



A safer, fairer, and greener Islington

The Liberal Democrat programme for Islington 2010 - 2014

"The Liberal Democrats 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"

Preamble to the Liberal Democrat Party Constitution

Keeping our word

People are understandably cynical about politicians and their promises in the wake of the MPs' expense scandals. But Liberal Democrats in Islington keep their word. In 2006 we made seven pledges to residents about what we would achieve. All these pledges have been kept.

1 We will keep your council tax below the London average.

Islington's council tax is one of the lowest in London, including a freeze this year, thanks to ten years of LibDem sound financial management. Under Labour, Islington's council tax was the highest in London.

2 We will re-build or refurbish all our secondary schools.

The first phase of Islington's rebuilt secondary schools are now open. Highbury Grove, Samuel Rhodes, St.Aloysius and Holloway schools all have new buildings to help continue the massive improvements in GCSE results. Work is now starting on phase two.

3 We will freeze the cost of a residents' parking permit.

LibDem Islington also offers free visitor permits over the Christmas holidays, free shopper parking and introduced pioneering 'green parking charges' based on a vehicle's emissions following a borough-wide referendum.

4 We will help children learn to swim through free swimming lessons in school holidays.

LibDem Islington was one of the first councils to introduce free swimming all year round. We also fund free swimming for pensioners. Islington now has more under-16s and over-60s swimming for free than anywhere else in London.

5 We will ensure at least 4,000 new homes.

LibDem Islington has given planning permission for nearly 6,500 new homes in Islington since 2006. LibDem Islington was one of the first councils in England to build new council homes for the first time in a generation using its own funding.

6 We will help council leaseholders pay their bills for large improvements.

Liberal Democrat councillors have introduced new, extended repayment options and support for leaseholders. Where improvement works are funded by third parties, Liberal Democrats have reduced bills or eliminated re-charging leaseholders.

7 We will create more green space.

Liberal Democrat councillors are investing a record £6.6 million in improving parks (including Arundel Square, Rosemary Gardens, Whittington Park, Highbury Fields, Joseph Grimaldi Park, Bingfield Park and St. Mary Magdalene Gardens) and extending parks such as Arundel Square, Malta Street and Gillespie Park. Liberal Democrats have also planted a record number of trees and flowers, will open new allotments and food growing plots as well as greening hidden corners of the borough to create new small green spaces.

These are just some of our achievements over the last four years. Liberal Democrats have turned Islington round from the basket case it was under Labour. But now we want to build on this work to make Islington an even safer, fairer, greener borough for its residents.

Our new pledges to Islington residents

Islington Liberal Democrats are again making key pledges to our residents. We believe this is just one of the ways we can stay accountable to residents. We want people in Islington to judge us against them in four years' time.

We recognise that local government faces some tough challenges in the next four years – whoever is in power nationally. The four pledges below will be our priorities for the next four years to make Islington an even safer, fairer, greener place to live, grow up and work.

1 We will cut crime and anti-social behaviour

- more visible late-night policing
- crack down on badly managed bars, clubs and off licences
- tougher action against irresponsible dog owners

2 We will make Islington greener

- set up a network of local energy generation schemes across Islington to create jobs, reduce emissions and lower heating bills

3 We will give our young people the best start in life

- keep improving school exam results
- new school buildings
- give local young people extra housing points so they can have their own homes
- provide more apprenticeships

4 We will deliver fair taxes

- keep Islington's council tax among the lowest in London.

Our vision

In line with the Liberal Democrats' themes in the national election campaign, Islington Liberal Democrats believe in **fair taxes for all**. For the last two years we have proposed a council tax freeze and throughout our administration we have kept our promise to keep your council tax below the London average. Not only have we cut Islington's council tax from the highest in London to one of the lowest, we have also actually kept tax rises lower than inflation, meaning residents pay less in real terms than ten years ago. We have also introduced discounts for pensioners. Gone are the bad old days under Labour of dire finances and the highest council tax in London.

A fair start for our children is also at the heart of what Liberal Democrats believe in. Our record investment programme in Islington primary and secondary schools, our best ever exam results and our 'Fair School Meals' for primary and secondary pupils will give our children the best possible start. Our work on tackling child poverty has won praise but we know we can do more.

Residents are understandably cynical about politicians these days. But Liberal Democrats have always believed in opening up the Town Hall's business and having **fair and transparent local politics**. Devolving power, reducing councillor allowances, listening to Islington residents and publishing senior council officer salaries are just some of the steps Liberal Democrats have taken to restore trust locally. We know that residents now want us to be even more accountable and make decisions in an open way.

Islington, like all parts of the country, is suffering the worst recession in memory. Liberal Democrats have already taken the lead among councils in protecting and helping local residents and businesses. Our 'Credit Crunch Bite Back' campaign to help local businesses and residents through the recession was praised by the Audit Commission this year. Now we want to build **a fair and sustainable local economy** with new green jobs and cheaper local energy.

Despite the recession, Liberal Democrat Islington is still pushing developers to build new homes for local people and we are one of the first authorities to start building new council housing. But we know that a **fairer housing** system that allows our young people to get their first home of their own is key to building stable and mixed communities and avoid the mistakes of Labour's old sink estates. Liberal Democrats will focus on building new homes, putting residents at the heart of services and ensuring value-for-money housing services.

Crime has fallen in Islington under the Liberal Democrats due to our good working relationships with the police and our common-sense measures to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour. Liberal Democrat councillors have put **more police on the streets** locally. But we know that feeling safe is local residents' top concern and we will ensure yet more police are on the streets when we most need them, crack down on anti-social behaviour caused by late licences in bars and clubs as well as dogs with irresponsible dog owners.

Liberal Democrats are passionate about preserving Islington's unique character. We know that many people choose to make Islington their home because of its local shops, open spaces, squares, cultural life and local heritage. We will ensure that the best of Islington is preserved and that regeneration helps, not hinders, this. We will **keep Islington special**.

Liberal Democrats are local champions for our communities. We have delivered real improvements and we will stand up for local residents. This is our vision for Islington.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Terry Stacy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Councillor Terry Stacy
Leader, Islington Liberal Democrats

Keeping Islington residents safe

Crime is falling in Islington thanks, among other measures, to investment from Liberal Democrat councillors. Rather than just talking tough to get cheap headlines, Liberal Democrats have taken a common sense approach to tackling crime in the borough. But we know that fear of crime is still one of Islington residents' top concerns. Liberal Democrats will:

Policing

- support the Liberal Democrat national campaign for an additional 600 police officers in London funded by scrapping Labour's 'Big Brother' national ID card scheme.
- fight moves by the Mayor and Conservatives at City Hall to cut the number of PCSOs and police officers in Islington.
- work with the Borough Police Commander and Safer Neighbourhood Teams to ensure police shifts better match times when crime and anti-social behaviour occur locally so that more officers are visible and available at these times.
- work to bring the existing Safer Neighbourhood Panels together with other public forums to encourage more people to join in decisions on local policing.

Domestic violence and hate crimes

Liberal Democrats have a 'zero tolerance' approach to hate crimes and domestic violence in Islington. We will:

- work with the police and community groups to tackle domestic violence within same sex relationships and against both women and men in heterosexual relationships.
- work with schools to tackle the issue of young people being the perpetrators of domestic violence at home towards parents or carers.
- work with community and faith groups to eliminate address honour crimes, forced marriages and female genital mutilation.

Drink and drugs

Many of Islington's incidents of anti-social behaviour involve alcohol or drugs. We will:

- continue to use special teams to catch and prosecute off-licences selling alcohol to people under-age.
- carefully monitor the effect of licensing hours, reviewing licences where problems occur and consider the impact on residents.
- continue to introduce controlled drinking zones around Islington, where appropriate, and only with resident and police support.
- extend the principles of the council's 'Clerkenwell Charter' to areas like Upper Street and Essex Road to limit the impact of licensing regulations on the local community and, if all else fails, explore whether saturation zones are needed in some parts of the borough.
- continue to work closely with residents and the police to combat drug dealing and crack houses, evict tenants found guilty of using their premises for these activities and work with other housing providers to ensure they do the same.

Protecting the public

We will:

- continue to use special teams to catch and prosecute traders selling prohibited items such as knives to under-age customers.
- ensure that police crime prevention design advisers spend at least one day a week working with council planners making new developments as safe as possible.
- recruit an extra dog warden to tackle the problem of anti-social behaviour involving dogs, dangerous dogs and dogs used as weapons.

Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour can seriously reduce the quality of life of many Islington residents. Liberal Democrats taken tough action against those who make their neighbours' lives a misery, where appropriate imposing Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, dispersal zones and evicting from their homes tenants who persistently make life impossible for their neighbours.

But we don't just want to deal with anti-social behaviour after it's happened. We will invest in preventing anti-social behaviour, helping to guide those who commit it away from it and towards more productive choices.

We will:

- carry out a major review into how Homes for Islington and other housing providers in Islington respond to resident complaints about anti-social behaviour.
- work with other councils to share crime data, including the use of cross-borough injunctions to prevent perpetrators moving between boroughs.

Restorative Justice – Community Payback

Restorative Justice is a longstanding Liberal Democrat policy for dealing with crime. Police will dispense 'instant restorative justice' on the streets when vandals are caught in the act, and offenders and victims will be brought face to face to account for their crime. We will:

- double the number of 'community payback' hours in Islington and allow local residents a say in how offenders should be made to make up for their crime.

Breaking the cycle of crime

Some parts of London have far more serious problems with organised gang crime than Islington. But we are determined to stop gang culture and youth crime gaining a hold on our communities and young people. Unlike other political parties, Liberal Democrats want the council to be proactive not reactive in tackling these issues. We will:

- build on the work of Islington's innovative Commission on Young People.
- fund voluntary groups and mentors with a proven track record of breaking the cycle of youth re-offending to target those most likely to offend.
- enhance street-based outreach work for young people to find the right balance with youth club-based activities.
- work with our partners to provide more safe places for our young people to meet
- continue to work closely with schools and youth groups to promote effective anti-gun and anti-knife programmes
- work with local community groups to introduce weapon amnesties to take lethal weapons off the streets as much as possible

Protecting Islington's civil liberties

The Liberal Democrats are the only party that stands up for civil rights in the face of this Labour government's stripping away of historic rights. We support the rights of individual citizens and, as far as we are able, will not actively support or promote the government's billion pound national identity card scheme.

We will:

- protect our residents' personal data held by the council
- support the Freedom of Information Act and make all requests to the council public.
- use the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act proportionately and reasonably

A Fairer Islington

Fairer on your pocket

It is incredible that under a Labour government the gap between the rich and the poor has got wider than ever in Islington and that child poverty targets are still being missed. Liberal Democrats are calling for income tax to be scrapped on the first £10,000 of salaries. This would mean a £700 tax cut for most Islington residents. Liberal Democrats are also calling for the abolition of the unfair council tax which takes no account of people's ability to pay or income.

Until then, we will:

- aim to reduce residents' council tax next year by paying back to residents money the council has secured from the Government to mitigate the high cost on Islington council-taxpayers of the Labour policy to provide "free" school meals to wealthy families and families living in other boroughs.
- keep council tax among the 10 lowest in London.
- stay tough on tax cheats by continuing to improve our record council tax collection rates, reducing the number of ineligible claimants of the single person council tax discount and cracking down on housing benefit and council tax benefit fraud.
- continue to reduce the use of expensive temporary and agency staff to keep council costs down.
- end automatic annual incremental pay rises for higher-paid council staff, which until now have been based solely on time served, and strengthen the link between performance and pay instead.
- roll out more cheap Internet access on housing estates to tackle social exclusion, combat poverty, improve people's chances of work and training and improve quality of life for isolated people.

Value for money services

Local government is set for a very challenging time financially whichever party is in government nationally. Liberal Democrats believe that prioritising council resources on services that do most to help Islington residents is the right way forward, not implementing savage cuts across the board.

We will:

- continue the drive to make Islington one of the most efficient councils in the country based on a "lean, not mean" criteria, for example by sharing services with other providers, councils and public bodies to keep our costs as low as possible.
- investigate how the council's support and backroom services can be carried out as efficiently as possible while protecting services to the public.
- continue to set all council directors challenging targets; only allowing spending on things which bring real benefit to residents.
- freeze the creation of new council jobs unless they are self-funded and there is a proven need for new services

Tackling debt and poverty

We will:

- continue to invest in our first class targeted benefits advice service to make sure that people who need more help are claiming all the support they are eligible for.
- create an 'advice hub' to bring together Islington Law Centre and other advice agencies in one building at a central location.
- build on the work of Liberal Democrats in developing and expanding Islington's Credit Union and expand its role across the borough.

- continue funding the council's Benefits Take Up Team to help local people (especially older people) get the financial help that they are entitled to and to help them make the transition between benefits and work.
- continue to lead our pioneering Islington Debt Coalition, bringing together voluntary organisations and government organisations to help local people tackle their debt.

Listening to Islington

We will:

- continue our drive to make the council more responsive to residents through improved communication and report-backs
- drive up the quality of the council's 'first stop shop' Contact Islington service
- revamp the council's website to include local news feeds and interactive communications between the council and residents (and between residents without involving the council).
- make more council services available online

Real equality

Islington Liberal Democrats will:

- continue their call for heterosexual couples to be allowed civil partnerships and for lesbian and gay couples to be married.
- ensure that we close the gaps in health inequalities.
- require every school in the borough to address homophobic bullying in their anti-bullying policies. Although 98% of schools have anti-bullying policies, only 6% have specific policies to tackle homophobic bullying.
- fight the Mayor's funding cuts, which have put back plans for step-free access at Archway, Highbury & Islington and Finsbury Park stations.

Fair, Transparent and Open Politics

The age of top-down, politicians-know-best is well and truly over in the light of the MPs' expense scandals. Islington residents rightly expect the highest standards of their council and councillors.

Liberal Democrats have long fought for a more open and transparent way of doing politics and this year we cut councillor salaries. This election is no different.

We will:

- publish the salary details of senior council officers to ensure transparency.
- resist attempts by Government to deny Islington residents access to council services or benefits unless they are in possession of a new national identity card: Liberal Democrats will not take part in any Government pilot scheme.
- ensure that all decisions to use 'snooping' powers under the Labour Government's Regulation of Investigative Powers Act are scrutinised regularly by councillors and the public to ensure they are not abused or used for trivial matters.
- publish the details of council expenditure over £1,000 to ensure value for money.
- protect our residents' personal data held by the council
- support the Freedom of Information Act
- ensure residents have access to affordable legal services by continuing to fund Islington Law Centre and working with the Citizens' Advice Bureau organisation.

Putting local communities in charge

Liberal Democrat councillors introduced area committees to break up Labour's Town Hall stranglehold on decision-making in the borough. Only the Liberal Democrats will now expand the role of communities in decision-making and service priorities locally.

We will:

- expand participatory budgeting schemes like recently trialled in Canonbury and Finsbury Park where local residents vote on which local projects get council funding.
- ensure the council takes a leading role in encouraging and supporting volunteering schemes in the borough to allow residents to take ownership of issues affecting their neighbourhood.

Handing power back to communities

One of the first things Liberal Democrats did when they took control of the council was to move decision-making out of the Town Hall and into the local community by setting up Area Committees.

The next four years will see the Area Committees change to involve more of Islington's local community and stakeholders in local decision-making. We will:

- review the work of the council's Area Committees and explore how to incorporate area housing panels and Safer Neighbourhood Team resident panels into a single forum.
- look at devolving additional budgets for area committees to spend, building on the success of our Neighbourhood Management pilot schemes around Islington.

Listening to you

Since 2006 Liberal Democrats have made turning the council into a listening organisation one of our key priorities and that will continue over the next four years.

We pledge to:

- improve services by making positive changes based on community-led information
- expand the range of services our customer service centre (Contact Islington) provides
- give residents information about the council in ways they wish to receive it
- improve access to services for those with disabilities and additional needs
- reduce avoidable repeat contact through improvements to customer service and service delivery
- launch a new 'Tell us Once' initiative to end the frustration of having to tell several council departments your personal information
- develop innovative ways of welcoming new residents to the borough.
- carry out regular 'Meet the People' tours of the borough for residents to see the council's leaders and tell them first hand what they think about the council.
- launch a new live website for residents to send in pictures of local environmental problems using camera phone, email or the website. Council staff will then feed back on what action is being taken - including an 'after' picture of how it's been sorted.
- hold regular 'Meet the Leader' sessions - building on the success of the Leader's supermarket surgeries last summer - in different venues around the borough to make the Leader of the Council fully accessible and accountable to residents.
- hold regular sessions when councillors take senior council officers out on 'Listening Days' to meet residents and hear first hand their experiences of council services.
- re-vamp the council's website into a consultation forum with discussion and voting topics on all the council's business - from traffic schemes and planning applications to budget setting and long-term strategies.

An even greener Islington

Liberal Democrats have turned Islington into a trailblazer among councils for our innovative work on protecting our natural environment and sustainability. We are one of only two councils in London and ten nationally to have our work on the environment recognised as a model of good practice by the Audit Commission. But we will not rest on our laurels. The future of our local environment and planet is too important to be an after-thought.

The local environment and the council's impact on it is at the heart of everything Liberal Democrats want to do. We want Islington to play its part in making a more sustainable borough.

Planning for the community

We have pioneered sustainable planning and we now have more green roofs in Islington than any other borough and a policy to avoid flooding and waste water run-off.

We will:

- ensure value for money for local taxpayers by lobbying Government to make property developers pay for the costs of council staff time in preparing their planning applications
- use the planning process to resist development of front and back gardens in Islington.
- review planning procedures to see how they can be more people-focused and ensure residents get the best possible deal.
- require planning approvals to include energy efficiency measures.

Reducing our environmental footprint

The water, electricity and other resources that we all use, all place a burden on the world's environment. We want to help people consume as little resources as possible, and are prepared to take action ourselves and to encourage residents and businesses to achieve it.

We are reducing our energy consumption and will lead the way locally, using renewable, and preferably local, sources of energy instead of electricity generated through burning of fossil fuels. Liberal Democrats in Islington have already signed the council up to the 10:10 campaign.

We will:

- introduce a decentralised energy system across the borough to provide cheaper heat and power to residents and look at small-scale ways to generate energy from waste
- reduce consumption of energy by Islington Council, and reduce the council's greenhouse gas emissions in Islington by 40% by 2020.
- continue to promote car-free developments
- get tough on developers to meet environmental standards
- put forward a positive vision of a greener future to Islington residents and businesses.
- work on ways to reduce demand for heating and lighting across the borough's offices and businesses.
- further improve our climate change performance by measuring carbon consumption as well as the production of emissions.
- continue to reinvest savings from landfill tax and from the sale of our landfill credits for environmental benefit.

Green Living

We will support our residents in their ambitions to "go green" and enjoy a sustainable lifestyle. We are proud of what we have achieved already. Under the Liberal Democrats, Islington has won numerous awards for our sustainability achievements. We will maintain a dedicated team in a sustainability department, which Labour have indicated they will axe.

Liberal Democrats want green buildings, green schools and green homes. We will:

- help residents with insulation and fuel efficiency measures and provide advice and grants to green our homes and schools
- protect our natural environment and support biodiversity
- provide advice on affordable, sustainable, healthy food and give grants for community food growing projects
- help residents, businesses and institutions to collect as much rainwater as possible and use it productively rather than letting it flow away down our sewers or cause flooding.
- ensure that every relevant council report includes an 'environmental impact assessment' to establish that the maximum has been done to minimise the eco footprint of any proposals.
- complete trials of solar powered parking meters and work with energy suppliers to ensure that the mains supply is from a renewable resource or green supplier.
- complete trials of 'intelligent lighting' schemes currently underway around the borough to reduce energy use.
- aim to make Islington plastic bag free by encouraging local shops to provide long-life bags from sustainable sources.
- increase the proportion of purchased and generated energy from renewable and clean energy sources in our buildings and encourage others in Islington to do the same.

Affordable warmth

Our 'Affordable Warmth Strategy' committed us to reaching Islington's most vulnerable residents, improving insulation, addressing unfair payment methods and ensuring a joined-up approach from the council and our partners such as Homes for Islington and NHS Islington.

We will:

- support continued funding for our award-winning 'Energy Doctor in the Community' and 'Energy Doctor in the Home' schemes to provide outreach and home visiting services.
- carry on large-scale cavity wall insulation work on council homes and encourage other housing providers to do the same..
- ensure grants are available to residents in private sector housing for energy saving measures.
- take proactive steps to keep reducing fuel poverty in Islington.

Air quality

We will:

- issue penalty notices to idling motor vehicles including lorries and buses that are disturbing residents' quality of life
- lobby for air quality improvements at the Archway, Highbury Corner and Old Street gyratory systems.
- work with TfL and lobby to ensure the UK complies fully with air quality laws for dangerous Air Pollution by the 2012 Olympics in London
- run the council's vehicle fleet on biomethane and/or sustainably sourced electricity
- explore fitting 'green roofs' on bus stops in partnership with Transport for London.

Cleaner streets and Flytipping

We will:

- continue improvements to the domestic bulky waste service
- issue Fixed Penalty Notices to people who drop litter after being offered a chance to dispose of it properly and prioritise those that allow their dogs to foul and fail to clear it up.
- investigate retraining our parking wardens to become a "Green Team" whose job would be to report environmental and traffic issues as well as enforce parking regulations

Recycling & Re-use

Islington now recycles over 30% of its household waste: a huge rise from just 3.5% when Labour ran the Council. We will continue to work to increase this level further. Our vision for recycling in Islington is clear: everything which residents or businesses use which can be recycled should be.

We will:

- hold a referendum on whether to introduce compulsory recycling in Islington
- to help the whole community understand the cost of waste collection and landfill locally, specify on every council tax bill the proportion that is spent dealing with rubbish. The bills will stress that the more people reuse and recycle, the more that can be invested in frontline services and used to keep residents' council tax down.
- work to keep our ambitious recycling targets to increase recycling rates year on year and minimise the council's liability for government 'landfill taxes'.
- look to introduce a general recycling service for every business in the borough
- explore further extending the door-to-door recycling service to include batteries and textiles.
- reduce the amount of waste the Council produces in its work and buildings and work with other borough organisations to reduce theirs.
- work with partners to ensure mini-recycling facilities in blocks, on estates, in streets, at stations and at bus stops.
- roll out chute recycling schemes on estates with separate chutes for recycling and non-recyclable waste.
- continue to improve the number of recyclable items that the council's bulky waste service collects, including extending the number of collections for items that can be reused, such as furniture
- increase year on year the trial public street recycling bins currently in Upper Street to other areas of the borough, especially by bus stops, stations and public buildings.

While Liberal Democrat councillors have ensured that Islington recycling levels have reached record levels, we now want to also emphasise the re-use agenda to encourage residents, local organisations and businesses to think about they can re-use materials to reduce landfill even further.

Enviro-crime

Graffiti, abandoned cars and dumping all reduce the quality of our local environment and can sometimes be dangerous. We've already successfully tackled fly-posting in key areas in the borough and we will continue to pursue innovative ways of tackling environmental crimes.

We will:

- continue to prosecute those who dump rubbish illegally and crack down on organised criminal gangs dumping industrial waste.
- remove all graffiti within a week and within 24 hours if it contains racist or offensive language.
- remove all abandoned cars within 24 hours of them being reported.
- remove all fly-tipped waste within 36 hours of being reported.
- make keeping streets clear of dog mess a priority and implement a no-tolerance policy for irresponsible dog owners who persist in allowing their dogs to foul the pavement.

Keeping Islington clean and green

We will:

- create a new way for residents to report issues and hear back about what the council is doing. Residents will be able to send in pictures of a problem - using their camera phones, email or a dedicated webpage – with all reports going on a live, public website where council officers can report back to the public with information and images about how they dealt with the problem.

- set up a network of Green Zones throughout Islington to encourage residents to take responsibility for sustainability in their neighbourhoods. Volunteer residents will talk to their neighbours about waste and recycling, energy efficiency, water efficiency and transport to raise awareness about positive environmental actions.

Keeping Islington moving

Getting around Islington should be as easy, cheap and safe as possible. We have opposed the very large fare rises on buses and the tube recently imposed by Boris Johnson. We want walking and cycling in Islington to be as enjoyable and easy as possible to encourage people out of their cars. But we want travelling by car and parking, when necessary, to be hassle-free.

Public transport

We will:

- continue to work closely with transport providers to promote good public transport in Islington and fight the proposed line closures for works on the Northern Line.
- continue to fight for a fair level of Government funding for the Freedom Pass for Islington's pensioners and disabled.
- fight the Mayor's proposed reduction in Islington tube ticket office opening hours.

Driving in Islington

We will:

- ensure, after one of the worst winters ever, the most dangerous potholes in the borough are made safe with roads being resurfaced wherever possible.
- introduce and review the success of the new borough-wide 20mph zone
- use effective traffic calming, and only if backed by residents, to cut down even further the number of people killed or injured on Islington's roads.
- replace old-fashioned 'Ken Livingstone' style speed humps with modern versions when resurfacing roads already with traffic calming.
- continue to support and promote car-sharing through Islington's Car Club, now the largest in England.
- campaign for two-way traffic on York Way at King's Cross and the scrapping of the gyratories at Archway, Nags Head, Finsbury Park, Highbury Corner and Old Street.
- co-ordinate roadworks to avoid our streets being continuously dug up by utility companies.
- work towards the installation of a car club space on as many streets as possible.

Cycling and walking

We will:

- work with the police to crack down on bike theft using sting operations and bike data tags.
- encourage the police locally to take cycle theft seriously.
- insist on cycle-friendly road layouts with an emphasis on safety.
- maximise route choice for cyclists and undertake a comprehensive review of all streets in the borough to identify all physical and traffic management restrictions to cycle traffic on the network
- work with the police to catch those who cycle on pavements or run through red lights.
- insist that future changes to parking bays, road layout and traffic calming measures should not create problems for cyclists or pedestrians or impede the developing cycle route network or pedestrian access.
- roll out more secure cycle parking facilities on our housing estates.
- invest in more cycle tracks/paths
- work with the Mayor to review the introduction of Transport for London's cycle-hire scheme in Islington.
- work with local businesses and other agencies to reduce clutter on the pavements.
- following the successful improvements to Islington Green we will make improvements to the streetscape at Exmouth Market in Clerkenwell and around Highbury & Islington and Essex Road stations.

Parking

More people want to park their cars in Islington than there is space for. The Council's job is to manage the limited parking space. We have been determined to give priority in parking to local residents – giving residents in every part of Islington the opportunity to control parking by non-residents, if they want it.

We will continue to put the interests of our residents first and we will make parking services and parking enforcement rules even more user-friendly

We recognise that wardens are a necessary evil to ensure fair parking. But as these staff are on the streets every day of the week they are a valuable additional asset and we will use them to tackle dog-fouling and keeping Islington's environment clean and safe.

We will:

- keep our successful 'Common Sense Parking Policy' and never set targets for the number of tickets issued.
- replace traffic wardens with a new 'Green Team Wardens' who have responsibilities for more than just issuing parking tickets – acting as additional eyes and ears on the streets to help keep our streets tidy by reporting litter, graffiti and fly-tipping.
- keep all existing current controlled parking zones under review to ensure they deliver what local residents want at the times they want.
- maintain the ban on the council clamping illegally parked vehicles and maintain the reduction in number of cars towed away.
- make sure that Homes for Islington and Aquaterra use the council's 'Common Sense Parking' policy on estates and properties they manage and end clamping by private contractors
- continue to provide residents parking permits free of charge to holders of disabled blue badges while continuing to crack down on blue badge fraud.
- handle parking ticket appeals efficiently and professionally and in line with common sense.
- use the planning process to promote more car-free developments in the borough and ensure that residents buying or moving into car-free developments are warned in advance of the car-free policy.
- continue the innovative green parking charges policy with resident parking permits being cheaper for cars that produce less carbon emissions.
- continue to only use parking revenue to improve transport and pedestrian facilities in Islington.
- roll out the 'Pay by Phone' facility for parking permits/vouchers across the borough
- review the success of the current free parking at local shopping centres and explore introducing 30 minutes free parking for key local shopping centres.
- introduce a 'Driving Me Crazy' scheme to ask residents and businesses which traffic regulations they want to change in the borough and let people vote on it online.

Keeping Islington in work and in business

Islington is currently experiencing one of the worst recessions in living history. Liberal Democrats have already won praise for their package of help and support for people who become victims of the recession and preventing people becoming victims.

But while there is a danger of a 'double dip' recession and to reduce the general level of long-term unemployment in Islington, Liberal Democrats will:

- continue to expand our apprenticeship scheme by guaranteeing a further 50 places per year for local people to take up jobs with the council, and encourage our partners to do take on local apprentices, adding this as a criterion in all relevant future contracts.
- explore how the 'Islington Working' project can deliver maximum value for money.
- integrate the 'Islington Working' programme with the 'Islington Connect' programme so that we are reaching out and providing back-to-work support to those who need it the most.
- make the council's recruitment and related processes more accessible to local people, particularly those currently under-represented in the workforce such as young people and the disabled.

Adult Skills

We will:

- continue to run a high-quality, community-based adult learning programme, including basic skills and learning for parents of primary school children.
- outsource the provision of this service, but ensure the quality is high and is provided with close links to 'Islington Working' and other employment-based programmes.
- commission future ESOL courses with a much stronger focus on getting people the confidence to go into work – using the Brent Language2Work model.

Voluntary Sector

We will:

- continue our strong relationship with the voluntary sector by implementing the newly agreed Islington Compact
- work to support and develop the voluntary sector so that they are able to compete for and win more contracts from the council
- build a stronger partnership with the third sector by supporting and working closely with the Community Network, and the networks that form it.
- ensure an enhanced role for the third sector in commissioning services with better consultation about needs, priorities and service design; more accessible and transparent tendering processes; decisions about providers that value local knowledge and relationships; and less costly and bureaucratic monitoring.
- invest in the Community Chest grants scheme so that local groups, particularly those serving the most disadvantaged communities, can access resources for their activities.
- invest in community premises by dealing with the back log of capital works in premises owned by the Council and used by local organisations. Buildings should be suitable and safe with more transferred to ownership by the community.
- champion volunteering by promoting the development of high quality volunteering opportunities and effective brokerage arrangements.
- support the infrastructure of the local third sector so that organisations can operate effectively and continue to bring funding and other support into the borough from a wide range of sources.
- support and develop community organisations working with the disabled and carers and support the re-development of Centre 404's building on Camden Road.

Supporting local businesses

Local businesses are the lifeblood of any community and provide a huge number of local jobs. Islington Liberal Democrats are fighting hard to help local businesses at regional and national level.

We are:

- running a small business rate relief sign-up drive
- battling for a fairer distribution across London of the Supplementary Business Rate for the Crossrail extension to stop Islington firms being out of business.
- fighting the Labour Government's business rate revaluations, which were done at the height of the last property boom.

In Islington, we will:

- assess the results of the free 2-hour Saturday parking pilot currently underway at Archway
- keep promoting our 'Shop Local' campaign to encourage residents to use their local shops
- fund a new Town Centre Manager for the south of the borough dealing with Whitecross Street and Exmouth markets
- continue to support the Angel Business Improvement District, Nag's Head Town Centre and Archway Town Centre, along with the smaller shopping areas in the borough ensure the council's business support team provides a single point of contact for businesses.
- provide grants to improve shop frontages in prominent shopping parades
- not let retail units sit empty, but create opportunities for arts and community groups to occupy the buildings until a new commercial tenant is found.
- preserve our local shopping centres through the council's planning policy.
- use the council to campaign for local business interests, where these are supported by our local communities. (e.g. business rate rises)
- fund the development of the Creative Islington website to support arts, culture and creativity as part of the borough's identity, increase visitors and boost local employment.
- continue to provide Christmas lights in the winter and hanging basket displays in the summer across the borough to attract shoppers to local shopping parades.

Investing in Islington's future

Under the Liberal Democrats, young people's life chances in Islington have been transformed from the unacceptably low standards Labour condemned them to. But Liberal Democrats are ambitious for Islington's young people and we want to do even more to give them the best possible start in life.

An improved learning environment

We will:

- invest in our twenty-three voluntary and third sector early years centres across the borough.
- build new primary schools on the Crouch Hill site.
- open new buildings at Islington Arts and Media School, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson secondary schools.
- work with schools to ensure class sizes remain at 30 students or below

Raising standards

We will continue our relentless drive to raise standards now that our primary schools are overall at the national average and our secondary schools are all at or above national averages. We will in particular:

- target educational attainment levels for less well-performing groups of children following significant improvements among BME children.
- continue to work actively with minority ethnic groups to maintain their greatly improved educational performance
- provide more targeted 1-2-1 tuition for pupils who need extra support to reach their full potential
- explore how we can extend the use of IT in schools and homes to boost results and standards.

Healthy children

There is a growing problem with the health of Islington's young people. Liberal Democrats believe that education is key and will work in partnership with families and children to show them the benefits of healthy eating through living playgrounds, allotments and growing spaces and healthy kitchen schemes.

Keeping children safe

Vulnerable children need the safety and security of a family and the Lib Dems are committed to making sure the highest possible number of children are put in foster care and not in institutions.

Liberal Democrats will encourage all Islington schools to carry out CRB checks on all School Governors and put in place an action plan to ensure we continue to do everything we can to protect vulnerable children in the borough including checks on schools' single central records system.

We will commit funding to a new professional and training fund to support social workers and improve recruitment and retention. We will also ringfence the Children's Services safeguarding budget and lobby the Government to provide child protection with the resources it needs rather than expect councils to pick up the tab. We will also offer to become a mentor to other local authorities' social services departments.

Outside of school

Liberal Democrats understand that there is more to developing Islington's young people than just good exam results. Outside of schools we will:

- continue to work closely with school attendance officers to identify areas where truants 'hang out' and take them home to parents and carers to discuss any related anti-social behaviour and welfare issues.

- re-focus youth services on positive grass-roots community projects for all young people, backed-up by improved online information
- look at how we expand and support community group and tenant & resident association activities and projects for young people.
- young people will be able to bid for up to £20,000 to fund a project of their choice using social media to manage budgets and make decisions that will shape the future of Islington services on offer to young people.

Financial support for those most in need

After thirteen years of a Labour government, Islington still has some of the highest levels of child poverty in London. To help parents and families, we will:

- provide more affordable childcare close to home
- introduce Fair School Meals - free school meals targeted at the least well-off families - especially families with more children - and extend fair school meals to secondary age students too. This will be a first in Islington, from which nearly 4,500 children would stand to benefit.
- increase the numbers of childminders providing childcare
- continue to promote the school uniform grants brought in by Liberal Democrat councillors and which have so far benefitted nearly 1,000 local families.
- promote benefit take-up campaigns through our children's centres
- provide training for parents to get back to work when their children reach 7

Supporting parents

Liberal Democrats recognise that one of the biggest hurdles for parents going out or back to work is childcare. But we know that working parents is one of the key ways to tackle child poverty in Islington. That's why we will:

- work with schools to offer a better, wider choice of after-school activities.
- boost the number of childminders to support parents
- introduce a fair charging policy for school holiday activities, targeted at poorer families, including a summer university
- support parenting with advice lines and 1-2-1 appointments
- offer specialist help for young people in trouble
- provide more activities for children with disabilities and more breaks for parents

A better deal for teenagers

While school achievements are important, Liberal Democrats understand that Islington's young people need activities after school. We will:

- open new flagship youth centres at Hornsey Road and Archway and a vastly improved White Lion Centre
- set up a network of youth hubs in local areas
- increase the range of post-16 opportunities with a larger sixth form consortium alongside Islington College
- provide help with getting into work and apprenticeships in the council

Education Services

Education is a significant part of Children's Services. Liberal Democrats will consider all options around service provision in the drive to raise standards and ensure that our young people are all well-qualified for further or higher education and work.

Higher education

Islington Liberal Democrats are campaigning for the abolition of university tuition fees to ensure that Islington's young people are not put off applying for a university place because of the fear of graduate debt.

Housing Islington

As a typical inner London authority with high housing demand, but little land available for new homes, Islington is facing real pressure to meet its housing need. The effect of the recession has also meant developers and housing associations are building fewer homes than before, despite Islington's good record previously.

Real housing help

To ensure the best possible use of the existing housing stock, reduce overcrowding and ensure everyone gets a fair chance to live in Islington, Liberal Democrats will:

- extend the 'Next Generation' scheme that gives priority to local young people for housing to include housing association properties and look to extend it to first generation leaseholders.
- give extra housing points for existing tenants' children to ensure they can stay in the borough and find a home in Islington near their family and friends.
- increase the number of young people housed under the 'Next Generation' scheme.
- 'de-convert' flats currently in multiple occupation into larger homes and extend existing homes to help overcrowded families on the waiting list.
- give housing priority to returning war veterans.
- continue to fund the Social Homebuy scheme which offers Islington tenants up to £4,000 to buy a share of the council home they live in. This is compared to the scheme launched by the Labour government which gives just £1,500 towards new home costs.

Quality and new housing

Liberal Democrats want to ensure the maximum number of homes are made available for local residents. To make this happen we will

- complete Islington's Decent Homes works to all homes on time and on budget.
- continue the programme to build the first new council homes for thirty years offering family-sized accommodation, but unlike Labour we will not consider building on open spaces or nature reserves like Gifford Street.
- complete re-building works on the Market, Churnfield and Packington Estates providing new homes to local residents.
- use the council's new planning policy to ensure developers have to build at least 50% affordable housing in their schemes to get planning permission with a 60/40 split between social rented and intermediate housing.
- work with residents to regenerate the Bemerton and Tremlett Grove estates.

Empowering residents

We will:

- introduce online assessment for the borough's housing register though this will not be compulsory.
- we will work actively with minority ethnic groups to get them more involved in resident participation initiatives
- re-define the relationship between the council and its tenant management organisations and co-operatives, in partnership with Homes for Islington.

Helping leaseholders

We will:

- commission an independent review of the council's leaseholder support package including whether current contracts offer maximum value for money.
- appoint an independent 'Champion' to represent the interests of Islington leaseholders before spending decisions are made and challenge contractors to bring costs down.

An even better quality of life

Islington's housing estates have been transformed under the Liberal Democrats. We will continue to improve the quality of life on our estates by:

- continuing to improve estate lighting
- encouraging community gardens where possible
- set up a fund for noise-insulation works in council-owned properties.
- fitting and encouraging 'window boxes' on balconies where tenants want them
- providing help for elderly and disabled tenants living on the ground floor who can't look after their gardens and patios but enforce tenancy agreements for people who can, but don't
- continuing to improve play areas

The future of housing management

The Council has a Management Agreement with HFI which runs until April 2014. Before that date the council will need to make a decision on the future of HFI. Tenants and leaseholders will have a say on the future of Homes for Islington.

Dogs

We will:

- review the success of Wandsworth's compulsory dog registration and chipping scheme and examine how Islington's and other housing providers' tenancy agreements could be amended to enforce this.

Empty homes

Liberal Democrats will build on their success in keeping the number of empty homes to a minimum in Islington.

Private homeowners

Islington was one of the first boroughs to offer the Mortgage Rescue Package that provides a lifeline to those affected by credit crunch and helps vulnerable families stay in their homes. We are committed to helping vulnerable people in difficult economic times and will monitor the level of mortgage arrears in the borough and homeowners in financial difficulty and consider how best to support people who find themselves in this situation.

Green homes

Liberal Democrats will seek to ensure that any new-build housing development provides some of its own energy from renewable resources.

Housing funding

The Labour government has put off reporting back on their Review of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy, so that any changes are delayed until after the General Election. The central proposal is to allow local authorities to buy their way out of the negative subsidy system – Islington tenants will be allowed to keep all rent income but only after having compensated the government for its loss of future payment streams. And the debt Islington will be obliged to take on is uncertain.

Liberal Democrats will:

- continue to lobby government as we think there should be a cancellation of historic debt.
- work with the government and agencies to make it easier for Islington to borrow against future rental income to invest in new housing and build new homes at every opportunity

Street properties

Liberal Democrats have listened to the concerns of residents living in street properties about Partners for Improvement's performance. We will bring the monitoring of this contract back in-house, improve monitoring of service standards and promote better value for money.

Intermediate housing

We will work with partners to find ways of making intermediate housing more affordable for those on low and medium incomes, such as low cost home ownership and sub-marketed rented accommodation.

A healthier Islington

There are times of our lives when we all need support from the NHS or social services – and when we do, we don't want to worry about whether it's the health service or the Council that helps us. The Liberal Democrat model of social services integrated with local health services is now regarded as leading the way nationally both by Labour government ministers and Tory opposition.

We've tackled the historic divide – created by the Conservative and Labour parties – between the Council and the health service – and now they both want to replicate it elsewhere. The Council's social services staff and NHS Islington work without barriers in the same building with many jobs performed by jointly appointed staff. This is also reflected in close co-operation between GPs (employed by, and working under contract to, Islington NHS) and council social services staff.

Liberal Democrats are opposed to the Labour government's plans to close the Finsbury Health Centre and transfer its services out of the area. We are also fighting government plans to close the accident & emergency unit at the Whittington Hospital. The Labour government had the power to stop these plans but chose not to. In fact, the Labour Secretary of State for Health was recently quoted as saying he believed that closing accident and emergency units was "the right thing to do". Liberal Democrat leader, Nick Clegg, has pledged not to let the Whittington Accident & Emergency unit close.

To improve local health, Liberal Democrats will:

- build on the integration of local social services and services to provide residents with the most convenient, easy-to-reach help when they need it.
- unlike other boroughs, continue to offer social care to residents with moderate needs, as well as those with more severe needs, to enable more people to maintain a higher quality of life and to prevent people from becoming more dependent.
- work with younger adults with a sensory impairment or other disability to make sure they and their families can maximise the possible benefits from new individual budgets.
- run campaigns to inform residents of the health dangers of drinking to excess and work with the local health service and through the local licensing system to ensure this message is communicated to all age groups.
- work with the local NHS to make sure that residents benefit from new NHS polyclinics and other facilities by co-locating them with social care services.
- make sure every eligible person who wants an individual budget is helped to set one up and make it work.
- increase the take-up rates by older people of benefits they are entitled to.
- deliver more of our services directly to elderly residents in their own homes.
- extend our award-winning re-ablement scheme, which gives residents back their independence after an operation or a long stay in hospital.
- extend inter-generational volunteering schemes, like our ground-breaking activities for vulnerable young people with the older users of the Alsen Day Centre, which builds trust and neighbourhood links on both sides.
- make 'direct payments' to more of our older people, giving them greater control over the services they receive and helping them to stay involved in their local community.
- extend our award-winning "Safe and Warm" scheme, run jointly with the local police, making more older people's homes more secure and better insulated.

- use the results of the Carers' Survey (December 2009) to further improve the council's services and develop emergency respite service for carers.
- link together our plans for sport with preventative health measures, to promote the health of everyone in Islington.
- while continuing of course to provide help to those in acute need, we'll also focus more and more on providing preventative care to everyone to help us all avoid preventable illness and incapacity.
- aim to work much closer with the borough's carer groups to ensure that adequate support is in place for carers
- propose a named councillor to champion the cause of carers in a similar way to our champion for older people, to ensure that there is a direct link and voice into the Council.

Mental Health

Liberal Democrats fully support the 'Time to Change' campaign led by Mind and Rethink and will ensure it is adopted across the council. The council's Mental Health Champion will also ensure the views of the borough's residents with mental health issues are heard.

Keeping warm

It is a scandal that after 14 years of a Labour government that many of Islington's older population still suffer in colder weather. While the Government has provided extra funding for heating bills, Liberal Democrats will, in addition, support the Affordable Warmth Strategy to insulate homes and reduce heating bills and keep pensioners warm

Freedom Pass

Liberal Democrats have been leading the campaign to stop the Labour government taking £30million from London councils' funding of the Freedom Pass for Islington's elderly and disabled. The Liberal Democrat council has also stepped in to help plug the funding gap this year by £0.75 million. Islington Liberal Democrats will fight to ensure fair government funding for London's free travel scheme.

Pensions

Nationally, Liberal Democrats are calling for the link between pensions and earnings to be restored to put more money in the pockets of Islington pensioners.

Keeping Islington special

Islington is a unique with a truly historic and special character. Its distinct individual neighbourhoods all need to be preserved as much as possible in the face of development. Liberal Democrats will:

- introduce a new 'green plaque' scheme to commemorate the borough's historic figures on local buildings. Residents will be able to nominate figures and vote on who they believe should receive a green plaque
- protect our current conservation areas and create new conservation areas subject to consultation where residents want them.
- preserve Islington's historic character through the council's planning policy.
- preserve Islington's heritage by locally listing key historic buildings.

Getting the maximum community benefit

With pressure for development in Islington so high and land being so scarce, it is vital that any new schemes bring the maximum community benefit. Liberal Democrats will:

- demand more out of developers in terms of community benefits from new developments, including contributions to infrastructure and community benefits such as apprenticeships.
- choose planning policies that preserve some of the highest environmental standards.
- fight to stop any further Labour Government closures of our Post Offices.

Getting tough on developers

Liberal Democrats will

- take prompt enforcement action where there is a breach of planning permission
- require new buildings wherever feasible to be 'Zero Carbon' developments.
- require more engagement from developers with local communities on major planning applications before the applications reach committee stage.
- give feedback on whether planning applications were successful or refused to residents who were initially consulted, whether they responded to the consultation or not.
- resist as far as possible the proliferation of student accommodation

Planning

Our new Core Strategy document sets out the planning framework the council will use for the next fifteen years. It sets out some very ambitious proposals on properly mixed communities, limiting tall buildings and student accommodation in the borough and environmental standards. Sadly, Labour chose to block the adoption of this key planning strategy. Liberal Democrats will ensure this is adopted as soon as possible after the elections.

Enjoying Islington

Because we are a small borough our open spaces are precious. Liberal Democrats have a proud record of improving our parks and turning them into places where people want to go. We are increasing the amount of open space locally and finding new innovative ways to meet the increasing demand for food growing in Islington. We have also planted more trees and flowers than ever before. The London Olympics in 2012 are also a fantastic opportunity to promote being outdoors, sport and healthy living in Islington.

Improving our leisure facilities

Record numbers of Islington residents are taking advantage of Islington's leisure centres. To cater for this increased demand, keep Islington healthy and ensure Islington residents get the most out of the 2012 London Olympics, we will:

- rebuild Ironmonger Row Baths as a state-of-the-art leisure facility for the south of the borough.
- we will re-consult on the re-development of the Sobell Leisure Centre in the north of the borough given the impact of the recession and the time that has elapsed since the last consultation.

Making the most of our parks and open spaces

We will:

- continue our record £6.6million of investment in the borough's parks and open spaces
- continue to create new green space where we can such as the new park in Malta Street, Finsbury and the extension to Whittington Park.
- not allow the borough's largest open space at Highbury Fields to be used for public fireworks displays because of capacity and safety issues.
- increase in the amount of green space on the ground, on walls and on roofs; create wildlife corridors across Islington; bring in stronger policies for enhancing biodiversity especially for bees; incentivise the re-greening of paved over front gardens.
- increase the number of new allotments and growing projects at housing estates, schools, and community centres around the borough.
- explore expanding the horticulture show held in 2009 at King Henry's Walk
- launch a 'Friends of Parks Charter' setting out what the council and park friends groups can expect from each other.
- commit to an ongoing annual increase in the amount of green space in the borough on the ground, on walls and on roofs and will use the planning process to ensure this happens.
- increase the number of Islington parks that win Green Flag awards

Protecting our trees

Liberal Democrats have planted over 2,000 new trees in Islington. To ensure we protect our borough's trees, we will:

- offer reward money for information leading to successful action against the perpetrator(s) of serious and extensive damage to trees on our streets and estates
- roll out measures to protect tree trunks in streets and on estates from dog owners training their dogs to fight.
- issue fines to irresponsible dog owners and prosecute, where appropriate, to send out a clear message that damage to trees by 'weapon dogs' is not acceptable.
- we are committed to protecting the borough's trees and unique urban forest. We will expand our tree planting programme, continue the flower basket and boxes display round Islington and create pocket green spaces out of existing forgotten corners.