

Action for our area

Creating a council that works
for YOU . . .

. . .not for the government

**‘Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a...
society in which no-one shall be enslaved by
poverty, ignorance or conformity’**

from the Liberal Democrat Constitution

*This Manifesto outlines how a Liberal Democrat run Council would be different from
the current Council. If you want more details on anything please contact -*

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You can find us at: <http://southgloslibdems.mycouncillor.org.uk/>

Or follow Sgloslibdems on Facebook or Twitter

Our approach

Our approach is distinct from other parties. We believe in working with residents to solve problems, enabling you and your neighbours to create the community you want. Not meddling, not imposing solutions from above, not getting in your way.

We will work WITH you ...

because TOGETHER we can make things better.

Liberal Democrat Councillors are there to stick up for our communities, work with you and campaign for improvements in our area. To do that, we need to be open, welcome your participation and trust you. We need to get the Council off your back, so it puts you in charge and does the things you want done, rather than deciding what you should want and then imposing it on you.



It means putting the things that matter most to you first, not fancy projects, but supporting you in getting a decent home, a decent job and protecting vulnerable people - and doing this without wrecking the planet.

Liberal Democrats locally and in government are working to get the Localism Bill in place, which will force bureaucracies to hand power to local communities. This will give real strength to our aim to give local communities real choice and power.

National decision making took us to war in Iraq, and is still planning a 3rd runway for Heathrow. We believe in localism, which means letting local communities reach different conclusions from other communities, because they are different. We will ensure that the best use is made of the new powers in order to ensure that available resources are used effectively to build a vibrant, greener local economy. Local decisions by local people; Your choice

We will work with you, but that doesn't mean we'll duck tough decisions. Sometimes different people in our community have different needs and what helps one group may cause problems for others. There has to be some give and take, but the burden should not be unfairly shared out. No one group should bear too much of the collective load. We will get groups working together, understanding, recognising and owning the problems - and the solutions. Councillors should have the courage to listen to residents, take the difficult decisions they have to, but then be honest about how they voted and why.

Money is short, difficult choices have to be made. We know you understand that, because our consultations are coming back saying so - saying 'please don't spend money on that, it's not really needed'. Ultimately we have to work with you to decide what is useful for the Council to do, paid for by all of us.

Who can you rely on to make a fresh start in a way that protects the services you need, but scraps the things you don't need? In these uncertain times, Liberal Democrats offer the clearest vision.

The current position in South Gloucestershire

Since 2007, the Conservatives have been in charge of South Gloucestershire Council as a minority administration. They have all the places in the ruling Cabinet that makes virtually all the decisions. As the main opposition party, Liberal Democrats can campaign and argue for what we believe is right and press the administration to think again, but ultimately the decisions are theirs.

The Liberal Democrats have been fighting to uphold our values in opposition. For example:

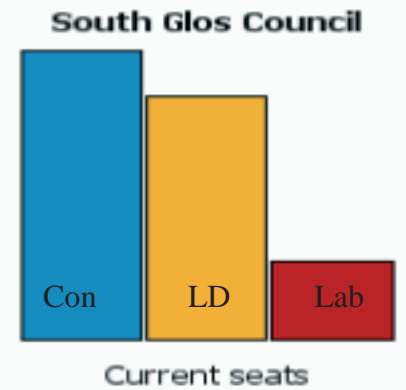
We proposed that all transactions over £500 should be published on the internet, to make the Council more open.

We won campaigns to save important bus routes like the X27 and the 381 and create new services like the round Yate bus

We fought for plastic bottle and food waste recycling, even while the other parties were voting against it.

We worked with the Deaf Association and found them a new home when the Tories let them down

We pushed the ruling party into spending money on the things you were complaining about like repairing roads and clearing drains to stop local flooding



Unfortunately, in opposition there are limits to what we can do. For example, we asked the administration to think again on a Park and Ride for Yate, but the answer was still no. We have pushed them to sort out the current chaotic and costly waste and recycling collection service. They have forgotten that the aim should be reduce, reuse, and then recycle, in that order – and have simply focussed on meeting targets to get a tick in the box on recycling.

When we ran South Gloucestershire – and when no party had complete control - things were better. Residents had a real say in things. Now, the local Conservatives are simply doing what they want, irrespective of whether you want it.

We have shown over many years that we will work constructively with other parties to get the best we can for residents and will continue to do that – but of course that does not mean accepting without question proposals from others – it means really challenging each other's ideas to get the best we can for our area.

If you give us power in 2011 we will work with you to help you create the sort of green, clean, fair and safe communities you have told us you want to live in, with a Council that listens to you and gives you real power over your own lives and communities.

No one should doubt the challenges ahead. Alongside the cuts central government is making to tackle the deficit, South Gloucestershire has historically had a poor deal when it comes to central government funding. **At present Bristol gets nearly twice as much from government per citizen, than they give our area.** That means we have to make the most of opportunities to ensure our area is wringing the last bit of value it can from your taxes and its resources. **We will campaign for a fairer deal for our area – but also work to make your taxes go as far as they can.**

Our question will be – what can we do to help you in what you want to do.

**If YOU want a Liberal Democrat Council here in May.....
..... you need to vote Liberal Democrat.**

Our Vision

- ☐ We will involve residents in decision making
- ☐ We will give residents and communities real power over local issues
- ☐ We will cut spending on report writing and strategies and invest in communities taking their own decisions
- ☐ We will give good value by spending taxpayers' money wisely
- ☐ We will be reliable and worthy of your trust

Our vision is of a **green, clean, safe South Gloucestershire with high quality, accessible, value for money, democratically accountable, public services**. Working with local people, we will look forward to tackle tomorrow's challenges and make the most of scarce resources rather than being stuck in the past, so that together we can create communities that:

take a lead on environmental action – to safeguard our local environment and contribute all we can to tackle climate change and other global environmental problems,
give every resident the greatest possible freedom and control over their own lives,
have a council, that welcomes public participation, listens to residents and is trusted by them,
are empowered by residents, councils and other local organisations working together.

This vision for South Gloucestershire is a local version of what we want to achieve for Britain as a whole. We want a society in which you can take power, where your choices count. It is about you, your family, your community deciding what you want your council to do, and what you want to be left to get on with without our meddling – residents as partners not clients. Democracy is what we do, not what is done to us.

Remember when we helped each other out? When we could solve problems ourselves without shed loads of bureaucracy? We don't want the bad bits of the old days, but we can give communities back the freedom to sort things out themselves, and use the state as the last resort. This is about trusting people to sort things out, not trying to get us to do things on the cheap. The Tories see handing powers to the community as a way of doing it on the cheap, we see it as doing it a better way – it won't necessarily be cheaper, but it will be better.

Until last May we had, for 13 years, been governed by the most controlling government in memory. Many of us thought that the previous Tory government had been bad enough, but the Blair/Brown government were far worse. Things became either compulsory or banned, and their control over Local Councils was a part of this. Councils were forced to spend valuable resources writing useless strategies and reports rather than doing things on the ground; obliged to do things nobody actually wanted doing, or even banned from doing what local people really wanted done. Crazy!

Labour cling on to state control. The party is stuffed full of the people who got us into this mess. They put bureaucracy and form filling above people. They let the bankers off the hook and did nothing to help low income families cope with the crisis.

The **Tories** are nervous about giving away their power to others, on the one hand claiming to want to decentralise while on the other trying to tell local authorities, schools and others what they should do. They risk cutting so much that we lose things we really need. Remember the local Conservative Councillor who announced on Twitter - that if people were not protesting, then they had not cut enough. The Liberal Democrats are all that stands between you, and that sort of Conservatism.

Only the **Liberal Democrats** will put you in the driving seat and work with you .

Campaigning locally and nationally

Representing the community also involves taking the case for change to central government and to the agencies and multinationals that have such a major influence on our lives.

In particular, as Liberal Democrat Councillors we will campaign to:

- scrap the unfair Council Tax
- increase the number of police on our streets
- cut class sizes in schools
- provide better medical and dentistry services
- end political interference in the NHS



To find out more about what the Liberal Democrats stand for - and how our approach is rooted in our belief in the importance of each and every individual, please go to **www.libdems.org.uk** or our local website:

Working in Coalition

In May 2010 the electorate gave no one party control. The Liberal Democrats agreed to take a part in government to give the country stability at a time of economic crisis. The new Labour Leader has criticised the Liberal Democrats for doing this, but what other choice was there? The electorate had not elected any one party to form a majority government. The alternatives were to allow Labour to struggle on, making even more mess or let a minority Conservative government loose to do what it wanted.

The coalition represents a new form of politics – where people work together to face up to difficult decisions, even though they do not necessarily agree and would do things very differently if they were in complete control. In coalition no party gets everything it wants. Decisions have to be discussed. Consensus politics - at last !

In a coalition, no party gets everything it wants, but Liberal Democrats in Government have been able to implement some key changes focussed on the needs of low and middle income people and families. We have directly obtained, for example:

- A commitment to increase the income tax threshold to £10,000;
- Introduced a crackdown on tax avoidance and evasion;
- Reintroduced the link between pensions and earnings (something the Tories scrapped in the 1980s);
- Increasing the rate of Capital Gains Tax to 28% for higher rate taxpayers while keeping it at 18% for basic rate taxpayers. This will raise an extra £1bn and end the disgraceful situation of bankers paying a lower rate of tax than their cleaners;
- No like for like replacement of Trident this Parliament;
- Scrapped the costly ID card scheme;
- Introduced a £2.5bn pupil premium which will bring an extra £430 per pupil for every low income pupil to schools. ;
- £800m for short break provision for children with disabilities and their families;
- £400m for carers breaks – supporting carers and people with disabilities;
- Set up a UK wide Green Investment Bank to invest in green infrastructure;
- £830m to put a digital hub in every community;
- Investing more in dementia research;
- £70m new cash to help the NHS support people going home from hospital.

SIX TO FIX

There's a huge amount that needs doing, but these are six key things we will do our best to fix. **Give us the votes and together we'll do the job!**

1 GREEN

Sort out the current recycling shambles and collect Tetra Paks. too

Cut carbon emissions by cutting street lighting electricity use, cutting congestion e.g. using part time lights where they will help traffic developing micro generation schemes, targeting high energy using firms, using the Green Deal to cut heat loss from homes and install renewable energy systems and assisting communities who want to develop their own energy plans.

Protect our green lungs by protecting the green belt and our open spaces.

Make our transport system greener - ensuring we have real alternatives to driving, campaigning for better local train services, cheaper buses that go where passengers want, flexible taxibus schemes, providing park and ride sites where people want them and ensuring new development puts people first not cars.

2 CLEAN

Wage war on litter, installing more bins and sweeping up more effectively

Prevent vandalism— making places feel owned, so vandals keep away

Work together to look after our streets, by supporting residents who agree to take responsibility for their own streets

3 FAIR

Campaign for fairer taxes, to axe the Council Tax and switch to Green Taxes

Provide Value For Money by rooting out waste and working smarter e.g. sorting out the current waste collection service

Protect vulnerable people and communities, making sure that all parts of South Gloucestershire have fair access to funding and services, that rural services are preserved, that health facilities are kept - and improved - and that vulnerable members of our community do not take an unfair share of the cuts coming nationally

Give hope to young people, raising aspirations and helping them to achieve them.

4 SECURE

Cut crime, by tackling drug and alcohol abuse, getting police working with local young people and maximising the use of community service to help achieve a cleaner, greener environment

Promote new jobs, by working with local business to help new firms start up and help current businesses to generate new employment opportunities

Provide stability in our community during these uncertain times, by keeping the jobs, homes, healthcare and support services we need but scrapping the state control we don't need

Help local people stay in the area, by ensuring there are affordable homes for local people, but not allowing massive new speculative housing schemes.

5 OPEN & APPROACHABLE

- **Listen to you**, not only asking your views but acting on what you say
- **Be open**, by making sure you get access to councillors, officers and information whenever you want it - and get a real chance to take part in decisions
- **Give you the services you want** not what the government tells you you should want, for example by working with individual disabled or older people to find solutions that help them retain the independence they want, where they want it
- **Encourage young people to get involved in taking decisions**, about their services and their community

6 LOCAL : GIVING YOU POWER

- **Transfer power to Parish Councils and community groups**, where they want this power, making sure that the groups are accountable to YOU.
- **Get bureaucracy off your backs**
Create Local Action Groups, holding all services in your areas to account
- **Give you a say in what interests you**