



WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

SOUTHEND LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MANIFESTO 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Liberal Democrats are the party of community and we pride ourselves on working to improve the well-being of all residents within the Southend Borough by actively supporting them to achieve their aspirations and making this the best place to live, learn, work, bring up a family or visit.

This is our Manifesto – our aims and our aspirations. For the last 2 years the Liberal Democrats have been working in a Joint Administration with other councillors towards a brighter future for Southend. We will continue to work with others to achieve our aims.

WE DEMAND EVEN BETTER FOR SOUTHEND

OUR VISION

To be the best place to live, we will invest in a climate change agenda that will improve our environment and in truly affordable, accessible housing, including council housing.

To be the best place to work, we will nurture the local economy by breathing life back into Southend High Street and supporting local employment.

To be the best place for families we will protect our libraries, invest in school places and support our social, medical and policing services.

To be the best place to visit we will improve our leisure and entertainment offer, so that, together with our fantastic beaches, festivals and history, Southend Borough is the go-to East Coast resort.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The work on a variety of aspects of Climate Change is progressing well. Our environment has changed during the pandemic and we are determined to harness the good changes that have happened to ensure they carry forward into the future. Under Liberal Democrat leadership the environment agenda has moved forward in the introduction of a new tree policy which has enhanced our tree planting programme and will do so into the future to increase our canopy cover. We have adopted a Green City Action Plan which sets out our programme of environmental projects for the future including relating to air pollution, green environment, energy savings and improvements to our green areas with activities to attract pollinators and enhanced natural spaces. We have worked with many local groups to improve the environment of our streets and open spaces and people have seen a real difference – we will continue and enhance this work. We will promote renewable energy and sustainable travel, work towards zero landfill and enhance recycling services and use all powers available to us to protect against dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER MANAGEMENT

We will continue to monitor and oversee all major projects, be they Council or statutory undertakers, to ensure they are on time and on budget, cause as little disruption to daily lives as possible and seek to continuously improve how works are co-ordinated.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER HOUSING

In the last 2 years we have invested heavily in truly affordable and more accessible council housing and worked for the appropriate regulation of the private rental market to make sure everyone has the chance of a decent home. We will demand use of compulsory purchase powers to meet social housing needs where necessary and will redesignate underused employment land for housing and demand balanced communities to meet the needs of the less able, vulnerable and homeless to help them to a more stable future.

DEMAND AN EVEN BETTER HIGH STREET

Our High Street has suffered as have others in recent years and throughout the pandemic. With our investment in the Victoria Centre and Better Queensway we will use our presence to influence improvements and inject new life into the area. We will foster a variety of uses, including housing and leisure with a more pleasant ambience and create a positive approach to the linkage between the town centre and the seafront so they interact well together.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER SERVICES

We will fight for and support our local NHS, social services and police to meet the needs of all the residents of Southend.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER TRANSPORT AND PARKING

We have taken strong measures in our budgeting process to ensure that we have the funds to invest in our roads and pavements and are being innovative with the introduction of the Southend Pass, which will benefit both residents and the town centre workforce. We will keep Southend moving and accessible but at the same time continue with our programme of school streets and proposals for 20 mile per hour zones in suitable residential roads. We will also support local bus services and a review of residents' parking.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER EDUCATION

We will continually monitor our schools and invest in new primary and secondary school facilities where they are needed, maintain our library and museum service and work with local groups to advance the cultural life of the Borough, through our venues, museums and cultural activities. We will support the enhancements to our Pier – the icon of Southend.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER FOR TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND HERITAGE

The pandemic has changed the way we view our area in terms of what it has to offer to residents and visitors. The rise in staycationing is something Southend can promote and support and we will work with businesses to create a destination which people and residents enjoy and want to return to. Our local heritage is very important and we will ensure it is maintained, enhanced and documented and that our Pier, Kursaal and seafronts are brought back to their former glory. We will work to provide as wide a range of tourism and leisure activities and facilities as possible. We will encourage more industries to

establish themselves in Southend, in order to raise income levels in the town and wealth for the Borough.

CONCLUSION

The Liberal Democrats, working with others within a Joint Administration, have delivered on many of the promises we made to the people of Southend 2 years ago. But there is more to do.

We hope you will share our vision for Southend Borough and we urge you to vote for your Liberal Democrat candidate so we can strengthen our voice and influence on the Council.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER FOR SOUTHEND

INTRODUCTION

The Liberal Democrats are the party of community and we pride ourselves on working to improve the well-being of all residents within the Southend Borough by actively supporting them to achieve their aspirations and making this the best place to live, work, bring up a family or visit.

This is our Manifesto – it is ambitious and needs the good will and support of our colleagues on the Council and local people. We will work with all of them to achieve our aims.

Working with others within a Joint Administration over the last 2 years we believe Southend Borough Council is beginning to live up to its ‘Better Southend’ strapline. Liberal Democrats Demand Even Better and we will take our residents, businesses and visitors with us on this journey as we continue our work.

WE DEMAND EVEN BETTER FOR SOUTHEND

After years of Southend suffering from a lack of vision, the Liberal Democrats, working with others within a Joint Administration, have started to enable Southend to reach its potential. We have declared a Climate Emergency and are working towards Southend being a truly ‘green’ borough. After years of under-investment, we have now launched a multi-million pound programme of investment in repairing our roads and pavements. And we are taking a more proactive role in boosting our local economy with initiatives like the ‘shop local’; campaign and the recent purchase of the Victoria Centre.

Southend has so much potential. We want to build on what we have started and demand even better for our wonderful seaside Borough.

We will continue to be decisive and prudent in how we use taxpayers’ money, focusing on what residents, businesses and visitors need. No return to the vanity projects of the recent past. Our decisions will be driven by common sense and fairness not blind political ideology.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



Having declared a Climate Change Emergency, we have made great strides with our environmental agenda. Our new Tree Policy has been widely welcomed with its aim of improving our tree canopy and working with the community on planting projects. Our Green City Action Plan has been well received and we will be pressing forward with the projects it contains working with schools, businesses and residents.

Our Policies

- ✓ We are, and will, continue to take comprehensive measures across all areas of the Council's work, as well as working with local residents, businesses and organisations to ensure that our Climate Change agenda becomes a reality.
- ✓ The Borough has 2 Air Quality Management Areas and we will continue to monitor and make improvements in these areas as well as monitoring at other points.
- ✓ We will work to ensure road improvements on major routes include proposals for a green environment and work with local groups to improve the environment of our streets and open spaces, especially our parks and Two Tree Island.
- ✓ We will promote renewable energy and sustainable travel programmes like supporting electric car use by providing more charging points and growing our network of cycle ways.
- ✓ We will work towards zero landfill by enhancing recycling services and promoting an education programme for residents and businesses to ensure our waste is recycled properly.
- ✓ We will continue with our plans to plant many more trees and shrubs across the Borough with a view to increasing tree canopy cover to 15% by 2030 working with residents and businesses.
- ✓ We will use all powers available to us to protect against dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER MANAGEMENT



We have taken a rigorous stance on major projects to ensure they are value for money and deliver the outcomes that are needed.

Our Policies

- ✓ In the last 2 years working within scarce resources, we have improved monitoring and oversight of all major Council projects to ensure they are on time and on budget. This is vital to the economic life of the Borough and will continue to be at the forefront of how we progress into the post pandemic economy.
- ✓ We will ensure efficient and effective procurement of services that adds value to projects. We will seek the same commitment from our suppliers and contractors. We will progress any proposals which allow us to require local employment in major schemes.
- ✓ We will ensure that the green agenda is uppermost when bringing forward projects and that our contractors and suppliers are also looking at their green credentials going forward.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER HOUSING

We have done much in the last 2 years to bring forward council housing for the many families on the housing waiting list, introducing a pipeline of sites for new housing and purchasing properties for refurbishment. We have also brought forward a scheme to improve the quality of private rented accommodation, a new empty homes policy, refurbishment of our current housing stock and innovative housing for those in need of temporary accommodation.

The Government's requirements on Councils for yet more and more housing places an enormous pressure on Boroughs like Southend which have very little spare land for development.

Our policies for planning and housing are moving forward in the new Borough Local Plan and we are working with neighbouring authorities, because we all have similar issues to deal with, but with different focusses.



Our Policies

✓ We will continue to press for truly affordable, accessible housing, including council housing: holding developers to account, ensuring that all major developments provide more affordable housing. We will also finalise our regulation of the private rental market.

✓ We will continue increase our housing stock by utilising available land and working with others to provide the housing we need and, where necessary,

using compulsory purchase powers to buy appropriate land for council housing and empty and derelict properties for refurbishment. Our new Local Plan will review land allocated for employment but not taken up and seek its re-designation for housing where suitable.

- ✓ We have made great strides in our care for the homeless during the pandemic and will be carrying that forward with innovative projects to enable them to lead a more comfortable settled life. We will continue our programme of improvements to our housing stock to improve the lives of our residents.
- ✓ We will, through our new Local Plan, press for our planning policies to provide for balanced development throughout the Borough and to ensure that all of the Borough takes its fair share of development, and a balance of housing to meet the needs of all the population, including bungalows and family housing.
- ✓ With the Government's housing requirements comes the need for new infrastructure and we will continue to lobby Government for the means to provide schools, health facilities, roads and parking. Large developments will be scrutinised for their contribution to necessary infrastructure and their green credentials.

DEMAND AN EVEN BETTER HIGH STREET



We all know that our high streets and shopping centres are struggling. We have produced a blue print for 'Reimagining the Town Centre' to help with the recovery given the effects of the pandemic. Times change and our central areas will become a mix of uses, not just retail, which we will continue to support. Our green agenda will be vitally important to the enhancement of these areas for the comfort and pleasure of residents, workers and visitors. Providing this diversity within our towns will help in the creation of new jobs and businesses.

Our Policies

- ✓ **Through our new Local Plan, we are working to ensure Southend's planning policies reflect the changes that have taken place and enhance the offer we provide. Our new stake in the High Street at the Victoria Centre will enable the Council to have a stronger presence and influence in the High Street and to be a catalyst for change.**
- ✓ **We will encourage more residential and leisure uses which will in turn lead to a more pleasant ambience through covered ways, green spaces and community uses and add to the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre.**
- ✓ **We will encourage a positive approach to the linkage between the town centre and the seafront and avoid clashes of interest that put our seafront and High Street at risk.**
- ✓ **We will work to protect our historic frontages and ensure new developments in our High Street are within context.**
- ✓ **We will support our local shopping areas by improving their settings and attraction.**

DEMAND EVEN BETTER SERVICES

We will continue to oppose any moves to downgrade Southend hospital or shift care away from local patients.

Similarly, we have long campaigned for proper social care services for adults and children, particularly around mental health. We will focus resources on frontline services, not wasteful transformation projects.

We are always lobbying the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (who controls this aspect of our services) to ensure the particular needs of Southend are at the forefront of their mind. We know that policing in Southend needs a significant injection of cash and police officer recruitment and we will support this with our Community Safety Unit which has done much in the last 2 years and through the pandemic to support the police and residents. We will support the Police in their programme of Specials recruitment.



Our Policies

✓ We will continue to resist any plans to downgrade Southend hospital.

✓ We will continue to enhance and work towards promoting better care for people with mental health issues in a targeted way so that the right help gets to the right person.

✓ We will work with and nurture and protect our young people who need a public health service and social network that works for them. We will work with other agencies to achieve

this. Similarly, we will care for our elderly and people with disabilities, ensuring care services meet their individual needs.

- ✓ We will press for the provision of accommodation and facilities to ease the burden of bed-blocking on the NHS. We will encourage multi-range doctors' practices to ensure that they can deal with a wide range of issues, without the need for hospital visits.
- ✓ We will continue to put pressure on the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for additional police resources for the Borough. Our new Community Safety Unit has expanded to cover not just Southend Central, but the surrounding areas and we will continue to give that Unit the tools it needs to improve our areas and assist the Police.
- ✓ We will continue with our programme of CCTV coverage where it helps to protect residents and businesses.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER HIGHWAYS, TRAFFIC AND PARKING



Keeping Southend moving and accessible is key to creating a great local economy and inclusive community. We have made innovative strides in budgeting for our road and pavement improvements over the coming years and to ensure our roads and connections are improved across the Borough.

Our pilot programme of School Streets has been very successful.

Our Policies

- ✓ We will build on what we have already done to introduce the Southend Pass and fairer car parking charges.
- ✓ We will introduce our 20 mile per hour zones project in residential roads, where appropriate, and expand our School Streets programme.
- ✓ We are committed to the investment in repairing our pavements and roads and green verges after years of under-investment.
- ✓ We are supporting and will continue to support the provision of local bus services, especially north-south connectivity.
- ✓ We will review all our parking permit systems and residents parking, taking into account the effects on adjoining areas and of the different needs of areas.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER EDUCATION

The academy system means the education of many of our children has been taken out of Council hands. However, Liberal Democrats believe that councils should take a proactive role in supporting our schools, whatever their status.



Our Policies

- ✓ We will continually monitor our school population and its needs and invest in new primary and secondary school facilities where they are needed.
- ✓ We will continue to ensure that our school standards are maintained at the highest levels, be they academy or community schools.
- ✓ We will overcome the problems of the dysfunctional system by supporting our many strong schools and offering assistance to those that are underperforming and need help urgently.
- ✓ We will protect our library and museum service and work with local groups to advance the cultural life of the Borough.

DEMAND EVEN BETTER FOR TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT AND HERITAGE

All tourism areas have suffered greatly during the pandemic and our leisure and hotel industries, pubs and restaurants etc will take time to recover. But there are opportunities as well in terms of staycationing which will be popular in the next few years and which, with the right investment, can be enhanced to a level of continued input into the local economy.

We are investing heavily in the Pier with new trains imminent and an exciting project for the revamping of the Pier head.

Other projects are being considered which will enhance the seafront areas and we will work with local businesses in central Southend and in our other areas of attraction from Leigh to Shoebury, making sure that our wonderful 7 miles of beaches and our leisure and tourist facilities are supported to the fullest.

In this respect the pandemic has taken its toll and our ambitions remain to a large extent as they were 2 years ago although much work has gone on in the intervening period



Our Policies

- ✓ **We will continue to work with all agencies and local heritage groups to ensure the Borough's rich heritage is maintained, enhanced and documented.**
- ✓ **We will progress the improvements to the Pier and encourage schemes to improve the Kursaal, which is on a long leasehold, and seafronts as places for the pleasure of the people.**
- ✓ **We will look to enhance our parks and gardens and historic buildings and be diligent with owners regarding their maintenance and protection.**
- ✓ **We will support leisure uses, these are vital to the future economy of the Borough and the Town Centre in particular, and we will look to provide as wide a range of tourism and leisure activities and facilities as possible.**
- ✓ **We will work to encourage inward investment into the Borough, to enhance our jobs market, provide apprenticeships and give our young people hope in their future prospects for a well-paid job in the town and wealth for the Borough. We have done much and continue to work to ensure local wages are improved and that we are not seen as a seasonal or low paid economy.**

Working with others within a Joint Administration we have delivered on much of what we promised the people of Southend in 2019. We want to build on this success and make Southend an even better place to live, work and visit.

We hope you share our vision for Southend Borough and will vote for your Liberal Democrat candidate so we can strengthen our voice and influence on the Council.

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS DEMAND EVEN BETTER FOR SOUTHEND



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