

Annual Statement – Liberal Democrat Group

As leaders of the City Council Liberal Democrats committed to maintain Cambridge's remarkable economic prosperity, but also to address the key challenges facing the city, many arising from its success (as specified in the attached manifesto "Delivering for Cambridge"):

- To meet the pressing needs for housing
- To ensure everyone in the growing city feels they have a real stake in its success
- To keep Cambridge moving
- To protect and improve our unique quality of life
- To deliver our financial strategy to enable the maintenance and improvement of basic universal services

The Liberal Democrat group is willing to work together with the new Labour administration towards these goals, bringing forward our own ideas and subjecting theirs to scrutiny.

We will be concerned that new initiatives are within the competence and capacity of the council, are affordable and, based on sound analysis, are likely to achieve what is professed for them, which we expect to see defined as part of the initial decision making process. We will be vigilant in identifying measures that are more designed for political posturing than tangible benefit to residents.

We will use our experience of 14 years' running the Council to hold Labour to account on behalf of residents for good use of public resources, high service standards to residents and against the expectations they have set while winning power.

We will continue to champion the major policy directions and accomplishments pioneered under Liberal Democrat leadership of the Council and we will be challenging the Labour Party to:

- Defend the balance between accommodating growth and protecting the character and setting of the city, embodied in our draft Local Plan;
- Stop minimising the importance of the City Deal and put it to work for Greater Cambridge – securing fair balance between investment in transport infrastructure within as well as into the city, and giving priority to sustainable transport;
- Build and modernise more council homes and develop the consensus achieved with our Greater Cambridge partners on collaboration to build new intermediate housing;
- Honour the Council's commitment to the "Keep Cambridge Moving Fund" to mitigate congestion within the city arising from the enlarged A14;
- Start supporting the City Centre Business Improvement District, whilst holding its board to account in relation to residents' concerns;
- Maintain area-by-area momentum in delivering the new residential 20mph zones;
- Develop the Local Centres improvement programme, funded and initiated earlier this year, starting with Mitchams Corner;
- Support the Green Deal with the funds just won from Government to incentivise energy efficiency investment in rental housing and conservation areas;
- Treat the city's voluntary and not-for-profit sector as partners in achieving the council's objectives rather than just an easy source for savings

We will continue to

- advocate for the interests of the vulnerable to remain at the heart of council decision making
- argue for investing the time and resources necessary for getting right those decisions for the future of the city, which we have only one chance to get right
- promote emphasis on educational, preventative and restorative approaches to anti-social behaviour, arguing against unnecessary council bossiness
- champion openness in council processes, enablement of public participation and ease of access to public services

Delivering for Cambridge

Facing the challenges of the future

Cambridge has some urgent challenges on its plate... How to meet the pressing needs for housing? How to ensure everyone in the growing city feels they have a real stake? How to keep Cambridge moving? How to protect and improve our unique quality of life? How to make ends meet in the public sphere, so high quality services can be maintained?

Many of these challenges are symptoms of Cambridge's incredible success over the past decade under the Liberal Democrats.

Today the city has unemployment near the bottom of the national cities league table and average earnings near the top. Its world-renowned universities thrive and its technology companies are booming. Home-grown employers have been able to grow and stay. New employers with global reputations have been attracted to come here. We have been able to ride out the recession much better than most of the rest of the country. This has brought wide benefits through the local economy, including that Cambridge has the lowest shop vacancy rate in the country.

The Liberal Democrat City Council has enabled and shaped this prosperity by moving cautiously from rigid straightjacket to measured growth. Without this, the "Cambridge Phenomenon" would have stopped in its tracks.

The benefits of success have been very widely shared. Nationally published figures tell us that Cambridge today is the most equal of the UK's 64 cities and that we exhibit among the lowest levels of deprivation

The City Council under the Liberal Democrats has invested massively in fostering a cohesive community. Resources to enable and include have been targeted to neighbourhoods and communities where there is relative disadvantage. Policies for our services have been framed to address hardship and the needs of the vulnerable. The Council is the leading social landlord in the city, a role discharged with energy and innovation on behalf of its tenants. We have worked with the voluntary sector to reach where officialdom often cannot.

Cambridge remains a place of great beauty. Its historic buildings, iconic vistas and green lungs all remain central to the city's character. But the opportunity of new development has also seen the city punch above its weight in architectural recognition and in the generous provision for new open spaces, echoing the historic city. The highest standards have been imposed on new buildings in terms of carbon footprint.

Liberal Democrats running the City Council have insisted that growth respects the constraints of Cambridge as a compact city surrounded by fields. High design and environmental values have been exacted in the face of development pressures.

Cambridge outstrips the rest of the country in the proportion of journeys taken by bicycle. This not only matches best public health advice, but is the best means of beating congestion and constraining both air emissions and carbon. If all the cyclists got in cars the city would simply seize up.

The Liberal Democrat City Council has championed cycling, investing in facilities itself and campaigning for the highways authority to fashion schemes with cyclists in mind. It has fought also for other sustainable transport including buses and Park & Ride. It has campaigned successfully for a new railway station in the north of the city and it is assisting its development.

The last time it was measured, people in Cambridge felt more able to influence public decision making than anywhere else in the country.

Liberal Democrats have invited the public right into the heart of the council. We have decentralised some of its work to Area Committees where the participation of residents is encouraged, and neighbourhood approaches on planning, environmental improvements and policing are determined. We have introduced public question time at all council meetings and practice public consultation on significant decisions, which we supplement by outreach to young people. All this is supported by a growing digital presence.

The challenges we face haven't arrived overnight and will not disappear overnight. Many require balance between competing pressures to avoid the city losing its underlying winning formula. Liberal Democrats are providing leadership and innovation but working with the grain of Cambridge: tackling the heart of the problem. We are already pursuing powerful strategies which bear fruit. These need to be maintained and sustained to deliver in the long run.

1. A Place of Your Own

In Cambridge's shortage of homes it is a victim of its own economic success. The result is hardship for children of local families wanting to leave home. It is tough both for people moving here for work and for employers trying to recruit them. It squeezes living standards of key workers. And the sellers' market tilts the balance away from the interests of private tenants.

The long recession in the construction industry had until recently slowed delivery of approved new homes. The Labour government's block on new council house building, until changed by the Coalition, left a diminishing stock of social housing and a lengthening waiting list.

The Council as planner and enabler

We are providing for more homes through our local plan in co-operation with neighbouring councils yet protecting the compact character of the city. More and more future development will come through new or enlarged settlements outside the city, but our plan for the city provides for 14,000 more homes by 2031, mainly through known extensions on the Southern Fringe and North West Cambridge – but also through ensuring

re-use of existing sites in the built-up area.

We strive to cut out red tape in the planning process to speed delivery, and we will continue to insist on high standards of design and energy efficiency for all new housing.

We will be supplementing our requirement that 40% of large new developments must be 'affordable homes', by applying an obligation on

smaller developments and rejecting student housing as an alternative.

We will persist in our goal of encouraging diversity of housing supply and mixing different types of ownership and tenure across the city. We will explore the possibility of a co-operative housing association providing all or part of the affordable housing element on the Mill Road Depot site when that comes forward. We will bring to fruition our co-housing project in the north of the city. We will work with neighbouring councils to find a new way to provide housing for the 'intermediate sector': those who are not eligible for social housing but cannot afford the prices in the city. With the new relationship established through the City Deal we have engaged partners, including the University, in this objective.

The Council as builder and landlord

Under the increased freedoms allowed by the Coalition government, we will build 2000 more council homes, spearheading the delivery of this type of affordable housing – and helping to relieve those suffering over-crowded and over-priced housing in their own city.

We will continue to improve our existing council stock including redeveloping sites where the present buildings are not up to 21st century standards. We will continue the extensive programme of retrofitting better insulation and energy efficiency measures to reduce fuel poverty: in particular we will tackle the problems tenants have when they can only use electricity for heating.

We will increase the support given to vulnerable tenants to sustain their tenancies. We will work with the County Council and the Health Authorities to maximise and co-ordinate services to vulnerable older people to enhance their quality of life.

The Cambridge Local Plan

Under its LibDem leadership the City Council has recently adopted the new Cambridge Local Plan. It will guide development in the city until 2031. It now goes to a Planning Inspector and likely planning enquiry where we will fight doggedly for its approval as representing the best balance to meet multiple pressures on the city – to retain its character and provide for much needed new homes and much prized new jobs.

The plan:

- Maintains as its central vision '**a compact city located within the high quality landscape setting of the Cambridge green belt**'
- Envisages **14,000 new homes**, 97% on existing sites within the city and co-ordinated with South Cambridgeshire where more development, including several new and enlarged settlements is planned
- Reinforces the aggressive 40% requirement for **affordable housing** on larger developments with new requirements from smaller developments and student housing no longer permitted as substitute
- In new home design, broadens the drive for **carbon reduction** by encompassing energy efficiency as well as renewable generation and aggressively targets **water conservation** through grey water and rainwater recycling
- Stipulates that all new housing should enable the **Lifetime Homes Standards** to be met and 5% of larger housing schemes to meet **Wheelchair Housing Design Standards**.
- Enables **22,000 new jobs**, with extra employment provision at Peterhouse Technology Park (for ARM) and North East Cambridge (near the new Science Park station), while the already approved Bio-medical campus continues to build out
- Designates an Urban Country Park near the lakes on Coldhams Lane
- Targets public realm improvements for Mill Road, Hills Road, Mitcham's Corner, Eastern Gate, Old Press/Mill Lane and the Grafton Centre
- Safeguards viable pubs from being switched to other uses

The Council as regulator and standard-setter

It is a high priority for us to uphold standards in the private rented sector, especially in seeing that landlords repair their property and do not harass their tenants. We have recently signed up to Shelter's pledge to tackle "rogue landlords" and, having recently increased our enforcement team, we will continue to challenge them and prosecute where necessary.

We will continue to target the owners of empty houses insisting that they get the buildings back into use, using Compulsory Purchase Orders where necessary.

We will continue to promote high standards through the Property

Accreditation Scheme and explore ways of assisting its members to improve the insulation and energy efficiency of their houses. With funding we have recently won from Government, as 'Action on Energy', we will roll out a programme to incentivise solid wall insulation, targeting the rented sector and conservation areas under the 'Green Deal'.

We will promote the 'Action on Energy' one-stop-shop to help residents find the best way to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and bring down their bills. We will explore with Cambridge Retrofit innovative ways of increasing the insulation and energy efficiency of homes in the city and we are championing a bid for European funding for them through the Local Enterprise Partnership.

2. A City that Works for All

Cambridge may be the most equal UK city and have amongst the lowest levels of deprivation, but the Liberal Democrats are committed to work hard to keep it that way and improve the city in that respect. With our population growth, it is important that we stay a city where people feel included, are treated fairly and have access to help when in trouble.

The expense of living in Cambridge is one of the main reasons people on low incomes can feel excluded. Attacking the shortage of affordable homes is a key driver of our housing agenda. But we are also proud that the City Council sets an example as a major employer by paying the **Living Wage** to all its employees and longer term temporary staff. We aim to extend this to the employees of firms providing subcontracted services to the council. We aim for extra relief to those on tight budgets through promoting **collective energy switching**.

Homelessness

We will continue engaging with the problems of alcohol and drug addiction, rough sleeping and homelessness in ways which **help people to improve their lives** rather than further criminalising them. We will keep on working with the health service, the Police and specialist voluntary organisations to rehabilitate where we can.

We will build on the initial success of the Single Homelessness Service to prevent those in temporary difficulties becoming the next generation of entrenched rough sleepers. We will put in place higher levels of support to help newly housed people sustain their tenancies. We will expand the Town Hall Lettings scheme, to give those in temporary difficulties a way out of homelessness.

Welfare Reform

In a time of anxiety for those on benefits we will continue to **minimise the impact of the national welfare reforms on the most vulnerable**. We will ensure the worst-off are not forced to pay council tax and we will award discretionary housing payments in an efficient and professional way. We will work to ensure that the roll-out of Universal Credit does not negatively affect recipients of benefits.

We will continue to give professional assistance through our own Customer Service Centre and we are committed to funding for the **Citizens Advice Bureau**, which we have increased as their caseload has risen during the recession. In addition, we are actively supporting credit unions to help to prevent recourse to payday lenders.

Helping Young People into Work

We want to connect local young people much better to opportunities in the successful Cambridge hi-tech companies, which they often have difficulty in filling. With new powers from the City Deal, we will work with employers and providers to better match **vocational training courses and apprenticeships** to the needs of growing sectors of our local economy.

Keeping older people connected

We will work with the County Council and the NHS to improve services for older people, promoting aspects of health care which prevent the need for hospitalisation. We will aim for services which enable the elderly and disabled to remain actively part of the community, including transport links such as the 199 and 114 buses.

Targeting help where it is needed

We will continue to reach out to those communities most in need, for example through the work of the Council's Children and Young People's Play Service (ChYpPS)

And we will continue to support a vibrant voluntary sector, which unleashes a huge reservoir of energy for mutual support and philanthropy into the community.

Bringing the City together

We will continue with events which bring people together in the city as well as initiatives which recognise those who have traditionally been excluded or suffered persecution in society. In new housing developments we will strive to build real communities.

We provide a vibrant programme of artistic and cultural events throughout the year and across the whole City, continuing to support established events such as Bonfire Night and fairs on the City's open spaces. We are particularly proud to be **bringing the Tour de France to Cambridge** – the UK cycling capital – in July 2014.

We recognise the contributions made by people of diverse backgrounds and will continue to commemorate those who have often suffered prejudice: marking Holocaust Memorial Day and celebrating LGBT and Black History months. We will also continue to support the Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum.

In growth areas in and around the city, we will ensure community facilities within new neighbourhoods are developed in a way that promotes the integration of new and existing communities, as well as supporting clustering policies that ensure social housing is fully integrated within new developments.

The Greater Cambridge City Deal

Lib Dems in Government locally and nationally - working for Cambridge

Recognising that “city regions” drive national progress and prosperity, the Coalition government invited bids for devolution to address key local constraints. Negotiated “deals” would be customised and based on relevant local councils pooling responsibilities across boundaries and involving other stakeholders.

The Lib Dem Cambridge City Council lobbied strenuously for the chance to negotiate one of these City Deals. We have long believed that local control can be more effective and that pooling of powers would be a welcome first step towards simplifying local government and helping it grapple with decisions in a strategic way through a single unitary council.

The City Council started work with South Cambridgeshire District Council, the County Council, the University of Cambridge and the Local Enterprise Partnership: five partners for “Greater Cambridge”.

The local constraint we targeted for the deal was investment in transport infrastructure, the lack of which held the area back. Better infrastructure, in particular better sustainable transport, would remove obstacles to housing both within and outside the city. It would help the Cambridge technology cluster of hi-tech firms and university research to retain the connectivity which has been critical to their success to date. And it would assist the quality of life of residents, threatened by congestion and shortage of homes.

We advanced perhaps the boldest of all the City Deal bids to central government – for necessary investment to be funded by rebating to the area a share of the national taxation that a more successful Greater Cambridge would generate.

- An injection of up to £500m to support progressive investment in transport infrastructure - reported by the BBC to make it the highest value City Deal so far
- A commitment between the local partners to powers on transport strategy and spatial strategy (the determination of a single Local Plans next time) enabling a step change in integrated, joined up decision making
- Agreement to work together to develop means of funding more affordable housing
- Power to redirect vocational skills spending to future employer need combined with additional apprenticeships in the growth sectors of our local economy
- A joint leadership for the economic development of Greater Cambridge, consisting of a 5-person Executive (leaders from each partner) to operate only by consensus, answerable to a politically proportionate assembly from each of the three councils

3. Keeping Cambridge Moving

Cambridge has suffered from poor transport infrastructure for years – and yet the City Council has not held the main levers of power to make significant change. Growth of the city has put this further under strain and the **City Deal** we have won the Government has not come a moment too soon. The deal not only brings huge additional investment, but also secures participation of the City Council itself in how that investment is used.

Our priority is to ensure that the undisputed importance of serving the new and enlarged communities outside the city is properly balanced with the need to address the capacity of the city itself by measures which protect the character and quality of life here. This means a preference for schemes which facilitate **public transport** and make **cycling** and

walking more attractive. This should include investment in bringing about the dedicated north-south cycleway, the Chisholm Trail.

We will work hard to defend the sustainability theme of our **Cambridge Local Plan** as it completes its final stages of approval. It aims to minimise commuting by maximising new homes within the city to the degree consistent with our compact character and landscape setting. This is reinforced by requiring new developments to provide high capacity broadband. We also expect adequate domestic cycle parking and cycle links to the rest of the city.

Public Transport

With the forthcoming enlargement of the A14, the City Council has set aside money to help ensure it doesn't result in gridlock in Cambridge. We will use this to encourage transfer to public transport by seeking agreement for a new **Park and Ride** facility near the Girton interchange.

We will advocate early determination of a **bus and coach management strategy** for the city centre to ensure the best balance between safety, protection of the historic fabric and convenience.

We will review the Council's policy relating to **air quality** following a recent research report. We will encourage more taxi drivers to have petrol hybrid or electric cars and will work with the County Council to ensure the Better Bus fund requires use of new technology to reduce air pollution.

Delighted with the eventual success of our longstanding campaign for a second train station in Chesterton, it is time for a **broader debate to improve rail** access to and within the city. A third station at Addenbrookes should be evaluated, as should improvements in the services to Stansted and to the East Coast mainline to the north, the re-establishment of the line to Bedford enabling a link to Oxford.

Cycling and Walking

We will continue to directly promote cycling by investing in better facilities including improved **cycle parking** as we are currently providing in the city centre. We will also press for allowing two way cycling in one way streets where it is safe, and an investigation of camera enforcement against driving and parking in bus and cycle lanes.

We will promote **safety on paths** in the city by reviewing signage to give pedestrians and cyclists better awareness of those that are pedestrian only, cyclist only, or for shared use, enabling an appropriate level of alertness and mutual consideration.

Following implementation of the widely welcomed 20 mph limit in the north of the city, we will work with residents to expand it to all residential roads across the rest of the city.

4. Quality of Life

Residents, both new and established, businesses and visitors all tend to agree that the common factor drawing people to Cambridge and encouraging them to stay is its high quality of life. The unique way the city is built around open spaces, its iconic historical built environment combining with the many excellent examples of the new; the values of a small city that is youthful, outward-looking and tolerant in character; the rare intensity of interest, participation and pride in the public domain. Even as the city grows, we are determined to protect and develop these characteristics.

Liberal Democrat values for Cambridge

We have defined the kind of liberal and democratic city we champion in order to guide our decision making and the Council has reflected this in these vision statements:

Cambridge - where people matter

- A city which celebrates its diversity, unites in its priority for the disadvantaged and strives for shared community wellbeing
- A city whose citizens feel they can influence public decision making and are equally keen to pursue individual and community initiatives
- A city where people behave with consideration for others and where harm and nuisance are confronted wherever possible without constraining the lives of all

Cambridge - a good place to live, learn and work

- A city which recognises and meets needs for housing of all kinds - close to jobs and neighbourhood facilities
- A city which draws inspiration from its iconic historic centre and achieves a sense of place in all of its parts with generous urban open spaces and well- designed buildings
- A city with a thriving local economy that benefits the whole community and builds on its global pre-eminence in learning and discovery
- A city where getting around is primarily by public transport, bike and on foot

Cambridge - caring for the planet

- A city in the forefront of low carbon living and minimising its impact on the environment from waste and pollution.

Natural Environment

We will fight to protect **Cambridge's open spaces** – its green lungs. We will ensure delivery of the equally generous provision in new developments around the city that we have stipulated. We will also ensure that, even where new provision is not publicly owned, it is open and managed in the public interest, as we have insisted in our joint management venture for the new Storey's Field in North West Cambridge.

We will equip open spaces to enable uses expected of them by **the whole community**, while respecting the different character of each.

We will continue to invest in the maintenance of **trees**, and will plant more, to ensure succession to those that fail, so that this valued feature of our city benefits residents for generations to come.

We will ensure that **allotments** have the highest level of statutory protection, so that they are not squeezed by the enormous pressure to develop within Cambridge.

Built Environment

We will promote **excellence in design** as a requirement for development within the city, by encouraging pre-application discussion between the urban design team and applicants, using masterplans for significant new development areas and making best use of public art contributions.

We will aim to reduce Cambridge's carbon footprint and mitigate the impact of **climate change** here with the use of sustainable urban drainage systems in our new developments and protecting biodiversity

Community

To balance the city centre, we will promote other neighbourhood hubs around the city. We will progress our new **Local Centres Improvement Programme**, aimed at regeneration of such hubs through environmental enhancement, in concert with local residents and in partnership with businesses and developers: starting with Mitcham's Corner.

With the powers that we have available, we will support **independent shops**. We will build on our earlier attempts to seek planning powers to ensure a diversity of shops can co-exist.

We will continue to support the **city centre**, conducting a widespread review of its physical accessibility. We will enhance the Market Square by realising the Public Realm strategy enshrined in the Local Plan, and completing a management review of the market itself, to support the vibrancy of the city centre.

Values

We will maintain the tempo of a **city at ease with itself** through focus on

prevention and education rather than heavy-handed enforcement of the big city government kind. We will resist the kind of regulation which jeopardises reasonable behaviour by all in order to tackle the misbehaviour of the few.

We will use the Council's role in community safety to work with the Police and others on **root causes** of petty crime and anti-social behaviour. We will build on the early progress of Neighbourhood Resolution Panels, the pilot restorative justice scheme we have started, which brings first time offenders face to face with their victims to agree future actions and behaviour.

We will defend the innovations of **openness and participation** we have introduced and which enable the city's high level of public involvement. In particular we leave unchanged the powers we have given to area committees, providing for elected councilors to take transparent decisions in their own neighbourhoods at times that most residents can attend. We will develop the Council's on-line presence and accessibility, working progressively towards a proactive, open data regime.

5. Making ends meet to protect and improve basic services

The success of the city is happening despite declining funds to run local government services. Liberal Democrats have worked successfully for over a decade to mitigate this through efficiency savings - and this must go on. But the numbers now force more difficult choices for any party running the council.

Basic environmental services

We are the only provider of many universal environmental services to the city and remain firmly committed to providing them to an excellent level and to developing them as the city changes and grows - as we always have. In our sights right now are:

- An expansion of **kerbside recycling** to include textiles and more plastic packaging
- An increase in the services of our recently introduced **Rapid Response street cleaning team** to include Autumn leaf fall priority
- Ongoing refurbishment of **public toilets** across the city

- Complete our programme of **new litter and recycling bins** across the city on streets and open spaces

Financial Plan

We have mapped out plans which we are already starting to implement, to generate the resources needed to continue providing at the level we do in these hostile times, and to keep enabling further improvements

We will:

- **Share some services** with neighbouring councils to further reduce costs, as we have started by combining our CCTV control room with Huntingdonshire. We are jointly exploring further opportunities with South Cambridgeshire and are working towards sharing waste collection operations.
- Consider **alternative models** for the provision of some services, such as a trust for the Corn Exchange and the Folk Festival, outsourcing of building cleaning, an arms length arrangement for our tourist service
- Maximise income through an **entrepreneurial approach** to key local assets, such as our major commercial property asset portfolio and trade waste business
- Within some of our discretionary services, **target resources** where only the council can make an impact, as we are doing with our children's play service, elsewhere encouraging and helping those who are willing to organise for themselves
- **Benchmark** the way the council discharges its statutory services, to be sure that choices about the nature and level of delivery are consciously made in relation to public need
- Continue to reduce carbon emissions and **energy costs** in the council's operations by investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy through our Carbon Management Plan

In navigating the way forward, we are determined to **protect vulnerable residents** and are committed to subject all our plans to equalities impact assessments.

As more of the income coming to the city council in future is likely to be linked to the growth in business rates, it is important we are well placed to support businesses as they start up, move to the city or develop here. We propose to fund a new **Business Partnership Officer** post to provide better liaison between the Council and businesses in the city and vice versa.

The Council punching its weight

To deliver for the benefit of the city, the City Council must be willing to bring its democratic legitimacy to the table to **rally and co-operate with others**. This we have done with neighbouring councils in the City Deal and with our draft Local Plan; with the formation of the city centre's new Business Improvement District, with the universities in their outreach to the community, and with organisations in the voluntary sector like the Citizens Advice Bureau. We will continue to provide this leadership, increasing the council's reach through partnership within the broader community.

Through working together with neighbouring councils we will continue to build the case and the conditions for a **single Greater Cambridge council**, offering simpler, integrated local government with clear accountability for the natural unit of the city and surrounding countryside.