

Moving Northampton Forward



**The Liberal Democrat
Manifesto
2011**





**Councillor Brian Hoare
Liberal Democrat Leader
Northampton Borough Council**

Dear Resident,

Four years ago, faced with one of the poorest local authorities in the country, Northampton's voters turned to the Liberal Democrats to pull the Guildhall from the brink of government intervention and put the pride back in our town.

Today, the Borough Council is in good financial shape, local services are improving and the council is punching its weight nationally to secure a fairer deal for the town's taxpayers.

This is clearly shown by: -

- The balanced budget this year which includes £5 million of savings without cutting local services and significant new investments to improve services, attracting private sector investment and reducing the Council's carbon footprint.
- Increasing our support to the Voluntary Sector while other Councils are cutting support.
- Investment in town centre regeneration.
- Investment in our council houses attracting £49 million of Government support.

The town is now at a crossroads, making the result of this year's Borough elections critical. The town has a clear choice: continue the very real improvements made by hard-working Liberal Democrat Councillors since 2007 or return to the chaos of the previous Conservative administration, led by the same Conservative Councillors that failed us last time.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Hoare

Councillor Brian Hoare

A Tale of Two Councils

The record of the two local authorities providing services to Northampton

The Conservatives have been in charge of the County Council since 2005 and in that time they have blamed everyone but themselves for their financial woes. First it was the fault of the outgoing Labour administration, then it was the fault of the Labour government and now their own ministers in Westminster.

The County Conservatives had a chance to make changes ahead of the national financial crisis but they wasted the opportunity and failed to sell redundant school sites during the height of the property boom or address the waste and excessive expenditure within the County Council. Now they have slashed front line services to deal with their budget shortfall.

In comparison the new Liberal Democrat administration that took charge of the Borough Council in 2007 quickly recognised that change was urgently required and set about transforming a failing organisation. Four years later the Borough Council has made considerable progress, a more efficient council is now protecting and improving front line services despite the cut in government grant. But there is more to do over the next 4 years.

Real improvement under strong Lib Dem leadership

In May 2007, a Liberal Democrat administration was elected, pledging to: -

1. **Give straightforward and honest leadership for our town.**
2. **Get the Council's finances under control.**
3. **Improve our town centre and;**
4. **Put the environment at the heart of everything we do.**

We immediately set about fixing the day-to-day running of the Council. We improved management, strengthened systems and working methods and delivered real improvements in the performance of key Council services – and, most importantly, we made the changes stick so that the Guildhall could never again return to the 'old way of doing things'.

In 2009, government monitoring was withdrawn and a key report said the Council now had 'excellent prospects for improvement'. In 2010, the Guildhall was short listed as one of the four most improved councils in the country.

After four years of Lib Dem leadership, hard-working Lib Dem Councillors have shown that it is possible to cut costs and improve services.

The Council is now well run and on course to be one of the very best in the country by 2013. But this can only be achieved with the strong leadership of an experienced team of Lib Dem Councillors.

In 2011, the Liberal Democrats have implemented their pledges and have a record of taking tough action to make many of the improvements the town so desperately needed. Seeking re-election, we are realistic about the scale of the task ahead and we have a clear plan in place to continue to put the pride back in our town.

Moving Northampton Forward...

...or going backwards with yesterday's men.

The choice for Northampton electors on the 5th May is to return a second term Liberal Democrat administration to carry on the good work in the Guildhall or to allow the Conservatives back in to office, led by the yesterday's men who failed our town between 2003 – 2007 and who support the cuts and waste of the County Council.

Moving Northampton Forward

A second term Liberal Democrat administration will build on the improvements achieved to date but with a new focus that recognises the changing financial position.

- The Borough Council will need to do more with less finance over the next 4 years. But it can still serve the residents and ensure that services are available if it works with communities that it serves.
- Community and voluntary groups are there ready and able to work with the Borough Council. We need to help them grow so that communities can contribute to the improvements that we all wish to see.
- Throughout the next 4 years we will continue to focus on regeneration of our Town Centre to improve business and job opportunities and to deliver the facilities that the residents of Northampton expect and deserve from a prosperous, vibrant town centre.

Delivering for Northampton

Six priorities for a second term Liberal Democrat Administration:

- 1. To create more jobs, a regenerated Town Centre, and continue to develop Northampton as a place where people want to live, work, shop and do business.**
- 2. To plan and deliver the homes our next generation will need, and to ensure all homes are up to national standards.**
- 3. To work in partnership with local organisations, communities and the voluntary sector to protect the vulnerable and to deliver locally accountable services.**
- 4. To improve the environment by continuing to increase the cleanliness of our neighbourhoods, an even better refuse and recycling service, and to continue reducing carbon emissions.**
- 5. To develop a Family Friendly and Safer Town and encourage green, healthy, active living.**
- 6. To continue to change the culture of the Council to a customer focused organisation providing the best value for money to council taxpayers.**

All these priorities have to be met whilst working within a reduced financial circumstances. Liberal Democrats would ensure that the Borough Council succeeds with less money available by working with other public sector organisations, businesses and the communities that it serves.

The most important partnership is with the people of the town. They pay for the Council, they experience the quality of services and ultimately they can make the difference to enable the Borough Council to do more with less.

The Green Thread.

Concern for our environment is not an add on, it has to cover all of the Council's activities.

The rapidly rising cost of energy, the requirement to reduce our carbon foot print and the need to address fuel poverty across the Borough means that a Green Thread runs through all Lib Dem policies.

A Historic Town, fit for the Twenty First Century



More Jobs

Northampton is now responding well in difficult economic times. It is one of the top towns in the country for new jobs. But, in tough economic times, maintaining a strong local economy is vital. Protecting existing jobs and attracting fresh public and private sector investment is crucial for our town.

Under the Liberal Democrats, Northampton Borough Council took a leading role in establishing the South East Midlands Local Economic Partnership (SEMLEP), putting Northampton on an equal footing with Bedford and Milton Keynes as a hub for jobs and investment. The Council has worked with businesses in Brackmills and the Town Centre to set up Business Improvement Districts (BIDS), where businesses are working together and pooling a share of their business rates to improve the local business environment.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Promote investment working through the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Continue to make regeneration of the town centre a top priority.
- Work with town centre businesses to bring in new jobs, homes and shops.
- Work with neighbours to bring jobs and businesses to the town and surrounding areas
- Work with the private sector and the university to develop effective, tight-knit Innovation Centres to help entrepreneurs and business start-ups and promote quality apprenticeships for those looking to work or retrain.
- Use new powers to help start-ups find highly skilled staff and affordable premises – working with Business Link, Jobcentre Plus and the town's rapidly improving Colleges and University.
- Provide Northampton with a stronger voice nationally and regionally.
- Work with local businesses to attract more visitors to Northampton.

Support the work of the Brackmills and Town Centre Business Improvement Districts and support the creation of more where they have business support.

The Green Thread:

We will encourage investors in our town to locate new businesses on brownfield land where possible and work to the very highest environmental standards.

Plans for the Grosvenor Centre

Shown to the public this March, with a planning application due to be submitted later this year and work to start in 2014



A Place to take Pride in



Pride of Northampton. The Council working with charities brought thousands of visitors to our town to see our lions.

In the last 4 years Northampton has seen very real improvements after nearly 30 years of neglect. Our Market Square – one of the largest open market squares in the country - has seen many much-needed improvements, including a new layout, events area, a fountain and fresh lighting. Likewise, Becketts Park has been much improved and the new marina is ready for business.

Liberal Democrat Councillors secured a Development Agreement for the regeneration of the Grosvenor Centre.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Develop the St John's area with new shops, cafes, hotel, offices and homes – creating a 'cultural quarter' for our town. This will proceed in parallel with the redevelopment of the neighbouring Angel Street area with offices and a new public square.
- Improve Abington Street and make further improvements to the Market Square.
- Continue to support the Royal & Derngate to provide strong cultural anchors in our town centre.
- Build on the successes of public arts events such as "Crackers", "Venezia" and the "Pride of Northampton Lions" with other popular events
- Demolish the bus station, open the new bus interchange and commence construction of the new Grosvenor Centre
- Begin the restoration of Delapre Abbey and its parklands.
- Develop Northampton's cultural and heritage offering, achieving national status for the Northampton Museum's shoe collection, promoting Northampton in Bloom and Heritage Open Days
- Gain approval for the Boot and Shoe conservation area

The Green Thread:

We will:

- *Continue to develop greater links to the River Nene in the town, increasing its use for recreation while protecting sensitive nature and wildlife areas.*
- *Enhance the meadows and wetlands along the River Nene downstream of the town centre*
- *Work with others to redevelop Castle Station to make rail travel to and from Northampton more attractive – especially given expected improvements in service planned for 2014.*
- *Remove the existing Bus Station and replace it with modern facilities that will encourage people to use public transport.*
- *Promote park and ride schemes where they make sense.*

Good Homes for our next generation

We have a growing housing crisis in Northampton, made worse by the last Labour government. As many as 10,000 new homes are needed just to satisfy existing demand for homes from our young people, facing an ever tougher start in life.

Equally importantly, a confident, successful and ambitious Northampton will inevitably grow, in common with successful large-scale towns across Europe, Asia and the United States.

Since 2007 the Liberal Democrats have embarked on a programme to improve our council homes for our tenants. In phase one of our Decent Homes Standard Programme 640 homes have been upgraded. In phase two a further 3,982 homes will be improved.



New Council homes in Kings Heath- built to high environmental standards

Liberal Democrats will:

- Support and encourage the private sector to provide the new homes the town needs
- Take full advantage of welcome Coalition schemes to build new Council homes and provide more affordable homes for local people.
- Seek to provide 'affordable' new homes for social rent or part ownership working with our housing association partners.
- Promote 'Homes for Life' principles within our planning policies
- Bring all our council homes to the Decent Homes Standard with the help of money awarded by the government.
- Seek local control over housing finance and the setting of rents.
- Whilst the government controls the level of council house rents we will ensure that tenants get a good standard of housing in return for their increased rents.
- Start to regenerate Spring Boroughs in partnership with local residents.
- Deliver the principles of the Northampton East regeneration strategy to improve housing in partnership with local residents
- Work with Council tenants to further develop tenant consultation and participation in how their homes and areas are managed.

The Green Thread:

We will:

- *Encourage developers to build on brown-field sites and to build more family homes. We will take action to bring one-bedroom flats lying empty into use.*
- *Protect our green spaces. A growing town will necessarily have to expand onto greenfield sites, opposed by traditional, Tory, 'just say no' Councillors. Liberal Democrats support limited, tightly controlled greenfield development only if it is well planned, with the necessary infrastructure and adds value with investment to neighbouring communities.*
- *Require developers to build new homes and offices to the highest practical environmental standards.*
- *Work to fit solar panels on suitable council house roofs.*
- *Work with developers and others to help make Northampton a friendlier town for pedestrians and cyclists – without demonising motorists who need their cars.*
- *Seek to provide allotment fields where there is a shortage near to new developments.*

Greater support for the vulnerable



A new home for homeless-Under construction on the Mounts

Since 2007 the Liberal Democrats have reduced the number of households in temporary accommodation down to only 22 households on average during 2010.

The average time homeless households live in temporary accommodation nationally outside of London is 11 months. In Northampton it is now only 45 days.

Northampton Borough Council has prevented 1,124 households from becoming homeless last year.

A successful Mortgage Rescue Scheme was launched to prevent people from becoming homeless.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Build on the success of the current homeless prevention programme to ensure that residents don't become homeless.
- Increase our efforts to prevent homelessness.
- Provide practical advice and attract investment for fresh funding to support families and businesses in reducing their own carbon footprints.
- Adopt a Fair Debt policy.
- Provide help to the elderly and infirm so they can remain in their own home.
- Improve the Sheltered Housing Service to better serve customers.

Working with Communities

Devolving decision making to the lowest level possible has always been a Liberal Democrat Principle. We wish to work closely with local communities, residents associations, parish councillors and the voluntary sector.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Provide a guarantee to the Voluntary and Community Sector to maintain or increase the proportion of the Council's budget they receive through grants or commissioning and to work with them on better ways of working together.
- Strengthen Neighbourhood Management devolving powers to local communities.
- Work more closely with voluntary and community groups
- Devolve appropriate decision making and budgets to local areas
- Further develop the Heart of the Community Awards as a recognition of active citizens
- Develop closer working between the Council and community groups
- Encourage local groups to become more involved in managing local services.
- Create new Urban Parish and Community Councils where local people want them.
- Help local people hold the council and their councillors to account.
- Actively seek feedback on council services and involve residents in improvements.

Cleaner Neighbourhoods and Improved Refuse and Recycling Service

Northampton's streets have been judged to be some of the cleanest in England. However, The perception is that more needs to be done.

The Lib Dems have improved recycling rates with the introduction of door to door glass collection and recycling pods in flats and the town centre. This year further improvements will be made with the weekly collection of glass, paper and plastics and the fortnightly collection of garden waste in wheelie bins.

The Council also plan to introduce the weekly collection of food waste, reducing nuisance caused by black bin liners on the street and smelly bins.



Recycling collections will be more frequent this summer

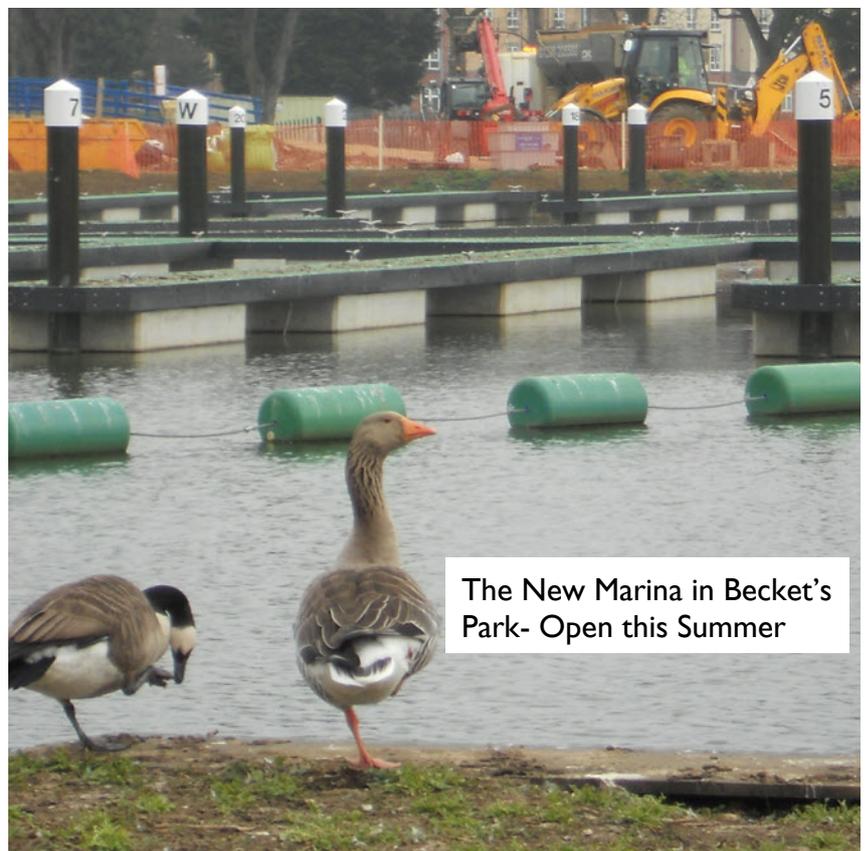
Liberal Democrats will:

- Work with businesses in the town centre and other centres to improve cleaning and reduce the amount of litter.
- Campaign for the County Council to prioritise road maintenance on the principle routes into town and on key areas within the town. A potholed road with overgrown verges is more difficult to clean and never looks tidy.
- Ensure that street cleaning in the town centre and district centres is done to the highest standard.
- Continue to raise the standards of waste and recycling collection – offering frequent and flexible collection schedules.

The Green Thread:

We will:

- Continue to invest in out parks and open spaces
- Provide additional fitness equipment in our parks.
- Achieve Green Flag status for Northampton's major parks
- Improve the play, sporting and leisure facilities in our parks.
- Complete the Becket's Park development project
- Enable community groups to adopt green spaces in their neighbourhood.
- Raise our recycling rates above 50% by making it easier for people to dispose of their recyclable material.
- Involve local people in schemes to increase energy saving and recycling.
- Install solar panels and other alternative energy devices on suitable council properties.
- Reduce the Council's Carbon footprint by a further 20%



The New Marina in Becket's Park- Open this Summer

A Safer Town

Crime has consistently fallen in the last few years, thanks to the Borough Council working more closely with Northamptonshire Police to tackle persistent low-level crime. We work closely with the Police to use equipment such as CCTV and the Council-specific powers (including town-planning, taxi, restaurant and entertainment licensing and environmental protection) to reduce low-level crime and anti-social behaviour.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Continue to make our town centre a more welcoming place for families and those not attracted just to pubs and clubs at evenings and weekends. More people - of all ages - in our town centre will make the town safer and restore some of the lost sense of community many people feel after 5pm on a Friday.
- Support Northamptonshire Police through Neighbourhood Partnerships and continuing support with our partners to maintain Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) on the beat.
- Demand that any new developments are built to the highest standards to 'design out crime' and include facilities for young and old alike.
- Support the development and successful awarding of 'purple flag' status across areas of the town for night entertainment
- Clamp down on Anti Social Behaviour.
- Support local organisations that help the victims of crime and violence.
- Encourage local people to get involved in projects to enhance their own local neighbourhoods.
- Work with the police to introduce Community Justice Panels across Northampton.



Community clean-up on the Racecourse

The Green Thread:

We will work with the probation service to enable offenders to make a real contribution to improving our local environment.

Encouraging healthy, active, green living

Liberal Democrats believe in promoting healthy active lifestyles that benefits local residents and reduces the cost of the NHS to the taxpayer.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Work with Northampton's well-supported and much-loved sports clubs to help them realise their ambitions without damaging local small businesses or our town centre or providing unwarranted subsidies from public funds.
- Encourage the development of new sporting facilities and opportunities through the new Northampton Leisure Trust – including a sports centre, swimming pool, cycling, skateboarding and extreme sports park.
- Create a skateboard park, which is internationally recognised as a competition site.
- Provide opportunities for teenagers to enjoy the countryside and learn new skills.
- Support the development of new community leisure facilities at key development sites including St Crispin's
- Actively participate in the Cultural Olympiad
- Expand the successful Street Football scheme to other sports and activities to provide activities

A Better Value Council



Solar panels- Lib Dems are investing in alternative energy to cut costs and protect the environment

We know that promises made in this election must be delivered with reduced funding available from government. We expect to cut the costs of council services without significant impact on front line services. Northampton Borough Council is now well placed to do this. Under the Liberal Democrats, the Council has reduced its budget by cutting waste, improving management, making better use of technology and working more closely with the private and voluntary sectors.

In 2009, Lib Dem-run Northampton Borough Council signed up to the nationwide 10:10 challenge – to reduce the authority's carbon footprint by 10% in 2010. By 2011, we exceeded this target and reduced the Guildhall's CO2 footprint by an impressive 15.5%. This also reduced the Council's fuel and energy costs. Now we need to go even further.

Liberal Democrats will:

- Support merging the functions of the Borough and County Councils to create a single, efficient and responsive council for Northampton so that decisions about Northampton are made by Northampton people and not people from the other end of the county.
- Continue to look for more cost-effective ways of delivering its services and of raising the quality of the services provided.
- Invest in new technologies and equipment where this will improve the quality or reduce the cost of providing services.
- Continuously search out and eliminate waste of taxpayers' money.
- Continue to look at new ways of delivering better services at lower cost.
- Continue to improve the financial management of the Council recognising that central government funding will continue to fall.
- Keep Council Tax down – especially when the national economy is weak.
- Encourage greater local involvement in how services are provided.
- Provide easy access to services.
- Treat everyone with respect.
- Achieve Customer Service Excellence accreditation
- Involve customers in everything we do.
- Improve our on-line delivery of services.



Lib Dem councillors receiving the carbon trust standard for reducing carbon emissions

The Green Thread:

We will:

- *Continue to cut the Council's carbon footprint by investing in new environmental and energy technologies, building on the recent decision to invest £300,000 on schemes such as providing solar panels on council building and council houses.*
- *Increase recycling rates and provide greater opportunities for people to recycle with schemes to compost food waste and take advantage of other opportunities as technology and private sector expertise improves.*
- *Carry on cutting waste and increasing efficiency.*

Don't let them take Northampton Backwards

**Remember when the
Conservatives last ran the
Guildhall?**

'Don't let our town
go down the pan'

Chronicle & Echo 10th January 2007

**World's Worst
Council** *Chronicle &*

Echo 2007

Weak political leadership is also
undermining improvement. The
administration has failed to
provide political direction.

Audit commission Feb. 2007

www.northamptonlibdems.org.uk
Moving Northampton Forward