

Kent Lib Dems'

Six to Fix

Manifesto 2009 - 2013



About the "Six To Fix" manifesto

The Lib Dem Group on Kent County Council are pleased to present the six to fix manifesto for 2009 - 2013.

The Lib Dems offer the only constructive opposition to hold the Conservatives to account and to voice your concerns at council and committee.

If you have any questions about the manifesto, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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6 to fix for a safer, greener Kent

- **Stop the waste of money** - and spend on YOUR Priorities.
- **Fix the roads and pavements** - repair the potholes and broken kerbs in your street.
- **A greener Kent** - better public transport, and improving recycling.
- **Better local services** - Improve children services, better facilities for young people and help for those people who need it the most.
- **Safer streets** - Work with the police to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour, more community policing.
- **Safer roads** - improve road safety schemes and stop the cuts

OUR SIX TO FIX

- STOP THE WASTE OF MONEY** - and spend it on YOUR priorities.
- FIX THE ROADS & PAVEMENTS** - Fix the potholes and broken kerbs in your street.
- A GREENER KENT** - Better public transport, and improving recycling.
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- SAFER ROADS** - improve road safety schemes and stop the cuts

Six to Fix

Kent County Council has been Conservative run for the last 10 years. Kent Lib Dems have been listening to what you have been telling us on the doorstep.

You tell us there are 6 main areas where the Conservatives have let you down.

These are the six we need to fix:

- 1. Stop the County Council wasting our money**
- 2. Fix our roads, kerbs, drains and pavements**
- 3. Make Kent a greener County**
- 4. Provide better local services**
- 5. Safer communities**
- 6. Safer roads**

**If you agree with our Six to Fix Campaign...why not give us a hand?
Contact us at www.kentlibdems.org.uk**

SIX TO FIX

1. Stop the Waste

The list of spending below shows KCC has a long record of wasting money. There are difficult times ahead and many people are having to cut their budgets and spend only when it is necessary. Kent County Council should do the same.

We will:

- Slash the massive £6 million budget KCC spends on promoting itself.
- Stop spending on Kent TV and make it survive on advertising as it should have done from the beginning. If it cannot do so, it must close down.
- Review all policies at KCC to cut out waste.
- Make sure all posts are filled competitively where the law allows.
- Invest in renewable, sustainable energy use in all KCC buildings to reduce energy costs.

£17.8 Million for Highways Relocation

In January 2006 the capital budget approved £17,700,000 (net) to develop 3 super depots. These plans were revised in summer 2006 to relocate to 2 super depots and 2 satellite depots. The net savings on the revised program was estimated at £3,400,000 with an annual revenue saving of £53,000. However the model requires significant investment in mobile technology and business systems, estimated at £3,700,000, so no net saving was achieved on the revised program, in fact an additional £300,000 investment was needed. The public perception is that there has been no improvement in Kent Highways.

In 2008 KCC admitted that it had not been recovering the costs of road and pavement damage during building works by developers vehicles for years.

In 2009 KCC were ordered to pay £115,000 Wrotham Parish Council costs when they successfully challenged KCC's ruling that a new highway depot was outside the AONB. KCC bought the site believing wrongly that it had planning permission. They must now sell it and look elsewhere.

£6.5 Million on Publicity

When it comes to self publicity, KCC was the third highest spending Local Authority in England and Wales in 2006-07. In fact KCC expenditure on publicity had risen a whopping 367.4% over just 10 years, from £1,409,000 to £6,586,000!

£1.2 Million plus Additional £0.4 Million to Pilot Kent TV

£200,000 capital costs and £600,000 revenue costs were spent to run a pilot Kent TV Station via Broadband. Will the pilot be successful? - a mere 589 viewers logged on to the KCC web cam to watch the Full Council Budget Debate on 22 February 2007. The Business Case, a breakdown of the costs and details of how the TV Station will become self funding is currently unavailable due to commercial sensitivity. (Interestingly the figures for the broadcasting Medway Matters TV in the neighbouring Medway Unitary Authority are available - £5,864.36 for video journalist camera / days training for two Medway officers, £700 for software to edit the material and £10-£15 per month running costs for hosting on the web site.) In Spring 2009, viewing figures are not attracting the

sponsors so in the Autumn KCC will consider ploughing another £400,000 of tax payer money into the TV station and Kent TV will not be self financed as was intended. Kent TV has not yet saved KCC money as was promised..

£1/4 Million KCC CEO Highest salary of any County Chief

"High salary" pay from the public purse? The Chief Executive of Kent County Council does oversee the largest council in Britain, with an annual turnover of £2 billion; but he earns more than the Prime Minister (£194,250) so is his salary really appropriate? Kent County Council has defended its payment of £255,000 per year to its Chief Executive by saying that this is the going rate for "the best man for the job". It is difficult to see how this view can be justified by the facts:

1. The vacant post was never advertised externally.
2. The current Chief Executive was never asked to interview in competition with any other applicants.

So KCC Conservative Councillors never gave themselves the opportunity either to test the Chief Executive's talents with those of other applicants, or to explore the possibility that any equally talented person might have been prepared to do the job for less.

£26 Million on KCC Employees in top 5% of Taxpayers

407 (non school) KCC managers are earning an annual income in excess of £50,000, that's more than twice the national wage in England and places them in the top 5% of UK taxpayers. In 2007/08 they cost more than £26 million or the equivalent of £18.81 per person in Kent. By contrast 10 years ago KCC only employed 37 managers earning over £50,000 at a cost of £2.5 million.

£50 million tied up in failed Icelandic banks

£50 million invested in collapsed banks in Iceland. The Audit Commission named KCC as one of seven 'negligent' councils. They say they will get 80% of it back .. but that's £10 million lost.

£7.6 million wasted on art gallery that failed to get off the ground

£7.6 million wasted when KCC plans for an art gallery off Margate pier were blown out of the water as costs rose to over £50 million. A land based Turner Centre is already £2 million over its £15 million budget.

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2. Fix our potholes

In every survey, Kent residents say that the condition of Kent's roads, drains and pavements are their major concern. Only in this election year has funding been increased, but with no commitment to future years.

The local Transport Plan for Kent 2006-11, stated that, without improved investment, repairs to all our footways would take **226 years**, and repairs to road gullies and associated drainage connections would take over **300 years**.

Only in this election year has some more money been put in place but the County has made no ongoing commitment for the future.

We will:

- Provide the long term budget which will bring our roads, drains and pavements back into good repair before they need replacing.
- Enforce good workmanship in Kent Highways so potholes don't have to be refilled days later.
- Ensure developers make good damage they do to Kent roads. (KCC haven't done this for years).
- Strictly enforce new legislation on utility repairs to ensure roads are only dug up once and then repaired to a high standard.
- Review the 'special relationship' between Kent Highways, Babbie and Ringways, which isn't working, and break it up if it doesn't get the job done.
- Ensure that the four senior interim officer posts controlling the management are filled permanently to provide stability to the Highways Department.
- Set in place a long term plan to ensure sensible levels of cleaning of gullies and associated drainage connections to maximize reduction in local flooding of roads.
- Review the effectiveness of the centralizing of Highways management which took away local control and management from the Borough Councils.

Record of neglect:

Conservative Kent County Council admits that at their current rate of spending, they will take 226 years to renew each pavement, 300 years to renew each drain, and some roads will NEVER be renewed as the backlog is growing faster than they can keep up with.

Lib Dems reveal KCC slip up costs thousands in highways repairs.

Cllr Ian Chittenden discovered KCC were not inspecting local roads before developers start work. So KCC could not recover costs for damage caused by developers' trucks. KCC admits they haven't been doing this 'for years'. ...so the Council Tax payer has paid the bill for all that damage instead."

3. A Greener Kent

KCC Liberal Democrats have pursued a green agenda for many years.

We argued for an extension to the Green Belt to cover the open countryside which separates Maidstone from Medway Towns and the Medway gap villages. Kent Conservatives refused to support us. Now, the Labour Government has removed the protection of 'strategic gap' policy, and this whole area is threatened by development.

The Lib Dems alone opposed the use of dirty coal technology at Kingsnorth power station. KCC Conservatives and Labour voted for the station to be approved with "the most up to date technology". Carbon capture is not available industrially yet.

We alone opposed the deal for a giant incinerator at Allington. It has taken 10 years to get going, and as we predicted is now taking waste from London and Councils in south east England.

Lib Dems proposed that plastic recycling facilities should be available at all KCC 'bring sites'. KCC Conservative votes defeated the idea.

We supported the green waste processor at West Malling, but successfully argued for KCC to restrict the sources of the waste to those authorities nearest to the plant except in exceptional circumstances.

Lib Dem Councillor Dan Daley has campaigned successfully for a proper system of listing and maintaining highway trees. Roadside trees are one of the most effective ways of cleaning the air in towns. KCC will take over 3 years to map them, and does not spend enough to replace them when they die or become dangerous.

Lib Dem Cllrs have supported school Walking Buses and sponsored them from their community grant.

We will:

- Campaign for the extension of the Green Belt to avoid the merging of Maidstone and Medway towns and the Medway Gap village.
- Continue to work for doorstep recycling of all recyclable material, particularly plastics. If it can be done in Canterbury, Maidstone and Medway, why not everywhere?
- Continue to oppose the plan to transport all Kent's green waste to a single plant at West Malling.
- Oppose plans for giant road/rail freight transfer stations north of Maidstone (KIG) and Borough Green. Both would massively increase road transport on Kent's congested roads.
- Increase spending on highway trees to maintain them properly and replace them when they are removed.
- Change all KCC buildings to green renewable energy sources and cut future costs with low energy appliances.
- **Conservatives rated dirtiest party in whole of Europe by Friends of the Earth**
- **The Times and Independent have trumpeted the Lib Dems' green credentials.**

4. Better local services

Children in Danger

The deaths of young children as a result of neglect or cruelty is rightly regarded as a scandal. We will carry out reviews of all serious cases, and a review of the provision for Looked After Children as recommended by Government.

Local School Places for Local Children

There are areas in Kent where this year parents of primary school children have found that they could not obtain places in their preferred local secondary schools and have been allocated schools outside their area. We will review the admissions criteria to ensure that more children are able to get local school places.

Local Services for Young People

KCC is 109th lowest out of 118 authorities for spending on the Youth Service. We want to see an extended use of schools, allowing them to provide their facilities for young people to use during the evenings, weekends and holidays.

We will:

- Cut bureaucracy by combining the County and District Youth Services at District level. This should enable a better response to local needs.
- Provide Youth activities during the weekends and holidays.
- Freedom Passes for 11 to 16 year olds to be extended to include all in full time education or training and to extend its use on trains and as a leisure pass.
- Find ways to increase the publicity and promotion of youth events, activities and opportunities for young people in ways in which young people can easily access and record.

Local Services for Older People

We are concerned to ensure that older people receiving home care do receive the level of care to which they are entitled, and are not exploited. So we will increase the number of spot checks by officers and visits to older people, and take action on their views on the quality of care they are receiving.

SIX to FIX

5. Safer Streets

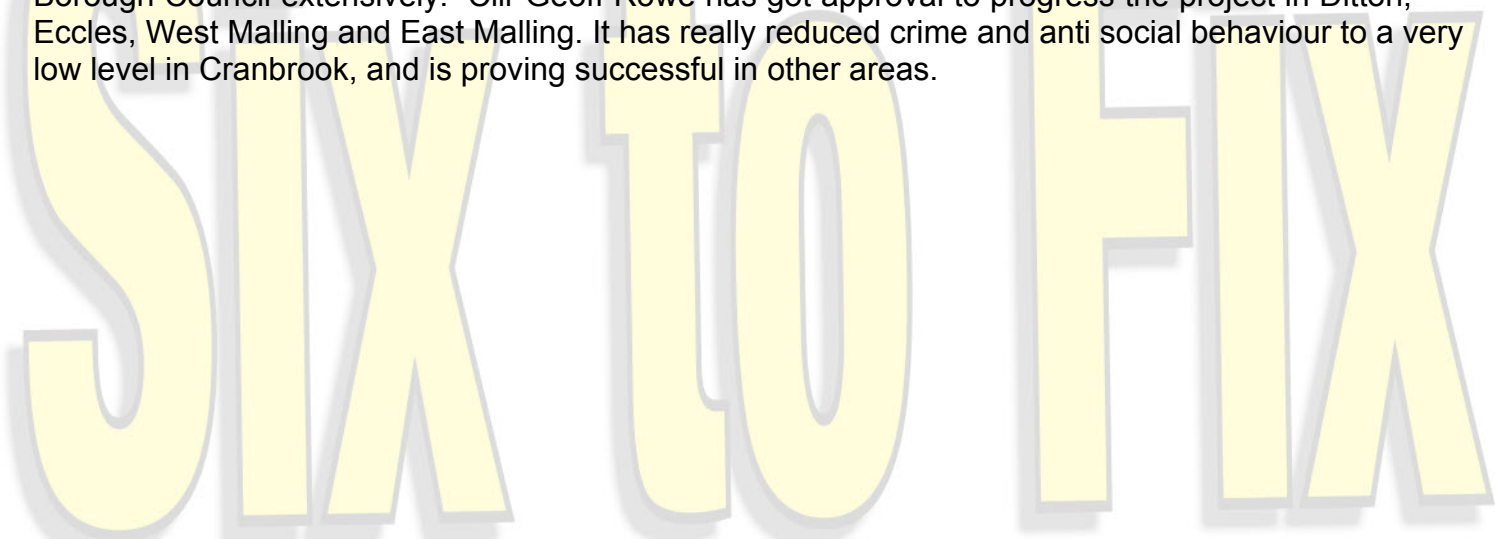
We will:-

- Work with the Police to tackle crime through more neighbourhood policing, and rapid response times to anti social behaviour reports.
- Introduce 'No Cold Calling' control zones where door to door sales are discouraged with the support of Neighbourhood Watch, Police and PCSOs. (Salesmen are often just gathering information on where elderly and vulnerable people live . They pass this information on to others who may then commit burglary or distraction robberies.) Evidence shows that where these zones are introduced, crime levels and anti social behaviour fall..
- Introduce Criminal Justice Panels across the County where trained volunteers bring the victim and the offender together to achieve a binding solution to the damage done. If agreement cannot be reached, or the offender does not fulfil the agreement, the case goes back to court. It ensures that the victim and the local community representatives are happy that justice is being done, and trials in Somerset have shown only 3% of offenders have reoffended.
- Examine spending on Emergency Planning which is the second lowest in the entire country, despite Kent's exposure to river and coastal flooding, tunnel disasters and channel tunnel traffic.
- Cancel Conservative plans to turn off street lights, and make the saving by conversion to low energy bulbs instead. Criminals welcome unlit streets.

More on Cold Calling Control Zones:

We want to establish more of these to prevent fraudulent and unwanted doorstep selling. They work with the support of Neighbourhood Watch volunteers. The zones are about discouraging door step sellers or bogus callers/sellers. The community takes responsibility for looking after itself, especially its vulnerable members by creating areas where doorstep tradesmen etc are discouraged from using their area for trading purposes.

Doorstep selling used as a means of obtaining information to sell on to others within criminal networks, or calling on people to create work not necessary. The Kent Lib Dems have been campaigning on development throughout Kent for a few years now, and have successfully extended them to the Malling Area. A successful pilot in Cranbrook has now been taken on by T/Wells Borough Council extensively. Cllr Geoff Rowe has got approval to progress the project in Ditton, Eccles, West Malling and East Malling. It has really reduced crime and anti social behaviour to a very low level in Cranbrook, and is proving successful in other areas.



6. Safer Roads

KCC's own Select Committee had to admit that the Kent Highways' failure to clean and repair drains was a major cause of flooding of properties in the county.

Kent's Fire Service attends many major accidents on our roads. Much of Kent is served by Fire Stations which are manned by the Retained Fire Servicemen who have normal day jobs, but who are called out when emergencies arise. The European Union's Working Time Directive threatens to put an end to this pattern of employment, and close these stations. Lib Dems are supporting the campaign for a special exemption or Opt Out clause to enable this service to continue.

We will:

- Put in place a long term programme of funding which will return our roads, drains and pavements to good repair.
- Restore the budget cut of £250,000 in spending on projects to improve road safety, and end Maidstone's record as the county's most dangerous town
- Change the County's computer driven formula for road projects, making accident black spots involving death and injury top priority rather than congestion.
- Invest in effective methods of reducing traffic speeds as a matter of priority.
- Support 20mph zones outside all schools.
- Give local people more of a say in which road problems should be sorted first.
- Scrap the unpopular Conservative policy to save £300,000 by switching off street lights, and use low energy bulbs instead.
- Scrap the KCC scheme of selling distracting advertisements on roundabouts and street lights
- Support further research into the causes of road crashes in Kent and look at measures to reduce the number.
- Allow lower speed limits to be approved where these are deemed necessary:
- Reduce the overall National Speed Limit on rural roads and country lanes.

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