



Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats 2018 Election Priorities

Our Party in MK and Key Priorities

The Liberal Democrats have a significant number of councillors on Milton Keynes council who use their knowledge and influence for the benefit of current and future residents. We use our influence to fight for the Milton Keynes local authority to be well run, for environmental, economic and financial stability in the long term, so that residents are well served by the vital services the council provides at all stages of their life now and in the future.

A number of our key priorities to ensure the residents of Milton Keynes are well served by the council are below.

- Tackle homelessness by giving support to those in need
- Protect our environment
- Protect the most vulnerable from Tory austerity cuts
- Build more affordable homes to buy and rent
- Protect our bus services
- Support independent living for our senior citizens
- Encourage more businesses to move to MK
- Repair our roads, redways and pavements so they are safe to use

The Liberal Democrats are ambitious for Milton Keynes and will work with others at all levels from residents to central government to make sure that new growth and developments serve our area in the long term. With Milton Keynes expected to expand significantly all must play their part to make sure that strategic plans such as Plan:MK and the Oxford to Cambridge development area are well thought out with sufficient space reserved for services such as schools, roads and other infrastructure, space for good employment, and good secure housing for all. When new areas are developed they should properly serve the needs of those who live here.

Supporting The Vulnerable

The highest priority of the Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats is to support the vulnerable, making sure help is given to those with need so that they can lead independent lives in their home and community.

Homelessness

Homelessness devastates lives. We have and will continue to fight for the council to use the resources at its disposal to help people off the streets and into sustainable lives. In addition, we believe that proper long-term housing should be available in Milton Keynes, and that it is not good enough to put people in temporary accommodation or B&Bs. This ties in with our success to fight for transitional housing to be built in MK, so the council no longer sends families to live outside Milton Keynes.

We will continue to push for building of appropriate homes and hostels on Council-owned land for accommodation, and work with charities to help homeless people rebuild their lives, so that Milton Keynes is a place where people are helped to have a safe and secure place to live.

Health/Adult Social Care

Liberal Democrats support independent living for our senior citizens. There should be a review to introduce a Warden Service to support residents who wish to remain in their own homes in their community.

The council, in co-operation with the NHS needs to deliver better services for the growing number of residents suffering from dementia and their families.

We have been, and will continue to campaign for a local GP for everyone.

Children's Social Care

The Liberal Democrats would continue to ensure the protection from harm of all children in MK, and ensure that children in MK Council's care receive the best possible support to flourish physically, mentally and spiritually.

Mental Health

It is national policy for the Liberal Democrats that the same level of support should be given to those suffering for physical and mental illnesses. This policy is for those of all ages, and for the support of families.

For our policies go to the web page <https://www.libdems.org.uk/health/> and find the “**Equal Care for Mental Health**” section. The council should implement all appropriate policies from the Liberal Democrat national policy.

Priorities for Housing and Development

Being at the crossroads between London and Birmingham, and Oxford and Cambridge means Milton Keynes is strategically located, and with the new developments between Oxford and Cambridge there is pressure for Milton Keynes to grow, and we need to get it right for all of our residents.

With there being increasing overcrowding in Milton Keynes homes, between sofa surfing and adult residents with children unable to afford to leave their parental home the council needs to use its powers to help make sure everyone who needs a home has one.

Affordable Housing

For new developments we support the strict enforcement of the current policy of 30% of houses being affordable housing, both to buy and for rental, and will continue to push for an increase to 35%, in line with the latest projections of need. As part of the Plan:MK planning process we secured an increase of the share of housing being affordable housing to 31%, which will become local policy pending approval by the government inspector.

We do believe that councils should return to building more council homes.

Regeneration

We support the plan to regenerate some of our older estates where the process involves and is supported by those local communities.

When fully supported by local communities, regeneration will lead to high quality homes, greater job opportunities, better health facilities and improved educational prospects.

We will not support any 'top-down' imposition of regeneration that doesn't have the support of residents. In order to be successful, all regeneration schemes must be backed by residents, following full and robust consultation. Residents must have a say in the future of their communities.

Future Expansion Including Plan:MK

We support the aim to build at least 1,750 houses each year in Milton Keynes, ensuring that the highest proportion possible are affordable. This is dependant on the required physical and social infrastructure such as sufficient roads, parking, schools and health centres being in place, while ensuring there are enough green open spaces protected to support access for residents and there is good environmental diversity.

Our support for well planned expansion is why Liberal Democrat councillors have supported Plan:MK, using their expertise to ensure plans will serve all current and future residents of Milton Keynes. Plan:MK is currently with the government inspector for review.

A Fair Council Budget in The Face of Cuts

Traditionally most council funding has come from central government, while council tax has provided a smaller share of local government funding. In the last 8 years our council budget has been cut by £145m by central government, which has meant a fall in money for services for residents despite an increase in council tax.

This year alone cuts by the Conservative government in Westminster has made cuts in our council's budget of another £14m this year, and that will continue year on year until at least 2020. While we call for a change in policy from national government, we support moves to maintain a council budget which is sustainable in the long-term in the face of further cuts expected in the future. This will mean we can avoid a situation like the Tory run Northamptonshire County Council running out of money!

Working With the Voluntary Sector, Charities and Parishes

Our highest priority is to protect the vulnerable from the impact of cuts being imposed by the Tory government in Westminster. To this end, we will continue to work with other organisations to ensure limited resources are used as effectively as possible in order to support our communities.

We will support voluntary sector organisations and charities who work with low-income families to find real, long-term solutions to the plight of our most vulnerable individuals and families.

As Milton Keynes Council shrinks with imposed cuts, we would work with the Voluntary Sector and Parish/Town councils who may be able to take over some services (such as landscaping) which may otherwise be cut.

Internal Council Finance and Resources

While the services provided by the council are reduced, the council needs to make its share of cuts. We will push to:

- Review the spend on the Council refurbishment programme to identify money to put into capital projects such as school builds and city infrastructure.
- Sell unneeded council land and buildings in order to generate capital receipts to fund investment for the capital programme.
- Carry out a fundamental review of the budget with a view to minimise or stop unnecessary activities.
- Ensure that when staff numbers are cut, management staff are cut by a fair share and front-line staff are protected as much as possible. A total of 460 council staff have already been lost due to government cuts.
- Make sure the council helps fight against tax avoidance by changing the rules on what the council buys and who from.

Maintaining our Environment

The environment is very important to us, which is why in the 9 years that MK Council was Lib Dem controlled between 2002 and 2011 proper investment was put in and recycling rates increased from 11% to 55%! At that time we also made sure that all recycling waste from MK is processed as locally as possible in the UK, which is better than many other councils which send their waste around the world to China to be processed.

We also believe that the managed environment should be safe for our residents, landscaping and road repairs should be carried out properly, and our streets should be cleaned and abandoned cars removed quickly.

Recycling and Waste Collections

We will continue to fight to maintain Milton Keynes at the innovative edge of recycling and aim to continually increase MK's recycling rates.

We will continue to defend weekly waste collections, and free green bins to make it as easy as possible for residents to dispose of waste properly.

We support the Waste Recovery Park in Wolverton as an innovative and efficient way to increase recycling and reduce our impact on the environment.

The Managed Environment

Many of our streets have become increasingly run down. When the Liberal Democrats last ran the Council we tackled environmental neglect by such initiatives as introducing the Graffiti Busters and removing abandoned cars quickly. We would once again look at ways of tackling environmental neglect, such as making the cleansing service more flexible, enabling areas with more frequent problems to receive an adequate service.

We will continue to work to improve our management of water and rivers to reduce water consumption and protect MK from flooding, and make sure that that good Flood & Water Strategy is implemented.

Potholes

The Council's current policy on fixing potholes is not fit for purpose. Council policy means they won't be fixed until they are at least 50mm deep, and staff seem to spend more time measuring potholes than fixing them.

We recently persuaded the Council to change its pothole policy so that they will now repair a cluster of potholes when only one meets the intervention criteria, but we believe the current intervention level of 50mm is too high and not enough potholes are being repaired. We aim to reduce the intervention level to 30mm, or ideally scrap it so time isn't wasted measuring them.

We also believe that pavements and redways need to receive equal attention to ensure they are safe to use, particularly for residents with restricted mobility.

Education and Employment

The long term success of Milton Keynes depends on ensuring there is a proper environment for small home grown businesses as well as attracting investment from larger companies.

Alongside employment we will continue to fight for good integrated education at all levels, for lifelong learning, and for a full-time university in Milton Keynes.

The Economy

We will support the economy by making sure our council uses all powers it can to put in place good infrastructure which encourages inward investment. Long term investment depends on good infrastructure, and we will continue to support and try to improve developments such as the Oxford to Cambridge development arc (with Milton Keynes at the centre) to ensure that any new road and rail links are appropriate to support businesses which may move to Milton Keynes.

As with residential spaces, roads and information links need to be set up correctly. Therefore, we will need to support strategic plans such as Plan:MK to ensure that developments are well thought out for the long-term interests of the residents of Milton Keynes.

Education and Training

We remain committed to a good comprehensive non-selective education for all children. We believe in a good school for everyone. All schools should have a good Special Educational Need Department (SEND) to ensure students with additional needs have good support wherever they are.

We'll continue to fight to ensure that schools and enough school places should be available as residents move into areas, and not make students wait for a good school to be built nearby after they have moved in.

Our policy is to encourage employers to help schools and colleges prepare young people for work, and apprenticeship schemes for lifelong learning.

We support the MK:U project for a new university to be built in Milton Keynes.

Public Transport

We will continue to defend public transport as it is often used by those without access to a car, the elderly, the young and the low paid. Early morning, evening and weekend services are important to ensure those on low pay can get to work 7 days a week.

In the last few years we have fought to defend individual bus services in the face of council cuts, however we would look for additional funding to support service improvements.

Beliefs of the Liberal Democrats

Taken from the preamble to the party constitution

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.

We champion the **freedom, dignity and well-being of individuals**, we acknowledge and respect their right to freedom of conscience and their right to develop their talents to the full. We aim to disperse power, to foster diversity and to nurture creativity. We believe that **the role of the state is to enable all citizens to attain these ideals, to contribute fully to their communities and to take part in the decisions which affect their lives.**

We look forward to a world in which **all people share the same basic rights**, in which they **live together in peace** and in which their different cultures will be able to develop freely. **We believe that each generation is responsible for the fate of our planet** and, by safeguarding the balance of nature and the environment, for the long-term continuity of life in all its forms.

Upholding these values of individual and social justice, **we reject all prejudice and discrimination based upon race, colour, religion, age, disability, sex or sexual orientation** and **oppose all forms of entrenched privilege and inequality.** Recognising that the quest for freedom and justice can never end, **we promote human rights and open government**, a sustainable economy which serves genuine need, **public services of the highest quality**, international action based on a recognition of the **interdependence of all the world's peoples** and responsible **stewardship of the earth and its resources.**

Our responsibility for justice and liberty cannot be confined by national boundaries; **we are committed to fight poverty, oppression, hunger, ignorance, disease and aggression wherever they occur** and to promote the free movement of ideas, people, goods and services. **Setting aside national sovereignty when necessary, we will work with other countries towards an equitable and peaceful international order and a durable system of common security.**

More about the Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats

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