

Liberal Democrats



Dacorum Liberal Democrats

Manifesto 2019



DEMAND BETTER – TOGETHER

Dacorum Liberal Democrats are committed to working with residents to maintain what is great in our community, improve and enhance our environment, and look out for each other.

Following their Government's austerity programmes, the current Council continues to threaten our quality of life. Their commitment to relentless cuts is ruining our towns. Everywhere I go in the Borough, people say that the ruling Conservative Councillors just don't listen.

Liberal Democrats believe in working with communities to make decisions after consultation on matters that will make life better for them – bringing local decision making into practice.

Although we live in a prosperous Borough, we cannot take this for granted; we will work with businesses and all levels of Government bodies to safeguard local employment and attract new well-paying business to the Borough.

We recognise there will be huge financial challenges and huge demand to rebuild our community groups and business. Working with residents, community groups, and businesses – **together** we can meet the demands of the challenges ahead of us.

This manifesto sets out some of our ideas – I would welcome your feedback and your ideas. Please do get in touch at rontindall@aol.com.

In May's election, Dacorum Liberal Democrats are proposing a more positive vision and we say to you – **demand better**.

Regards,

Ron

Cllr Ron Tindall, Leader of Dacorum Borough Liberal Democrat Councillors



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1. BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

The Voluntary Sector We are fortunate to have such a wonderful voluntary and community sector, with so many residents willing to give up their time to help others. They should be given every assistance yet funding and support to the voluntary sector has been cut and they are asked to jump through hoops with the current commissioning process.

The voluntary and community sector deserves the council's support, not funding cuts, as it is asked to provide more and more services.

Our priorities for the next four years are:-

- Create and strengthen a climate of **Partnership working** with our voluntary sector.
- Review the commissioning process, to test if it is value for money (including officer time and difficulty of organisations applying) when compared to a simple grants process.
- Introduce a 'Dacorum Deal' setting out what support our voluntary and community **partners** can expect from the council.
- Help community groups by allowing access to working spaces, meeting rooms and facilities in Council properties and community centres.
- Create a register of local community, residential, business and voluntary groups that will be consulted as of right on matters of local interest and service provision

Stronger Communities – local neighbourhoods

- As with a village, a strong community has residents who enjoy a sound sense of identity with its locality and people; we will foster this more widely – especially in our urban areas.
- We will develop meaningful neighbourhood forums where local residents can vote for projects and activities that will improve their neighbourhoods – practical localism.



2. A NEW APPROACH TO HOUSING AND PLANNING

A Lib Dem council will create a long term Plan for the Borough which will be Community-led, not Developer-led.

Decades Of Failure As a result of decades of failure by both Labour and Tory governments, the current Government has an agenda of ‘catch-up’ which it is imposing on local councils, giving little say in the matter to local communities.

We will plan to provide more homes for local families. More and more high-priced and high-rise developments aren’t the answer.

There are over 5000 families on the Borough’s Housing waiting list and there is growing homelessness. This must be addressed with some urgency.

We need homes at a price our residents including young people can afford.

For families and the many others in our communities that need a permanent home – no longer will we rely on the vagaries of the private rental market to meet this demand. Our communities need rents that are affordable and especially in high-cost areas we need many more homes at **social rents**.

Building Communities It will take time, and we will not forget that developments, without the vital infrastructure and employment to support the residents, are not communities but sterile dormitories with little to commend them.

Liberal Democrats priorities for the next four years -

Prioritising Local needs

- We will work with our neighbouring local councils to ensure that all developments in the West of Hertfordshire are sympathetic to each other and build in good transport and road links in the whole area to support and improve employment in our Borough.
- We will ensure that developers contribute towards the infrastructure needed such as roads, health centres, schools, open spaces and designated Electric Vehicle charging points where parking spaces are shared.
- We will include in the Local Plan detailed policy to restrain ‘back-garden development’ and draw up new design standards to ensure that neighbours are protected under planning law.



Ensuring we build quality homes

- We will co-design with local residents, developments based on design codes that prioritise inclusive and sustainable communities with strong bias on homes that meet the needs of local residents and families on local wages.
- We will ensure minimum housing standards for residents living in the private rented sector and ensure Houses of Multi-Occupation (HMOs) are licensed and monitored appropriately.
- We will develop measures to bring high standards of energy insulation to existing housing and especially Council owned housing and properties.
- We will carry out a complete inspection of all our properties and adopt measures to ensure that they are fit to live in and bring up families.

Making homes affordable

- There will be no compromise on the affordable homes policy. Developers will need to understand their contribution to the community. Manipulating the planning financial viability process will not be allowed.
- A Liberal Democrat Council will deliver significant numbers of **social rent** homes as well as shared ownership on all council-led developments.
- We will not allow segregation of dwellings on the grounds of housing tenure.
- We will find new ways of prioritising the Council's resources and assets to provide homes for those that need them most.



3. CLEAN SAFE & REALLY GREEN IN OUR BOROUGH – ENVIRONMENT

Air Quality - Although our air quality is better than the centre of large cities, there are still hotspots that will become worse unless action is taken. We need to have regard for the health and wellbeing of our residents – particularly children and the vulnerable, and not just brush the problem aside.

Liberal Democrat priorities for the next four years -

- Introduce more electric vehicle charging points across the borough
- Discourage people from idling their vehicles at the kerbside, especially around schools
- Ensure council contractors upgrade their fleet vehicles to low pollution vehicles as quickly as possible
- Work with schools to introduce green-screens to help reduce air pollution in the playground
- Work with the County Council and cycle groups to develop more cycle friendly routes

Road safety & Parking Congestion - We shall be proactive in working with Residents, Local businesses and County Highways to improve our environment

- Parking on- and off- street. Our communities are becoming choked by the combustion engine. In our first year of administration we shall set up a major enquiry on what to do with the motor car and how we control the increase of commercial vehicles driving through residential areas.
- We will investigate what it will take to optimise capacity and co-operation for neighbourhood parking, and to set up and sustain 'car clubs' in the Borough
- Consult on increasing the number of 20 mph areas in residential roads to make them safe for everyone
- Work with County Council to bring in speed reducing measures, especially at entrances to villages and neighbourhoods.
- We will focus on DBC's responsibility to keep the streets clean and reduce the risk of blocking the drains (which is the responsibility of the county council).



4. CLEAN SAFE & REALLY GREEN IN OUR BOROUGH – SERVICES

Recycling - Following the decision of China and other nations around the world to stop importing plastic waste, we shall investigate our re-cycling options to ensure we adopt the best methods rather than dump our rubbish on other countries

- We want to be among the best Districts for recycling, so we will increase practical help to individuals and businesses to re-cycle more.
- To capture more street-litter we shall review street-recycling bin capacity.
- We shall review the present council operations to ensure that residents and businesses receive services of the highest quality.
- The Borough has gradually become more unkempt as austerity cuts have deepened. We will seek to reverse this trend and bring back a sense of pride among residents to our towns and countryside.

Warden/Ranger Services – We will review the present warden services to include environmental duties dealing with litter, dog mess and other anti-social behaviours on our streets

- We will develop and support community groups to aid warden services.
- Look to introducing a Ranger Service across the Borough to deal with small issues in the most cost-effective and swift manner, like cutting back hedges, erasing graffiti and minor repairs.
- Fly tipping has become a scourge on our countryside: we will give enforcement more resources.
- Work with the local police and neighbourhood watch to improve safety on our streets and in our homes.
- Consider whether a system of lockable gates in alleys in urban areas would improve safety and the quality of life for local residents.



5. SPORT AND LEISURE

We aim to create a society where people can explore their full potential, where the council provides not only the services necessary to support us, but as importantly, services that allow us to enjoy life.

In our increasingly sedentary lifestyle, the opportunities for recreation can be limited. It is more important than ever to encourage everyone to maintain a fit and active lifestyle to ensure our health and wellbeing.

We are therefore making a core strategic commitment to ensuring that Dacorum is an attractive place to live, play, race, compete and train.

A key aspect of achieving this is improved oversight and co-ordination of existing facilities and introducing consultative decision-making:

- Dacorum has many good sports and leisure facilities. It also has a thriving voluntary sector. But these services lack co-ordination and support, which would allow them to serve the whole community.
- We will reach out to these groups, whether they are council run, voluntary or commercially run to bring them into the decision making process of the council.
- We will produce a Sports & Leisure Strategy based on an audit of facilities, and a comprehensive consultation with all these stakeholders. Every local group will be invited to take part in a Dacorum Sports Council, which will adopt co-operation agreements between complementary groups in order to maximise efficiency and capacity.

Improved governance and expertise We will expand the council's capability to manage outsourced contracts. Including setting up a Supervisory Board for the Leisure Management Contract with Sports and Leisure Management Ltd/ Everyone Active . We will employ a qualified and experienced senior officer for Sports and Leisure Partnerships.

We will ensure that our Strategy meets the needs of all ability groups, both centrally and locally:

- Through engineering of capacity, we will accommodate the grades from Elite to Club, Individual, Beginners and those with Special Educational Needs and Disability
- All community buildings will be included in capacity engineering, forming a new backbone of Community Leisure Activity Inspiration and Motivation



Spaces (CLAIMs). The aim will be to build up a successful network of neighbourhood CLAIMs.

- Just like a well-run Marathon we will commission a multi-tracked programme designed to motivate from Elite to Beginner levels.

As the Borough grows, our strategy will link development of leisure capacity in our communities to housing and population growth.

The Strategic Financial Planning of Dacorum Borough Council will be in parallel with a Medium Term Sports & Activity Strategy. This will track population and demographic trends to accommodate a growing number of senior and active population.



6. A DEMOCRATIC, TRANSPARENT AND LISTENING COUNCIL

Liberal Democrats have always believed that local people should be involved in decisions affecting their communities and services should be managed with 'service' in mind. We often hear that the current Council doesn't listen. A recent instance was the lack of good consultation when the long-term Sportspace contract was terminated early.

Liberal Democrat priorities for the next four years:-

- We shall review the major contact channels between residents and the council, particularly the telephone referral system
- For the difficult-to-solve issues, such as parking, we will introduce local forums that will look at those issues and make recommendations to improve the quality of life for the whole community.
- Review how the council interacts with its communities and, where no town or parish council exists, seek to develop **neighbourhood councils**
- Review the present governance system to see whether Cabinet or Committee is best
- Seek to ensure that every councillor receives proper training so they can work well for their residents.
- Improve scrutiny and better working across the Council by introducing cross-party appointments of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees.



7. GETTING THE FINANCES RIGHT

We must never forget that the Borough is spending our residents' taxes.

Over the next four years we shall seek to reverse cuts and improve services. This will be tough in the present climate but needs to be done.

Liberal Democrat priorities for the next four years

- Current staff are under considerable pressure and vacancies have a negative effect on Council Staff. We shall survey the current staffing arrangements to ensure that we have the right number of staff in the right places to implement Liberal Democrat policies while ensuring that staff have a decent life/work balance
- We shall look to our ability to borrow money at very low interest rates to generate a reliable long term revenue stream that can be reinvested in services.
- We shall work with businesses across the borough and in the new development areas to aid growth and mitigate the worse effects of an unfair business rate system
- We shall only increase council tax if it is necessary to invest in the services that residents need and want.
- We shall review all vanity projects to ensure that money spent on them are approved of by residents and represent good value for money.