would set up multi-ward Area Committees with real powers to change their communities. The Lib Dems would delegate budgets, in areas such as highways, to ensure that councillors are able to make sure that the money is being spent in the best interest of all residents rather than at the whim of a handful of 'senior' councillors.

The Lib Dems believe it is wrong that councillors make decisions about what they themselves are paid. We would like these kinds of decisions to be made by a fully independent panel. We also believe that the number of councillors receiving 'special allowances' should be reduced so that these allowances only go to councillors who have genuine special responsibilities.

First-past-the-post elections have blighted our politics for too long. They reduce diversity of ideas and representation. We believe that politics, both in Peterborough and across the country, would be healthier if we had a fairer voting system. A Lib Dem-run Peterborough City Council would lobby central government to allow councils the option of adopting a fairer voting system such as the Single Transferable Vote (STV).

We also believe that it is important to get young people engaged in the political system at an earlier age. To help do that we would lobby central government to lower the voting age to 16, which has been successfully done in both Scotland and Wales in recent years.

Like many residents, Peterborough Liberal Democrats are concerned by the way our local Conservative administration has accepted the Conservative Chancellor's cuts to local government budgets. We are outraged that it took cuts of 78% to our grants from central government before local Conservative councillors acted. The Lib Dems believe that a change of attitude is long overdue when it comes to austerity. Peterborough City Council - like other councils across the country - is in urgent need of a massive injection of funds.

Sadly, the Conservatives' 'Stand up for Peterborough' campaign is an attempt to 'rob Peter to pay Paul'. We believe their efforts to move the deck chairs around the sinking ship don't go far enough. If we are going to protect children's centres, social care services, libraries, etc, and improve local roads, public transport, etc, then the Conservatives in central government need to reverse their cuts and invest in vital public services.

Peterborough Liberal Democrats are proud to live in a diverse and vibrant city and we want to celebrate our differences while ensuring that everyone who lives here is able to integrate into life in Peterborough.

The Liberal Democrats believe that strong English language skills are a key part of ensuring that people are able to integrate into British society. That's why we will work on the development and implementation of a comprehensive strategy to develop the English language skills of those who speak other languages. We will aim to ensure that they are able to make progress quickly, interact with their neighbours and have access to education, training and work. This strategy will go beyond the general skills required to live in Peterborough and specifically reflect the requirements of local businesses to ensure that people have the right skills to find work.

We will also actively encourage cooperation and interaction between the different communities in Peterborough to ensure that we are building an integrated community as a whole. We will work with all of the communities, organisations, businesses and individuals in the city on joint events and activities that bring together people from all backgrounds, thus lowering barriers to integration.

Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour and Enforcement

The Liberal Democrats are concerned that in recent years more residents than ever before have contacted us to tell us that they are concerned about criminal activity and anti-social behaviour in our city.

Sadly, under the Conservative leadership, burglaries and other crime are rising. Many people feel let down by the lack of police action to tackle anti-social behaviour in residential areas – although this is not serious crime it causes great annoyance to the residents affected. From our conversations with residents it is clear to us that they feel ignored by our local Conservative Police and Crime Commissioner as well as by our Conservative-led city council. Things need to change.

The Liberal Democrats will take residents' concerns seriously. We will ensure that the council works with the police to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour across our city.

The Lib Dems' top priorities:

- Enhance the Prevention and Enforcement Service, to establish a specific new enforcement team which will spend all its time in residential areas.
- Lobby the police to increase the resources they allocate to community policing.
- Work to tackle speeding across our city.
- Review the provision of services for young people to ensure that there are activities available for them out of school hours, to help reduce anti-social behaviour caused by lack of a more productive use of their time.

Background

Evidence shows us that community policing works. By building stronger links with residents, our police and police community support officers (PCSOs) play a vital role in intelligence gathering, community engagement and reassurance. That's why we will lobby the police to improve their visible Neighbourhood Police Team.

The Lib Dems also support the police's excellent Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. We want the council to do more to support the police's efforts in this area. We will do more to promote existing Neighbourhood Watch groups and encourage residents living in areas without a group to set up new Neighbourhood Watch groups.

Sadly, under the current Conservative administration, too many of our enforcement officers are being pulled into the city centre. As a result, problems such as dog fouling, graffiti, fly-tipping and problem parking in residential areas aren't being tackled. To help reduce this kind of anti-social behaviour the Lib Dems will work to create an enhanced Prevention and Enforcement Service which will spend all its time tackling problems in the residential areas of the city.

We will follow the common-sense approach adopted by Conservative-run Richmond-upon-Thames council to allow residents to request a 20 mph zone in their street to reduce speeding. We would only introduce a 20 mph limit where a majority of residents actively support reducing the speed limit and where council officers agree that introducing a 20 mph zone would not increase danger elsewhere, significantly increase congestion, or divert traffic to other residential or unsuitable roads.

The police's Community Speedwatch scheme is proven to reduce speeding. The Lib Dems want the council to invest in more Speedwatch equipment which can be borrowed by Community Speedwatch Groups across the Peterborough area. We also want the council to do more to promote and encourage the setting up of local Speedwatch schemes in areas without a group.

The Lib Dems will promote community justice panels and restorative justice that bring victims and wrongdoers together to resolve conflict, reduce harm and encourage rehabilitation.

Domestic violence and abuse is an horrific stain on our society and is still all too often a hidden crime. Everything that can be done must be done to eradicate it. The Liberal Democrats want the council to better support services by ensuring they are properly funded so that victims are given the help and support they need.

Sadly, Conservative cuts mean that young people living in Peterborough have less access to provisions such as youth centres than ever before. The Lib Dems will work with voluntary and other organisations to review provision of services for young people to ensure there are activities available for them out of school hours. This will help to reduce anti-social behaviour caused by lack of opportunities for more productive use of young people's time.

Education

The Peterborough Liberal Democrats believe that high-quality education services are one of the keys to building a fairer and more equal society. The right education can open up opportunities, unlock an individual's potential and provide the foundation people need to succeed in life.

The Liberal Democrats believe that to do this we must improve everyone's access to education. We will embrace 'lifelong learning' so that all residents, regardless of age or background, are equipped for a career in a modern, ever-changing economy.

The Lib Dems' top priorities:

- Lobby central government to axe education league tables to change the focus in the classroom from passing exams to developing key skills and knowledge.
- Establish an independent, high-quality university in the heart of Peterborough.
- Promote lifelong learning through a council-run web portal.
- Protect our children's centres and local libraries.

Background

Evidence shows that early years and primary school education is the most important stage of an individual's education. That's why the Liberal Democrats will ensure that children's centres are kept open and their work strengthened. We will also ensure that a variety of accredited childcare is available throughout the city so that parents can choose the right care for their child.

We will fight against Conservative cuts which damage our children's future. We will aim to reverse cuts to the Pupil Premium and Free School Meals policies which are widely considered to have boosted children's educational attainment. These were Lib Dem achievements from 2010 to 2015 in the coalition government and we are proud of what Lib Dem ministers achieved in giving a fair chance to children from less privileged backgrounds.

We will ensure that there are enough school places and that parents can access a good primary school in their local area. We aim to ensure that primary schools in Peterborough are able not only to improve their OFSTED grades but also the outcomes for all of their children.

If every school in Peterborough was a 'good' school, there would be less pressure on parents to secure places at schools further from home. As well as producing better outcomes for all the city's children this would reduce 'school run' traffic and improve community integration.

We will work to offer extra support for pupils, both to ensure individuals are able to fulfil their potential and to help create a more integrated Peterborough,

The Lib Dems believe that having good secondary and further education is vital to enable pupils to succeed in their chosen career. We would work to ensure that all pupils make good progress no matter their background at a good or excellent school, while ensuring that pupils with special educational needs, disabilities and English as an additional language have appropriate support.

Liberal Democrats value all forms of post-16 education and believe that for Peterborough to succeed we need to invest in a wide range of training opportunities. That's why we will work to ensure that all pupils have the right choice of schools and courses to meet their needs and aspirations, whether that be skills-based, academic or vocational training.

We will work to expand the number of businesses offering apprenticeships so that young people in Peterborough have the opportunity to earn while they learn.

In both secondary and further education, we will work to ensure that pupils have the right advice for selecting a future training or career path.

We support the establishment of a high-quality independent university in Peterborough and the range of opportunities that it would bring. As well as improving our local education, the Liberal Democrats believe that establishing a good university in the centre of Peterborough would offer a huge boost to our economy. It will help keep talented young people in our city who are currently leaving at the age of 18, grow a more varied night time economy and - via placement years - ensure that local businesses have the graduate-level skills that they need to grow and succeed.

As mentioned earlier in this document, the Lib Dems believe that improving English language skills is key to making Peterborough a more inclusive and integrated city. To help integration we would increase the range and duration of courses for adults whose first language is not English to ensure they are able to learn effectively, make progress and therefore work towards integration.

The Liberal Democrats believe in 'lifelong learning' and we want all residents to be able to develop their skills and knowledge in an educational environment. We believe that the council, employers and our city's educational institutions need to work together to enable individuals to train and retrain to meet the constantly changing needs of the local jobs market.

We will work to increase cooperation with local business to provide courses designed to help people fill local job vacancies at all levels. We will target support packages at residents who are unemployed, underemployed or wishing to return to work to enable them to have the skills and confidence to be active within the workforce.

As part of the Lib Dem aspiration to make Peterborough an 'age-friendly city' we will provide accessible, relevant and interesting courses for adults of all ages and backgrounds to reduce social isolation and encourage interaction and integration.

We will promote democracy and participation in education by enhancing the rights of parents and students, for example by encouraging the setting up of school councils with meaningful powers in all schools. These councils could lead their schools to achieving Fair Trade, environmental or other accreditations.

Environment and Waste Management

The Liberal Democrats are proud to have made protecting the environment a central plank of our local and national manifestos since the party's creation in 1988.

It is our commitment to the natural environment that makes us concerned by the way the current Conservative administration has failed to live up to our city's Environment Capital ambitions.

The Lib Dems want Peterborough to regain our status as an environmental leader to ensure that residents are living in a pollution-free and clean environment whilst doing our bit to preserve our planet for future generations.

The Lib Dems' top priorities:

- Support the current move to managing the city's waste services as a council-run operation, ending the use of expensive and often incompetent contractors.
- Work to reduce waste through initiatives such as Peterborough Environment City Trust's scheme to allow bottles to be refilled with tap water at a variety of local outlets and a reusable coffee cup scheme.
- Tackle litter and fly-tipping by:
 - Improving enforcement.
 - Axing the Conservatives' unfair and counter-productive 'Brown Bin Tax' under which householders (who already pay for waste collection through their Council Tax) are charged extra for removing garden waste.
 - Implementing a free 'bulky waste collection service' across the city – allowing householders to get the council to remove things like fridges and furniture (which are otherwise all too often dumped by roadsides) with two free collections each year.
- Bring back street sweepers – the people with brooms and trolleys who used to keep streets and footpaths clean but who have been axed as an 'economy measure'.
- Work with the council's energy company to provide a green tariff (offering 100% renewable energy) in addition to the current tariffs offered.
- Reduce pesticide use and enhance biodiversity across Peterborough.
- Encourage energy conservation and renewable energy.
- Plant trees to help combat the effects of climate change.

Background

Under the Conservatives, fly-tipping and littering have increased. This has led to many areas of our city looking unnecessarily scruffy and run-down, while having dire consequences for wildlife and biodiversity.

The Liberal Democrats want the council to work both independently and with parish councils (where they exist) to improve enforcement (as set out on Page 7) and litter clean-up practices. The council should look to reduce the time taken to clear fly-tipping, reintroduce street cleaning in problem areas and, given the council's current financial situation, work with parish councils and community groups to increase the number of 'community litter picks' happening across our city.

The Lib Dems would also aim to bring back street sweepers. We believe that street sweepers are much more able to tackle litter hotspots than the council's driven street cleaners.

We will also work to reduce fly-tipping by scrapping the Conservatives' unfair and counter-productive Brown Bin Tax, as we believe that residents shouldn't be penalised for using brown bins. We will introduce a bulky waste collection service giving residents two free collections each year.

Reducing the amount of waste is a top priority of the Liberal Democrats. In particular we want to reduce the number of plastic drinks bottles and disposable coffee cups that end up in landfill.

Tackling air pollution and CO2 emissions is also a top priority for the Peterborough Liberal Democrats. We will cut dangerous emissions in a range of ways set out in the transport section of this document to improve residents' health and tackle climate change.

The Lib Dems believe that Peterborough City Council should lead by example when it comes to energy conservation and renewable energy. The Lib Dems will push for more solar panels to be placed on council-owned buildings to cut CO2 emissions and reduce the council's long-term energy costs. We will work towards making all council buildings being highly energy-efficient with a long-term target of the council's use of buildings being 'carbon neutral' by 2040.

We believe that the Conservatives' £27 million refurbishment of the Town Hall (including installing air conditioning in the council leader's office) has been a huge waste of money. It has left senior councillors and management based in the Town Hall while moving junior staff to another building on Fletton Quays, with serious detrimental effects on internal communications and efficient working.

We will examine options for moving all council staff into one energy-efficient building (including the possibility of making better use of the existing new building on Fletton Quays) and dispose of or rent out the current Town Hall.

Where government permits us to do so, we will use the council's planning powers to promote high energy conservation standards and use of renewable forms of energy within new housing and commercial developments.

The Lib Dems also think that it's wrong that the council's energy company, Peterborough Energy, doesn't offer a 'green tariff'. The Lib Dems would make sure that residents have the option of a 'green tariff' so they can pay more to cut their CO2 emissions if they wish to do so.

The Lib Dems are concerned that pesticide use by the council and its contractors has increased in recent years. One of the ways we will look to improve our city's biodiversity is to reduce the use of pesticides.

We will also support the Forest for Peterborough initiative which aims to plant one tree for every person in Peterborough. This will encourage more wildlife, improve the quality of the air we breathe and tackle climate change.

We will increase the number of council-owned biodiversity areas. We will seek to use grass clippings and timber generated by landscape and tree management as a resource for energy generation and extra income for the council.

Visits to parks and green spaces have been proven to improve people's mental and physical health. The Lib Dems will safeguard and enhance parks and playing fields across our city so that future generations are able to access a green space close to their home, for example by applying Natural England's Access to Natural Greenspace Standard.

We will seek to manage the council's farmed estate (farms which the council owns and leases to tenants) for greater environmental benefit, looking to reduce water usage and pollution and emissions. More fundamentally, we will also look at whether the council should be a rural landlord at all and whether we would get better value for money by selling the land and investing the proceeds in local services.

We will promote environmentally-friendly land management and farming practices and support better access to local nature reserves through working with local wildlife trusts and land owners.

Health and Social Care

Official statistics show that people living in Peterborough are much less healthy than people living in comparable council areas. Our social care service is in crisis while mental health still doesn't have parity with physical health.

Both locally and nationally there is a clear need for more money to be invested in the NHS and social care which is why the Lib Dems are calling for additional funding for healthcare services.

Locally the Lib Dems believe that it is vital that the council uses its public health, leadership and scrutiny roles to improve health across our city.

The Lib Dems' top priorities:

- Increase the public health budget and work with the NHS to improve preventative healthcare.
- Make Peterborough the UK's first age-friendly city including tackling the loneliness and social isolation crisis faced by thousands of vulnerable residents living in the city.
- Lobby central government to step in and cancel Peterborough City Hospital's PFI contract to put our hospital on a more sustainable financial footing.
- Work with service users, carers and others to improve social care services which better meet people's needs.
- Ensure that all full-time carers have access to suitable respite care.
- Work to ensure that, regardless of Brexit, the rights of doctors and nurses from EU countries currently working within the Peterborough area are guaranteed.
- Promote the rights of patients as 'customers' of the National Health Service.
- Work with the NHS to try to ensure that people can get an appointment with a GP, nurse or dentist swiftly and easily at a time, date and place which is convenient for them.

Background

Government cuts, combined with growing demand caused by an ageing population, has pushed our NHS and social care service into crisis.

Cuts to healthcare services are increasing waiting lists while cuts to social care have made the problem worse by resulting in patients being forced to stay in hospital (or 'bed block') long beyond the time when they are medically able to leave. Cuts to public health services and other preventative healthcare services are storing up health problems for the future.

The Liberal Democrats will campaign for better funding nationally and work to ensure that money is spent in the most efficient way.

We believe that the council must persuade central government to step in and cancel Peterborough City Hospital's PFI contract to put our hospital on a more sustainable financial footing and allow more money to be invested in patient care.

Locally we believe that the council must take a strong lead in combating health inequalities and promoting preventative healthcare.

The Lib Dems will invest more in preventative healthcare, particularly in areas of the city with lower levels of health and well-being, and work with partners such as Vivacity to ensure that more people are engaging with the services available.

We also recognise the connections between health, education, transport and housing. We will work to tackle the impact of social, economic and environmental factors on health by ensuring the council takes into consideration this issue when planning spending and investments. Community centres, children's services, health and fitness classes and healthy eating advice all have a key role to play in improving health – and in cutting the burden on the NHS by reducing illness.

Equality for mental health is another priority for our party. We will work with partners in the charity and healthcare sectors to ensure that mental illnesses are given parity as soon as possible.

One of the areas of mental health which is a big concern for the Liberal Democrats in Peterborough is loneliness and social isolation. The Lib Dems want to make Peterborough the country's first 'age-friendly city'.

Both locally and nationally the Lib Dems are concerned by the impact of Brexit on our NHS. There has already been an 80% drop in application for nursing jobs from people in other EU countries. We believe it is vital that European doctors and nurses are given the certainty that they will be able to remain in the UK if Brexit happens.

Using the council's powers in relation to 'health scrutiny' we will work with the Cambridgeshire Clinical Commissioning Group to ensure that rights of patients are promoted within the NHS and that patients wherever possible are able to get to see a GP, dentist or nurse at times which suit them.

We will seek to influence health service partners to get them to reduce over-prescription of drugs - in particular, antibiotics – and to change the perverse system of financial incentives that at present encourages the NHS to perform operations rather than invest in health education and preventative medicine.

Housing and homelessness

Issues around housing and homelessness continue to concern local residents. Whether it's unaffordable housing costs, empty homes or an increasing homelessness problem in our city centre it's clear that over the past 17 years Peterborough's Conservative administration has failed to act to deliver the homes which local families need.

The Lib Dems believe that everyone should have access to a decent home and we will act to deliver the homes that our city needs. To do this we believe that the council needs to be prepared to look at developing a new strategy for delivering housing.

We believe the council needs to be much more innovative and explore options to build new council homes, to introduce a 'living rent' and to increase the number of 'zero carbon homes' being built.

The Lib Dems' top priorities:

- Provide more social housing – including by building and managing council homes.
- Increase the percentage of affordable homes being built on new developments.
- Tackle rogue landlords to ensure that all rented properties are to a decent standard.
- Ensure that all new developments have utilities such as high-speed fibre broadband to ensure that they are fit for the twenty first century.

Background

The Liberal Democrats are committed to making our community a place where people want to live and work. As part of this commitment, we want to increase the number of new and affordable houses, helping to drive economic growth and investment within the area.

Using receipts from 'Right to Buy' sales and Housing Revenue Account borrowing, we will build new council houses. We will look at the possibility of the council owning and maintaining its own stock of council properties as a legacy for the people of Peterborough to use for generations to come.

We will improve planning policies to ensuring that new developments are fit for the twenty-first century. We will ensure that all new developments have fibre broadband installed from the onset to meet the needs of residents.

The Lib Dems will review and develop the selective licensing scheme for landlords which operates in the city centre with a view to rolling it out to other parts of the city where it would be beneficial in improving the standard of rented accommodation. We will review the council's policy on Houses of Multiple Occupation, with consideration given to limiting the numbers of such homes because of, among other things, their impact on parking and changing the character of the area.

We will ensure that all new houses are energy-efficient and that older houses are retrofitted with energy conservation features. Where possible we will ensure that play areas, natural greenspace and street trees are planned into new housing developments.

Transport and roads

The Liberal Democrats believe that an affordable, reliable and efficient public transport service is vital to sustaining our city's physical and economic growth.

By investing in public transport, and in infrastructure such as footpaths and cycle paths to encourage environmentally-friendly (and healthy) walking and cycling, we will ease congestion on our roads and cut emissions without limiting people's opportunity to travel.

The Lib Dems' top priorities:

- Increase investment in our public transport network – in particular, our bus services. We would protect and improve the core bus network by increasing the frequency of evening and Sunday bus services and improving access to buses in rural areas.
- End the Conservatives' 'pothole culture' which has left many of our roads and pavements in a dangerous state, invest more in road repairs and lobby central government for extra resources to tackle this huge problem.
- Work to develop a long-term transport investment plan which seeks to develop bus, rail, walking and cycling infrastructure across our city.
- Reduce fares for using public transport.
- Tackle irresponsible parking, including parking on pavements and grass verges
- Encourage the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to examine ways to tackle poor air quality and traffic congestion, including exercising his bus franchising powers, and to include Peterborough in his plans for light rail across Cambridgeshire.
- Examine options for 'park and ride' bus services – initially perhaps at weekends only – to reduce city centre traffic.
- Establish a network of electric vehicle charging points throughout the city and encourage a switch to electric buses or trams as part of a plan for carbon-neutral transport.

Background

Given the rising concern about poor air quality in recent years, the Liberal Democrats believe that it is important that we cut harmful emissions from traffic as soon as possible.

Improving our bus network is a top priority for the Liberal Democrats to tackle dangerous emissions.

The Lib Dems would increase investment in our bus network to ensure that more residents have access to a reliable, regular and environmentally-friendly bus service.

In the urban area we would improve the frequency of evening and Sunday buses, and protect and improve the network of buses subsidised by the council. In rural areas we would examine options for ensuring that residents have access to some form of public transport, whether a scheduled or a 'demand responsive' service.

We would also aim to work with Stagecoach and the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to modernise our bus fleet so that the vehicles are all hybrid, electric or other low emission buses as soon as practical.

We would lobby the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to introduce smart ticketing and bus franchising as done by the Mayor of London. We believe both the Mayor and Peterborough City Council have a responsibility to make public transport more accessible by reducing fares and providing fast and frequent bus services, including park and ride.

We will finance many of these new investments by raising city centre car parking charges to encourage people to make use of alternative means of transport.

We will lobby the Department for Transport to help fund new railway stations in the north and south of Peterborough to make it easier for residents to use the railway and cut traffic traveling through the city centre to the railway station. While the Conservatives argue it can't be done, Lib Dem politicians in Cambridge have successfully campaigned for and won two new train stations.

We would look to work with the Mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to integrate his light rail plans for Cambridge with a similar model for Peterborough, so that our city does not fall even further behind under the Conservatives.

We believe that increasing the numbers of residents who travel by bicycle will cut pollution levels in our city. That's why we will also implement the Get Britain Cycling report recommendations in full, safeguard The Green Wheel in spite of the number of developments proposed along its route and work with council officers to develop a purpose-built cycle highway network to make it easier for people to cycle from residential areas into and through the city centre for work and leisure.

The Lib Dems are concerned that under the Conservatives the council has failed to implement the Transport User Hierarchy as set out in the council's Sustainable Transport Plan. We would ensure that pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users are prioritised as the plan says they should be.

We will stop the Conservatives from demolishing Rhubarb Bridge and guarantee its long-term future so that pedestrians and cyclists in the north of the city are able to safely cross the A47. If the bridge has to be removed at some future date, we will ensure that a replacement bridge is put in its place and that there is proper consultation with local people on replacement options.

The Lib Dems believe that for too long the Conservatives have failed to maintain our roads and pavements. We will end the 'pothole culture' which has left our many of our roads and pavements in a dangerous state.

The Lib Dems will invest more capital to protect our grass verges. We will keep our pavements safe for pedestrians by discouraging parking on them. We will work to engage with local residents on a street-by-street basis to see if there is desire for Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to be put in place to make grass verge and pavement parking illegal. We will also use other simple measures such as tree planting to discourage cars from ploughing up grass verges.

A Thriving Local Economy

The Liberal Democrats believe that a thriving local economy is essential for the future of Peterborough. Our aim is to provide people with access to a wide range of well-paid employment opportunities and to encourage entrepreneurs to set up businesses here – because that, too, will create employment.

A city where people have ‘money in their pockets’ is a city that can support cultural, leisure and educational activities and finance investment in health and environmental improvements.

The Lib Dems’ top priorities:

- Support local businesses in creating good long-term jobs.
- Encourage new business start-ups.
- Create a ‘John Lewis style’ economy in Peterborough.
- Reinvigorate our city centre and restrict ‘out of town’ development.
- Create a genuine ‘environment capital’.

Background

The Lib Dems will work with the key local business networks like the Chamber of Commerce, Share Peterborough, Peterborough Bondholders and the Business Board of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to understand the current and future needs of employers, ensuring that good jobs are available long term. We will feed employment planning into our infrastructure, housing, transport and education development to ensure we make the most of the opportunities that employers will bring.

Small companies offer great potential for growth in stimulating new jobs directly and in benefiting our lives locally, as well as impacting positively on the wider economy. We will encourage vibrant new start-up companies to emerge and flourish, especially from the new university, by working with partners in both public and private sectors to provide good business advice and access to capital.

We will support the excellent innovation centres Peterborough already benefits from which encourage new technologies and social enterprises. We will also explore how the council can assist new manufacturing enterprises with premises made available on ‘easy in, easy out’ rental terms.

As noted earlier in this document, we will also work with partners to support the provision of training and workforce development to help companies and individuals to keep up with the rapidly changing needs of the modern economy.

We will support the use of apprenticeships and other 'in work' training and increase the number of apprentices that the council itself employs.

Lib Dems will work with the council and local employers to encourage employee participation and involvement in decision-making, and ownership of companies by employees through co-operatives and other mechanisms. In 2012, Lib Dem deputy prime minister Nick Clegg talked of the need to create a 'John Lewis style' economy: that is our ambition here in Peterborough too.

We will lobby central government to scrap business rates entirely and replace them with a tax on land values, the Commercial Landowner Levy (CLL). In the meantime, we will bring new life to the city centre, urgently reviewing business rates to stem the tides of businesses deserting Bridge Street and the heart of Peterborough.

We will explore innovative approaches to risk-sharing to draw in new retailers who will add vibrancy and originality to the city. New retailers will serve the needs and aspirations of our thriving local population and attract shoppers from outside the city to contribute to our local economy. We will use the council's planning powers to focus this new retail development in the city centre rather than permitting new out-of-town retailing.

Peterborough's economy needs to grow in an environmentally sustainable way, protecting and enhancing our natural environment and protecting good air and water quality. We should make "creating the UK's environment capital" a meaningful aim and not an empty slogan, as it often is under our Tory-led council.