



A New Start For Reading

Our Aims for the Council

Reading has suffered from a lack of vision and leadership for too long. To tackle this, we have 6 aims:

- **Building a stronger economy**
- **Making communities safer**
- **Building sustainable communities & services**
- **Helping children and young people**
- **Health and care for all**
- **Improving local transport**





The people of Reading are facing unprecedented uncertainty about the way they lead their lives. They are concerned about their jobs, about heating their homes and about the rising cost of food and transport. They are worried about the world they will leave to their children.

The Liberal Democrat proposals for a better Reading recognise that economic, social and environmental issues cannot be separated from each other. Indeed, social and environmental development can provide exactly the bottom-up building blocks for economic development that Reading needs.

Our aim is for Reading to respond to these challenges and be a high-performing Borough in all areas, with vibrant and supportive local communities. A Borough where individuals, companies and communities can be freed from obstacles that stop them from reaching their aspirations and realising their full potential.

We want to make a distinctive shift in power away from the centre, encouraging de-centralised decision-making, partnership working and empowerment of communities and individuals. Others want to do things to you, or do things for you: Liberal Democrats want to do things with you.

Councillor Meri O'Connell

Liberal Democrat Leader on Reading Borough Council



Building a stronger economy

Our future lies in the creation and attraction of clean, environmentally-friendly industries to Reading to drive up local employment. Making Reading's local economy more self-reliant will ensure that profits are retained within Reading, driving economic growth.

We recognise that the public sector alone cannot address the economic problems facing Reading. However, by working with others, we can maximise local growth by providing the infrastructure and environment for them to prosper.



Ensure Reading benefits from the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) and Green Park by making targeted investments to generate revenue

Introduce the Reading Red Tape challenge – partner with local businesses to stimulate ideas for local growth

Save money by selling off surplus Council buildings

Improve transparency of Council finances especially money from developers ('Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy money')

Review free Trade Union use of Council facilities and consider providing space to deserving community groups



Making communities safer

People have a right to live in our communities without worrying about their personal safety or that of their families or properties.

Regarding crime, many concerns centre around 'low-level nuisance', with anti-social behaviour that is often linked to alcohol and drugs.

That is why the Liberal Democrat approach to tackling crime focuses on specific areas where the Borough Council can, together with our partners, make a real difference to how people are affected by crime.



Empower resident-led Safer Reading Groups and rebuild trust between local communities and the Police

Revitalise Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) and work with the Police to be more responsive to our priorities

Hold the Tory Police and Crime Commissioner to account for:

- drug enforcement
- providing an effective 101 non emergency number
- stopping human trafficking
- community policing funding

Improve youth services, their funding and provision

Tackle crime hotspots e.g. with infrastructure improvements like gates and lighting



Building sustainable communities

A sustainable community not only requires a stable economic base but an infrastructure of housing, transport and services that enable individuals to lead active, fulfilling and productive lives.

We need to tackle issues such as pollution and recycling, improved access to services, decent affordable housing and a high quality environment in our local areas.

A key area that we want to address is the lack of a balanced housing market in Reading. This creates economic difficulties and forces people to move away from their communities and support networks.



Hold developers to account to build the required level of affordable housing

Ensure 30% of homes in new developments are affordable

Bring empty homes back into use

Protect existing parks and green spaces, and management of wildlife

Increase kerbside recycling from households to include all glass, plastics and food waste

Prioritise monitoring and reducing local air pollution

Tackle littering, fly tipping and dog mess with stronger enforcement



Building sustainable services

National funding reductions mean that we have to rethink the balance between what the state provides and how individuals and communities must work to support each other.

We believe that all tiers of government and the private and voluntary sectors must work together with the people of Reading to co-ordinate service delivery.

Covid-19 has cruelly demonstrated that the capacity and resilience of our communities varies: we must help communities to develop and strengthen their capacity to help.



Provide more customer call centre service staff - better skills, faster responses

Maintain support for Berkshire Credit Union, Citizens Advice Reading and Welfare Rights Unit

Keep all libraries open with no significant reduction in levels of services, staff and opening times

Expand free library services to include improved facilities and times for study (e.g. after work)

Protect existing Council-run Arts and Sports venues including Reading Museum, South Street, Palmer Park and others

Ensure that Reading citizens get value for money from the proposed new and expanded venues at Palmer Park, Rivermead and elsewhere

Offer our Council's skills and expertise to other local authorities or private business to increase the Council's income.

Be transparent about where Council income comes from



Helping children and young people

Young people are the future of Reading. This is why we will support and encourage young people to work within their local communities.

We want to improve academic achievement by ensuring that the role that schools can take in the wider community is protected and enhanced.

Following the damning reports from OFSTED on the performance of Reading's Children's Services, we will continue to support and scrutinise the Council's newly formed company that has charge of Reading's Children's Services. Its work is vital to improve the quality of care that we provide for our most at risk children.



Value people who work with young people by improving their working conditions

Encourage Reading employers to support new, meaningful apprenticeships

Provide careers advice for young people emphasising the value of apprenticeship training alongside academic routes

Keep youth centres open

Promote services to diverse communities, ensuring access to early years support

Co-ordinate local voluntary groups to provide consistent support for young families with pre-school children

Fight inequality by taking action to improve BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) young person attainment and reduce exclusions of these groups

Invest in health education, using Public Health money

Increase co-ordination between sport education, physical exercise and local leisure centres

Support the excellent work of Reading's Youth Offending Team in diverting young people away from crime and anti-social behaviour

Scrutinise and support the work of the Council owned company that has charge of Reading's Children's Services to ensure the best provision for our vulnerable young people

Ensure there is a long-term plan for enough school places for Reading's children



Health and care for all

People expect to live better and longer lives. They expect to be active for longer, have more control over their own care and live in their own homes. We will break down the barriers to independent living that still exist, enabling people to make real choices about how they live their lives.

We will respect our most vulnerable residents by ensuring that Council care services staff are paid a genuine Living Wage, inclusive of their travel time.

The NHS is moving towards earlier intervention and preventative work. The Council should increase its role in encouraging and enabling people to lead healthier lives, irrespective of where they live.



Address inequalities in treatments across Reading by using Public Health money to support mental health initiatives, ensuring equality between physical and mental health, as committed to in our national Liberal Democrat manifesto

Tailor services to individual needs of vulnerable adults to support their independence

Treat the elderly with respect, provide the highest standards of care and ensure visiting times meet their needs

Improve alcohol/drugs rehabilitation support

Improve options for care leavers to learn life skills

Improve access for young people experiencing mental health issues to specialist support

Improve access to sexual health provision and education

Expand child and teenage play provisions in local areas to combat obesity and encourage positive free time activities

Develop plans for exercise for all, not just young people

Set targets to ensure air quality meets required standards - publish air quality figures and hold those responsible to account

Pay carers employed by organisations contracted to the Council a genuine Living Wage



Improving local transport

We want to take measures to ensure that all our road users feel safe, including motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. We want to encourage healthy transport where possible, making it easy for people to walk and cycle.

We fully support the use of renewable and low-carbon energy for transportation.

Reading Buses is one of the best bus companies in the country and we'd like to keep it that way. We will also pressure rail providers to improve commuter services from Reading station.



Introduce a Low Emissions Zone in the town centre

Increase the number of car charging points, including in commercial developments

Increase the number of trees planted to a more ambitious level than the Council's climate strategy

Develop, in conjunction with cyclists, parents and schools, a comprehensive network of cycle routes with a long-term plan covering the next 10-15 years

Put pressure on Police to respond to local speeding concerns

Expand the provision of 20mph zones to all residential roads

Tackle inconsiderate parking with better enforcement

Improve the state of Reading's footpaths and pavements, which are fast turning into a hazard for pedestrians, especially wheelchair users, the visually impaired, and parents with young children and pushchairs



Vote Liberal Democrat on the 5th of May, and you'll get a local champion who will get things done in your community. You'll get a cleaner, greener neighbourhood where recovery comes first and locals are listened to.



Liberal Democrats are brilliant community volunteers and have been working hard all year round, despite the difficult circumstances. The question facing every voter at these local elections is this: do you want to keep hold of this precious rediscovery of community?

Liberal Democrats do. Because Liberal Democrats have always been about community. There are over two and a half thousand Liberal Democrat councillors already serving their communities. People who go the extra mile – to get things done, for their communities.

So, on May 5th, people have a fantastic opportunity to back their community, by backing people who believe in their community, people who will act for and with their community – their Liberal Democrat candidate.

Sir Ed Davey MP, Leader of the Liberal Democrats