

Taking Local Democracy Further

LDs will respond to public opinion

We believe in devolution from central Government down through all tiers of government

We would encourage parishes to be pro-active, providing training and resources so that informed decisions can be made. We would encourage the parishing of urban areas.

We will consult as widely as possible before decisions are made.

We fully support 'Ward Walks' with senior officers

We would reintroduce monthly 'Coffee with a Councillor' meetings in County Square and extend it to other areas of the Borough.

We would promote the use of plain English in letters and publications.

Partnership and Innovation

LDs would aim to give more publicity to meetings such as Full Council, Executive and Scrutiny thereby encouraging public attendance and awareness of issues.

We would continue to support and strengthen the Youth Forum

We support the community strategy and would continue to forge links with other statutory bodies working in the Borough.

We will continue to support the voluntary sector and enable them to operate more effectively and to lever in funds from external sources.

We recognise that the main function of the Council is to act as an enabler, helping individuals and groups to achieve their potential.

We would work to invigorate Ashford's street markets and encourage Farmers' Markets

The Environment

We support the Blue Box scheme. We would investigate and endeavour to improve the collection of recyclables from flats.

We would aim to recycle some plastic material eg milk containers.

We would support the introduction of a Heritage Strategy to enhance the appreciation of our Borough wide heritage.

We would support and protect 'Green Corridors' through the urban area of Ashford and encourage the planting of native species of trees when landscaping new estates.

We would liaise with, and support Kent Wildlife Trust and the Stour Valley Project in the work they do caring for the council owned public open spaces.

We would encourage the public to make use of the open spaces.

We would pressure KCC to maintain the country footpaths for recreational walking.

We would encourage residents to take a pride in their neighbourhood.

Transport

We support the introduction of a central integrated travel hub in Ashford town which would include an information centre.

We would encourage the extension of the 'walking bus' system to enable children to get to school safely.

We will investigate the 'Quiet Lanes' policy already in operation in some rural areas.

We would support a policy which provided more parking places in new developments

We would support the Quality Bus Partnership scheme and press for bus routes to be routed through new housing early in their development.

We support the extension and linkage of cycle paths working with the Sustrans organisation .

Leisure

We would look at ways of re-furbishing the older part of the Stour Centre.

We support the provision of good quality play areas for children and young people.

We would reinstate the Playmatch Scheme to enable Parishes to upgrade their facilities.

We would support the creation of a water sports facility at Conningbrook.

We will encourage Arts developments, by supporting community initiatives amongst all age groups in both the urban and rural areas and by using links with SE Arts to bring artists into the area.

We will encourage local participation in the conservation of green spaces under Council ownership through the creation of Friends groups.

We will encourage all local sports groups to develop youth sections.

We will support the provision of allotments on new developments and ensure that all sites are well run.

We would support the continuation of the 'Cre8' festival .

Crime and Vandalism

We will support the Ashford Community Safety Partnership in their strategic aims

To support young people at risk

To reduce violent crime, criminal damage and anti-social behaviour

We would encourage co-operation with police, schools and the social and youth services to tackle anti-social behaviour. We will support the use of Hawkeye.

Where called for, we would support better lighting in rural areas.

We support the use of PCSOs in urban areas and Community Wardens in rural areas

Housing

We support the establishment of Tenants' Forums

We will seek to improve the liaison with Housing Associations with regard to their tenants in residence.

We would use any opportunity which presented itself to increase the stock of council properties.

We will seek to encourage the highest possible standards of environmental construction in new building .

We will continue and extend local needs schemes in villages. This to include modest sized bungalows for residents who wish to move out of larger homes with big gardens, but who wish to remain in the village.

Planning

We would support the writing of a new Core Strategy but it must be seen as guidance for flexible, common sense and positive decisions.

We will support a better link between KCC and ABC on planning matters.

We will encourage Planning Committee meetings to be held in the relevant area when appropriate.

We will continue to support a system that allows the public and parish councils to participate in the planning process.

We support the growth of the Borough by seeking to ensure that brownfield sites are fully used before greenfield sites where ever possible and that infrastructure is constructed early in the development.

We would expect developers to provide a good mix of quality housing with the social element distributed throughout.

We would encourage sustainability in new building in relation to energy and water saving and the inclusion of sprinkler systems in new builds for fire prevention.

Paying for it all

Ashford needs a value for money council providing the best quality services without making excessive demands of the Council Tax payer

Liberal Democrats will make every effort to eliminate waste and inefficiency.