

YOUR TOWN OUR TOWN

Liberal Democrat ideas for a
better Cheltenham: 2010



FOREWORD

This manifesto is in three parts. We begin with our principles and how they differ from those of Labour and the Conservatives. Then we translate these principles into a vision for the town. This means looking at the challenges that the town faces and the policies we think are needed to address them.

In compiling these ideas we acknowledge that it is not only the Borough Council that is responsible for what happens to the town and its citizens. There are various other public bodies that we need to influence to achieve things or to stop undesirable things happening, and there are many businesses, community and voluntary sector 'stakeholders' that want to and need to be part of any vision for the town.

Politics is in stage of transition at the moment with great pressures on local government finance and Council Tax and all this has been compounded by the banking crisis and recession. We face substantial cuts in public expenditure. On top of this there is great cynicism about politicians following the scandal about MP's expenses.

The challenge for Councillors is to protect the things that made Cheltenham such a good place to live despite cuts in funding. This will mean 'enabling' some of the things traditionally done by the Council to be done more effectively and economically by other organisations. The links with business, the voluntary sector and cultural organisations - such as Cheltenham Festivals, Care and Repair and Cheltenham Borough Homes - are important in this.

Elected bodies range from Parish Councils up to the European Parliament. We will work at all levels - at the local level, with the County Council and Parliament, as well as Europe, to realise the vision that we have for the town. Liberal Democrats are active at all levels in these elected bodies.

Policies are shaped by more than just formal elected bodies. The Liberal democrats are active as ordinary Citizens all the year round in a wide range of pressure Groups, community organisations and voluntary sector bodies as well as more formal 'Partnerships'. Activity in these organisations informs us and helps turn our principles into clearer policies. It is at the level of principle that our politics begins. It is this that makes us different from the others and is the basis for the relationship of trust that we wish to build with the electorate of Cheltenham.

Every week our members canvass opinion in their wards or circulate copies of Focus, the Liberal Democrat news-sheet which informs local people about what's going on in their area. We think this is how politics should be conducted - round the clock, round the year activity so that we are continuously engaged with the electorate.

At the end of this manifesto there is a list of achievements made since 2008 in the period of Liberal Democrat administration. It is a record of steady advance.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Steve Jordan
Liberal Democrat Group Leader, Cheltenham Borough Council

PART ONE

WHAT DO LIBERAL DEMOCRATS BELIEVE IN?

Economic liberalism

Economics is at the heart of politics because it shapes societies - politics is 'concentrated economics'.

There are two extremes to politics, both of which have been discredited.

The rigid socialist model believes everything should be collectivised and socially owned. 'State' socialism thus becomes autocratic and oppressive and seeks to control production and distribution in a way that cripples markets and restricts human behaviour and opportunity.

On the other hand the extreme free market model sees the role of Government as largely a nuisance that exists only to protect competition and provide key functions such as law-making and enforcement and coordination of foreign policy. It elevates the wealthy and believes poorer people should be left to their own devices.

Liberal Democrats take the view that there needs to be a balanced approach to economic issues. Critical resources and services should be socially owned and the market should be allowed to operate within the law, subject to regulation, so long as it doesn't overpower the collective interest.

We believe that over-regulated state planning is counter-productive and bureaucratic. We believe that in a world of unregulated markets, boom and slump is inevitable, brutal and wasteful.

Personal liberalism

We believe in the rights of the individual and in freedom of choice. As long as their choices do not actively hurt others, individuals should be able to choose their own lifestyles, politics, sexuality, religion etc. without discrimination or government intrusion into their private lives.

Political liberalism

We believe that power should be devolved to the lowest level where it can be exercised effectively. It should be held in bodies which are, wherever possible, accountable to the electorate. This is cheaper and more inclusive, and does away with bureaucracy.

Social liberalism

We believe that liberty can only be enjoyed when people have basic needs met, and therefore it is the duty of the state to ensure that all citizens are

The balance on the Council

There are 20 wards in Cheltenham with 2 Councillors for each ward.

Of the 40 Councillors in January 2010:

16 are Conservatives

21 are Liberal Democrats

3 are People against Bureaucracy who normally align themselves with the Tories

The Cheltenham MP, Martin Horwood, is a Liberal Democrat.

One of the South West Region Members of the European Parliament that represents Cheltenham, Graham Watson, is a one-time Leader of the 150 strong Liberal Group in the European Parliament.

safe and free from poverty and have access to education and healthcare so they can realise their full potential.

Sustainable liberalism

We believe that meeting the needs of the present generation should not come at the expense of future generations. This applies especially to the protection of the environment and the use of natural resources.

What differentiates the Liberal Democrats from the Conservatives

Philosophy

Despite the recent protestations of their leader to the contrary, the Conservatives typically put economic growth and tax cuts ahead of social justice, investment in the public service and community cohesion. In addition, Conservatives are still mainly social conservatives - suspicious of benefit claimants as 'scroungers' and people living non-traditional lifestyles such as single parents and people in same-sex relationships.

Policy

The Conservatives opposed devolution to Scotland and Wales and still oppose fair votes for Westminster, meaningful environmental taxes and constructive engagement in the European Union. By contrast, they supported the war in Iraq and have now aligned themselves with the most reactionary conservative groups in Europe and expelled the previous Leader of the British Conservative Group in Europe, Edward McMillan-Scott from their party for objecting to the racism of one of their sister parties. He has just joined the Liberal Democrats.

What differentiates the Liberal Democrats from Labour

Philosophy

The Labour Government is authoritarian, paternalistic and has continued the Conservative policy of centralising power. This is manifested in their plethora of central targets in the public services, the continuing emaciation of local government, and even in the way that the present government completely ignores the views of its own party members and party conference.

Policy

Labour have introduced or proposed a number of fundamentally illiberal policies, including the increase in the period someone can be detained without trial and the repatriation of genuine asylum seekers back to regimes like that of Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Labour's lack of commitment to international law and international collaboration has been graphically illustrated by the war in Iraq, and more subtly manifests itself in their lack of enthusiasm for proper engagement in the European Community. This Labour Government has created huge cynicism in the way it has distorted and misled people with the result that politics as a whole has become discredited - particularly in the way many of their MPs behaved in relation to Parliamentary expenses where they seemed to believe they had a right to claim up to the limit that they could regardless of whether or not what they claimed for was incurred in working on behalf of their constituents.

Our Seven priorities for Cheltenham

Environmental sustainability

We are serious about environmental sustainability which, at its heart, is concerned with living within the capacity of the earth and tackling the production of polluting greenhouse gases. This is embodied in our policy of 'localism'. The 2007 floods were a wake-up call for the need to be serious about what's happening to the environment. We believe that we need to be better prepared for such events in future, and, that to do this, we need to strengthen communities and make them more resilient and self reliant.

We are concerned that much of what is currently claimed to be 'green' is nothing of the kind. We will work towards ensuring that national plans to produce carbon neutral development are realised and intensify our efforts to improve recycling so less rubbish is dumped in landfill sites. We will reduce reliance on carbon based sources of energy such as oil and gas and promote sustainable non-polluting sources of energy.

We will use the planning system in a way that encourages real sustainability to decrease overall carbon dioxide production in the town by such means as implementing continuously improved standards for building insulation. We will encourage local food production.

We are genuinely very pleased that there is now a developing political consensus around these issues, but we need to go further, faster. We will extend re-cycling to include plastics and more green waste and aspire to 'Transition Town' status, and oppose the huge housing targets which will create 'urban sprawl' imposed on the area by the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The RSS contains within it an emphasis on growth at all costs which is in conflict with real sustainable development.

Equal opportunities

We are serious about equal opportunities and social justice for all of Cheltenham's Citizens. We will consider the impact of our policies on specific groups as well as areas. We want communities to be strong and cohesive: prejudice is divisive. We will seek to improve services and strengthen communities through a determined approach to 'Neighbourhood Management'. This will involve local community and political representatives in resolving practical issues with officer representatives from the public sector, health and police. We will make sure that we embed the principles of equal opportunities, social justice and environmental responsibility in our procurement policies to make sure that public money is spent in a way that is socially and environmentally responsible.

Community regeneration

We will continue to support the community regeneration areas in the town which we initiated - both as part of our commitment to social justice, and because the long term effects of failing to do this will be disastrous for the town and will be a basis for social conflict. We will oppose the ongoing attempts to undermine this work and note the great success of the Neighbourhood Resource Centres that have been created and which are organisationally and financially independent of the Council.

Better organisation

We will constantly try and improve our efficiency and reduce our costs by using new technology and also take into account what the impact of such technology is on our citizens and our workforce. We will oppose unitary status being inflicted on the area because we believe it will lead to a larger Council with less political accountability for the citizens of the town, but will seek to share services with other public bodies and neighbouring councils to increase their resilience while at the same time lowering their cost.

Partnership

We will work in partnership with community and voluntary sector organisations who we acknowledge have a vast experience over a wide range of issues, and with colleagues from other statutory bodies such as the police and health services. We will continue to support the Cheltenham Strategic Partnership which coordinates the statutory and voluntary sectors in the town including the Police, all Councils and the Health Service.

Young people

We will try to do more for our young people. We have pioneered Community Resource Centres in those parts of town where deprivation is most concentrated and where opportunities for people, especially young people, are most limited. As part of our policy of localism we will take this model and develop it in cooperation with local people in other areas in a phased way paying particular attention to the needs of young people and in ways that promote voluntary sector activity. We welcome and supported the Brizen Youth Centre initiative and applaud the Leckhampton and Warden Hill Parish Council for the effort they put into achieving it.

Older people

We will help pensioners more. We know the Council tax is the biggest item of expenditure for many pensioners and nationally are committed to introducing a local tax system which takes into account the ability of people to pay. Until this is introduced we will urge and enable people to claim Council Tax relief which is paid for out of national funding - not by other Cheltenham Council Tax payers. There should be no shame attached to claiming Council Tax relief - it is an unfair tax.

Council Tax

A 1% Council tax increase for Cheltenham raises c£77,000s for the Borough Council.

The Council tax bill sent out by the Borough Council includes the bill for County and Police Services. The vast majority of the amount charged (over 86%) goes to the County and the Police.

The current amount paid in Council Tax for a category D property for the year 2010/11 is:

County Council £1090.50
Police £199.69
CBC £187.12

The Lib Dem proposal for 2010/11 increased the Council Tax for CBC by £4.57 a year.

WHAT KIND OF COUNCIL DO WE WANT?

We want a council that exercises leadership but which has a light touch and a low profile - that is seen as an ally rather than one that tries to tell everyone what to do. Politicians who blow their own trumpets don't inspire confidence. To do this we outline below what we believe are the main challenges facing the town and what we think needs to be done to address them.

PART TWO

What are the challenges that the town faces?

Cheltenham is a very successful town - but it faces challenges of both a global and local nature. More than ever before these challenges are interconnected.

Modern life is dependent on energy. The use of relatively cheap fossil fuels has hugely increased the productive capacity and population of the planet. It is now clear that not only is this inheritance running out, but that the Carbon Dioxide produced is making the decisive contribution to the change in the world's climate. As a result it is likely that traditional carbon-based sources of energy - particularly gas and oil - are going to become scarcer and increase in price. There is a consensus now that we must reduce our use and reliance on such sources of energy and this will have far wider repercussions than has yet been appreciated. To this end the Council recently signed up to the 10:10 Campaign - for organisations and individuals to cut their carbon emissions by 10% in 2010.

Production, population growth and greenhouse gas emissions are clearly linked. If we are to cut greenhouse gas production we must utilise non-polluting sources of energy as well as creating a 'build-down' model that seeks to reduce demand. This will be a profound challenge. Capitalism is a dynamic system that is good at maximising production through the acquisition of profit, but it has embedded within its dynamic the tendency for 'bust' to follow 'boom', and so is unstable. It is good at expanding, but finds it hard to cope with contracting markets or to maintain a steady balance.

Gordon Brown's boast that he had controlled the markets through light-touch regulation' and had cracked the cycle of 'boom and bust' must rank as his most glaring misjudgement. Our economic system needs more control exercised over it. The Tories and their friends in big business resist it.

In order to address the recent financial crisis the Government had to bale the banks out at a huge cost to the nation. It should be congratulated for this because the Conservatives would have stood by and let the banking system collapse and this would have triggered a major crisis. But repaying the debt will mean an increase in taxes, or cuts in public expenditure, or both. The pound has been detrimentally affected because its strength is related to the strength of the economy as a whole - and this has been jeopardised by the banking crisis because of the size of the banking sector in Britain relative to the size of the rest of the economy. The pound has, in effect, been devalued.

The increasingly integrated nature of the world economy has meant that many industries have relocated to countries where labour is cheap in order to survive and be more profitable. While the British economy has been very successful as a specialised part of a world economy, many of those traditionally involved in unskilled blue-collar work have become almost surplus to requirements and live an existence away from mainstream economic activity because they lack the skills needed for employment in today's world. The unemployed, sick, disabled and old are increasingly concentrated in the poorest parts of town, with elevated levels of relative deprivation. This is happening throughout the developed world. In an

affluent town like Cheltenham the polarisation is, in some ways, even more pronounced than it is elsewhere.

How do we reconcile the global and local problems that we face so that we tackle them in a coherent and consistent way? We believe that in order to do this we need to pursue a policy of 'localism'. This means that we put the emphasis on nurturing stronger self-reliant communities; that we develop local non-polluting sources of energy and reduce our reliance on private transport and on the distances we travel in our day to day lives; that we waste less and recycle more; that we use locally grown food and local products whenever we can.

The policy of localism has environmental and social benefits. It will seek to identify community service centres where shops and other service providers are located within half a miles walking distance of every urban household. We will do this through the planning system and we will look to long term public investment to provide supporting infrastructure - with the provision of buildings such as Community Resource Centres at their heart that are run by local people and that address the needs of local communities.

The role of local government

It is fashionable to dismiss Local Government as irrelevant. It is not. As we have pointed out the responses to the global and local challenges we face lie at all levels of Government - from International to Local. In the end, it is what individuals do, how they behave, that is the critical factor. Local Government has a role in influencing this.

In Gloucestershire we currently have a 'two-tier' local government system. The County Council is responsible for roads and parking, Children & Young People's Services, Adult and Community Care and so on, and the Borough is responsible for housing, leisure and entertainment, rubbish collection, parks, planning and so on.

We're tight against our boundaries, but the government says we need much more housing.

We do need more housing - especially social housing - but nothing like the amount that the Government wants to inflict on the area. The challenge is - how do we provide sufficient housing at affordable costs for the skilled workforce that the Government says the town needs when land is so precious and expensive?

We will use existing 'brownland sites' within the existing urban areas for housing, and make as much of it as we can 'affordable'. We have already agreed to build over 100 council homes on such land with Cheltenham Borough Homes and their development Partners, Bromford Housing Association to house people on the waiting list. Local people will come first.

Cheltenham is a garden town - and the most complete Regency town anywhere. It is a desirable place in which to live. The real issue is about securing development while retaining Cheltenham's identity and retaining and enhancing its historically acquired economic, social, cultural and environmental quality. This is the basis of its success.

To achieve this, over the past few years we have strengthened development guidance in the Conservation Areas in the town and

produced a supplementary planning document on Garden Land and Infill sites to make sure that development is stopped unless it meets key standards - particularly in design and impact on the locality. We do not see the question as - either build in back gardens and on our urban green spaces - or allow 'urban sprawl' onto the Green Belt. We oppose both these options.

We reject the Governments Housing Projections which seek to use housing as a vehicle for economic growth rather than catering for housing need. They are massively exaggerated. They are based on a growth model that will see the population of the UK accelerate as a result of immigration from Europe. According to them, Cheltenham's population will expand as people from other parts of the United Kingdom and Europe migrate to it.

The South West Regional Spatial Strategy (SWRSS) embodies the Governments Plans for the South West. According to its latest version, Cheltenham will have to build 13,800 more houses in the next 20 years - almost twice the rate of growth we have witnessed in the last 20 years. The so-called 'urban extension' to the North West of the town contains 5,000 of these and must be opposed. Cheltenham, Bishops Cleeve and Gloucester mustn't be allowed to merge into one long urban sprawl. Some well-managed open space must be kept between them. Cheltenham's people value its urban environment and its easy proximity to one of the most pleasant variations of scenery in Britain. Once urban areas grow not much bigger than Cheltenham is now, peripheral centres develop which can initiate the process of fragmentation. Towns can then begin to pull themselves apart and transform themselves into urban conglomerates and lose their identity and sense of place.

The future of Cheltenham has therefore to be seen in the context of the plan for the county as a whole.

We will oppose Cheltenham and Gloucester joining together as one continuous built-up area. To prevent urban sprawl, the key challenge is to maintain the identity of existing settlements by well planned buffers of open space and by being careful about what and where development is allowed.

Crucial to this is an effective system of transport links in the Severn Vale to connect settlements together. This will not be achieved by putting another lane in the dual carriageway between Gloucester and Cheltenham (unless it is an interim measure reserved for buses and taxis at peak periods), but by installing a proper light passenger transport system from Quedgely in the south of Gloucester to Bishops Cleeve in the north that feeds into the existing main line stations. This can be delivered through the new Community Infrastructure Levy which empowers local authorities to effectively tax development to provide infrastructure such as roads and railways.

This will also reduce vehicle trips and therefore emissions. It has to be done coherently. The plan to build a new railway station at Parkway without a light rail connection feeding into it will merely disrupt what exists, clog up the roads and be actually counter-productive.

We will oppose an increase in development until the plans for a proper transport system are developed and financed.

In our last manifesto we promised to review local planning guidelines so that development in back gardens was subject to controls that made sure that the character and amenity of the existing town was protected. We have done this.

We won't ruin the quality of the town in satisfying the demands of the Regional Spatial Strategy. We will therefore:

- Oppose development on the Green Belt and in the open countryside.
- Insist that the case for growth is proven before development sites are identified.
- Demand that public transport infrastructure is given consideration before houses are built and not afterwards.
- Fight to maintain the environmental quality of the town by implementing proper policies towards sustainable development

Preserving the quality of the town with more careful development and the better use of space and better transport are all interconnected. Our approach will protect the quality of life and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

The two faces of cheltenham

A significant group of people in the town lack the skills to enable them to find work in today's economy. They lack purchasing power as a result of this and are increasingly excluded from mainstream society and are concentrated in social housing and the cheap private rented sector. They become more dependent on the government and the council to support their needs. People in this situation become subject to a cycle of interconnected deprivation that condemns them and their children to

Cheltenham's population

CURRENT CHELTENHAM POPULATION - 111,656 (mid 2006)

Ages:

0 - 4 = 5,666

0 - 17 = 23,296

over 65 = 19,141

There are 62,858 people in employment in the town in full and part time jobs. (2007 figures - source CBC)

Average individual earnings in Cheltenham at 2005 were £23,970 against an England and Wales average of £23,854 (source Maiden).

There are 51,287 households in the town (Jan 2007). The Regional Spatial Strategy proposes a further 13800 houses in the Cheltenham Area up to 2026. This represents an increase in size of nearly a quarter and is twice the rate of expansion that the town has experienced in the last 20 years

Average House prices in Cheltenham are slightly higher than the English average and over 2% higher than Gloucestershire - compared to Gloucester where the average is 26.4% lower than Gloucestershire.

Average Price in England: £201,172

Average Price in South West £200,715

Average Price in Gloucestershire £197,467

Average Price in Cheltenham £201,607

Average Price in Gloucester £145,243

(source Land Registry Q1 2009/ Fordham Research - Glos Housing Needs Surveyec.09)

impoverishment - economic, cultural, educational and social. Poor skills lead to unemployment or low wages, which in turn is connected to poor housing and diet, low expectations, poor health and so on.

At the same time, the nature of the new economy and communications has meant that people are much more mobile than they have ever been. Communities are becoming more and more fragmented and less cohesive as a result of this. Many people no longer know their neighbours, and feel little in common with their locality. High property prices in the town are increasingly forcing people to look for accommodation elsewhere or to live with friends and relatives. At one time it was the affluent that commuted into the town. Increasingly, it is those who work in the town but cannot afford to live in it that are obliged to live elsewhere - particularly in Gloucester, the Forest of Dean and Tewkesbury, where prices are cheaper.

Many of those buying property in Cheltenham are relatively wealthy strangers to the town. At the same time, those who are poor or disadvantaged are housed in council or housing association property. The effect of this is to concentrate deprivation in particular areas of the town where there are high amounts of council housing.

It is this that leads to despair and is the breeding ground for crime and disorder. A Liberal Democrat council will work to tackle the problems that people face in acquiring the skills they need so that they can earn a reasonable living, and not be dependent on state benefits.

We have spent a lot of time analysing the problems in various parts of town and applying appropriate solutions based on a thorough analysis. These include the regeneration of the Manser Street / Hudson Street area of St. Pauls where the problems included inadequate housing with concentrations of deprivation. The redevelopment of part of the area was the solution. Properties have been demolished and plans are currently being finalised which are due to result in building works starting in 2010.

How can we do these things - with fewer resources than ever?

Most people overestimate the power and capacity of individual organisations to change things on their own. There are some things such as collecting rubbish that the Borough Council has the direct power and responsibility to do and is good at. There are other things - such as crime and disorder - that it must work with other agencies to tackle, particularly the police in this case. Partnership working around key priorities with a range of bodies including other council's, is crucial. One of the responsibilities of the Borough Council is to coordinate this co-operation. It must also seek to utilise the energy of its citizens more, particularly through closer working of the voluntary sector.

It is these bodies, together, that distribute scarce resources according to decided priorities, but without the support and agreement of the council their efforts will not be as effective as they could be. Agreement on a vision for the town is therefore paramount - and this is why we have outlined ours.

PART THREE: POLICY AREAS

Housing and homelessness

Pressure on housing has made Cheltenham one of the most expensive parts of the country to live in even after the reduction in prices caused by the recession. If Cheltenham cannot house those with the skills its economy needs to ensure its ongoing success then businesses may move. In the short term traffic congestion will get worse as people are forced to live elsewhere and commute into work.

In the 1991 District Plan it was estimated that between 1991 and 2011 some 7350 additional dwellings would be needed in the town. This figure has almost been achieved and it is estimated that 345 dwellings will need to be permitted and completed between April 2006 and mid 2011 to reach this target. This requirement will be replaced by targets imposed through the latest draft of the Regional Spatial Strategy which envisages some 13,800 additional dwellings be built between 2006 and 2026. This represents a rate of growth substantially more than double that we have seen in the last 20 years.

We are concerned at these figures - they represent an increase in the size of the town of 25% in less than 20 years! We believe the impact on the town could be disastrous. We are not convinced by the projections. We believe that the provision of such a reserve of housing will merely seek to attract more people to the town rather than satisfying the needs of local people.

This is what government wants to happen. Cheltenham has been identified by the Government as a growth area, and is suggesting building on the Green Belt. The new labour needed for this growth will be provided by immigration - and they will need housing. We are concerned about the impact of this on the quality of the environment and those who already live here. If it happens, it must be carefully planned and managed - but we will resist any building in open countryside or in the Green Belt.

We therefore believe that we need more social housing within the established urban area and that local people should take priority in accessing this.

We cannot leave appropriate housing provision entirely to the market. There is a huge amount of property on sale in Cheltenham - but it is out of the reach of those who most need a home. We need to provide low cost starter homes and apartments which are affordable for first-time buyers.

We will therefore take steps to promote the greatest possible amount of affordable and social housing and strive to make it properly integrated into general development. We will support moves to increase the amount of social housing. The current standard is a quota of 40% social housing of all new development on residential new build planning applications of 15 or more units. We will impose a quota of 40% social housing on all new build planning applications of more than three units. The reason for this change is that too many developers are currently submitting applications for 14 units or less to avoid providing social housing. A stricter standard will resolve this.

We need more housing for rent, and the Council has a role to play in the provision of this both by building more council houses and as the local

planning authority using planning gain legislation. We will not favour the further development of expansive tracts of social housing, and will seek to have a mix of different housing types in the future.

Now that Cheltenham Borough Homes (CBH) has successfully completed the Decent Homes programme so that all its housing stock is up to modern standards, we will support moves for it to build social housing on Council land with Government Grant, which it can now do having achieved top Government status for an Arms Length Management Company (ALMO). We will also encourage the Homes and Community Agency to pursue a policy that allows CBH to manage the property of the other 25 Housing Association landlords in the town in order to maximise efficiency and tackle the social issues that CBH has a track record in pioneering.

We will continue to support the community regeneration areas and Partnerships, Parish Council's and the Neighbourhood Projects and see these initiatives at the heart of the long-term improvement of these parts of town. As the built fabric of the town improves the emphasis is shifting towards tackling social issues. Many of the problems that we have are not 'bricks and mortar issues' - but 'people' issues. These issues need to be tackled by all the responsible agencies - the police, social services, housing and health and so on, working together. At a local level we will work with the Police to build on Neighbourhood Policing through the process known as Neighbourhood Management whereby local community representatives, politicians and public sector officers get together to identify and tackle local issues. This will not only improve service delivery but strengthen local communities.

Access to advice so that people know their rights and responsibilities is an important part of 'empowering' people. The law is a complete mystery to most of us. We will work with those organisations, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, that have supported the people of Cheltenham for over 50 years

Social housing

There are 4773 Council properties in Cheltenham (Jan 2007) and 1700 or so Housing Association Properties which together house over one fifth of the town's population.

There are some 3000 people on the waiting list in Cheltenham (Oct 2009) - but only about 500 a year are housed.

The Council created an 'Arms Length Management Organisation' (ALMO) called Cheltenham Borough Homes in 2003, which is a limited company with tenant representation on the Board of Directors, and which is 100% owned by the Council.

CBH is one of the top ALMO's in the country having achieved three star status, and has completed improving all its homes to the 'decent homes' standard.

The Council has now agreed that it be a major development partner and it has agreed to build - for the first time in almost 30 years - what will effectively be new Council houses. Over 100 are in the pipeline.

Neighbourhood projects

A Neighbourhood Project is a voluntary organisation established by local people and constituted as a company limited by guarantee with charitable status.

They are normally established in relatively deprived areas targeted for government funding. There are 2 Neighbourhood Projects in Cheltenham - in Hesters Way and Oakley.

As a result of their activity and the three Community Regeneration Partnerships, millions of pounds of Government Funding has been won by them for the town.

with information and independent and confidential advice about their legal rights and we oppose any plans that will decimate them. We opposed from the start the Conservative administrations plans to cut the number of advice giving agencies in the town. As a result Cheltenham Community Support Centre, previously Cheltenham Centre for Unemployed People, has closed and Cheltenham Housing Aid Centre has been seriously weakened. This is a disaster for Cheltenham's most vulnerable people.

Transport and roads

The County Council is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of roads and pavements. At one time the Borough Council had its own Highways division that looked after the roads in Cheltenham as the agent of the County, but the County Council took the responsibility back 'in house' in 2006. There has subsequently been a substantial transfer of resources

Traffic

There are 227 miles of road in the town - 180,000 vehicles travel in and out of it every day.

away from urban areas to

maintain rural roads. Traffic jams caused by last-minute road repairs in the town have become longer as the roads and pavements have deteriorated to the point that some of them are dangerous for pedestrians, cars, motorcyclists and, particularly, cyclists.

The last Liberal Democrat administration opposed the ending of the agency agreement with the Council. The Conservatives supported it. The decline in the service is their fault - but it is too late to do anything about it apart from fighting for more resources to come to Cheltenham. We will do this.

For years the Council had one of the best Concessionary Travel Systems for the elderly in the country. Now free nationwide bus travel has been introduced by the Government for the over 60s. This is very good for older people and for Cheltenham, because it means that fewer older people will use their cars and therefore there will be less traffic congestion and pollution, and less demand for parking. But because the Government is not properly funding it - as it promised it would - it costs Cheltenham Council Tax payers an extra £800,000s a year! We will support this initiative to make it as effective as it can be and will argue for the necessary funding from central Government to do it.

Given that the price of energy is certain to increase in the long run it will be more expensive to travel by car and there will be more demand for good quality bus and light rail services. The policy of localism will mean that people will travel less and use public transport more. We need to encourage investment in the public transport infrastructure to promote this. But we will oppose plans for Parkway station!! We genuinely cannot understand the logic behind Parkway since it would dramatically reduce trains stopping at Cheltenham. Neither is the Government persuaded and has indicated that a much better case must be made for it if funding is to be made available. We need a light rail system as mentioned earlier as part of a comprehensive approach to development in Severn Vale. Building a brand new station at Parkway is putting the cart before the horse!

We will continue a policy of reducing traffic through the town centre and of promoting clean, safe and efficient public transport. Buses, taxis and the disabled will be the only ones excluded from restrictions. Deliveries will be

encouraged outside of normal working hours. To reduce the amount of traffic entering the town on the A40 from the Golden Valley we will support the construction of southerly access/ northerly exit from the M5 at junction 10 (Piffs Elm), and associated works to ensure safety on Tewkesbury Road. We will support acceptable extensions to the Park and Ride system - particularly to the west of the town at Uckington.

Community safety

Crime and anti-social behaviour affects the lives of far too many people in our town and it is one of the top priorities of the Liberal Democrats to ensure that the police, the Council and local communities work effectively together to tackle it. For the last ten years or so the Police and the Council with other agencies has coordinated work to prevent crime in the area through the Crime and Disorder Partnership, and this work has been effective.

However, the best defence against anti-social behaviour and crime is a healthy and vibrant community, in which people know each other and watch out for each other. We therefore believe that strengthening and developing communities is crucial in lowering crime and disorder. We welcome the decision by the Police to focus on neighbourhood policing. It strengthens our policy of 'localism'.

The established Neighbourhood Coordination Groups which involve meetings between local community representatives, politicians and police representatives are seen as the building blocks for a Neighbourhood Management approach. The aim of this is to get community representatives and organisations together at a local level to sort out practical problems - building on existing structures so as to minimise bureaucracy and duplication. This will strengthen communities.

Policing

There are 4 Police Stations in the town and 444 employees in the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Police Division made up of 291 Police Officers; 50 Police Staff; 47 Police Community Support Officers; 44 Special Constables and 12 Custody Detention Officers.

Those who commit crime and anti-social behaviour must be properly punished, and made to face up to the damage they have caused. We would advocate a targeted use of Anti Social Behaviour Orders, controlled and co-ordinated by the Community Safety Unit. In exceptional circumstances, the exclusion of repeat offenders from the whole of the town should be considered.

Much of the crime and anti-social behaviour in the town is committed by young people. We will support crime diversion schemes which stop young offenders becoming criminals in the first instance. We will encourage further co-operation between young people's organisations, particularly the County Council Youth and Community Service, the Council, the Youth Offending service and Cheltenham's Youth Council to address the needs and aspirations of young people.

Cheltenham's 'Safer Estates' initiative established by the Liberal Democrats is a nationally acclaimed approach that uses a range of measures to modify the behaviour of anti-social / difficult people who live on Council Estates. This initiative is run by Cheltenham Borough Homes - the company created by the Council to manage its housing stock.

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders have been used in Cheltenham to target repeat offenders. Following the imposition of an ASBO people can be banned from certain areas of the town, or the whole of the town. If they break the ASBO they can get up to 5 years imprisonment and/or a fine.

We will ensure a high priority is given to securing a safe town centre, especially at night, through high profile policing and use of CCTV to detect and prosecute offenders. We will support anti-littering and anti-vandalism initiatives, and support a firmly policed town centre. The Liberal Democrat Cabinet supported a Dispersal Order for the town centre when there were problems involving some young people - and the threat of it resolved the issues, but we acknowledge that the best way of reducing anti-social behaviour among young people is to work with the Youth Service and other agencies early on to address the issues that young people have.

Anti social behaviour

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We will encourage the town's park rangers, town centre wardens, taxi marshals and traffic wardens to work closely together with police community support officers to tackle low-level anti-social behaviour and vandalism so that the police can concentrate on serious crime and public disorder, and welcome the street pastors initiative which will help to get vulnerable people off the streets and home safely.

Health

Cheltenham's town motto is 'Salubritas et Eruditio' - Health and Education. Under the law, the Borough Council has a role in the scrutiny of the provision of health services in Cheltenham and works closely with the County Council to pursue this. Liberal Democrats and our MP played an important role in organising the opposition to the closure of the Battledown children's ward and are committed to fighting to maintain maternity services at Cheltenham. The protection of health facilities that serve the people of Cheltenham is of prime importance, and plans for change must include proper consultation with the public and their political representatives. There is still concern that elements within the Conservative Party - such as the extremist Conservative Member of the

Health facilities

Cheltenham has:

- 14 Medical Practices with 91 Doctors;
- 18 Dental surgeries with 52 Dentists (with 2 more on the way)
- 23 Ophthalmic Surgeries with 54 Opticians;
- 25 Pharmacies with 97 Pharmacists.

A total of 270,620 outpatients were also dealt with by other Health facilities, including the 493 bed General Hospital and Delancey Hospitals; Linton House; St Paul's Medical Centre and Hesters Way Healthy Living Centre.

European Parliament Daniel Hannan - want to dismantle the National Health Service.

The health of the community should be looked at in a wider context than just the provision of health facilities - such as doctors, hospitals, dentists, opticians and so on, which are the responsibility of the National Health Service. It is necessary to make sure that health care is complemented with a strategy for healthy living that puts emphasis on public health issues such as clean water, fit housing and wholesome food, and the provision of facilities for exercise and leisure, such as swimming pools, leisure facilities and parks.

We will work with the Health Authority and the Primary Care Trust to coordinate the delivery of those services that have an impact on health. The Borough Council is the enforcing authority for environmental health and housing functions, which includes health and safety in certain premises, pollution and food and water. It also includes leisure facilities which have a health, (including a mental health), dimension. The Parks, the leisure centre and the museum and art gallery are part of this function. We will promote athletics and swimming and review current facilities to assess whether the facilities provided by the borough in the playing fields it owns can be improved and enhanced, and we will seek to protect overall playing field provision. We brought the Leisure Centre back into use following its destruction in the 2007 floods and it is better than ever and paying its way. Flood defence works around it are planned.

Since the last election, two new Neighbourhood Resource Centres in Oakley and Springbank have been completed. These co-ordinate a range of health care facilities and include ante-natal classes, exercise initiatives, anti-smoking courses and so on as well as other more orthodox medical facilities - such as doctors surgery and pharmacists in Springbank or the Cheltenham Borough Homes area office in the Oakley Resource Centre.

We will continue to enforce housing fitness standards particularly in houses in multiple occupation and try to bring empty property back into use. We will continue to promote the insulation of property in order to tackle fuel poverty and reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

We will promote cycling and walking particularly on health grounds as well as a way of reducing dependence on motor transport and reducing carbon dioxide emissions. We will make sure that there are dog free areas and play areas for young children in our parks. We will continue to support our dog and park warden services to protect our open spaces from litter and dog mess, and take appropriate steps to reduce other nuisances, such as concentrations of seagulls.

We will promote the use of allotments for growing food and for recreation, and support and extend the Farmers Market. We will oppose any development on allotment land unless it is clearly in the public interest to do so and only if alternative allotments are provided. We will need to provide more allotments to meet an increasing demand - with 700 people on the waiting list (at Oct 2009).

The festival culture and quality environment

The festival culture is central to the quality of life offered by the town. It is important to its economy as a tourist attraction. It is a cultural attraction for its citizens. Cheltenham's festivals are a showcase for the town and we will continue to support them and the Cheltenham Festival Company. They are vital to the success of the town and are profitable financially for the town only because they are good culturally. Many people choose to live in the town because of its festival culture, and there is a strong relationship between its festival culture and educational establishments. Those who argue that the Council should not support the festivals fail to understand how important they are to the 'total quality' environment of the town

We will work to create the area around St Mary's Church and the existing library/museum as the cultural 'quarter' of the town.

We have supported the Art Gallery and Museum extension with £2million of Council capital funding. Plans for it have been agreed and construction should begin in 2010. In order to make sure it survives in the long term will seek to establish a Cultural Trust, separate from the Council, so that it can be insulated from the financial problems the Council may have. Despite the current financial difficulties we have proposed a major funding package for the 'Everyman' Theatre. To increase tourism we will advocate 'twinning partnerships' with rural towns in Gloucestershire and with Gloucester City so that the attraction of all can be marketed together.

Environment

The environment, particularly the town centre environment, is under constant pressure and is crucial in maintaining Cheltenham's quality image which is the basis of its prosperity. We will protect and enhance this heritage, particularly the Conservation Areas. We will preserve the appearance of the 1500 acres of Central Conservation Area and all the other conservation areas. We will encourage owners of high profile terraces of properties to co-operate in improving their appearance and work to secure funding to help in this. We have produced Conservation Area Statements for most of the Conservation Areas in the town, as well as a crucial Supplementary Planning Document on Garden Land and Infill sites introduced to prevent poor development particularly outside Conservation Areas. In a previous Liberal Democrat administration we completed a Local List of buildings to enhance their protection - and are pleased to say that not one of them so far has been demolished.

We will promote and protect the towns green spaces as outlined in the Council's Green Spaces strategy and develop policies that help mitigate

Cheltenham festivals

There are four festivals a year organised by the Cheltenham Festival Company.

Jazz Festival - April

Science Festival - June

Music and Fringe Festival - July

Literature Festival - October

In addition there is the annual Cricket festival, and the Folk Festival which takes place in February. Along with the Race meetings, including the National Hunt Festival, these events attract about half a million people to Cheltenham a year, and directly generate an estimated £34 million in income for the town. The Festival of Performing Arts, the oldest festival in Cheltenham, has been in existence since the 1930s. Lately the Greenbelt festival has proved to be very popular and attracted many thousands of participants.

the effects of climate change such as allowing open land wherever possible so that water can naturally drain away and cultivating trees and plants that can live in the changing conditions. We have finalised a Green Spaces strategy that joins up the various elements of green space provision and management with strategic land management, sustainability, biodiversity, and adaptation and resilience to climate change.

Cheltenham is known as the Garden Town of England and has won more awards in the annual Britain in Bloom competition than any other town in the country. We will promote the town's parks and gardens but acknowledge that given the current financial climate, it will be difficult to maintain the levels of planting that there have been, and that more sustainable

planting will be introduced that is better suited to the changing climatic conditions. However, we will ensure that the ornamental gardens, such as the Long Gardens, are protected as an admired attraction. Vandalism of these gardens and associated property will be vigorously combated.

We will clean the town centre area more regularly, and make sure that cleansing plant and equipment is improved and brought up to date so that all areas can be better cleaned. We will increase the number of litterbins in the town centre. It's hard to prosecute people for dropping litter when there are so few litter bins around.

Preventing and reducing waste before it occurs is the most efficient way to minimise it - and any waste that remains should be reused if possible. Only then should recycling and similar techniques be used, and so we will strive for a 'waste minimisation' strategy. This will include promoting composting and encouraging people to reduce waste as much as possible - and then recycle as much of the remainder as can be done.

We will keep the Recycling Centre at the depot open and intensify our efforts to promote recycling in the Borough as a whole. During the last Liberal Democrat administration we increased re-cycling threefold from 9% to almost 27% of household waste by weight. This had only improved to 30% during the last Conservative administration in March 2007, and has since risen to 34%. There is still a long way to go. We will therefore extend recycling facilities to include plastics and cardboard and welcome the introduction of these facilities that we budgeted for when we previously ran the Council. Our next priority will be to introduce re-cycling of kitchen waste.

There were signs that the previous Conservative Council was considering moving to a fortnightly collection regime, which is a national trend. We believe that if this move is to be made it should only be done in those parts of the Borough where waste has been reduced through better recycling to the point where it makes it sensible and practical to do it, and also acknowledge that there are some parts of the Borough, such as parts of the town centre, where weekly collections will continue to be necessary.

We have supported and will continue to support the Civic Pride initiative and have established, with cross party support, a delivery vehicle separate

Parks and beautiful buildings

The town covers 11,500 acres of which 1,661 acres are in Conservation Areas. Some 2540 buildings are nationally listed and some 430 buildings or structures are on a local list of architectural interest. These have specific protection in the local plan (2009). There are 10 major parks and 16 playing fields in the town, and a further 475 pieces of green space owned or controlled by Public Bodies.

to the Council and are seeking to design a scheme that stops most vehicle traffic through Boots corner, because this is the key that unlocks much of the potential in Civic Pride. The impressive improvement works at Montpellier Gardens were the first stage of Civic Pride, but later stages will involve redevelopment of some major town centre sites owned by the Council. We will ensure that whatever building is done is appropriate for the needs of the town, well designed and has the minimum carbon footprint possible.

Children and young people - lifelong learning

Most schools in Cheltenham are good schools. We believe that good schools should be nurtured and weaker schools given the resources so that they can develop and improve. We do not believe that closing Pates Grammar School will improve the results at Pittville. We do welcome the work that Pates Grammar School does with the gifted and talented children in our primary schools. We do believe that more resources should be targeted at weaker schools and for that reason support the closure of Kingsmead and Christ College (formerly St. Benedicts) and accept the planned 'All Saints' academy which has now received Government funding and will be built. We believe that the Academy must serve the interests of the local community, and that every child from the local area who wishes to go there should be able to do so. We welcome the fact that sixth form education will return to this area within the new Academy.

Schools and Colleges

In September 2006 there were 13,139 pupils in 39 LA schools including 6 Secondary Schools and 3 Special Schools in Cheltenham as well as 4 private secondary schools (Cheltenham College; the Ladies College; Dean Close and St. Edwards) and associated pre-schools. (source LA 2007) 'All Saints' - a new Academy in west Cheltenham - has resulted from the closure of Kingsmead school and the proposed closure of Christ College (formerly St. Benedicts) and will open in September 2011.

In addition there are 8304 students (5,952 f/t & 2,352 p/t) + 1,360 staff (671 f/t & 689 p/t) at Gloucestershire University in Cheltenham (source Glos. University 2007), and approaching 19,000 students at Gloucestershire College - formally GlosCat (3,024 f/t and 18,753 p/t)

(Source GlosColl website 2007 - figs include students at Gloucester and Cheltenham)

There have been many debates about secondary education because it is the gateway to future life chances, but to reduce education to just an issue of social mobility, as some have done, is a mistake. It is important to the individual in terms of their own development, to the country in terms of developing our economy, society and culture, and in producing the excellence that our top Universities lead the world in.

For this reason we start where we are at, rather than attempting to recreate the educational system. In addition to the 6 (soon to be 5) state funded secondary schools, we have four public schools in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire College, and the University of Gloucestershire. They are part of the town. We support the partnership work that goes on between schools, the College and the University, and will encourage more of it - particularly between the independent and the state schools. Cheltenham Ladies College is a very fine school with superb academic results and we believe the relationship they have with the wider community is good for everyone and ought to be applauded. The days when money alone could

buy a future are gone. Today's young people have to be academically committed to get to the best universities regardless of which school they attended - but money does buy opportunity. So we want a state system that gives as much opportunity as possible to those who cannot afford to buy an education - and it starts with very young children, and families and with developing motivation and commitment in children.

Those children who are born to parents with no tradition of education or who do not value it are at a massive disadvantage and all the information available demonstrates that those without basic skills find it very hard to find employment and even harder to find well paid secure employment. Education starts at birth. We welcome Sure Start and the children's centres in the most deprived parts of the town and we want to see children nurtured, and inspired to take advantage of all the options that exist and that can develop them. This is why we opposed the closure of Monkscroft Community school. On the one hand we are told that Cheltenham has to expand and build more houses. On the other hand we are closing excellent primary schools because the numbers of pupils are falling. This doesn't make sense.

Economic development

We will not artificially separate economic issues from social issues, because wealth creation is at the heart of addressing social issues and must be done in a co-ordinated and planned way. We acknowledge that capitalism is inherently unstable and needs careful regulation to provide for the needs of people.

Economic Development and Education are also connected. We need to educate and train people, not only for the sake of their own self development, but so that they can also improve business and increase productivity. We are fortunate to have excellent facilities at Gloucestershire College (formally GlosCat) and at Gloucestershire University, which is improving all the time.

Employment

Some 62,858 people are employed full and part time in the town. Growth has outstripped the national average over the last 10 years.

There are an estimated 6 million day visitors a year, mainly shoppers, who visit the town from beyond its borders.

There are 486 retail premises, 519 restaurants, cafes and bars and 1819 commercial premises in the town, and in all some 3,742 business premises.

We will continue to promote and protect a diversified and balanced economy, and work with employers to identify the skills they need in their workforce in order to increase productivity and training opportunities.

We will continue the close working relationship we have developed with Gloucestershire County Council, the Regional Development Agency, Gloucestershire First, Business Link (now Chargrove Business Services) and the Learning and Skills Council to try and continually improve the economic attraction of the town. We will endeavour to improve Cheltenham as a retail destination by focussing, in particular, on the town centre improvements detailed earlier but will encourage people to use Public Transport as visitors.

We will continue to protect land for employment purposes and use powers available to us to assemble plots of land to achieve this end. We will continue to support business and employment opportunities around

Gloucestershire Airport at Staverton which the Council jointly owns with Gloucester City, and promote it primarily as a high-tech employment opportunity for the whole of Gloucestershire rather than as a housing opportunity. However, we will not agree to large expansion of Staverton, and have only supported those engineering works that make it safer. As part of the deal, they have agreed to a 'Green Management' plan that pays heed to the environment with a cap on the number of flights.

We will promote Cheltenham as a Quality Town located in a Quality County and we will publish an updated economic model on an annual basis in order to monitor the health of the local economy and hold an annual 'state of the economy' seminar to which businesses will be invited to give their views. We need to understand the nature of the local economy, and the threats and opportunities that face it.

Governance

We believe the decision making process should be more open and transparent. We believe this strengthens it. We argued successfully that no chair of Overview and Scrutiny should come from the same party that forms the Cabinet, where there was a single party cabinet, and that the process for 'calling in' Cabinet decisions should be made easier by Overview and Scrutiny Committees, but we feel more needs to be done.

We will therefore promote the following constitutional changes:

- At the moment the Cabinet can implement policies even if the majority of the Council are opposed to them. Councillors not within the Cabinet can be isolated and feel powerless. We will reassert the supremacy of full Council with a condition being that any issue can be referred to full Council by majority vote from one of the Council's three Overview and Scrutiny Committees.
- We feel that to deny the supremacy of full Council is an abuse of democracy - and that this is a big flaw in the Cabinet system that has encouraged bad governance and poor decision making. We will seek cross party support for the principle that the Cabinet will not override decisions taken at full Council despite Cabinet having the legal right to do so, unless there are powerful reasons for doing so.
- The Constitution should be a respected and primary source of Governance. At the moment it is a political yo-yo because it can be changed by a simple majority vote. The Conservatives have

Decision making structures at the Council

At the moment there are 40 Councillors. They elect a Leader who then appoints a Cabinet which has executive authority to take most decisions on behalf of the Council within an agreed annual budget.

There are three Overview and Scrutiny Committees responsible for examining the work of the Council and the Cabinet. If the process of decision making has been defective then an Overview and Scrutiny Committee can 'call a decision in' and examine it further.

The executive should then reconsider it in light of the observations of Overview and Scrutiny. Although the membership of these committees is proportionately based on political parties, they are supposed to examine things from a non-party view point, and be detached from the Cabinet. They are chaired by elected members from a different political party to the Cabinet, unless the Cabinet is 'hung'.

indicated they will reverse the changes indicated above should they ever achieve a majority capable of doing so. We pledge that we will review the Constitution and change it so that it can only be amended by a two thirds majority in future to safeguard these important democratic rights.

Conclusion

These are just our ideas and views. They unfold from our basic beliefs and our experience of living and working in the town, and governing it, for many years. If you have ideas to contribute and they fit in with our views then we will pursue them if they can be practically implemented. We acknowledge that we haven't got a monopoly on good ideas. But compare our manifesto with those of the other groups, and decide, having considered it, which party you most believe in to run the town.

We will be putting up a full field of candidates in the forthcoming election and look forward to robust debate around our policies. If you agree with us and want to make a contribution - join us.

ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE LAST ELECTION, 2008

- ✓ Springbank Neighbourhood Resource Centre (which has integrated GP/pharmacy and Dentistry facilities in it, plus educational and child care facilities etc)
- ✓ Oakley Community Resource Centre - alongside CBH satellite office.
- ✓ Beginning the process of Neighbourhood Management - seeking to work with existing organisations so that community involvement/engagement is 'bottom-up' rather than top-down.
- ✓ Introduction of Choice Based lettings for Council Housing (ie one list for the whole of Gloucestershire in which applicants have access on the web to vacant property which they can apply for given their circumstances)
- ✓ Development of design for St. Pauls rebuild and funding applied for (planning permission achieved December 2009)).
- ✓ Agreement to building new 'Council' houses through CBH on garage sites and other redundant sites.
- ✓ Establishment of Civic Pride Delivery Vehicle.
- ✓ Resistance to the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- ✓ Successfully reopened the Sports Centre (damaged badly by flooding) on time and within cost.
- ✓ Reopened the cricket centre (damaged badly by flooding).
- ✓ Introduced free under 16 swimming and a range of cut price sporting activities for over 55s.
- ✓ Expanded the Healthy living programme and GP Referrals programme.
- ✓ Funded the refurbishment of the Playhouse theatre.

- ✓ Extended doorstep recycling to cardboard.
- ✓ Recycling of plastic bottles announced to begin early in 2010.
- ✓ 53 new allotments opened on Saturday 5th September.
- ✓ Design for new Art Gallery Museum completed and Council funding put in place as a basis for other 3rd party funding.
- ✓ Supplementary planning guidance for Garden Land and Infill sites finalised and accepted by Council.
- ✓ Adoption of 7 Supplementary Planning documents for Conservation Areas to protect town's heritage.
- ✓ Protection of street trees and establishment of fund to replace dead ones.
- ✓ Declaration of Dispersal Area in Town Centre to deal with ASB.
- ✓ Development of 'shared services' with surrounding Council's (particularly Tewkesbury) to cut down costs and increase capacity and resilience - Legal and Building Control so far.
- ✓ Streamlining of procedures and processes of internal services by systems thinking and service improvement in order to lower costs to those identified in 5 year Medium Term Finance Strategy.
- ✓ Introduced new more transparent budget-making process with projected 5 year plan.
- ✓ Extension of recycling facilities ... local businesses can now benefit from paper, cardboard, and glass recycling collections as well as trade waste collections
- ✓ Budget proposal to give £250k grant aid to Everyman Theatre plus £1m loan to be repaid over 25 years.
- ✓ Establishment of annual Community Pride fund for voluntary sector organisations.

