

Major Opposition Group Leader's Annual Statement 2014

For the past year the Liberal Democrat Group have assiduously adhered to their national constitution which states that they *'exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.'*

We shall continue to uphold these key values during the forthcoming year in everything that we do as representatives of this Council and our communities.

Our **four key priorities** have been and will continue to be:

To Tackle Long Term Climate Change Threats. As Liberal Democrats we believe we should be taking steps to reduce our impact on the environment both as a District Council, within our communities and individually.

We shall achieve this by:

- Promoting renewable and energy efficiency improvements to listed buildings and in conservation areas.
- Ensuring that sustainable transport infrastructures are in place for new developments.
- Requiring the highest possible energy efficiency ratings for new builds (both commercial and retail).
- Leading on 'Greening the fleet' to make sure that South Cambs vehicle fleet is as efficient as possible including trials of hybrid and electric vehicles.
- Requiring increased amounts of recycling and re-use from businesses, schools and residents within South Cambs including promoting the publication of annual recycling rates with as much detail as possible.
- Ensuring that sustainable transport needs are addressed as part of road improvement schemes including the diversion of funds from building developments to fund paths and cycle ways of exemplary design.
- Engaging through the Sustainable Energy Partnership, with Parish Councils to address climate change at community level.
- Ensuring improved local roads and cycle links are included in all major road upgrade projects.

Building Stronger Communities. Strong communities are the best possible foundation we have for building a sustainable future. As Liberal Democrats we believe in strong local democracy and a community where residents are active and engaged in the decisions that affect them. This will support our long term national goal of building a fairer society for everyone.

We shall achieve this by:

- Ensuring that infrastructure is in place for Northstowe and that a minimum of 40% new housing is affordable to local residents. We shall also promote the early development of Northstowe in preference to the strategic sites promoted in the LDP
- Work with Parishes to ensure that local housing needs are being met as locally as possible
- Promote the accelerated development of council housing
- Where the disposal of South Cambs land is required for new housing, ensure that at least 80% of new housing is affordable to local residents
- Preventing any softening of the current 40% affordable housing requirements for new builds
- Promoting the creation a new grant scheme for small capital projects within communities of £100k with the aim of providing two £40-£50k project grants a year to village organisations, (village halls, play areas etc).
- Working with Parish Councils to deliver neighbourhood plans so that they are involved in as many decisions that affect them as possible.
- Working with Parish Councils to protect shop, post offices and public houses.
- Tackling rural isolation through improving community transport.

Greater Accountability Through Greater Transparency. All decisions should be made in public and at an appropriate level. Residents should be aware of upcoming decisions and should have every opportunity to influence them.

We shall achieve this by:

- Promoting fairness, transparency and value for money as the cornerstone of South Cambs procurement policy.
- Ensuring that the Council works with colleagues a Cambridgeshire County Council and on Cambridge City Council to build on the current City Deal with the goal of seeking a unitary authority,
- Working to scrap the current cabinet government system and replacing it with committees to ensure decision making is fully scrutinised.

Better Value for Money. As Liberal Democrats we believe that local residents should expect the best value for money from their Council Tax and we will work to ensure that transparently secured shared services become the default option.

We shall achieve this by:

- Ensuring that benefits from the City Deal are long term and felt District wide
- Promoting the sharing of common back office services that are transparently secured and robustly evidenced.
- Investigating the sharing of front office services like Housing Repairs with surrounding Councils.

Cllr Bridget Z D Smith

Leader South Cambridgeshire Liberal Democrat Group