



WINNING IN WESTMINSTER!

Westminster Liberal Democrats | Manifesto 2018

Letter of introduction

London is a world class city, with strong claims as the foremost global capital of culture, media, finance, innovation and liberal democracy in the world. And Westminster lies at the very heart. Westminster's strengths have always come from its wonderfully diverse and talented residents, who come from all over the world, and its strong sense of community.

And yet the very foundations of Westminster's success are under attack. The Conservatives and Labour are both firmly behind a hard Brexit policy that will see us crashing out of the EU in less than a year. They both openly declare their goal to restrict the number of people who come to Westminster to live and work, and have done nothing to reassure those already here that they are valuable members of our society and will be looked after.

The Conservatives and Labour will argue that this election is about local issues - not Brexit. But even the Conservative-run council has noted the "potential effect on economy including income growth, capital values and availability of workforce." Brexit will clearly have a negative impact on London and the Conservatives and Labour are ignoring the very real and justifiable concerns of the residents here in Westminster.

More locally, the Conservatives leading Westminster Council and the Labour mayor leading the London General Assembly have looked on as crime increases due to cuts in police services, house prices soar while social and affordable homes crumble, our air gets dirtier, our health and social services disintegrate, and our schools fail the next generation.

Put simply, Westminster Council desperately needs a change. We have a plan that leverages the very best of Westminster – diverse, innovative, and international. This manifesto sets out our positive vision on how we would build a better Westminster through six main priorities, which would give our borough the fresh start it desperately needs.

We are encouraging all residents, including EU nationals and Commonwealth citizens who are eligible to vote on 3rd May, to use their vote to send a message to both the Conservatives and Labour who are both failing to stand up for their rights and failing to deliver the local services they deserve.

Our vision

1/ A safer Westminster

Adopt a holistic approach to tackle violent crime in the borough and prioritise the escalating problem of gang related moped and knife crime. This includes extra police officers, better intelligence gathering and sharing, surveillance and community engagement.

Similarly critical is to reintroduce youth and leisure services as a way to divert potential young offenders away from criminal activities.

2/ Affordable housing

Accelerate the building of council and genuinely affordable homes in Westminster using a wholly council-owned housing company to build new homes, with profits reinvested back into council housing.

Protect private tenants by introducing a landlord licensing scheme.

3/ Cleaner, greener environment

Invest more resources in Westminster's Air Quality Action Plan including greater use of electric vehicles, reduce the environmental impact of businesses and investing in better cycling and walking paths and related infrastructure.

Improve recycling and waste collection services in the borough.

4/ Pro-Europe

We commit to use our unique position as the home of Parliament and Whitehall to press for keeping Britain as close as possible to Europe and to protect the rights of EU citizens and other immigrants here in Westminster.

The Conservatives and Tories will argue that this election is not about Brexit. But it certainly is about Brexit, especially for those of us who are recent immigrants and feel marginalised by the other parties. And it will have a devastating impact on local services for the rest of us as well, from the NHS to policing to education. This election is definitely about Brexit!

5/ Health and social care

Ensure that older people are properly cared for in the community including those with dementia.

Create new support centres for people with learning disabilities and provide better support and facilities for all with physical disabilities.

Focus on physical activity in care homes and improved provision of sports and physical activity spaces in the boroughs parks and green spaces.

6/ Children & young people

Improve children's physical and mental health, prioritise the attainment for BAME children, increase apprenticeships and support the transition from primary to secondary school.

Improve the council's child protection services.

1/ A safer Westminster

Westminster is no stranger to crime. Reported offences in the heart of London are running at almost twice that of nearby Camden or Islington. To make matters worse, crime in Westminster has increased by ~14% in the past year.

It is no surprise, then, that residents are concerned about police budgets and plans to extract even more savings out of an already overstretched police force.

The Conservatives have imposed cuts of up to 17% on policing since 2010. And the Mayor of London, Labour's Sadiq Khan, plans to force through a merger of Westminster police command with that of the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham. This would result in a tripling of response times in areas piloting the scheme.

Additionally, police numbers are at an all-time low and the number of Community Support Officers has been slashed, leading to less safe London streets.

Therefore, we will:

- Pledge extra funding for more police officers where they are needed most.
- Improve information sharing between schools, hospital A&Es, health and social services and the police to identify gang members and at-risk youth.
- Work with all sectors to help combat gang violence and youth offending.
- Tackle persistent anti-social behaviour by providing the right balance of enforcement together with prevention and active intervention.
- Create new youth provision following the cuts to the youth services budget to help prevent young people from falling into crime and also make them less vulnerable to the exploitation of groups like gangs.
- Increase parking bays for motorcycles and mopeds with fixed anchor points to help prevent theft of these vehicles.
- Commit to safer housing for all, with sprinklers and fire alarms to be retro-fitted in all council housing. Introduce safety measures and mandatory checks for all council buildings.

2/ Affordable housing

London is in the midst of a housing crisis. With the demand for decent, affordable housing still dwarfing the current supply, boroughs like Westminster face a real challenge to ensure everyone has a decent home. The Tory-run council lacks ambition and thinks the only way to deliver housing is through give-aways to private developers.

The Westminster Liberal Democrats have announced a new flagship policy to deliver affordable housing if elected in the local elections on 3rd May. The plan will end the Conservative-run council's developer-first housing record. London-wide, Liberal Democrats have committed to retain the Olympic precept and use funds to build 200k new homes across London. Westminster needs to play its part.

If elected we pledge to set up a 100% council-owned housing company to build new homes, with profits reinvested back into council housing. This model is already successfully implemented across the country, including by the Lib Dem-run Sutton Council.

Therefore, we will:

- Set up a wholly council-owned housing company, investing funds to accelerate the building of council and affordable homes.
- Drive community-led decision making where plans for regeneration are developed from the bottom-up by talking to the community first.
- Support community builds to build genuinely affordable homes via a community land trust.
- Pressure developers to provide more affordable homes and homes for key workers.
- Encourage developers to provide 'green' homes which are sustainable, carbon neutral and energy/water efficient. Ensure larger developments "green" the environment by having open and green spaces and planting more trees.
- Promise a fair deal for tenants with as many landlords as legally possible required to apply for a licence which they could only obtain following a safety inspection of their property.
- Ensure that residents made homeless receive the right support and advice to help them into accommodation – with earlier intervention where possible. We will dissuade authorities from confiscating property from rough sleepers.

3/ Cleaner, greener environment

Westminster is among the worst performing boroughs when it comes to the environment. Ranked second to last in a recent survey by London Cleaning System, Westminster scored dismally for air pollution, energy efficiency, use of renewable energy, recycling and green space.

With national government shirking its responsibility on this crucial issue, it is imperative that local government steps up in its place. We want to reduce Westminster's energy use. That will not only be good for the environment, but will also save taxpayers money. We will put Westminster at the forefront of the transition to electric motoring - everyone in this borough should find travelling by foot, bicycle and public transport is easy and pleasurable. And residents and businesses should find it simple to recycle unwanted products.

Liberal Democrats would like Westminster to be a trailblazer in creating a greener borough, by setting an example to other councils around the country to build a more environmentally friendly UK.

Therefore, we will:

- Encourage the transition towards electric vehicles by installing charging points for vehicles on lampposts and at council offices. Introduce discounted parking and lower charges for low emission and electric cars, and wherever possible, replace petrol vehicles in the Council's fleet with electric ones.
- Introduce no-idling zones around schools to protect children from harmful pollution as recommended in guidelines published last year by NICE and Public Health England.
- Work with partners to reduce congestion on roads by promoting and improving alternatives to car use such as walking, cycling and public transport, and improve wayfinding for pedestrians and cyclists between points of interest.
- Increase facilities for bike storage on streets and at transport hubs.
- Accelerate the installation of LED bulbs on all of Westminster's street lights within 10 years.
- Increase the number of stations that monitor levels of CO2 and other pollutants, whilst also reducing those emissions levels using green walls and by planting new trees in the borough.
- Create more services to make it easier for residents and businesses to recycle.

- Install more points for recycling of small electrical products and additional dual-use bins that collect both litter and items for recycling.
- Work with supermarkets and other businesses to introduce recycling schemes for glass and plastic bottles, coffee cups and coffee pods.

4/ Pro-Europe

The Conservatives and Labour are jointly pursuing an extreme form of Brexit, causing serious concern to voters across London. It will mean:

- taking Britain out of the single market and customs union, risking jobs all over the country and especially in London's financial services and creative industries
- making the country poorer, with less to spend on the NHS, schools and policing
- reducing the rights of EU citizens to come to Britain and work in our essential and economically crucial services

With one in five nurses in some London hospitals coming from EU countries, our NHS is already facing serious problems. There is an exodus of highly skilled staff because of Brexit and now a crisis in recruitment, all because EU citizens face an uncertain future.

Meanwhile, business confidence is falling, with key indicators going in the wrong direction, and big employers like our local universities now uncertain about their research and student income.

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The Liberal Democrats are the only major national party that continues to believe in the European ideal and seeks an 'Exit from Brexit.' Both Labour and Conservatives have long and conflicted relationships with the EU and their approach to Brexit is failing. The Conservative government has already begun to shamelessly use EU nationals as bargaining chips.

During negotiations, we commit to use our unique position as the home of Parliament and Whitehall to press for keeping Britain as close as possible to Europe.

Our priorities will include:

- *Protection of rights for EU citizens and UK citizens:* We will press for the UK to unilaterally guarantee the rights of EU nationals in the UK, ending their ongoing uncertainty. We will call for the overhaul and simplification of the registration process and the requirements for EU nationals to obtain permanent residence and UK citizenship, as the current system is not fit for purpose. We will urge the government, and use our influence with Liberal leaders in European countries, to secure the same rights for UK citizens living in European Union countries.
- *Membership of the Single Market and Customs Union:* We believe that any deal negotiated for the UK outside the EU must ensure that trade can continue without customs controls at the border; and must maintain membership of the Single Market, which smooths trade between the UK and the continent by providing a common 'rule book' for businesses and a common mechanism to ensure that everyone abides by the rules.

- *Freedom of movement:* We support the principle of freedom of movement – to abandon it would threaten Britain’s prosperity and reputation as an open, tolerant society. Any deal negotiated for the UK outside the EU must protect the right to work, travel, study and retire across the EU. Any restrictions sought by the government must take account of the vital importance of EU workers to the British economy, including public services.
- *Opportunities for young people:* In an increasingly globalised and complex world, it is vital that our young people are afforded the same opportunities their parents enjoyed to work, study and travel abroad. To that end we will do everything we can to protect Erasmus+ and other EU-funded schemes which increase opportunities for young people.
- *Defending social rights and equalities:* Many important protections such as the right to 52 weeks’ maternity leave and rights to annual leave are currently based on EU law, and many of these rights have been upheld at the European Court of Justice. Liberal Democrats will fight to ensure that these entitlements are not undermined.
- *Maintaining environmental standards:* The European Union has created the highest environmental standards in the world. We have a duty to future generations to protect our environment and tackle climate change. Liberal Democrats will ensure that everything is done to maintain those high standards in UK law, including the closest possible cooperation on climate and energy policy.
- *Law enforcement and judicial co-operation:* Europol, the European Arrest Warrant and shared access to police databases have helped make Britain’s streets safer. We will fight to maintain maximum co-operation to ensure criminals are pursued quickly and effectively and police are not frustrated by huge amounts of red tape.
- *British Business and Jobs:* We must protect support to domestic industries such as farming, tourism and the creative industries, as well as regional support for deprived areas. The City of London is Europe’s financial capital and must retain its full rights in EU financial markets.
- *Science and research funding:* Research is vital for our long-term prosperity, security and wellbeing – but the Leave vote has already started to affect existing and proposed research programmes. We will campaign against any reduction in investment in UK universities and for their right to apply for EU funds on equal terms.
- *Travel and tourism:* Britain is an outward-looking country with commercial and leisure interests around the world, particularly in Europe. We will strive to retain traveller and tourist benefits such as the European Health Insurance Card, reduced roaming charges and pet passports, all of which are at risk by leaving the European Union.
- *Respect for the interests of Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland:* We will fight to ensure that the priorities and long-term interests of the nations of the UK are fully taken into account during negotiations. We will oppose any moves that threaten the political stability of Northern Ireland. We will also campaign to protect the rights of the people of Gibraltar.

5/ Health and social care

At the heart of our manifesto is our belief that Health and Social Care should be treated as one integrated service, with neither element seen as the ‘poor relation’. This is important because the same individuals often rely on both.

Funding this approach to a joined-up Health and Social Care system should be agreed across all parties nationally and the Lib Dems believe that Income Tax should be raised by 1p, to ensure there is support in place for those who are in immediate need. Here in Westminster everyone should be

given the care they deserve, whether that be the acute care given in the clinical hospital environment, social care in day centres, or even care given within people's own homes.

The current system in Westminster is fragmented and services are often isolated. Our plan looks to consolidate services into one joined up care system, where we collaborate with our neighbouring boroughs to learn from best practice and implement systems that work.

We also want a focus on patients with mental health conditions. The treatment of these conditions has long been underfunded. Therefore, imaginative solutions are now required to allow those who run these services to provide the right care at the right time.

Therefore, we will:

- Increase specialist provision for patients with dementia.
- Provide better local nursing home services as a vital tool to enable people to stay in their communities.
- Work with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to ensure that all care homes are assessed for physical activity provision with the aim of achieving a gold standard across the borough.
- Work with community groups and charities to extend the confidential and free mental health services available to those who need urgent assistance 24 hours a day; especially to young and vulnerable people and those from the BAME and LGBT+ communities.
- Increase support for carers including more respite provision to recognise the huge and often unacknowledged role carers have in supporting their friends and family.
- Work with people with learning difficulties and their families to help design day opportunities that allow users and carers to have a safe space and be able to access community provision.
- Within the planning and design of any new urban space, ensure the active participation of people with physical disabilities to input into how to make the surroundings accessible for all.
- Assess every green space and park in Westminster to ensure that there is excellent provision of sports, including physical activity spaces such as outdoor gyms. Green spaces are now recognised as being hugely important to improve our health and wellbeing.
- Set up a new intergenerational buddying programme to connect older people with young people aged 16+. This would be run through schools and link with local companies to provide mentoring for the young people who take part.

6/ Children & young people

Every parent hopes to give their children a better life than they had. However, British society is still split between the "haves" and "have nots", so rather than moving beyond their parent's circumstances, too many children become trapped by them. Sadly, we can see this playing out in Westminster. The Child Poverty Action Group (www.cpag.org.uk) published its latest report showing the levels of child poverty in each council area, ward and constituency. The survey shows that an astonishing 4 out of 10 children live in poverty in Westminster, which puts Westminster sixth from the bottom in the entire country. This kind of inequality is not only inherently unfair, it also wastes potential and talents that could benefit the whole community.

So while Westminster has excellent schools and excellent teachers, more tailored support is needed in schools to ensure that children don't slip through the net, that their mental health is prioritised and that they are fully supported to go on to lead happy and successful lives. We believe that a

dynamic and children-centred local council is key and we will therefore create, expand and improve programs aimed at children on the margins.

Children grappling with poverty, mental illness, learning difficulties, discrimination and the challenges of fleeing to the UK deserve our full support. We will ensure that schools, children's centres, social services and the NHS are all participating in delivering this objective.

Therefore, we will:

- Improve mental health in schools by ensuring that all primary and secondary schools have at least two Mental Health First Aid qualified members of staff. We will also encourage mindfulness programmes in schools e.g. Mindfulness in Schools Project.
- Work with mental health services to ensure mechanisms are in place to identify vulnerable young people in Westminster and strengthen adolescent outreach teams.
- Prioritise closing the attainment gap for BAME and disadvantaged pupils with targeted support and sharing of best practice between schools both in and out of the borough.
- Ensure SEN (Special Educational Needs) assessments are done in a timely manner, bringing together expertise and resources from across London to deliver a better service.
- Continue to support the cross-party Fairer Funding for Schools Campaign.
- Employ a "Work and Life Skills" officer whose remit will be to increase apprenticeships and develop a PSHE/Citizenship curriculum for the borough.
- Reduce the number of re-referrals to Children's Services by ensuring that referred children are dealt with effectively and provided with the right support the first time around.
- Better support for refugee children in the borough to include training for schools and council staff who are in contact with refugee children and improved cooperation & information sharing between the council and voluntary sector organisations.
- Keep immigration checks out of our schools to protect children in education.
- Increase the number of local foster carers for older children and children with more complex needs.

This manifesto sets out Liberal Democrat policies and priorities for the borough of Westminster for the 2018 local elections.

This manifesto can be found online at:
<http://www.westminsterandcityoflondonlibdems.org.uk/>

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