

# OUR VISION FOR OXFORD

**Liberal Democrat Manifesto**  
**2012 Oxford City Council Elections**

## **Lib Dem Priorities for Oxford:**

- **An *Economy* thriving and providing *Employment***
- ***Equality* of Opportunity and Access to Services**
- **Real *Engagement* with the residents and communities**
- **An *Efficiently* run Council giving value-for-money**



### **Support for small businesses**

We will target specialist shops and other small businesses in Oxford to help them survive and thrive. Our support will include: The Local Loyalty Card scheme; increase in apprenticeships; use of procurement to support local suppliers and use of local control over rates, which are due to be introduced by the coalition government.

### **Increasing Apprenticeships**

Like Liberal Democrat ministers in government, we believe that the number and quality of apprenticeships needs to increase significantly. We will double the number of apprenticeships offered by the Council for young people who live within the city and require contractors to create new apprenticeships.

### **Re-opening Post Offices**

We believe that everybody in Oxford should be in walking distance to a Post Office. Council premises will be considered as locations for new Post Offices and Council services such as council tax collection should be offered through all Post Offices in the city. Detailed solutions may vary on a local basis and will have support from the local community.

### **Introducing a Local Loyalty Card**

We will investigate setting up a Citizens' Card to give Oxford residents reductions on local services so that they save money and local businesses benefit.

For a Citizens' Card to work, it will need buy-in from the whole range of institutions, businesses and organisations that make up our community so we will spearhead a partnership to get this off the ground, and commit to it the support of the City Council.

### **Allotments and Open Spaces**

We will take a number of initiatives to ensure that residents are able to make full use of the outdoor facilities in Oxford including: identifying new allotment sites and re-opening old sites where demand exists; allow community groups to establish community gardens and orchards, in some cases taking over council land; re-invigorate the Council's Countryside Service; work with schools and other education bodies to make their leisure facilities available to city residents and improve publicity for tree planting programmes.

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### **Better HMO Licensing**

We strongly oppose the Labour and Green policy of restricting Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). It is a form of “social sorting” on basis of tenure not behaviour. We will support good landlords and good tenants who cause no problems for each other or their neighbourhood. A few bad landlords and some irresponsible tenants give HMOs a bad name and can cause real problems which we will deal with effectively.

### **Devolution and Empowerment**

We will devolve power to democratically accountable Community Assemblies, and give them control over local spending such that residents and community groups in every part of Oxford can achieve real improvements in their own area. These Community Assemblies will be responsive to local needs and priorities. They will encourage areas to develop their own Neighbourhood Plans.

### **Bring back the Out-of-hours Environmental Service**

Liberal Democrats will bring back a comprehensive out-of-hours noise service, responding to all complaints, and providing noise measurement and enforcement of noise limits as and when required.

### **Increase Revenue, Reduce Costs**

Liberal Democrats will quickly increase revenues by scrapping council tax discounts for second homes in Oxford when national legislation permits and cut council operating costs by sharing a number of functions with the County Council and other public bodies.

### **Pro-active planning**

We will work to make sure the people of Oxford feel confident that the council’s planning decisions reflect their priorities and values as the city grows.

### **Reduce Fuel poverty**

The Liberal Democrats intend to help people in local communities save money on heating, while staying warm and reducing consumption of energy.

We will build on the Lib Dem “Stay Warm – Save Money – Go Green” Green Deal and provide a targeted top-up fund so that the full costs of insulation work can be covered, enabling people to embrace the use of renewable energy.

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## **Getting the priorities right:**

**This year's debate on the City Council budget highlighted how Labour have got their priorities wrong for Oxford.**

Despite a large increase in spending, Labour largely ignored the needs of elderly and vulnerable residents and the need to protect the environment.

**In contrast, the Liberal Democrat alternative budget proposed, among other things:**

- Investing in extensions to council houses for overcrowded families;
- Retaining the second Dial-a-Ride bus, cut by Labour;
- More grants to voluntary bodies helping the vulnerable;
- Restoring the 24-hours a day noise nuisance service, cut by Labour;
- Investing in energy efficiency measures, ahead of the Green Deal coming in the autumn, so that low-income families can keep warm next winter at low cost;
- New Countryside and Biodiversity officer to improve the management of the city's precious green spaces, such as Port Meadow and the other 12 sites of special scientific interest;
- Reinstating letters to neighbours about planning applications, cut by Labour.