

CRAWLEY 2018 LOCAL MANIFESTO



**Crawley Liberal
Democrats**
Open, Tolerant, United.

Vote Liberal Democrat on Thursday 3rd May

Message from the Chairman of Crawley Liberal Democrats

With Brexit being the main point of discussion in politics, it becomes very easy to forget that there are other national priorities.

The Liberal Democrats warned that pursuing the Brexit fantasies now taken up by Her Majesty's Government would take up all of Parliament's time and the Civil Services' resources. We can now see that to its fullest effect:



Social Care has been forgotten about by the Conservative government even though it was a central part of their manifesto.

The Conservative run West Sussex County Council was forced to raise Council Tax by 3% to help boost Social Care funding. Yet, this alone is not enough.

Affordable Housing continues to be open only to those in secure and well paid jobs. The majority of Crawley's residents still struggle to get their foot on the housing ladder.

Again and again the Conservative government has failed to provide local councils with the resources they need to provide adequate housing for the most vulnerable, and for future generations.

Even basic environmental needs are being forgotten. With increases in litter, plastics and other household waste being left in public places, we risk failing one of Crawley's finest post-war legacies; that residents deserve to have as much green and pleasant open spaces as possible.

But, it doesn't have to be like this. Crawley's Liberal Democrat candidates are willing to use the resources of the local Borough Council and Crawley's position as a potential regional powerhouse, to campaign across all levels of government and get our policies across.

From prioritising Social Care, to meeting various housing demands, to more creative thinking by the Borough Council, there are fantastic opportunities to continue to make Crawley the best place for people to live.

Let's make it happen,



Marko Scepanovic

Chairman of Crawley Liberal Democrats

Contents

4	Meeting Housing Demand
6	Boosting the Local Economy
7	Improving Infrastructure
8	Safeguarding Healthcare
9	Protecting the Local Environment
10	Arts, Culture & Sport
11	Local Democracy

Meeting Housing Demand

Providing more 'Affordable Housing'

When granting planning permissions for new housing developments, a Crawley Liberal Democrat Council will require 40% of the new housing to be affordable, the maximum allowed under national law.

Liberal Democrats would also push for greater minimum specifications for accommodation to ensure that houses are fit for living purposes, and do not get smaller whilst prices get higher. High rise builds would also be accepted in appropriate areas, providing industry standard regulations are met.

Increase Council owned residential properties

Crawley Liberal Democrats shall campaign for the construction, and re-introduction of council owned properties, with the aspiration to have a locally built, low rent housing policy when permissible.

Brownfield sites

House building will be primarily focused on Brownfield sites in Crawley, and a Liberal Democrat Council would seek for development to have minimal impact on Greenfield land as far as possible, in line with the current Local Planning Framework for Housing in Crawley.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

There has been a steady rise in recent years of single rooms being offered for rent in houses with shared bathrooms and kitchens. A Liberal Democrat Council would take a much more active role in ensuring that all of Crawley's HMOs meet the necessary safety standards.

Our 10 Point Plan for creating a better rental market

1. Assign and maintain a designated person to work specially with private landlords to create encourage compliance with housing quality legislation applicable currently to social housing and guidelines from 'fit for human habitation' campaigns.
2. The above will also work to establish a support network for those needing to move in or out of the area – signposting sources of support, local charities, schools, public services etc.
3. Introduce and maintain a private landlord accreditation scheme to value their input into the housing market.

4. Create and maintain a register of 'Registered Private Landlords' who sign up to a series of pledges to improve standards and quality of rented property.
5. Related to the above, Councils via their Registered Social Landlords could be offered first refusal on properties, including sitting tenants in excess to requirements by Preferred Landlords on their register.
6. Licensing Landlords to put the public – private partnership on a more formal level leading to better living conditions for residents, recognition for good landlords and encouragement to improve for rogue landlords.
7. Campaign and introduce, when possible, temporary leasing of private homes to the Borough Council in situations such as where an elderly resident needs health care or sheltered housing. Over time the rent paid by the tenants would go towards covering the cost of the lease.
8. Introduce and maintain an accredited lodger scheme with registered families, allowing spare rooms to be advertised for rent.
9. Develop and campaign for the introduction of interest free loans for renting paid back via an insurance and introduction of Council as a letting agent.
10. Introduce and maintain a designated officer for Landlords and tenants to work with planning teams so that planning applications favour private and social renting to a minimum of 40% whilst being aware of viability and sustainability.

Boosting the Local Economy

Creating a Regional Influencer

With the continuous growth of Crawley as a hub for businesses and the position of Gatwick Airport nearby, Crawley Liberal Democrats will work to play a key role in the Greater Brighton Economic Board.

Crawley Liberal Democrats will continue to seek funding opportunities from the Coast to Capital investment fund to further increase economic development in the local area.

Broadband

Despite Crawley being a vital hub in the South East, many of our residents and businesses continue to suffer from frequent broadband signal problems. Alongside more urgent investigations into why Crawley is not receiving the best internet service possible, a Liberal Democrat Council would strengthen collaboration with local providers to reduce such problems.

Crawley Liberal Democrats will campaign for free wifi to be accessible to the general public in all major public spaces and buildings.

Local Fair Trade

A Liberal Democrat Council would work with local businesses and producers to support local Fair Trade. Customers should be provided with clear labelling on UK produced food and other products bought in our shops, indicating that the producer has been paid a fair price.

Apprenticeship Growth Pack

Crawley Liberal Democrats will work with local businesses to provide more opportunities for young people to become involved in apprenticeship schemes. We will endeavour to set up a specific database of local opportunities.

Our councillors will continue to campaign against unpaid medium-long term internships and will work to ensure all apprenticeships and internships pay the National Living Wage.

Expanding the University of Sussex

As clearly demonstrated in the nearby town of Guildford, a student community can boost the local economy greatly, and also ensure there is a strong pool of highly skilled labour to assist local economic growth. This can be of great assistance in Crawley as we seek to develop our industrial estates, cultural hubs and airport. A Crawley Liberal Democrat Council will therefore initiate discussions with the University of Sussex for a local branch to be developed, with courses that can be tied to Crawley's growing economy.

Improving Infrastructure

Tackling potholes

West Sussex County Council spends millions making major improvements to road conditions and yet potholes continue to damage residents' vehicles, particularly during the winter months. The current short-sighted approach of merely paving over them when they appear has proven to be costly.

A rigorous investigation into why the road concrete continues to be susceptible to breaking up is required. Many residents have reported potholes which have been covered up re-appearing within months.

Working in partnership with contractors in the private sector, more work needs to be done to ensure that the best materials are used, to save money for both residents and Councils in the long term.

Better pavement accessibility

Residents who use wheelchairs and mobility scooters face longer journeys to various locations such as Crawley town centre because of a lack of accessible footpaths. A Liberal Democrat Borough Council will work closely with West Sussex County Council to improve accessibility for residents in the following ways:

1. Aim to have every main footpath in Crawley wheelchair and mobility scooter accessible.
2. New footpaths are to have the lowered slope smoothed to ensure that users do not suffer discomfort as they mount the pavement.
3. Existing footpaths are to have the lower slope smoothed in line with planned repairs, and when additional revenue is made available.
4. Press for more crossings and for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility scooter users to be given greater priority in the design of new roads.

More road lighting

Crawley still has public pavements and roads with insufficient lighting. This is a particular issue during the winter months. A Liberal Democrat Council would seek government and EU funding to pilot new solar powered lighting in these areas and assess its effectiveness.

If successful, a gradual replacement of all standard lighting will be undertaken where it does not impact resident or road user safety. Both projects will be discussed with contractors, who own the street lights, as improvements to the lights take place.

Safeguarding Healthcare

Mental Health

Crawley Liberal Democrats are making the safeguarding of Mental Health a key local campaign point. It is an issue which has affected many residents and their families, but it receives very little attention in comparison to physical health.

By working in partnership with charities and medical experts, educating residents on different types of mental health issues, and providing services at a local level to deal with them, a Liberal Democrat Council will ensure that we take on this silent menace.

Crawley Hospital parking

Those who have appointments or are in need of urgent treatment at Crawley Hospital should be exempt from the parking charges.

A Liberal Democrat Council will work together with Crawley Hospital to create a process in which appointments letters can be used as evidence by visitors in exchange for an exemption badge.

Doing so will ensure that a parking charge to combat parking overloading does not become a sickness tax and impact low income families. To offset the reduction in income from parking, the Borough Council will seek to reduce the price of parking as revenue from Business Rates increase, leading to an eventual removal of parking fees for those with appointments.

Working with Charities

The work of charities such as Macmillan Cancer, supporting our doctors and nurses on a day to day basis, should be welcomed and admired. Where local government has failed to provide aftercare and other services, the charity sector has stepped up to the mark and taken on key responsibilities.

We would aim to strengthen such a partnership between the Borough Council, local charities and Crawley Hospital. Areas such as mental health, adult social care and, in particular, the welfare of elderly patients after discharge, are becoming bigger issues. A Liberal Democrat Council would ensure that Crawley Hospital, patients and charities have increased co-operation to get a fair deal.

Protecting the Local Environment

Managing property flooding

Consistent wet winters have shown that our drainage system is susceptible to overflowing; many images have circulated of blocked roads during stormy weather, such as the one beneath the railway on St Mary's Drive.

A full investigation is urgently required into the capacity of Crawley's drainage system, and the development of contingency plans to deal with the effects of increasingly frequent storms.

Solar panel support

Liberal Democrats acknowledge that solar panels cannot, by themselves, provide sustainable development locally. As a party, we are committed to a diverse range of clean sources of energy.

And it must not end there. Local government must ensure that all new housing has the latest technology. This should include investigating heat pump technology and ensuring that insulation materials are of the highest quality. This will much reduce heating costs for local residents in the long term, particularly during the winter months.

No to Fracking

Liberal Democrat representatives in the Borough and County Councils will campaign against domestic extraction of fossil fuels using unconventional methods such as fracking. We will seek to persuade central government to invest in local renewable projects as an alternative.

A Diverse Range of Shrubbery

Crawley is full of green spaces, hedges and different kind of shrubbery. Crawley Liberal Democrats wish not only to maintain that position but to improve it further. We will campaign for the Borough Council to diversify further the species of plants and shrubs planted and maintained. This will assist in beautifying the town more and providing a wider variety of wildlife.

Arts, Culture, Sport

Encouraging the Arts

Motivating the next generation of students to be involved in drama, dance, music and visual arts will benefit both Crawley and the United Kingdom. There is more to life than working 40 hours a week. The Liberal Democrats firmly believe in providing opportunities for all age groups to see artistic creativity at its finest and partake in creative activities themselves.

Working in partnership with the Hawth Theatre, the Arts Council and various charities, a Liberal Democrats Council will seek to increase engagement and opportunities for everyone. Doing so will provide economic benefits to Crawley, alongside improved health and wellbeing to locals.

Museums and Heritage

Crawley has a well documented local history stretching to pre-Roman times. Educating the next generation about historical events is one of the most fundamental elements in producing a society that appreciates its place in the world.

Liberal Democrats Councillors will always fight to maintain the local museum, seek further funding opportunities and increase awareness of Crawley's great heritage through collaboration with local archaeological societies, schools and national museums.

Doing so will continue to raise Crawley's identity in the South East as a confident, proud and cultural centre. This is guaranteed to bring in more investment, as a report by the Arts Council shows that even modest Council investment brings about greater turnover¹.

Youth Centres

Youth Centres formerly played a prominent role in local communities as safe places where kids and teenagers could hang out, learn skills and make friends. Crawley Liberal Democrats will seek to re-introduce the Centres into communities and work with charities and community leaders to ensure they remain available for future generations to enjoy.

¹ http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Final_economic_benefits_of_arts.pdf

Local Democracy

Complying with Freedom of Information requests

Transparency and accountability are cornerstones of good governance, and essential to maintaining trust with residents. It will be the policy of a Crawley Liberal Democrat Council to ensure that all staff and councillors comply with Freedom of Information requests. We will introduce a simplified process to ensure residents are aware of how to obtain information.

A 'State of the Borough' annual debate

The leader of Crawley Borough Council should be required to debate annually with the leaders of the other party groups. This will bring about greater accountability, whilst also encouraging local residents to participate.

Modernising Discussions

Many residents may wish to view public council meetings but be unable to attend for a variety of reasons.

A Liberal Democrat Council will work with Information Technology services to ensure that most of the Council's public discussions are broadcast live on Crawley Borough Council website, and that podcasts are available for those who wish to view later.

Overview and Scrutiny Commission

The role of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission is to hold the Council's main decision makers to account. It should be as independent as possible of the majority party.

Crawley Liberal Democrat councillors would seek to change the Council's Constitution. The positions of Overview and Scrutiny Chair and Vice-Chair should always be offered to the main opposition party.

Community forums

Forums exist in many wards but we would establish forums in all wards to ensure that councillors are held to account on a frequent basis by residents, who have an opportunity to voice problems they encounter.

A Liberal Democrat Council would seek to utilise the local knowledge and enthusiasm of Community Forum volunteers to enhance services in their area. This could include helping to run discount schemes to increase occupancy of Council owned garages, identifying newly advertised Houses in Multiple Occupation, designating narrower footpaths to be kept free of refuse bins or helping schemes to discourage speeding in residential areas.

Raising political awareness

At a local level Liberal Democrats councillors could not change education policy. However, we would encourage the Borough Council to enhance the education of pupils of all ages by working with schools, charities and other service providers to ensure that younger people are aware of the benefits of democracy and political engagement, and its impact on their lives.

Greater public involvement in debates

Crawley Liberal Democrats will encourage local people to be more involved in local politics by raising awareness of its importance. Greater marketing and promotion of hustings and debates would aid in this. Liberal Democrat councillors will work on the Borough Council to open up more committee meetings for members of the public to observe, and contribute.

Managing the PREVENT Strategy

The government's counter terrorism measures on a local level are proving worrisome to advocates of Human Rights, justice and greater outreach to ethnic minorities. Liberal Democrats on Crawley Borough Council would seek to raise awareness of the current PREVENT strategy and seek to ensure that matters such as questioning and investigatory obligations by local bodies are clarified.

Neighbourhood policing

Crawley Liberal Democrats on the Borough Council would, working in partnership with the Sussex Police, Crime Commissioner and local police, continue to advocate increased community policing, including expanding the PCSO programme where possible. This is to ensure that community trust and cooperation continues to be at the heart of local policing.