

BOURNEMOUTH DESERVES BETTER



Bournemouth Liberal Democrats

MANIFESTO

***For Bournemouth Borough Council
2003-2007***

March 2003

‘The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.’

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT VISION FOR BOURNEMOUTH

Bournemouth Council should be judged by four tests:

1. Does it provide value for council taxpayers' money?
2. Does it provide good services?
3. Does it listen to public opinion?
4. Does it have a clear vision for our Town?

THE TORIES TESTED

Tory run Bournemouth Council fails four tests:

1. A Council Tax rise of almost 50% over the last four years.
2. Meanwhile services have declined with weeds and litter on our streets and public loos shut. Why is Bournemouth so wasteful?
3. The Tories have remained out of touch on many issues. Worst of all it ignored the results of its own consultation on the Winter Gardens
4. With no clear vision or direction the Tory Council has not tackled the Town's key problems

When the Conservatives took control of the all-powerful Cabinet they said it would be clear who was responsible.

'We think local government is best served if the public know that there's a party in power and other parties in opposition – so they can say "that crowd have done a reasonable job, we'll vote for them" or "they've been totally useless, we'll vote for someone else".'

Cllr Stephen MacLoughlin
Leader of the Conservative Group
March 2002

BOURNEMOUTH DESERVES BETTER

The Liberal Democrats will put basic services first, improve the way the council works, promote equality of opportunity, and entrust local decision making to local communities wherever possible.

LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PRIORITIES

To be an effective Council means taking tough decisions about priorities. A Liberal Democrat Council will focus on taking action. These will be our top eight priorities:

1. Value for money

Constantly search for efficiency savings every year and explain better how your money is spent

2. Services

To put the basics first. We will ensure that less money is spent on red tape and more on frontline services, with a maximum of 15% spent on administration. This works in Education. We will look to apply this winning formula elsewhere to provide services for a 24 hour workforce

3. Listening

Neighbourhood Councils will be set up and given real support by the Council. They will be given a real say in decisions. To help bring Bournemouth Council into this new millennium, Council Meetings will be held in the evening so that more working folks can attend if they wish, though we recognise that there is a 24 hour work force. One-stop shops will help to make services available locally. Devolved budgets will be investigated

4. Environment

To extend the recycling service and to ensure a 'green audit' of all council and contractors work, to reduce energy consumption and promote sustainability

5. Crime

To focus on drug related crime and improve rehabilitation, to update CCTV, consult with Local Residents on spending for Neighbourhood Wardens, and to fight Labour Government cuts to the Dorset police budget

6. Transport

To make our roads safer, public transport better and parking restriction sensible, reduce congestion at school and during rush hours, and ways to provide cheaper or even free travel for older people and students

7. Getting the small things done

To establish a £100,000 fund for local improvements suggested by residents. Suggestions might be for benches, bins, removing graffiti, street signs or any other suggestions to make all of Bournemouth better

8. Review of the Town Centre developments

To look at the future of the Winter Gardens, the Pavilion and the BIC before the Council gets any further into debt and also to promote Bournemouth as a vibrant, forward looking coastal resort and university town which is a good place to live and a good place to do business.

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GUARANTEE

This manifesto is a programme for the next four years for Bournemouth Council and for all the residents of the town and the town's many partners. It is a four-year programme because on 1st May 2003 **you** will elect the fifty-four councillors to deliver this programme.

It is an ambitious programme. It will transform the quality of public service the Council delivers, the way it delivers it and the way the Council engages with the people of Bournemouth.

This programme includes pledges against which you will be able to measure our performance in key areas.

As Liberal Democrats we now want to offer you some guarantees about the style and leadership that the Liberal Democrats will bring to Bournemouth Council and the way it will be run, for each of the principal service areas.

We also want to offer some guarantees that on behalf of each individual Liberal Democrat councillor

WHAT KIND OF COUNCIL CAN YOU EXPECT?

Your Liberal Democrat Council will:

- ✓ Listen to you
- ✓ Communicate with you
- ✓ Ensure value for money
- ✓ Deliver quality, universal services
- ✓ Be open, accessible and accountable
- ✓ Employ and train our staff to be courteous, well informed, and helpful
- ✓ Take responsibility for our environment
- ✓ Encourage and promote communities within and across Bournemouth
- ✓ Work in partnership with local people, businesses and other agencies including the Health Service, the Police and the voluntary sector.

CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER BOURNEMOUTH?

Your Liberal Democrat councillors will:

- ✓ Attend Area Committees
- ✓ Hold advice surgeries in their area
- ✓ Answer your letters
- ✓ Return phone calls and e-mails promptly
- ✓ Publish their telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and contact details
- ✓ Attend local community meetings
- ✓ Act as your advocate to the Council even on matters about which they personally do not agree with you

WHY IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE

In May 1999 the Tories became the largest party on Bournemouth Council by just a few hundred votes and they took charge of the Council. The Liberal Democrats had run the Council for eight years before that. And with considerable success.

The years 1999-2003 have shown just how important it is to vote. These years have also shown the chasm between our approach to making Bournemouth better and the Conservative's way.

THE TORY RECORD

- In 1999 the Tories inherited a budget where the books balanced. The Liberal Democrats had achieved this through hard work and good management. In 2003 the District Auditor had to order the Tory Council to put the Council's finances in order
- In 1999 the Tories made an election promise to keep Council taxes low. Since then the total rise in Bournemouth council taxes has been almost 50%.
- But while taxes have gone up, services have gone down. When the Liberal Democrats were in charge, the town had a 'can do attitude.' Under the Tories it has become a 'can't do town.' Now the streets are not cleaned often enough
- The Conservatives were elected without a manifesto, and no vision of what they thought Bournemouth needed. As a result they have had no direction, and made few decisions
- Bournemouth was successful in attracting private investment for new amenities and new jobs. The Tories have not continued this successful policy. Instead they have reverted to discredited 'the Council Tax payer will pay' policies
- Under the Tories services have been cut and the cost of running the Council and its payroll has soared. The hard work and good management of the Liberal Democrats has been squandered
- Under the Conservatives the new way of running the Council, with a Cabinet, has made Bournemouth Council less democratic. This is the opposite of what the Government intended
- Liberal Democrats believe in asking people what they think. The Tories do not understand this. They have ridden roughshod over public opinion. Their refusal to listen to public opinion over the Winter Gardens says it all
- And what do the Conservatives have to say for themselves? 'It's not our fault. We can't afford it. It's the Government's fault.'

BOURNEMOUTH DESERVES BETTER

It's time for a change. The Council needs to get back in touch with the people who live and work here.

This Vision for Bournemouth sets out the Liberal Democrats plan for a better Bournemouth and a Council that *really cares*.

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT WAY: TO LISTEN

Across the land the Liberal Democrats run many town councils, and they have earned a reputation for what is known as 'community politics.' This means working in and with the local community. 'You can't please people all the time' is as true as ever. But we believe that by asking what people think and being open to the views of residents, we can promote more involvement. With the turn out at elections at 3 out of 10, or even less, public participation is not just desirable – it is vital.

The Tory Council in Bournemouth decided to consult with a select few, through 'business leaders' or 'focus groups.' Helpful, but it is not the same as real interaction with the people who pay the Council Tax bill.

The determination of the Tories to push through the demolition of the Winter Gardens despite the biggest display of public opinion in the history of Bournemouth made a mockery of democracy. Many people lost faith in the democratic process.

The Liberal Democrats will listen and;

- We will strengthen Area Forums and give them proper support from the Council so that local people really can be involved. We will examine the possibility of establishing Neighbourhood Councils in areas of Bournemouth where local residents want them
- We will rebuild the partnerships with voluntary groups who are doing essential social and community work by reinstating many of the grants that have been cut by the Tories
- We will delegate some local Council expenditure to local areas under the discretion of local Councillors working with active Area Forums or area committees. Each ward will have a member of Council staff officer to act as an advocate for it
- We will try to establish one-stop shops that provide services locally and become the focus of community dialogue
- We will revamp the Council newspaper so that it gives real information and not just 'Council propaganda.' And we will make sure that it is distributed across all of Bournemouth
- We will make voting more user friendly and encourage people to get involved in decision making
- We will encourage young people to get involved by promoting more 'civics' in our schools and through the Youth Council

Liberal Democrats believe that;

'the Council should be the servant of the people – not the other way round.'

YOUR COUNCIL TAX

In 1999 the Tories inherited a healthy financial situation. A budget where the books balanced plus an immediate windfall of £2 million from the Pension Fund. Since then the Tories have allowed expenditure to grow and they now have to cut Council services to try and reduce their overspending. Yet they have put up Council taxes by nearly 50%.

The new Council needs to take a positive line on expenditure and a modern approach to the delivery of public services. Every aspect of bureaucracy needs to be examined and the priorities clearly defined.

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- Put in place a plan to balance expenditure with income. We know how to practice good housekeeping. Our record to 1999 shows that
- Make realistic and affordable plans for the future that are available to the ratepayers
- Consult with residents every year on the budget and try our best to explain clearly tax rises so that people can see where their money is going, and why
- Work to avoid duplication between Council departments and to ensure that the job is done right first time. We will ensure that preventative work is maintained as quick fixes cost more in the long run.
- Look to fill job vacancies in the Council from the existing staff so that we can maximise our 'service providers' but minimise 'administration'
- Improve financial reporting and accountability so that every Council department gives reports that can be compared against each other, and look to introduce a proper business culture that gives you value for your money
- Explain where the Council makes a profit or a loss on services that it has to provide, for example parking and planning
- Encourage private sector funding in expensive new projects such as the Winter Gardens and the refurbishment of the Pavilion rather than look to the Council Tax
- Delegate some local Council expenditure to local areas under the discretion of local Councillors working with active Area Forums
- Look carefully at whether getting some services from outside the Council is in the best interest of the people who pay the Council Tax, and make clear exactly where financial contributions that are received from developers as part of their planning permissions are spent

'Councillors always need to remember that is not the Council's money they are spending. It's the voters.'

BOURNEMOUTH'S ECONOMY

Bournemouth Liberal Democrats are proud of our town's history, but we do not dwell on the past. All of our policies look to the future. They aim to ensure the economic and social well being of the people of Bournemouth.

We will restore the reputation of Bournemouth as a 'place that wants to do business';

- By sustaining our environment
- By improving job prospects, education and training
- By helping people into meaningful employment, including working for themselves

We will work with our partners in the Bournemouth Partnership; other local Councils such as Christchurch, Poole and Dorset County Council, and Bournemouth University to ensure that more graduates find employment in the region. We want to see more local people in better-paid jobs so that they can stay in Bournemouth rather than having to move away to better themselves.

Tourism

Tourism is an integral part of Bournemouth and its economy, but so are newer businesses like Finance, Banking and Insurance, and the Education Sector. We want the benefits of tourism to Bournemouth to extend to more people, both residents and visitors;

- For those that work in the industry by the provision of better training and job prospects with decent pay
- For those that do not live in the centre of Bournemouth by improved services and entertainment venues

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- Encourage a hospitality industry confident of its future and provide a climate in which it can prosper
- Work in partnership with a revitalised Bournemouth Illuminations Association

Language Schools

Students from overseas at Language Schools, Bournemouth University, and Arts Institute are welcome, and valued, guests. Without them there would be fewer entertainment venues, fewer buses and taxis. And less choice. Bournemouth should be their first choice.

On average each overseas students contributes £70 every day to the economy of Bournemouth, representing a very major source of income for the town.

Conferences

An area of Bournemouth's economy that is inextricably linked to Tourism is the conference trade. Bournemouth is able to accommodate a large number of visitors and this, combined with the conference facilities, make it one of the key venues outside of London.

Conferences contribute some £85 million to the local economy. However, this has to be set against the subsidy that the main conference venue, the BIC receives from the Council.

A Liberal Democrat Council will review whether this subsidy benefits the residents of Bournemouth as a whole. If it does not, we will examine whether the subsidy should be reduced between 2003-7.

Boscombe

Boscombe has had a bad press. Not least from the Tories. The area has pockets of intense social deprivation. These areas are something that no one in Bournemouth is proud of. And they represent something that everyone in Bournemouth wants sorted out.

- We will continue to talk up the economy of Boscombe. And not to talk down to its residents. Much has been achieved. But much more remains to be done
- This will only be achieved by the Council working together with the residents of Boscombe

A key element in this will be making the eastern coast of Bournemouth, the Boscombe and Southbourne areas, a focus for modern family seaside holidays that are supported by improved visitor and transport facilities.

BOURNEMOUTH'S ENVIRONMENT

When the Liberal Democrats led Bournemouth Council between 1991 and 1999 we;

- Installed Recycling Centres throughout the Bournemouth; introduced the Blue Bag scheme for recycling paper, cans and textiles; instituted garden waste recycling at Millhams, and encouraged home composting and rainwater collection
- We carried out energy saving measures in Council owned buildings and Council housing
- We carried out a systematic refurbishment and improvement programme for public conveniences
- We produced an Environmental Charter for Bournemouth and a Corporate Environmental Strategy to coordinate green policies in all departments
- We introduced environmental awareness programmes in all our schools

A tale of Tory Failure...

Since 1999, under the Tories;

- Percentage recycling figures have deteriorated, recycling bins have remained full and overflowing, graffiti has soared, and residential streets have not been cleaned for months and months on end. And shrubs have grown in the gutters and pavements of Bournemouth. It is a disgrace.
- Financial management has been poor. Not enough money has been set aside for Bournemouth's growing population and rising costs. To avert a crisis, the emergency reallocation of money that should only be used for new projects is being used as a stopgap. But how can that money be replaced? What about the future?
- The programme of refurbishing public loos has been cut. Toilets serving some local Shopping Areas and visitor facilities were closed in winter when the budget ran out.
- Decisions on future waste disposal options have been deferred, making sensible planning impossible.

The Future

For the sake of our health, for our quality of life and for our children's future we shall work for sustainable, cost-effective solutions to local environmental issues

We accept the need for local action to combat global warming and tackle its effects

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- Encourage innovative options for the re-use of waste materials in the Council and with other local partners
- Buy locally recycled materials and products whenever appropriate
- Decide on, and plan for future waste disposal and a green waste collection system, realising that landfill tax is rising each year and landfill sites will soon close
- Encourage all our schools to get involved with practical green initiatives
- Work for clean air, clean water, clean streets and clean buildings
- Bring in noise management policies based on citizen's panel consultation
- Pursue new ways to reduce emissions by continuing to monitor energy use and good practice
- Reduce our use of energy and utilise renewable energy sources such as solar power where appropriate
- Undertake an environmental audit of the Council to learn how we can improve the environmental impact of the Council's business and reduce costs

PARKS AND BEACHES

Our Parks and Gardens and unrivalled beaches should be sustainable both environmentally and financially

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- Encourage more people, whether individually or as groups or families, to make use of our public open spaces for rest, leisure and recreation
- Provide a clean and safe, but monitored environment, where parents and guardians feel that children are safe to play and to explore
- Ensure that the possibility that our beaches and Hengistbury Head could be protected by submerged reefs is fully explored and debated
- Encourage accessibility, diversity, cleanliness, and environmental sustainability in the use of our beaches
- Support Bournemouth's tradition of excellence in civic parks and gardens
- Reduce the amount of peat that is used, with a view to not using it all
- Reduce watering as much as possible and in so far as is possible, use rain water 'captured' in Bournemouth where this it is not yet possible to reduce watering

TRANSPORT

Liberal Democrats recognise that a properly maintained and updated network of roads, pavements and cycle tracks is essential to the safety, welfare and economic prosperity of the community. We will seek to channel the available investment into appropriate developments at local level, encouraging the introduction of integrated and sustainable transport plans. Safety will be our first priority.

We will make serious and concerted efforts to deal with residents' major concerns about transport and traffic congestion. Whilst we recognise that the car is an integral part of our everyday lives, we believe in providing a public transport alternative for many journeys. Free-flowing roads, and reduced levels of air pollution, can only be achieved if the number of car journeys is reduced.

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- Integrated Transport - we will work with partners and other interested parties to develop innovative and forward-thinking transport schemes
- We will seek to help Yellow Buses and other companies run additional routes and times, and encourage them to provide 'real time' information at bus stops and interchanges.
- We will aim to bring in 20 m.p.h. speed limits outside our schools.
- We will support and liaise with the Rail authorities to develop better station facilities at Bournemouth and Pokesdown
- We will increase the number of pedestrian and cycle crossings.

Our Priorities

We will support successful and vibrant communities in all parts of the Bournemouth. We are committed to the provision of high quality transport within the town. We will ensure that the most suitable forms of transport are used to develop the town's economy.

- **Consultation**
We will consult people about the transport plans that affect them. Their views will always be taken into account. This will produce more integrated transport within Bournemouth
- **Schools**
We will ensure that as far as possible every child is able to walk or cycle to its local school in safety. We will provide a 'Walking Bus' (a group of children walking to school escorted by grown ups) wherever parents request one. We will aim to reduce speed limits around schools
- **Walking**
We will work to improve the maintenance of footpaths and improve conditions for pedestrians in district shopping streets. We will introduce pedestrian phases at existing signal junctions, where needed, and we will try to make existing Pelican crossings more responsive to pedestrian demand

- **Traffic impact**

Where possible we will try to reduce traffic noise by the use of quiet road surfacing on main roads. We will improve safety by working to reduce speed limits in residential areas and roads through public parks

- **Railway**

We will work towards the reopening of Boscombe Station. We will support the cross-conurbation tram/rail initiative, the Dorset Area Rapid Transit System or 'DARTS'

- **Road Safety and road quality**

We will target accident black spots for attention and prioritise area based work where requested by residents. We will take advantage of enhanced technology to improve the efficiency of reporting and remedying highway faults

- **Buses**

Bus travel needs to be made a more attractive choice rather than the option of last resort. We will initiate a full review of bus travel and try to ensure that buses are reliable, represent good value for money and that timetables reflect residents travel needs. For example are bus stops in the best places, and are there good links to the hospital and suitable facilities there? We will introduce free off-peak travel for those aged over 70 and review the provision of bus passes. We will also look to introduce an effective real time passenger information system. In partnership with employers we will work to encourage the use of buses for getting to and from work

- **Park and Ride**

Park and Ride sites are complementary to town centre parking policies. On their own they will not reduce traffic congestion in the town centre

- **Cycling**

We will complete the National Cycle Network route through Bournemouth and invest in cycling schemes where the demand exists

- **Access to the countryside**

We will work with neighbouring Councils to develop 'Greenways' and quiet roads that give access by foot and bike to Purbeck, Canford Heath, Hurn Forest and the New Forest

- **Congestion and Traffic Control**

We will introduce area computer control of major signal junctions to facilitate traffic flow and, where it is appropriate, allow buses priority

- **Tourism**

We will, in partnership with neighbouring authorities, explore schemes that integrate sustainable travel by tourists, both those arriving within the town by road, rail or air, and within the conurbation, including travel by DARTS and by boat, which may require new facilities such as small piers or pontoons.

PLANNING

Inspectors have criticised the Tory led Council for taking too long to decide on planning applications, for not letting Council staff get on with their job, and for losing a lot of appeals against the Council's decisions. The people of Bournemouth have a low opinion of the planning service, and staff morale is low. It is a sorry story.

Good planning is about being forward looking, innovative, creative and trying to generate jobs and homes, while trying to protect the special character of areas. Although there have been some initiatives, planning in Bournemouth is seen as backward looking, conservative and about control rather than creativity.

In Bournemouth, the importance of key skills in planning such as enforcing decisions, Conservation and Design, and Special Projects are not recognised or valued.

Local residents find it hard to have their voice heard. In reality 'public consultation' usually means an orange sign on a lamppost. Plans are only available at the Town Hall, and decisions are usually taken there. There are no guides in plain English that explain how the system works, how local residents can make their voice heard, or how they can make deputations to Councilors.

Where resident's voices should be heard, the Conservative Council has been deaf. It is a public scandal that the loudest voice of public opinion in the history of Bournemouth - over the demolition of the Winter Gardens - went unheard. Or unheeded. Not only did this made a mockery of the planning process and democracy; it made many people lose all faith in the Council.

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- Support best practice, learn from what our neighbours in Christchurch and Poole do well, and drive forward an Active Plan
- Provide a Vision for Bournemouth. A vision that will include a Plan for the Town Centre, and for Neighbourhood Shopping Centres
- Review the plan that has been agreed with Government for the development of Bournemouth (the Local Plan) to see if some areas on the outskirts of the town could be allocated for local, affordable, homes.
- Encourage excellence in design, in architecture and in landscaping
- Revive the annual Civic Design Awards that celebrate the best developments in Bournemouth

With consideration to our urban environment:

- Continue the protection and improvement of the Green Belt around Bournemouth and Public Opens Spaces within the town.
- We will resist planning proposals to build on flood plains
- Promote the use of sites that have already been built on (known as Brownfield sites) by providing clear leadership in the planning process working with land owners and by leading the debate rather than reacting to it; or by simply ignoring it

- Champion the conservation and continuing use of historic buildings as important factors in shaping local identities
- Review 'non-conforming' or inappropriate industrial or commercial developments or uses in residential areas

Keeping in touch with local residents:

- Make the planning process clearer, more inclusive by genuine Public Consultations that involves residents, Area Forums, amenity groups, the Architects Panel and the Civic Society in consideration and comment on proposals for major developments in our town and hold local workshops on them
- We will consider introducing letters that tell local residents about planning applications
- Make the planning process more accessible by posting topics on the web, making plans available at Local Libraries and holding meetings of the Council at local venues like Community Centres
- Publish guides in plain English that explain how the planning system works, how residents can make their voice heard
- Use the local press to help explain the planning process to help residents see both sides of the argument over new developments

HOUSING

We are committed to resisting an unsustainable level of housing in Bournemouth, but a shortage of smaller, *more affordable housing is a major social problem for families on lower incomes and individuals in Bournemouth.*

- This issue must be tackled and we will seek to review existing planning policies that determine where new housing may be built
- We will review the provision of affordable housing by the Councils own housing department and consider whether a better service might be provided by a private sector provider
- We will work to improve the quality of existing Homes of Multiple Occupation through existing policies and guidelines
- We will ensure that Government policies are enforced so that a quality stock of short to medium-term lets is available to students, seasonal workers and holiday makers

CARING AND SUPPORTING

The Tories have removed the £3 million deficit in the Social Services budget but at what price? It has been achieved by;

- Cutting home visit to the elderly, leaving relatives to take up the slack
- Charging more for home care
- Charging more for day care
- Introducing charges for Day Centres dealing with the mentally ill. This is a new charge
- Cutting out all preventative measures
- Providing statutory duties only
- Not maintaining properties

Liberal Democrats will provide effective support for older people, disabled people and people of all ages with special needs. We aim to ensure that all members of our community, regardless of their needs, are treated with dignity and respect.

Providing appropriate help and care, through social services, is an important part of enabling people to lead the fullest possible lives. We strongly believe that Social Services should become a supportive enabler rather than responding to crises, and we will focus on supporting carers

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- We will promote a programme of care homes for the elderly
- Work in real partnership with Bournemouth and Christchurch Primary Care Trust and the voluntary sector to seek savings by stopping duplication of effort and in turn reducing overhead costs.
- Work with the NHS and Nursing Homes to find ways of unblocking beds in hospitals so as to best care for elderly people. Finding ways to create more nursing homes, better ways of working, and shared responsibility between patients and their families, statutory services and nursing care providers will take time, but improvement is essential
- Make full use of Slades Farm to bring looked after children back into our town
- Bring back effective preventative measures
- Fill vacant Occupation Therapy posts to prevent a backlog in disabled facility grants that provide help in retaining independence
- Wherever possible preserve independence for people, and support their carers
- We will review how best to provide improved transport for the disabled and elderly to best cater for customers' needs
- We aim to offer enhanced housing advice to prevent homelessness amongst young people under 18.

Our Young People

As Liberal Democrats we will try to involve our Young People in the democratic process, and to provide facilities in partnership with the voluntary sector and other bodies.

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- Consult with our young people to establish their requirements and we will ensure that their views are better represented by exploring the establishment of a Youth Forum in the Bournemouth Partnership and having dedicated time for Youth questions at meetings of Council
- Seek increased use of Youth Centres and other Clubs
- Increase activities available to young people
- Try to maximise the resources available to our young people through partnership working. (For example with Church groups)
- We will promote modern Apprenticeships that empower young people with real world skills that lead to nationally Recognised qualifications (usually a National Vocational Qualification or NVQ)

A SAFER COMMUNITY

Crime and the fear of crime undermine the quality of life of our residents and our visitors. We will pursue, in co-operation with the Police, a number of initiatives to improve public safety.

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- We will consider an independent study on crime prevention measures in the Town's main centres which will enable us to bid for Government funding for CCTV once that funding becomes available
- We will seek to improve safety in our car parks
- We will continue our anti drugs-driving campaign and will continue to seek ways to combat alcohol and drug abuse
- We will continue to press for an appropriate level of Police resources to be provided in Bournemouth
- To help combat the fear of crime, we plan to extend youth provision
- We will encourage the welcoming and respect of Foreign Language Students

EDUCATION

Until 1997 Dorset County Council ran Education in Bournemouth. The Tories had closed Beaufort School but failed to build the new Winton School. The majority of Bournemouth's secondary schools could not match the money that they needed to spend with the money that they were given. Some of the primary classes were the largest nationally. Only 18% of the children who had special educational needs had their cases sorted out within timetable.

In 1993 the Liberal Democrats took control of Dorset County Council; and they found an education service that the Tories had left so badly short of funds that it was near the bottom of the national league.

In 1997 Bournemouth became a Unitary Authority and responsibility for education was shifted from Dorset County Council to Bournemouth. The Liberal Democrats made sure that the money for education was protected and we started a major programme to improve our schools.

Plans were put forward to;

- Reduce the sizes of primary classes
- Raise the level of achievement of our children
- Protect funding for Education
- Delegate more money to Schools
- Establish Easter revision courses
- Fund summer schools for gifted and talented children, and to
- Provide new Youth Clubs

And we worked in partnership with all the interested parties to ensure that Bournemouth's youngsters got a top service.

That vision and determination was recognised by the Government's recent official Ofsted report on education in Bournemouth. It said that;

'Councillors had planned and prepared carefully for the unitary status granted to the Borough in 1997. They had the vision and brought in new and energetic staff to oversee its realisation. Ultimately it is the members [Councillors] who are responsible for the very considerable achievements of the last four years. They picked the right staff and backed them. They listened, learned and made good decisions. They have worked well together to better the lot of Bournemouth's children.'

Opportunities for All

As Liberal Democrats we value the contribution of everyone in our society. We want to open up new opportunities for people so that they can gain the knowledge, skills and experience that they need to make the most of their lives.

Investing in Education

Education is the key to unlocking people's potential. It is the means by which we enable people to develop their skills and talents to the full and do things for themselves and their communities. Our aim is to offer everyone a high quality education. We believe that the best way to continue to improve education is to enable those working in education – teachers, parents and school governors – to get on with the job of teaching rather than filling in forms. We want to see greater freedom at school and Council level. Working in partnership with other bodies involved in education, the voluntary sector and the wider community, we will develop services that widen opportunities for all.

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- Liberal Democrats will put children first in all matters - they only get one chance
- We believe that consultation is vital and will continue with the big programme with parents, teachers, and school governors that we started in Bournemouth in 1995. Our aim is ensure that everyone is working towards the same goal. To achieve the best possible education for our children
- In partnership with the voluntary and private sector we aim to make sure that high quality early years education is available throughout the town.
- Continue to rebuild the budget for the Youth Service after the cuts made by the Tories and to increase the number of Youth Workers in Bournemouth
- Support Bournemouth's Youth Council in their work in putting forward the views of our young people and work with to sort out the issues they raise and review membership of the Bournemouth Community Partnership
- Support the development of the Lifelong Learning Partnership in Bournemouth
- Promote Bournemouth as a place of learning; as a University town and the home to many colleges of further education and language schools
- Continue to extend the Adult Education Service, in partnership with the voluntary sector, reaching out further into local communities
- Support the acclaimed plans for the Class Room of the Future at Hengistbury Head
- Work across departmental boundaries for the increased use of school facilities by the community, and for schools to increase their involvement with their local communities
- Good teachers are the lifeblood of a good education system. We will continue to provide training so that teachers can further improve their high standards
- Support the role of school governors in their vital roles in managing schools and improving the links between schools and their communities
- Work imaginatively with the voluntary sector, seek to extend existing facilities and to develop new ones, and protect and enhance the diversity of early years education

Liberal Democrats have always tried to stop Education from becoming a political football and we have consistently provided as much money as possible to this vital service.

Education is 'aspirational.' As Liberal Democrats we aspire to provide the highest quality of education for all, throughout their lives.

ARTS, LIBRARIES, AND ENTERTAINMENT

The debate on the Winter Gardens highlighted the shortcomings of the Council's Arts Policy. The building is an important cultural and heritage asset to Bournemouth, and more. The Conservative Council has failed to recognise the importance of arts and entertainment, not just by professional artistes, but also in the involvement of the people of Bournemouth.

In contrast, when the Liberal Democrats were in charge, we improved the arts and entertainments programme, secured major grants to help restore the Russell Cotes Art Gallery and Museum. We supported winter performances at the Pavilion, and worked closely with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. Arts Grants were introduced to help local amateur groups and new special deals encouraged leading local amateur groups to use the Pier Theatre.

The Liberal Democrat programme:

- Introduce policies to invest more money in Arts Provision, by both professionals and amateurs, as opposed to tax payers money being constantly sucked in to the maintenance of the Council's venues
- As a matter of urgency, involve the private sector to help with funding for the refurbishment of the Winter Gardens (if it is still standing) and Pavilion
- Review the strategy for Libraries provision in Bournemouth, particularly with regard to the currently threatened local libraries of Ensburry Park, Springbourne and Strouden Park
- Review, and if appropriate promote, plans for privately promoted improvements to Bournemouth Pier
- Build stronger links with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra who provide world class performances for local people, great support for local young musicians and are ambassadors for Bournemouth around the world
- Encourage competition in arts provision by the private sector, the Council and charitable trusts. The 'entertainment monopoly' of the Council has not been good for Bournemouth
- Reintroduce both the ideas of a 'cultural crescent' linked by sculptures (something which Bournemouth generally lacks) and the 'percentage for arts' in new buildings, which have been allowed to slip, and promote the value of public art to the local economy
- Encourage all local amateur groups by shared advertising and links with professionals.

'Bournemouth should not betray its arts heritage – it should build on it'

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