

# Sedgemoor District Council needs a shake up



**DEMAND BETTER**



**A message from  
Liberal  
Democrats  
Sedgemoor  
District  
Councillor Bill  
Revans:**

Sedgemoor has been dominated by the Conservatives since 1999. Too often people across Sedgemoor say the same thing:

“Sedgemoor District Council doesn't listen to us, they do things to our communities, not with us. We want a council which is on our side.”

That's why we say, after twenty years of Tory rule, it is time to Shake up Sedgemoor.`

Our policies have six main themes:

- ✓ To open up the council
- ✓ To tackle the housing crisis
- ✓ To protect our environment
- ✓ To build our communities
- ✓ To strengthen our economy
- ✓ To make Sedgemoor fairer for all.

We **Demand Better** from Sedgemoor.

## **DEMAND BETTER from our Council**

Sedgemoor needs to change. Too many decisions are made away from the people affected, in secret and with too little consultation. We need to make Sedgemoor more open and democratic so people will be genuinely listened to.

## **DEMAND BETTER Housing**

The housing market has been distorted by Hinkley Point C meaning a massive shortage of homes for local youngsters starting out in life and rents are going through the roof. Homelessness is rising.

Housing should be built for people not profit.

## **DEMAND BETTER for our Environment**

Our environment is too far down the list of priorities at Sedgemoor. We need urgent action to deal with climate change, air quality and plastic waste. Sedgemoor is on the front line of rises in sea levels and should be leading the way.

## **DEMAND BETTER for our Communities**

Developers have too much power over our communities. They are getting away without contributing enough to the local highways, health and schools, while making millions in profits. Our County and District councils don't cooperate enough to deliver effective services.

## **DEMAND BETTER from our Economy**

We need a successful local economy to support our communities. Our town centres are not being supported to flourish. Smaller businesses are being squeezed out by the big. We need a sustainable economic strategy for after Hinkley Point has been completed.

## **DEMAND BETTER and fairer for All**

Too many people are being left out. The gender pay gap in Sedgemoor is the biggest in the country and opportunities for women are too low. The poorest and the disabled have been made to suffer too much of the burden of austerity. Minority communities have been marginalised. People should not have to use Foodbanks in the sixth richest country in the world. We need a council that will lead in creating a Sedgemoor for all.

## **DEMAND BETTER from our Council**

We will:

- ✓ Bring back the Committee system so all Councillors have a say in how the Council is run.
- ✓ Use area forums to make decision making more local to the people affected.
- ✓ Give Town and Parish Councils the right to contribute to debates and decisions, for example on Planning decisions.
- ✓ Make sure that local people are kept informed of planning issues and are involved throughout the process.
- ✓ Review all Councillors' allowances and expenses to get value for money.
- ✓ Work closely with other councils in Somerset to ensure that they work smarter together.
- ✓ Commercial investment decisions should be made ethically and to promote the vibrancy of our local communities.

## **DEMAND BETTER Housing**

We will:

- ✓ Work with developers to meet housing need, developing partnerships with local smaller businesses where possible.
- ✓ Insist on an integrated mix of market, affordable and social Housing in communities where there is development and robustly challenge developers who claim this is not viable.
- ✓ Ensure the council fulfils all its obligations under the Homelessness Act so that no one needs to sleep rough.
- ✓ Make sure that smaller communities address local need for housing to make sure communities are sustainable.
- ✓ Use new Government powers to build council houses again so that everyone has a decent home in which to live.
- ✓ Reduce the waiting list for social housing.

## **DEMAND BETTER for our Communities**

We will:

- ✓ Ensure that developer contributions match the impact of the proposed developments on infrastructure.
- ✓ Work closely with parish and town councils, Somerset County Council and other public bodies like the NHS to ensure community facilities match growing local needs.
- ✓ Be prepared to challenge developers to build communities and homes not just houses, with services and infrastructure.
- ✓ Make sure Neighbourhood Plans are given proper weight in planning decisions.
- ✓ Local residents will be able to petition to bring planning decisions to the Development committee.

## **DEMAND BETTER for our Environment**

We will:

- ✓ Push for maximum kerbside recycling as soon as possible to minimise landfill.
- ✓ Ensure the District has a full network of electric car charging points.
- ✓ Make sure that recycling systems suit the communities they serve to maximise recycling rates.
- ✓ Monitor and act to ensure our air quality is high in spite of traffic congestion. Minimise the impact of HPC traffic by ensuring their planning agreements are adhered to without exception.
- ✓ Review all council decisions for their impact on carbon output.
- ✓ Stop the use of glyphosphate as a weedkiller.
- ✓ Ensure that the proposed Parrett Barrage is a sustainable long term solution to rising sea levels and investigate including renewable energy as part of the project.
- ✓ Maximise the use of roof space for generating solar electricity.

## **DEMAND BETTER from our Economy**

We will:

- ✓ Support our small businesses with advice and guidance to ensure they have the skills they need to thrive. Where possible, we will give contracts and work to local businesses to help the local economy grow.
- ✓ We will work with our small and medium businesses to promote a circular economy to make our local businesses more sustainable.
- ✓ Develop a sustainable economic strategy to attract investment for the area after Hinkley Point construction has ended.
- ✓ Work with education and training providers to ensure that people have the skills our economy needs.
- ✓ Creatively promote our shopping centres throughout the area to help them thrive once again.
- ✓ Review parking pricing to encourage people to shop in town centres again, introducing “happy hour parking” to stimulate demand.
- ✓ Back our tourism and heritage industries to ensure that our beautiful heritage is maintained and supported sustainably.

## **DEMAND BETTER and Fairer for All**

We will:

- ✓ Ensure that Sedgemoor cooperates with other councils and agencies to protect the most vulnerable in the community.
- ✓ Make sure that local leisure facilities provide for the whole community to get and stay healthy
- ✓ Support our rural communities who are struggling without public transport to play a full role in society.
- ✓ Set up a bursary fund and mentoring to give opportunities to Sedgemoor women to raise aspirations.
- ✓ Support a Sedgemoor Pride event to celebrate diversity in the area and promote community harmony.
- ✓ Support the development of physical and mental wellbeing through more opportunities to exercise and socialise.

## **Local Government in Somerset**

Our Local Government in Somerset is in crisis.

Somerset County Council was brought to the brink of bankruptcy last year.

Central Government has cut back financial support to councils by millions of pounds.

Districts like Sedgemoor have had to cut back too.

Town and parish councils have had to take on more and more.

All this at a time when demand for services has been increasing dramatically.

The Conservative party has controlled Somerset County Council since 2009.

The Conservative party has controlled Sedgemoor District Council since 1999.

All Somerset's MPs are currently Conservatives.

They have made a political choice to keep Council Tax low and have pretended that this is good financial management. It is not. It is simply not honest to claim that council tax can be frozen at the moment and provide a decent level of services.

The Liberal Democrats will set the council tax at a level to maintain good quality, front line council services. We will challenge spending in areas that bring little direct benefit to the community. We will find efficiencies by working more effectively and with other councils and agencies. We will not take risks with your money on speculative investments in shopping centres outside of our area.

We will work cooperatively with neighbouring authorities to find a sustainable long term solution for Local Government in Somerset. And we will lobby Government so that Somerset will no longer be ignored.