



TAKING SOUTHEND TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE

SOUTHEND LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MANIFESTO 2019

OUR VISION

To be the best place to live, we will invest in social and truly affordable, accessible housing. To be the best place to work, we will nurture the local economy by breathing life back into Southend High Street and support 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. We will improve our leisure and entertainment offer, so that, together with our fantastic beaches, festivals and history, the Borough of Southend-on-Sea is the best place to visit.

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-on-Sea 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. These are ambitious plans and need 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.

BETTER HOUSING

More truly affordable and more accessible social housing and appropriate regulation of the private rental market.

A BETTER HIGH STREET

Diversifying and re energising Southend’s failing High Street.

BETTER MANAGEMENT

Better oversight of major projects.

BETTER SERVICES

Supporting our local medical, social and policing services.

BETTER ROADS, TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND PARKING

Rationalising parking charges, promoting 20 mph speed limits in residential roads, better street repairs and local bus services and reviewing residents’ parking.

BETTER EDUCATION

Investing in our schools, maintaining our library service and advancing our cultural heritage.

BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Protecting our environment and promoting renewable energy and sustainable travel, zero landfill and acting against dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering.

BETTER FOR TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND HERITAGE

Protecting our heritage, promoting our tourism offer and encouraging business opportunities.

DEMAND 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 Manifesto 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.

We want our Borough Council to live up to its 'Better Southend' strapline. Liberal Democrats Demand Better and we will take our residents, businesses and visitors with us on this journey as we get to work.

We will be prudent with finances but fight to protect services. We will speed-up decision making, not let the grass grow. Everything we do will be judged for its sustainability, benefit and achievability

We cannot promise everything will happen quickly, but what we can promise is that we, working with you, will give it our best shot, always, because we are proud of our Borough and its heritage and we want to be prouder still.

WE DEMAND BETTER FOR SOUTHEND

Southend is suffering from a lack of vision, worn down by a government that for years has slashed local budgets while off-loading more of its problems onto councils to fix. Our town is under immense pressure in terms of development, infrastructure, services, regeneration and the economy. The Council struggles to find cash to meet its statutory responsibilities, let alone invest in better. Only those blinded by political ideology and privilege fail to see that austerity is a false economy.

Southend has so much potential. It is time to demand better for our wonderful seaside Borough.

The Liberal Democrats have a clear vision for Southend Borough. We will be decisive and prudent in how we use taxpayers' money, focusing on what residents, businesses and visitors need. No more vanity projects. Our decisions will be driven by common sense and fairness not blind political ideology.

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.

OUR VISION

To be the best place to live, we will invest in social and truly affordable, accessible housing. To be the best place to work, we will nurture the local economy by breathing life back into Southend High Street and support 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. We will improve our leisure and entertainment offer, so that, together with our fantastic beaches, festivals and history, Southend Borough is the best place to visit.

BETTER HOUSING

How can young people get on the ladder when the average home in the Borough is out of their reach? How can families and children thrive without the most basic of human needs – knowing they have somewhere to call home? That is the reality for the 1300 families on the housing waiting list and the many more in private rented accommodation. The Borough is under enormous pressure and demand shows no sign of slowing in the coming years.

Thriving, secure neighbourhoods are good for community spirit and the local economy - reducing pressure on social care, hospitals and policing. However, we are a linear Borough with the sea as a boundary so it is difficult to find the space needed for the number of new homes required without destroying the character of our neighbourhoods.

Our policies for planning and housing balance these issues. We would implement them through the new Southend Local Plan and joint approach with surrounding districts currently being drawn up. We will be active listeners, making decisions through dialogue with public and private stakeholders.



Our Policies

- ✓ **We will press for truly affordable, accessible social housing: holding developers to account, ensuring the Better Queensway development provides more social housing and for the appropriate regulation of the private rental market**
- ✓ **We will promote the use of compulsory purchase powers to buy appropriate land for social housing and empty and derelict properties for conversions. We will seek a review of land allocated for employment but not taken up and seek its re-designation for housing where suitable.**

- ✓ We recognise the housing needs of the less abled and vulnerable and will work with agencies for them and for those who care for the homeless and street sleepers to help them to a more stable future.
- ✓ We will press for our planning policies to provide for balanced development throughout the Borough and to ensure that all the Borough takes its fair share of development
- ✓ We will seek a balance of housing to meet the needs of all the population, including bungalows and family housing.
- ✓ We will work to ensure infrastructure needs are met, such as schools, doctors, roads and parking in large developments and proposals are assessed with infrastructure in mind.

A BETTER HIGH STREET



We need a drastic rethink of how Southend town centre functions. It needs to be a place where residents, businesses, employees, day trippers and visitors feel safe to walk around, a welcoming focal point, with more green spaces and community uses. It needs more people living in the central area, creating a local community and local jobs, as well shopping and leisure.

Our Policies

- ✓ We will work to ensure Southend's planning policies reflect the way we shop today and work with stakeholders to achieve a vibrant and vital High Street and that best use is made of Victoria Centre and the Royals to cater for the new trends in eating out and leisure.
- ✓ We will encourage more flats and homes on upper floors and leisure at ground floor. We will create a more pleasant ambience through covered ways, green spaces and community uses.
- ✓ We will encourage a positive approach to the linkage between the town centre and the seafront and avoid clashes of interest which 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.

BETTER MANAGEMENT



We cannot afford for projects in any part of the Borough to end up costing millions of pounds more than agreed, and disrupting daily life and businesses for those affected, often for years on end.

Our Policies

- ✓ **Working within scarce resources, we will DEMAND BETTER monitoring and oversight of all major Council projects to ensure they are on time and on budget and work more closely with statutory undertakers to ensure no hidden issues arise part way through projects and that street works are better co-ordinated.**
- ✓ **We will ensure efficient and effective procurement of services that add value to projects. We will seek the same commitment from our suppliers and contractors.**

BETTER SERVICES

Our councillors rejected changes to our local NHS hospital, and we will oppose any other moves to downgrade the hospital or shift care away from local patients. Nationally the Lib Dems are the only party with a proper funding plan for the NHS – and we'll stop it being used as a political football.

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.

On policing we will lobby 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. Right now, policing in Southend needs a significant injection of cash and police officer recruitment.



Our Policies

- ✓ **We will continue to resist the NHS Plan for our hospital - there are still too many unanswered questions about stroke services, staffing, movement of patients between sites and doubts around financing.**
- ✓ **We will promote 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 and ensure that the new Borough enforcement officer programme is expanded to cover not just Southend Central, but the surrounding areas.
- ✓ We will work to extend the CCTV coverage where it helps to protect residents and businesses.

BETTER HIGHWAYS, TRAFFIC AND PARKING



Keeping Southend moving and accessible is key to creating a great local economy and inclusive community. We will work to bring forward a traffic and parking strategy for the whole Borough, recognising the different needs of different areas and residents and businesses. We will learn from the success of other Councils to make sure the maintenance of our roads and pavements ensures safety and eases traffic issues.

Our Policies

- ✓ We will work to reduce parking charges and hours when charges apply in winter and introduce a reduced rate for the first hour of parking both on street and in our car parks
- ✓ We will end the mean-spirited parking charges for out of town disabled people.
- ✓ We will promote 20 mph speed limits in residential roads, where appropriate and expand the programme of street repairs and other safety measures
- ✓ We will support local bus services, including the feasibility of a "park and ride" scheme in an appropriate locality and north south connectivity.
- ✓ We will press for a review of residents parking, taking into account the effects on adjoining areas and of the different needs of areas

BETTER EDUCATION

The academy system means the education of many of our children has been taken out of Council hands. This makes it very difficult to deal with catchment areas, wellbeing of children and budgets. However, there is more we can – and should – do to support our schools, whatever their status.



Our Policies

- ✓ We will 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 support our many strong schools and offer assistance to those that are underperforming and need help urgently.
- ✓ We will protect our library service and work with local groups to advance the cultural life of the Borough.

BETTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



The way we live our modern lives is affecting our environment, be it in our use of plastic, our polluting vehicles or the anti-social behaviour of some when it comes to dog waste, littering and fly tipping.

Our Policies

- ✓ While recognising the need for effective traffic management throughout the Borough, we will learn and implement best practice to protect Southend residents from pollution caused by heavy traffic. We will pay particular attention to pollution issues at traffic junctions where traffic idles, especially near schools, densely populated areas and other areas our residents attend in numbers.
- ✓ 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 use all powers available to us to protect against dog fouling, fly-tipping and littering.



BETTER FOR TOURISM, EMPLOYMENT AND HERITAGE

We are a resort Borough and we have two of the most iconic buildings in the Country, our world-renowned Pier and the Kursaal.

Yet we seem to flounder when it comes to knowing what to do with these wonderful buildings and how to turn our resort back into the fun place to go to it used to be. With the notable exceptions of Adventure Island and City Beach we struggle to enhance our offer.

We also have the jewels that are Leigh and Shoebury and many other historic areas.



Our Policies

- ✓ We will work with all agencies and local heritage groups to ensure the Borough's rich heritage is maintained, enhanced and documented, whether it be our support for the historical fishing industry of Leigh, the legacy of the military at Shoebury or the impressive historical finds and information unearthed on land and sea in recent years.
- ✓ We will work to ensure our Pier, Kursaal and seafronts are brought back to their former glory; no fanciful schemes but what they always were, places for the pleasure of the people.
- ✓ We will work to protect our parks and gardens and historic buildings and be diligent with owners regarding their maintenance and protection.
- ✓ We will support leisure uses, where appropriate, in order to provide as wide a range of tourism and leisure activities and facilities as possible.
- ✓ We will work to encourage more industries to establish themselves in Southend, in order to raise the number of well-paid jobs in the town and wealth for the Borough. We do not have to continue to be a low-wage economy.

We cannot promise everything will happen quickly, but our pledge to you is that we, working with you, will give it our best shot always, because we are proud of our Borough and its heritage and we want to be prouder still.

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

LIBERAL DEMOCRATS DEMAND BETTER FOR SOUTHEND



To find out more about the Liberal Democrats both locally and nationally, go to www.southendlibdems.org.uk

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