

Finance, Assets, Major Projects, and Strategic Partnerships

The previous Tory administration left the Council at risk of bankruptcy, but thanks to the prudent management of the Liberal Democrat team, we are now in a position to **invest in the long-term facilities and environmental solutions** the Borough needs. **Our ambitious plan includes much-needed new leisure centres and an innovative sustainable energy solution**, and we also commit to continue working in ways which support the long-term financial and social health of the whole Borough.

The Liberal Democrat team will:

1. Build two new leisure centres at Kingfisher and Cocks Crescent, and provide a new pool in Chessington.
2. Drive forward a District Heat Network in collaboration with Thames Water at the Hogsmill sewage site, using the excess heat of the plant to provide heating.
3. Support the community and voluntary sector, building on the strong relationships we developed during Covid.
4. Work in partnership with our faith communities across our borough.
5. Be responsible with Kingston's finances and strike the right balance between much needed investment and the transformation of services to make them more efficient.
6. Take a holistic approach to budgeting, where all departments work together, and all savings and growth will be looked at in a wider context.
7. Take a transformational approach towards budgeting to look at long term overall improvement and sustainability of our finances.
8. Continue to lobby the government for a fairer funding settlement for Kingston and for retaining a greater share of business rates.
9. Continue our commitment to the Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education, which helps us address the overspend in the Dedicated Schools Grant.
10. Make the best use of our assets, making sure they are properly maintained and used in the most effective way for our communities and the council.
11. Build further on our strong record of extending the London Living Wage across all our suppliers and contractors and promoting London Living Wage across our partners and businesses in Kingston as well.
12. Build on our strong record of ethical and responsible commissioning and resourcing in all work commissioned by the council.
13. Ensure that all our contracts have strong contract management in place and that they provide good services and value for money.
14. Work actively and collaboratively with the business community to support the economic recovery from the pandemic, whilst also driving forward green recovery schemes.

Adult and Children's Social Care and Education

Social care is the largest single area of spend for our council, protecting the vulnerable in our society, and **we are delivering the highest possible standards** to Kingston residents with our performance in the **top 3% of councils in the country and a children's service rates as Outstanding**. But we are committed to doing even more to support our young people, and to providing the schools which will educate future generations.

The Liberal Democrat team will:

1. Make sure that all families get enough support during the first 1001 days with early interventions if needed, giving every child the best possible chance for their life.
2. Ensure that “No child goes hungry”: we will tackle food insecurity, and provide hot meals for children in need during half terms if the government fails to provide this.
3. Provide new school places and improved school facilities including:
 - a new secondary school at the Kingsmeadow site in Norbiton
 - a new primary school at King Charles Centre in Surbiton
 - rebuilding and expanding Burlington Junior School
 - a Special autism School at Moor Lane in Chessington
4. Expand our youth services, offering more for young people in our borough through additional Youth buses and Youth workers.
5. Establish a mental health hub where children and young people can access mental health support and we will work with schools to increase preventative mental health care.
6. Establish a Forest School for children with special educational needs, where children and young people learn in an open, softly structured environment which meets their needs.
7. Establish a specialist campus for SEND provision for children over 16 to ensure they don't have to leave the borough for further education.
8. Increase the availability of accommodation for care leavers as they continue their journey to independent adulthood.
9. Increase in-borough temporary accommodation for families, so children do not have to travel long distances to their schools.
10. Increase respite care capacity and day care centre places.
11. Look into providing housing for families with disabled family members and for elderly residents; adapting to changing needs (for example at Murray House).
12. Work on a whole council approach to tackling obesity in our borough.
13. Promote and support person-centred care to maximise the independence of our residents.
14. Work with South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust to actively look to partner more with local communities.
15. Provide better support for Carers.

Equalities

As Liberal Democrats, **equality sits at the heart of our values**: we reject all prejudice and discrimination based upon race, colour, religion, age, disability, sex or sexual orientation and oppose all forms of entrenched privilege and inequality. In office, we work to **ensure that every individual is treated with dignity, respect and compassion**, by investing in services and initiatives which **support the vulnerable and those who experience inequality**, and in the way in which we engage with our communities.

The Liberal Democrat team will:

1. Develop and implement a 4-year strategy on diversity and inclusion in Kingston.
2. Tackle digital exclusion in our communities.
3. Ensure that the diverse communities in our borough have a voice in policy decisions of the council.
4. Continue to drive forward White Ribbon accreditation of the Borough and deliver on the action plan to tackle violence and abuse of woman and girls in our Borough.
5. Support the women's domestic abuse hub.
6. Encourage and support diverse cultural offers and festivals by the various communities in our borough.

7. Establish an Equalities Forum.
8. Improve the EQIA (Equality Impact Assessment), including co-design with our communities.
9. Hold an annual Disabilities Awareness Event, arranged together with disabled people to empower them.
10. Ensure that blue badge parking spaces are not reduced and give access to all parts of the town centre.
11. Ensure that Shopmobility comes into the heart of the town and is available to those travelling by public transport and by private car.
12. Introduce language that is more inclusive of diverse sexualities and gender identities through the Council's publications and communications.
13. Fly the Pride Flag from the Guildhall for LGBT History Month in February and Pride in June.
14. Support Black History Month.
15. Reflect LGBT histories, stories, and experiences through our offers on heritage and culture and through our communications.
16. Work with our partners to ensure we have inclusive day and residential facilities and services for older LGBT+ residents.
17. Look into introducing gender-neutral toilet facilities in all council buildings.
18. Continue to have Equality champions in the Council, an initiative started by the Liberal Democrats.
19. Support efforts to increase voter registration and participation.

Neighbourhoods and Planning Policy

As Liberal Democrats, **we believe that people should be involved in running their communities** and that decisions should be made locally. We celebrate the richness and diversity of the communities in Kingston, and we will protect our natural and built environment. We will continue to **invest in strengthening every part of our Borough**, while fighting against the Tory government for the right of local voices to be heard in planning.

The Liberal Democrat team will:

1. Protect the Green Belt, Metropolitan Open Land and our parks and green spaces from Tory sell-off and development aspirations (e.g. the Chessington Golf Course).
2. Fight the Tories' White Paper which will double the number of homes Kingston needs to build every year (to 2,000) and would take away the voice of local residents on planning decisions.
3. Withhold support for any planning applications without sustainable standards.
4. Create a design panel to review major projects to enshrine quality design.
5. Develop a Blue and Green infrastructure SPD (Supplementary Planning Document) to set out an approach to protecting our rivers and green spaces.
6. Strengthen the role of Neighbourhoods and increase the power of Neighbourhoods to distribute funds through participatory methods.
7. Support Farmers Markets across every neighbourhood.
8. Continue to make improvements in each Neighbourhood:
 - Surbiton: continue to support the farmers market, lobby and work on step free access to Surbiton Station and support the Arts trail project from the River to Surbiton High Street
 - South of the Borough: look into linking up the cycle lanes to Chessington, lobby for better transport links into Epsom, reinvigorate the shopping parades and provide a swimming pool in Chessington
 - Malden and Coombes: provide a new leisure centre at Cocks Crescent, reinvigorate the high street, and improve community facilities in Manor Park

- Kingston Town: improve Canbury Gardens by moving the cycle path away from the riverside, continue to improve the riverside in the town centre, regulate changes on riverbank to remove illegal mooring, improve green spaces in town centre such as the Memorial Gardens, and develop a Kingston Town Area Plan together with residents

Culture, Business and Enterprise

Kingston has a rich heritage, and is at the same time a thriving and diverse environment for work, study or leisure. We will **celebrate our past**, marking the important role of Kingston in our nation's history. We will continue to **preserve the diversity and richness of our arts and culture today**, creating innovative cultural spaces and supporting our theatre. And we will continue to **build the future**, creating more jobs, and more opportunities for academic and professional development.

The Liberal Democrat team will:

1. Celebrate the 1100th anniversary of the coronation of King Athelstan in Kingston, the first king of all of England.
2. Protect our libraries and our library offer.
3. Create community hubs where residents can access council services, enjoy community and cultural events, attend adult education courses, go to live performances and exhibitions.
4. Continue to support start-up businesses and cultural hubs, like the Undercroft Project.
5. Work with our partners including Kingston University, Kingston College, the Chamber of Commerce, Kingston First and other major employers to improve opportunities for job creation in our borough.
6. Tackle the digital divide by providing equipment connectivity and training to those in danger of being left behind.
7. Continue to support the Rose Theatre as a cultural hub in Kingston.
8. Look into creating a Culture Quarter for Kingston Town centre.
9. Introduce more soft landscaping and investigate more pedestrianised streets to improve our town centres, whilst ensuring these areas will be fully inclusive.
10. Provide flexibility and support for commercial, art and cultural events.
11. Ensure adult education creates re-employment opportunities, helps learners start their own businesses and helps residents through life's transitions as a key priority, as we recover from the impacts of Covid-19.
12. Promote and support more international cultural exchange programmes, helping young people to gain skills.
13. Support our High Streets to thrive economically (by working with partners to develop sustainable plans for Kingston Town Centre, New Malden, Surbiton, Tolworth and Chessington).

Housing

Housing is an issue of equality: across London and the South East, there aren't enough homes which are affordable, and which give an acceptable quality of life at an acceptable environmental impact. In Kingston, **we are facing up to these challenges** and are taking action. **We are building** more homes so that our children will have somewhere to live, including **the first council homes in a generation**. Above all, we listen to our residents: we are building and renovating properties to make them more energy efficient, with better design and service from the council to improve quality of life.

The Liberal Democrat team will:

1. Keep our promise to regenerate the Cambridge Road Estate.
2. Build more council homes on small sites to increase the existing provision.
3. Support schemes which help key workers and first-time buyers to get a foot on the housing ladder, as well as schemes for those on lower incomes.
4. Provide debt support for tenants.
5. Improve the repair reporting system for tenants, with tracking of reports and regular updates
6. Increase the availability of council housing for disabled people.
7. Ensure better access for elderly residents in large accommodation (disabled friendly and safe).
8. Introduce eco-friendly management of the green spaces on our estates and involve tenants and leaseholders.
9. Improve conditions in sheltered housing and end shared bathrooms across our estate.
10. Ensure that no one is housed in our properties without the basics for life such as a cooker and table.
11. Enable fibre broadband in our council housing estates.
12. Promote the establishing of resident groups on all estates.
13. Incorporate residents' input into HRA spending decisions.
14. Look into introducing a tenant's manifesto, which would include benefits for tenants.
15. Look into introducing an Irwell Valley homes style gold service (i.e. rewarding people for doing the right thing).
16. Look into introducing a volunteer led befriending scheme for homeless people.
17. Look into bringing housing service and housing rent services under one directorate, together with housing enforcement.

Comms, Engagement and Internal

As Liberal Democrats, **we believe that politics exists to serve people**, and that we achieve better outcomes when our communities participate. Too often, services are hard to access or services are designed without involving those who receive them. In our first 4 years, we have started the journey to a more inclusive approach, but we want to do more to **ensure that the council is working with our residents** rather than just let them take what is given to them.

The Liberal Democrat team will:

1. Create more opportunities to self-report and request a service via the Council website and raise awareness of the ability to do so.
2. Develop measures to evaluate and to improve the experience of being in contact with the Council, not only the time you wait but also the information given.
3. Look into establishing a citizens' panel with a rolling and representative membership to look at big issues and come up with recommendations that are then considered by Council or Council Committees.
4. Extend the use of smart technology to better predict needs and maximise independence of residents to enable more targeted use of the Council's resources.
5. Increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities available through the Council.
6. Track and showcase resident engagement and its impact, how we are listening and acting on feedback from communities.
7. Run a bi-annual residents' survey and produce a council-wide action plan on the back of it.

8. Create an action plan to ensure our workforce is broadly representative of the population of Kingston.
9. Focus on social value through our larger digital contracts, supporting our communities through digital infrastructure.
10. Build on our record of running regular and comprehensive early engagement events on key priorities.
11. Maintain and enhance links to our Twin towns.
12. Hold cross-party working groups in public, on issues of key importance, so evidence from stakeholders and experts can be considered.
13. Create a guide for residents on how to turn their ideas on improving their community into practice.
14. Launch an innovation fund for community groups and voluntary sector organisations, so that they can pilot projects that will help support and promote volunteering (i.e. to tackle poverty or social isolation and to improve mental health).
15. Collaborate with other post-16 education providers locally to create 'learner pathways' so that our learners can map everything that is available to them to help meet their aspirations.
16. Explore how the effectiveness of learning in our Adult Education service can be maximised within the wider organisation of the Council, to boost the wellbeing and mental health of its learners, helping to take a holistic and person-centred approach.

Environment, Transport, Waste and Recycling

Liberal Democrats are committed to **taking the lead on addressing the Climate Emergency**– it is our moral responsibility. We do this both through **our actions as a Council**, and by **working with our community to influence and change behaviours**. Key among these are reducing the use of fossil fuels through providing more sustainable energy, increasing the use of electric vehicles and increasing re-use and recycling. We are also working to protect and increase the biodiversity of our Borough, and to improve our green spaces for our enjoyment and leisure.

Our ambition is to

- Be carbon neutral as a Council by 2030
- Be carbon neutral as a Borough by 2038

The Liberal Democrat team will:

1. Take action to achieve carbon neutrality as a Council by 2030 by e.g. decarbonising our housing estate and our schools.
2. Adopt a carbon budget to embed and drive forward our commitment to be carbon neutral as a Borough by 2038.
3. Drive forward a District Heat Network (see Finance, Assets, Major Projects, and Strategic Partnerships section above).
4. Continue to plant 500 new trees per year.
5. Install 200 new on street charging points and apply for more fast charging points at key locations across the borough.
6. Work with the private sector and community groups to install solar panels on council owned buildings.
7. Promote and take part in schemes to help retrofitting homes.
8. Ensure that all our streetlights are converted to LED lights.

9. Convert all our refuse collection lorries to electric vehicles.
10. Continue to improve our parks and green spaces.
11. Continue to work with community and "Friends Of" groups to improve our parks and green spaces and enhance biodiversity.
12. Enhance community empowerment in our green spaces and parks through initiatives like mini-allotments, wild ways, and an adopt a tree scheme.
13. Continue our commitment to enhancing biodiversity in our borough, through measures like expanding the wild ways, becoming a bee-friendly borough, and extending biodiversity initiatives to our housing land.
14. Protect the biodiversity of our rivers including our stretch Arcadian Thames and the ecological rare Hogsmill Chalk Stream.
15. Work with other local authorities and the Environment Agency to conserve and promote the river Thames.
16. Establish an effective mechanism to manage Kingston's stretch of the river Thames to address general river management, biodiversity and heritage conservation, mooring fees and rules, byelaws and trading.
17. Continue to lobby TfL for electric buses to reduce pollution, for all bus stops to be sheltered, and to improve design so that it is not necessary to cross a cycle lane to access a bus.
18. Reduce speed limits to 20mph across the borough on all the roads the council is responsible for, in consultation with residents (TfL roads are excluded, e.g. A243).
19. Continue our school streets programme and introduce more school streets across the borough
20. Run campaigns to reduce the use of polluting wood burners.
21. Work with our partners and businesses to improve green opportunities for job creation, the green economy, and decarbonisation.
22. Look into providing tools for residents to take individual action on reducing their carbon footprint and to monitor progress.
23. Work towards improving our recycling rates.
24. Continue our efforts to tackle fly-tipping and littering via our fly-tipping task force.
25. Look into introducing separate on-the-go recycling bins in our town centres.
26. Promote repair and reuse facilities on our high streets.
27. Continue to improve the infrastructure for sustainable travel across the borough, whilst ensuring that those who need the use of vehicles for mobility are not excluded.
28. Look into providing cycle parking at train stations, where it is needed.
29. Continue to work with partners to do all in our power to protect and improve the train links within our borough and to places outside of the borough.
30. Look into introducing a bike hiring scheme.
31. Look into a pilot scheme for kerbside recycling of big items and a drop-off scheme for households without a car.
32. Look into a non-doorstep recycling pilot.