

Fix 5: sort out public transport

The County Council continues to cut bus services, with little regard to the effect that this has on people's lives.

Older people now find that their leisure activities are curtailed; those visiting friends or relations in hospital find that this is much more difficult or impossible; those in work find their travel times extended or more unreliable; and those in education find that their choices are severely curtailed. But all of us suffer if roads are crammed with private cars – both in terms of congestion and in terms of the damage to the environment.

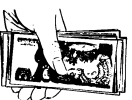


A Liberal Democrat Council would reverse those cuts. It would also take up the political challenge from the Government and demand greater control over bus services – the sort of thing increasingly available to urban councils but not pursued by the current administration.

Meanwhile our rail commuters continue to suffer excessive fares and poorer services. Overcrowding is now the norm in the rush hour and service reliability continues to deteriorate on many of our lines. **A Liberal Democrat County Council** would approach the Government to see whether any of our more troublesome lines – like Thameslink – could more usefully be taken over by Transport for London. It is also important that the Oyster card is available at more of our stations and that long-distance services stop more frequently at Watford Junction and Stevenage and that some East Midlands trains stop at St Albans.

Fix 6: make the money go further

Council tax was frozen for many years during Labour's recession but the County Council needs to be honest with its residents: future freezes would lead to a complete collapse of social care as well as other council services. But if residents are going to have to pay more, they need to be reassured that unnecessary spending is removed.



A Liberal Democrat Council would:

- Sell off unused County Council property in urban areas, saving money on security and making the capital receipts available for new schools or care facilities
- Axe the wasteful expenditure on the County Council's propaganda department and its Horizons magazine
- Let contracts with commercial providers more competently to secure a better deal for the local taxpayer
- Ensure closer working with district councils, the Police and the NHS to avoid duplication of services or buildings
- Transfer functions like grass-cutting and weed clearance to district councils to ensure that a better local service is provided
- Work with district councils to tackle the housing crisis
- Continue to invest in employment creation measures, like Visit Hertfordshire, with a view to creating and supporting employment.

Six to Fix in Hertfordshire

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The Liberal Democrat manifesto for the 2017 elections



A fresh and new look for Herts

The Conservatives have run the County Council since 1999.

Since then the County Council has become ever more remote from the real needs of local people.

Liberal Democrats believe that there are a number of key areas which need urgent attention.

In short, there are six key things that urgently need fixing. Inside we outline the problems and ways of fixing them.

Dear Residents,

On 4 May, 78 County Councillors will be elected to run Hertfordshire until 2021. I believe the current Conservative run-council has let you down. They claim they listen to your views but time after time they ignore their own consultations and your petitions, from cutting funding for Home-Start to reducing our bus services, to slashing the household waste site opening hours.

Liberal Democrats are the official opposition, with more councillors than Labour: we battle every month to hold the Conservatives to account for their failures but we are voted down – often with Labour sitting on their hands.

We want to fix what is wrong with the County Council and have a fresh new look for Hertfordshire for this century! Please join us.

Kind regards
Stephen Giles-Medhurst

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

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Six to Fix in Hertfordshire

Fix 1: look after the old and vulnerable



A Liberal Democrat County Council will reverse, as far as possible, the cuts made to those suffering homelessness and the proposed cuts in day centres for older and vulnerable people.

We will deliver a better deal for the unsung heroes in our society – children who care for close relatives.

We will take a tougher stance on providers of home care and the managers of residential homes who fail to provide an adequate service to our residents.

Too many people are stuck in hospital waiting for social services to provide for their needs once they are ready to come home. The blame for this lies both with the NHS and the County Council and both sides must communicate better and ensure the right level of staffing to unblock vitally needed hospital beds.

We will reverse the funding cuts for voluntary sector organisations which have done so much over the years to provide services which not only help the vulnerable but save council taxpayers' money.

Fix 2: create a healthy Hertfordshire

A number of our hospitals have fallen into Special Measures or been criticised by the Care Quality Commission as 'needing improvement'.

The County Council has a key role in challenging the health service about its services and about whether it spends our money effectively in Hertfordshire.

We will press for ever closer working between the County Council and the NHS to make sure bad practice is driven out and patients have the best possible care from Hertfordshire health bodies.

We will work with the NHS to provide a permanent and workable future for our three hospitals in west Hertfordshire and ensure that health care is delivered as closely as possible to where people live.

We will continue to argue that that primary health care – GPs and pharmacies – are the key to our health service and the place where most of us will receive the treatment we need.

We will protect the County Council's public health budget and ensure that prevention and healthy lifestyles are seen as the key way of minimising the incidence of diseases like diabetes and stroke.

We will ensure that health education continues to receive proper support so that children have healthy diets and teenagers have adequate advice about staying healthy and avoiding pregnancy.



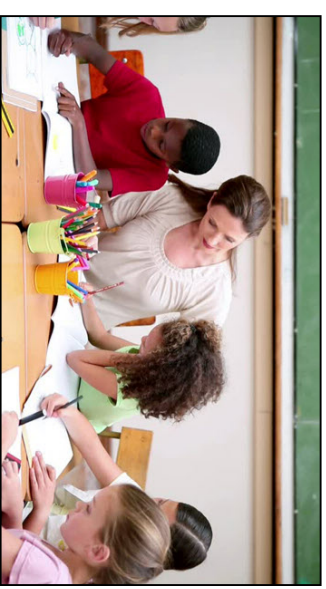
Fix 3: provide school places

Government interference has hugely undermined the ability of the County Council to drive up standards and provide or expand schools.

In effect, handing over the management of schools to private companies rather than local people or parents.

Nevertheless, the Conservatives are far too slow to recognise where there is a lack of school places and to take action to find new sites or increase the size of schools. This can lead to the nonsense of additional rush hour car journeys as parents are forced to take their children to schools on the other side of town which they didn't choose when applying for a place. Leaving aside the obvious personal cost, especially to those who also have jobs to go to, the environmental cost of extra car journeys cannot be ignored.

We will resist attempts by the current government to reintroduce selection. All selection does is ensure that most children from the age of 11 are permanently disadvantaged in life.



Fix 4: deliver a better deal on highways & pavements

The failures of the Conservatives in highway maintenance are all too obvious in every part of the county, despite attempts by the Conservatives to deny that there is a problem.

This problem faces motorists – but is even more significant to pedestrians who are injured tripping over damaged pavements or cyclists who fear the consequences of potholes. It is clear that contracts are poorly managed and that there is huge wastage through inefficiency.

A Liberal Democrat County Council would:

- Take a tougher stance with failing highways contractors
- Cleanse roadside gulleys at least annually
- Overhaul the highways maintenance programme so that roads are tackled in a sensible order, not just on the basis of a computer printout
- Devolve more highways money to local county councillors
- Allow greater local flexibility on street light switch-offs
- Reverse cuts in winter gritting which are such a threat to our town centres and schools.



A large number of people are keen to ensure that there are 20 mph zones in town centres but the County Council is pitifully slow in responding – while often installing them in places where they are not needed. A Liberal Democrat Council would give 20 mph zones a much higher priority.

