

Uttlesford Election Manifesto May 2015

The towns and villages of Uttlesford face change in coming years. Its residents and businesses need a district council that has a vision for the future; which faces challenges with realism; and which leads future change in partnership with local people by being open and transparent about the choices it makes. Below are the “six to fix” key changes the Liberal Democrats would make if elected in May 2015 and overleaf is our manifesto.

SIX TO FIX

REBUILD TRUST in the council by working with local people to produce a new Local Plan that does NOT get rejected next time

PLAN our towns and villages as balanced communities, not dormitory settlements, for people of all ages (especially young people) and incomes

PROMOTE quiet and protected lanes which walkers and motorists can all use in safety to enjoy the tranquillity of our beautiful countryside

STOP hoarding taxpayers' money but instead use it wisely for the benefit of the community's residents and businesses

SET UP a new Capital Initiatives Fund to pump prime developer-funded community infrastructure for housing, jobs and residents

SCRAP private and secret decision-making and abolish or reform the elite cabinet system to make decisions transparent and democratic

Planning for future homes, jobs and people

The district faces unprecedented demand for housing and population growth.

We will:

REBUILD TRUST in the Council by working with local people over the next two years to produce a new Local Plan based on evidence, realism and a clearly articulated vision for the future of the district;

AVOID a developer-led plan by identifying which parts of the district are best suited to larger developments and which are best suited to smaller developments;

PLAN new homes based on reliable evidence of demand and need, which we will explain before making decisions;

FACE hard choices and not repeat Conservative past deceptions about the number of new homes needed;

PLAN sustainable communities, not dormitory settlements, for people of all ages and with a mixture of housing, so that local people, especially young people, can compete for homes with people who move into the district;

GREET new residents in Uttlesford with welcome packs containing advice and information on local services and other community organisations that help make Uttlesford a good place to live

ENCOURAGE new local jobs to match population and housing growth; a balance of unskilled, skilled, professional, managerial jobs and apprenticeships;

ENCOURAGE new employment premises ranging from modern business parks to start-up premises for small and medium sized enterprises;

STRIVE to provide the maximum possible number of affordable homes and council houses and ensure developers do not escape their obligations to help pay for them;

AVOID a repeat of the planning anarchy allowed by the outgoing Uttlesford administration.

Our Environment

The Liberal Democrats place high value on maintaining and improving the quality of our environment.

We will:

WORK WITH local people to restore Uttlesford's recycling rates to being amongst the best in the country by regularly informing residents, especially new arrivals, about what items to put in which bin and about how the materials are recycled;

COMMIT the council to installing photo-voltaic solar panels on its own premises as an example to local businesses and residents;

PROMOTE quiet and protected lanes which walkers and motorists can all use in safety and enjoy the tranquillity of our local nature and beautiful countryside.

BOOST the council's Highway Rangers service so it can do more to keep our streets, our footpaths and the general environment in and around our towns and villages bright, clean and tidy

A Listening, Trusted and Transparent Council

Liberal Democrat councillors at Uttlesford will reverse the past eight years' decline in trust between the District Council and the people it is there to serve.

We will:

CHAMPION a sea change in the way Uttlesford is run, scrapping private and secret decision-making meetings. We will abolish or reform the elite cabinet system to make decisions more democratic and transparent;

CREATE a new partnership of trust between the people of Uttlesford and the Council by making consultation real and inviting people to be more involved in the work of councillors;

REBALANCE developer power and community wishes so that developers don't escape their obligations to provide affordable homes and the infrastructure needed to make their developments acceptable;

IMPROVE the way decisions are made by listening to public opinion and the evidence they provide, by rejecting party political dogma and by explaining the decisions we make and why we have made them.

Paying for Our Plans

Sound council finance is important if we are to pay for good and reliable local services. In June we will inherit a council whose coffers are very full thanks to unexpected, windfall income from the coalition government's New Homes Bonus. This scheme has provided Uttlesford with money beyond what it needs for day-to-day expenditure and whose use has not been effectively and prudently planned by an administration lacking in vision and ambition for its taxpayers.

We will:

ENSURE the council never again wastes over £2 million on producing a Local Plan that is kicked out by a Government Inspector and has to be begun again;

ENSURE that future expenditure on consultations and consultants for a new Local Plan is made transparently and is available to public examination

STOP the practice of hoarding reserves of taxpayers' money for purposes that cannot be justified and instead have a plan showing when and why the money is needed;

USE surplus reserves to create a Capital Initiatives Fund which will help pump prime improving the amenities and developer-funded infrastructure needed to cater for housing, jobs and population growth;

KEEP the district's share of Council Tax at a level which meets long-term needs and adapts to cuts in funding from central government;

NOT CUT the council tax as a pre-election gimmick if this means the council is unable to deliver on its commitments in future years;

CONSIDER the needs of the least fortunate members of our community as well as the needs of our wealthier residents when we decide to prioritise where your money is spent.

Contact for feedback: uttlesfordlibdems@btinternet.com