

## Dates for the diary

Saturday 4 October, **All Saints, Charlton Park, College and Leckhampton Surgery**, 16 Hewlett Road, 10 - 12 noon. Contact Lloyd Surgenor on 529387.

Wednesday 15 October, **All Saints, Charlton Park, College and Leckhampton Branch Meeting**, 16 Hewlett Road, 7 pm. All members welcome. Contact Chris Coleman on 224889.

Saturday 25 October, **Quiz Evening**, Swindon Village Hall, 7.30 pm. Tickets £7.50 to include supper. Phone Heather Turner on 574227 to let us know you are coming.

Wednesday 29 October, **St Mark's, St Paul's and St Peter's Branch Meeting & Surgery**, St Mark's Community Centre, 7 pm. All branch members are invited to attend. Contact John Webster on 511424.

Thursday 6 November, **Executive Committee** meeting, Victoria House, 1 Gloucester Road, 7 pm. All members welcome. Contact Nigel Britter on 224889.

Friday 21 November, **Constituency Dinner**, Renaissance restaurant at Gloucestershire College, Princess Elizabeth Way. Tickets £19.50; contact Heather Turner on 574227.

Thursday 27 November, **Constituency AGM**, Municipal Offices, 7 pm. Contact Andy Williams on 224889.

For a full listing of events see the website at [www.cheltlibdems.org.uk](http://www.cheltlibdems.org.uk)

## Candidates selected to fight county election

The Lib Dems have selected most of their candidates to fight next June's Gloucestershire County Council elections. The full list is as follows:

**Up Hatherley, Benhall, Hesters Way**  
Simon Wheeler  
Chris Pallet

**Springbank**  
Suzanne Williams

**St Mark's, St Paul's, St Peter's**  
Mike Skinner  
Charmian Sheppard

**All Saints**  
Garth Barnes  
Chris Coleman

**Charlton Kings & Battledown**  
Paul McCloskey

**Oakley, Pittville, Prestbury**  
Martin Dunne

We are in the process of selecting a second candidate for Oakley, as well as two people to fight the Lansdown, Park and Warden Hill division. Watch this space!

## Autumn dinner

We will be holding a constituency dinner on **Friday 21 November 2008** at the Renaissance restaurant at Gloucestershire College's (GLOSCAT as was) Cheltenham campus in Princess Elizabeth Way. Tickets cost £19.50 and the speaker will be Chris Rennard. Contact Heather Turner on 574227.

## Quiz evening

The Autumn quiz will be on Saturday 25 October at Swindon Village Hall at 7.30 pm. Tickets £7.50 to include supper. Please phone Heather Turner on 574227 to let us know you are coming.

## Focus Club Draw

The Focus Club Draw is vital for our fund-raising in Cheltenham. Since it was launched in 1986 it has contributed many thousands of pounds to the local party.

**It is also a chance to win two cash prizes every month.** We need to increase the vigour and effectiveness of our campaigning and, amongst other things, that costs money.

Please consider joining by returning the form enclosed with this newsletter today.

Thanks very much  
for your support

## We need your help

Even outside election time, there are always jobs that need doing, either in the office or at home. Please help if you can - training will always be provided where necessary.

- I can help in the office, stuffing envelopes, folding leaflets etc
- I can help deliver leaflets
- I can help with door-to-door canvassing
- I can help with telephone canvassing
- I have computer skills which may be of use
- I can help with fund-raising

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return to:** Liberal Democrats, FREEPOST SWC0744, 16 Hewlett Road, Cheltenham, GL52 6ZZ

October 2008  
The newsletter of Cheltenham Liberal Democrats  
Free Speech

## INSIDE THIS EDITION

**Environment** - Tories block debate on crucial green issues at Shire Hall

**Fairer taxation** - conference backs cuts which will benefit Cheltenham's workers

**Economic recovery** - Lib Dems launch 9-point plan for a fairer economic future

**County elections** - candidates have been selected for June's County Council vote

**Dates for your diary** - all the events that are coming up in the next few months

**Can you help?** - we need YOU to increase the vigour of our campaigning

## Our achievements so far...

### Leader of the Borough Council Steve Jordan updates us on 5 months of Lib Dem control in Cheltenham

There has now been a Liberal Democrat administration in Cheltenham for 5 months so what have we done? This is a quick run through some of the key issues we campaigned on during the election and what happened next.

The issue most raised on the doorstep during the election was poor roads and pavements. Unfortunately, these are run by the Tory county council who seemed to completely underestimate the work involved when they took them away from local control in Cheltenham and Gloucester last year. It makes getting improvements difficult but within the cabinet John Morris has special responsibility for dealing with the county on roads and pavements. He now has regular meetings with them to discuss Cheltenham issues. We have also been promised that local councillors will be consulted this year before the county work programme is put together.

We remain concerned about the Single Advice Contract pushed through by the previous Conservative administration. It both cuts the advice available for people with problems in Cheltenham and is likely to finish off a number of respected advice agencies in the town. Unfortunately the new 3 year contract started on 1<sup>st</sup> April and there is little we can do to alter that but we are monitoring the situation closely to assess the impact.

Under the proposed Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), Cheltenham is threatened with huge new housing developments (13800 homes) sprawling into the greenbelt. We have until 24 October to respond to government on this. To have your voice heard, download the official comments form from: <http://www.gosw.gov.uk/gosw/planninghome/691545/713860/>.

As part of the RSS, the government proposed the Growth Points initiative. This purported to fund improved infrastructure but depended on councils signing up to accelerated and, in our view, excessive housing growth. The previous Tory leader in Cheltenham did sign up to this, but we have always

### By-election: We need your help!

Loraine Yates, the Liberal Democrat councillor for the Churchdown Brookfield ward since 2007, has stepped down in order to move abroad. We need your help to get our candidate Tony Stokes elected in the by-election on Thursday 16 October.

Campaigners are meeting at Churchdown Parish Council car park on Parton Road most weekday evenings at 5.30 pm for canvassing and delivery, and in the same place on Saturdays at 10.30 am. Every little bit of effort is crucial for us to retain this marginal seat and keep the Tories from taking back overall control of the council. So please give up any time you can!

Contact Bill Whelan on 01452 856375, or Alistair Cameron on 01242 584081 for more information.

Continued overleaf...

## The story so far

Continued from page 1...

opposed it. Our win in May clearly put the wind up the Tories as the county council immediately reversed its own position. I have written to Hazel Blears to make it clear we would never support the excessive growth proposed and Gloucestershire is not now included in the current phase of Growth Points. However, providing proper infrastructure, especially public transport, for current requirements let alone any growth is clearly a big concern and must be properly funded by government.

We have reversed the policy of the previous administration of support for the proposed Gloucestershire Parkway station. However it is still supported by the county council. In Cheltenham, the Lib Dems support improvements to public transport in general and Gloucester station in particular, but this must not be done by reducing trains to Cheltenham.

In June, John Rawson, who looks after council finances, put forward proposals for using money saved from the previous year's budget. £50k of this was put into funding energy reduction measures within the council itself.



After over a year closed because of flooding, Leisure@Cheltenham has now reopened. Andrew McKinlay, who looks after sports and safety,

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*We have until 24 October to respond to the government's plans for 13,800 new houses. Don't forget to have your say!*

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was able to carry out our promise of free swimming for under 16's to encourage more youngsters to swim. We seem to have beaten the government to this one!

One of the biggest issues is to improve recycling. Things have stagnated in Cheltenham during the last 2 years of Tory rule and we need to move forward.

Unfortunately there is no extra funding and as a rough guide a new kerbside collection throughout Cheltenham would cost about £500k, or 7% on council tax. To complicate things, district councils collect your rubbish but the county council disposes of it. The county's

plans are still not clear but we don't have time to wait for them to get organised if we are to meet our targets of 40% of waste recycled by 2010.

So we have to be smart and flexible. At cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> October, Paul Massey, responsible for sustainability, will put forward a new broadly cost neutral package which should see us:-

- Introduce kerbside collection of cardboard in existing recycling boxes and using existing council lorries from April 2009;
- Improve recycling for flats etc by providing new communal bins that you can't contaminate with normal waste sacks;
- Introduce free weekly kerbside collection of kitchen waste from Sept 2009;
- Introduce weekly kerbside collection of garden waste (to be charged at £30 per year) also from Sept 2009 and using new bins (to replace the green bags);
- Offer subsidised home composting kits;
- Keep the collection of residual waste free and weekly.

It is disappointing that we can't include plastic at this stage but the weight to volume ratio makes the cost prohibitive. However we are looking at more 'bring sites' and talking to contractors who may take more plastics than just bottles.

## NATIONAL NEWS

# The Lib Dems' nine steps to economic recovery

The Liberal Democrats have responded to the current economic crisis by issuing a nine-point action plan with the dual aim of giving the economy a boost and making the country a fairer place.

The plan addresses some of the most important issues facing British households, like rising energy bills, house prices and growing debt problems, while also including measures designed to stabilise the economy, like regulating bankers more efficiently.

### 1. Action on the housing crisis

Families struggling with repayments will be allowed to sell all or part of the equity in their house and rent it back from a housing association or private firm to help keep them in their home. A statutory Code of Practice for mortgage lenders will be introduced to ensure that repossession is only ever the last resort. Finally, councils and housing associations will be allowed to borrow against their assets to buy up unsold properties and land from building companies in order to replenish the social housing stock.

### 2. Action to put more money in people's pockets

The basic rate of income tax will be cut by 4p in the pound, paid for by upping taxes on pollution and closing tax loopholes used by the rich. We will also get tough on unnecessary and wasteful government spending, and use some of the money saved to cut taxes even further for those on low and middle incomes.

### 3. Action to limit the excesses of the City

More will be done to stop the destabilising practice of short-selling bank shares by hedge funds, and banks will be required to hold more capital in periods of boom and less in recession. This will help to prevent the boom and bust cycle characterised by extremes of irresponsible lending. We will take decisive action to curb the 'bonus culture' using regulation where necessary to stop large payments which destabilise the financial system by encouraging reckless risk-taking. Those institutions, like hedge funds, that are not subject to the same degree of security and transparency as others will be subject to more effective regulation.

### 4. Action to deliver future economic stability

House prices will be included in the considerations of the Bank of England when setting interest rates to manage inflation, and the Government's fiscal rules will be independently monitored.

### 5. Action to cut energy bills and fight fuel poverty

Energy companies will be compelled to re-invest the £9 billion profit they have made in kind from the Emissions Trading Scheme into cutting bills through the following:

- The roll out of social tariffs to over two million vulnerable customers;
- Installation of smart meters, which show consumption costs;

- A £500 million a year rolling programme to make sure homes are properly insulated.

### 6. Action to help people with debt problems

A national network of free independent financial advice centres will be created to ensure that individuals with debt problems can seek assistance promptly and professionally. The social fund will also be expanded, increasing the amount of short term emergency affordable loans to help low income families pay off high-interest debt.

### 7. Action to help people who lose their jobs

Jobseekers will be given personalised help to meet their individual needs. The cost of work permits for foreign workers will also be increased, and the money made will be directed to fund more training for low skilled and unemployed workers already in Britain.

### 8. Action to deliver 'green-collar' jobs and energy independence

A big investment in renewables, home insulation and railways will create thousands of jobs.

### 9. Action to reinvigorate global trade

We will work within the EU to unlock the stalemate on agricultural trade between the rich and the developing world, and bring down prices worldwide.

## Would you like a tour of Parliament?

Martin is always delighted to welcome constituents to Westminster and arrange a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament for them.

Whether you want to come along with a few friends or family members, or would like to organise a group to come from your school, place of work or organisation, just let Martin know on 224889 or email martin@martinhorwood.net.

Martin says: "It has been a pleasure to see so many constituents up in Westminster - do come along if you can."

There is no charge for tours but places are limited so please let Martin have as much notice as possible.



# Conference backs tax cuts for the lowest paid

Delegates at the annual Autumn conference committed the Liberal Democrats to deliver big tax cuts for people on low and average incomes by voting to approve the party's new *Make it Happen* policy document.

The document serves as the basis for a general election manifesto, laying out the party's vision and values. At its heart is the proposal to reduce the tax burden on the lowest paid by taxing pollution and closing the tax loopholes used by the rich instead.

Addressing critics of the party's new tax-cutting language, Vince Cable said in his conference speech: "I don't see what is 'right wing' about wanting to cut the taxes of millions of people who earn less or barely more than the equivalent of the minimum wage."

Cable also hit out at the Conservatives' promises to implement a 'fair' tax regime, saying David Cameron's "top tax priority is to lift millionaires out of inheritance tax; his second is to remove the burden of stamp duty from share dealers."

Cable presented an alternative Liberal Democrat vision of fairness, which will see the highest earners pay more in tax to subsidise cuts for the majority of ordinary people, saying "tax cuts should mostly be paid for by

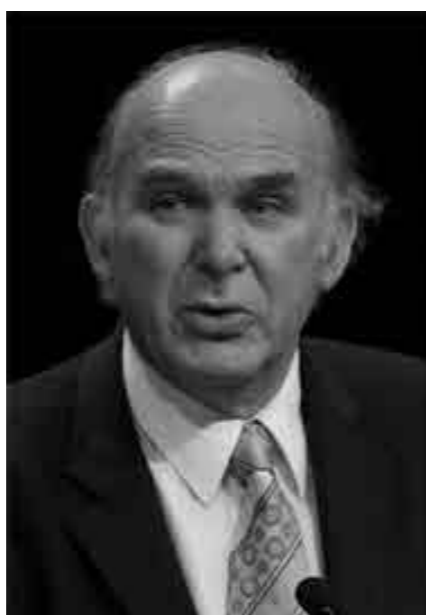
those who currently don't pay their fair share."

The Liberal Democrats' pledge to cut taxes for the lowest paid workers comes at a time when the campaign for the payment of a living wage is gaining increased attention.

Under the Labour government,

*"A Liberal Democrat government would reduce the income tax paid by many of Cheltenham's key workers and reduce the gap between rich and poor in the town."*

the gap between the highest and lowest paid has grown despite their introduction of the minimum wage. The minimum wage fails to take account of the variation in



Vince Cable told the conference that genuine fairness means tax cuts for ordinary workers at the expense of the highest earners.

living costs around the country and has proved inadequate as a means of providing people with enough money to live on.

Cheltenham is home to both large hospitality and retail industries and it is these sectors which employ the cleaners, catering staff and shop workers who suffer most from the government's

unfair approach to taxation.

A Liberal Democrat government would close the gap between rich and poor in the town that has

emerged under Labour and would make many of Cheltenham's key workers better off and go towards securing them a living wage.

Conference delegates also backed the document's plans to protect civil liberties, scrap ID cards and introduce a Freedom Law to get the government off people's backs

## Work for the Liberal Democrats

Based in Cheltenham a small telemarketing operation is looking for flexible and committed staff to join their team.

**Maximum of 15 hours per week, £6.50 per hour**

Flexible working hours guaranteed Full training given Call or text Richard on

07946 614464 or email [rpinnock@cix.co.uk](mailto:rpinnock@cix.co.uk) for more information.

# Tories block debate on environment

The Conservative-run County Council has effectively blocked councillors from debating many of the most important issues facing the county.

By abolishing the the council's Environment Scrutiny Committee at a meeting on 19 September, the Tories have stopped councillors studying, scrutinising and questioning their plans for dealing with environmental issues in the county.

In particular, the council's plans to build a massive incinerator to burn the county's waste will

*"The Conservative cabinet running Shire Hall clearly do not want the public to show an interest in the living and working environment in Gloucestershire."*

go unchallenged. The Liberal Democrats have campaigned against this approach, but now we have no way of fighting the council for a greater focus on reusing, recycling and reducing of the county's waste.

As Councillor Jeremy Hilton, the Lib Dem leader at the council said in June, "an incinerator will blow emissions all over Gloucester and Cheltenham, the most densely populated part of the county. It will

burn reusable waste to feed its appetite."

We will also be unable to scrutinise the council's progress on implementing the critical flood-risk studies that will assess the safety of building new houses in the floodplain of the River Severn.

Councillor Roger Brown, the Liberal Democrat shadow cabinet member for green issues said: "The Conservative cabinet running Shire Hall clearly do not want the public to show an interest in the living and

working environment in Gloucestershire.

"The environment around Gloucestershire

is critical to the quality of life for people living and working in the county. Local people need to have their say on the future of green fields and the risks of flooding.

"Shutting down the only forum in Shire Hall which allows councillors to challenge environmentally unsound decisions will shut out the concerns of local people in this vital area."

## Campaigns training

Regional campaigns officer Tim Pollard will lead a campaign training day on Saturday 11 October at Lysons Hall on St Swithuns Road in Hempsted, Gloucester.

The day will include sessions on community campaigning, focus writing, canvassing and messaging, and will be particularly useful for both first time candidates and experienced campaigners alike.

Tickets, to include lunch, cost £5. If you wish to attend, contact Jeremy Hilton on 01452 501206.

## Regional Conference

The Autumn Regional Conference and AGM will take place on Saturday 8 November at the Milford Hall Hotel in Salisbury.

Registration forms, calling notices and nomination forms are available from the Lib Dem office, 16 Hewlett Road. Contact 224889.

## News in brief

### Your email address

We already communicate with a number of you by email, but if you don't think we have your address and would like us to send you news about social events and political campaigning, please let us have it! Send your address to: [cheltlibdems@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cheltlibdems@yahoo.co.uk) Thank you!

### Could you hold a house meeting?

Formal meetings are not necessarily the best way to get our message over to local people. For example, Martin Horwood has held a number of extremely successful informal house meetings around the town since his election in 2005. Martin says: "These are an excellent way for me to meet constituents in a relaxed setting. If you would like to host one in your home please give the constituency office a call on 224889."

### Executive meetings

The Executive meets on the first Thursday of each month at 7 pm, usually at the offices of Aspey Lawrence. If any member would like to come along, please let the office know on 224889.

## Trip to London and tour of the Houses of Parliament



Date to be confirmed

**£12.50**

Contact Andy on 01242 224889 for further details

# Tory council in debt fiasco

**COUNTY COUNCIL DEBT** has increased by more than 15 % in just two years since the Conservatives took control of Shire Hall

In response to a Liberal Democrat question, shame-faced Tories were forced to admit that the debt has increased from £1,250 to £1,444 for every family in the county in the two years between 2005/6 and 2007/8. This is the direct result of the Tories' financial management, as they took control at Shire Hall in 2005.

**What's more, the borrowing spree is set to continue.** At a recent meeting the Conservative councillor in charge of the county's finances admitted that Gloucestershire County Council would 'resort to more borrowing'.

The Conservatives have also revealed that their plan to raise £11m by selling council assets to pay for services has failed completely. The new forecast is to try to raise £5 million, leaving a massive £6 million hole in the Council's budget.

£1.2 million of extra costs in social services have also been discovered, exposing the Tories' poor budgeting. As a result, services for elderly and vulnerable people will be cut and squeezed to make the extra costs fit into the original budget plans.

At the same time the Conservative cabinet has wasted £100,000 of

taxpayers' money on a 'communications review'. This is despite the fact that was no plan to spend this money in the budget published by the Council earlier this year.

Local Lib Dem county councillor **Mike Skinner** said: 'The shocking Conservative financial mismanagement is saddling the county's taxpayers with more and more debt. Social services for elderly and vulnerable people face cutbacks, while the Tories spend a fortune on propaganda and marketing.'

## Fight against the 'Urban Extension' goes on

The Government's latest house-building plans propose that 13,800 houses should be built in the Cheltenham area, including 5,000 in Green Belt north west of Cheltenham between Swindon Village and Uckington.

**However Liberal Democrats have condemned the so-called 'North West Urban Extension' as 'institutionalised urban sprawl'.** They believe the scheme will have disastrous effects on the Green Belt and create traffic congestion on major roads in our area, including **Tewkesbury Road** and **Princess Elizabeth Way**.

Cheltenham Borough Council's new Leader, Councillor Steve Jordan (Liberal Democrat), has now withdrawn from the Government's Growth Points scheme, in which councils can receive Government funding in

return for speeding up development. This reverses the previous Conservative administration's "expression of interest" in the Growth Points scheme, which was strongly opposed by the Lib Dems.

**Meanwhile, hundreds of local residents have signed local MP Martin Horwood's petition against the Government's plans to allow massive housing development in the Green Belt.**



Martin has been campaigning to preserve our green spaces

### Don't rob our schools!

**School governors and parents throughout Gloucestershire are furious at the way that the Conservatives on the County Council are planning to rob local schools and their pupils.**

The Tories are proposing to 'claw back' money that the schools have saved from their budgets,

often for important purposes such as replacing classrooms. **The county council has ignored many Headteachers and Governors** who worked hard on plans for their school finances. Liberal Democrats will be challenging the Tories to rethink this high-handed proposal and work more closely with schools.

# Cheltenham photo archive!



● The College ward team in action some years ago. The much-missed Derek Brown is in the background, but whatever happened to the fresh-faced youth on the left?.



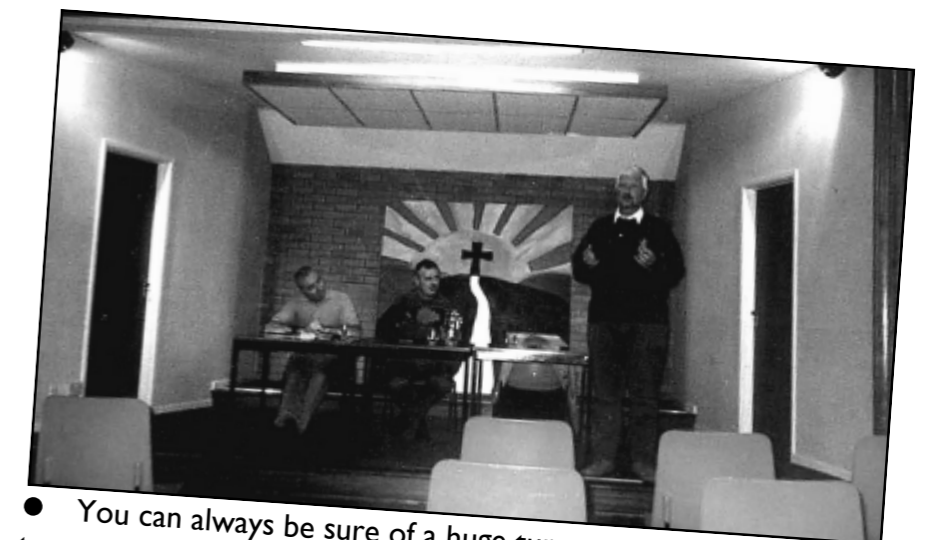
● Richard Holme, who sadly died in May, continued to support the Lib Dems in Cheltenham long after he stepped down as parliamentary candidate. Here he is opening our new office in Hewlett Road back in 2000.



● Former Cheltenham Councillor Hazel Langford demonstrating that the Lib Dems were taking the lead on recycling years before the other parties jumped on the band wagon



● County Councillor Charmian Sheppard strikes the sort of pose that has secured her re-election every time in her division.



● You can always be sure of a huge turn-out when the local MP turns up to speak. We think there was probably someone in the audience to at least take the photo.