



# The New Beginning for Dundee

The Dundee Liberal Democrat  
local election Manifesto 2003



## *So, why choose Dundee LibDems?*

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. The City of Dundee needs dedicated Councillors who will ensure high standards of public service, and a greater transparency and accountability to the electorate. Dundee Liberal Democrats seek to promote an environment where our local communities and businesses can flourish.

The current Labour administration was elected without a majority, either in terms of seats gained nor in votes cast at the ballot box. Many Dundee councillors were elected on a minority vote; a high proportion of councillors have very small majorities, including both the Labour & SNP Group Leaders. The reality is that it is unlikely that any party will obtain an overall majority of votes or seats at the May 2003 Dundee City Council elections. Furthermore, Scotland is likely to move to a proportional system of electing our councillors by 2007.

The Tay Bridges by-election in August 2001 saw Labour's safest Ward turned into a Liberal Democrat seat with a majority of over 200. Since being elected, Dundee's Liberal Democrat Councillor Fraser Macpherson has repeatedly called for Dundee's politicians to recognise that, given the political arithmetic in the City, they should work together for the good of Dundee. There have been some encouraging signs in this direction - for example, three out of the four parties represented on the Council worked together on the Council's 2002/3 and 2003/4 revenue budgets to ensure that Dundee's Council Tax rise each year was kept to a minimum.

2003 sees the largest Liberal Democrat local election campaign in Dundee in a generation. The more Liberal Democrat candidates, who are elected, the more we will be able to influence decisions of the Council and press for the adoption of our policies. We pledge to work constructively with others elected to the City Council, and will oppose the 'political dog-fight' that has been a feature of much of the City's local government in the past.

# It's Your Council

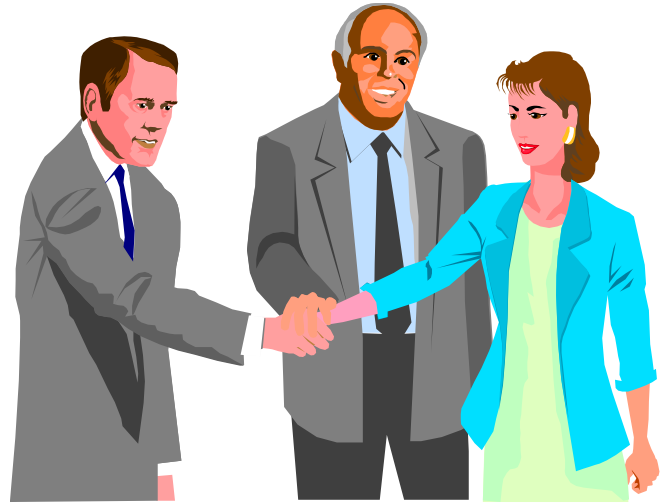
How much do you know about your council? Have you ever been told? Have you ever asked? If you never ask you never know, right?

Wrong! Liberal Democrats believe you should never have to ask - after all it's your council.

In the jargon of politics this is "transparency and accountability" but the words mean nothing unless they are backed by actions.

As your representatives the Liberal Democrats are committed to:

- Introducing a Public Question Time before every monthly council meeting. This has been successfully introduced by other local authorities in the UK.
- Giving a committee of the council the responsibility of scrutinising, monitoring and reviewing the work of the Council. The committee will have a duty to actually go out into the communities in Dundee, gather your views and make specific recommendations to the full council. It should invite other public sector organisations to report on their services within the City Council area.
- Developing Community Councils and local Forums around the city and giving them an active role in policy and decisions.
- Keeping in touch with our communities through regular local newsletters. The work of Dundee Liberal Democrat councillors will also be posted electronically to further aid transparency and accountability.
- Effectively publicising ward surgeries.



# It's your money!

Only 21% of the council's income comes from your council tax, the rest comes from central government - but in the end it all comes from your pocket!

It is very easy to criticise any council about its spending. Difficult decisions have to be made and they will often be unpopular with many people.



The Liberal Democrats know this but we also believe very strongly that you should know how and why these decisions are made.

To achieve this we will :

- Prior to setting budgets and Council Tax levels, hold public meetings giving you the opportunity to discuss the level of council tax and council services.
- Require all departments of the council to produce a brief summary of their required budget, with a clear explanation of how much money is needed and where it will be spent. These would be published as part of the public consultation before the final budget is agreed.
- Establish a cross-party committee whose principal responsibility is to develop the revenue and capital budgets and recommend them to the full council. The party political pantomime of "alternative" budgets appearing at the last minute is not in the interests of the City of Dundee.
- Improve the level and efficiency of council tax collection. In 2000 only 85% of tax due was collected. Nationally, we support the replacement of the unfair Council Tax with a local income tax, which is based on ability to pay.
- Continually press the Scottish Executive to "bring home" the areas lost to Dundee in the 1996 local government reorganisation.

# It's your Community



## Dundee's Education Service

Liberal Democrats believe that investment in education is the most important function of local government. We are committed to securing the maximum possible additional investment in all aspects of educational provision.

- The use of PPP to fund major local government capital projects the government is implementing Tory policies, which will result in projects such as new schools not being owned by the community and being more expensive to build. However, given the much needed capital improvements urgently required for Dundee's schools, we have taken a positive approach to the City's Public Private Partnership project, in the absence of an immediate alternative to funding improvements to our schools. There is merit in exploring Joint Venture proposals as an alternative to the traditional PPP model.
- We are aware that the current capital improvements programme could not meet the needs of all schools improvements required in the City, and we see resourcing those not covered in the first "PPP tranche" as a key priority for the new administration.
- We favour sensitive school catchment areas, and parental choice should be paramount.
- We support the valuable work of School Boards and PTAs. We will encourage the development of Pupil Boards in the City's schools.

- We will provide a high level of professional support/training to nursery staff
- We will streamline administrative systems by asking teachers to tell us what is and is not useful. We support the call by Jim Wallace MSP for abolition of national testing for 5-14 year olds.
- Continuing professional development opportunities should be available to teaching staff by right - not at discretion of head teacher.
- The City Council should follow up success of 1999 anti-vandalism campaign with further initiatives to reduced vandalism in the city's schools.
- We wish to encourage diversity in pupils' choices at school - especially encouraging second languages and music.
- We shall encourage the provision of 'healthy tuck shops' in schools and support the extension of "Cafes Discovery" in promoting healthy food and drinks.
- Through the education system, it is vital young people are informed of the dangers of substance abuse, drugs and alcohol.

## Dundee's Housing Service

Dundee Liberal Democrats strongly support the provision of affordable social housing.

- The City Council should work closely with other social housing providers and other agencies such as Communities Scotland and the private sector, to increase the range of affordable housing.
- Dundee Liberal Democrats are opposed to the large scale stock transfer of the City Council's housing stock unless and until it has been proven to the satisfaction of tenants that this will bring long term benefit to them.



- We shall encourage local tenant and resident groups in the management of their own properties and neighbourhoods, and will work in partnership with Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations to achieve this.
- We wish to encourage further development of housing in the City Centre.
- We support the City Council's moves to reduce the over-provision of sheltered units within the Council housing stock, and see improving the quality and services of the sheltered stock for which there is demand as a priority for the housing department. The City Council must also support "Care and Repair" schemes to help elderly and disabled people keep their homes in good repair.
- Another priority for the housing department is to ensure that empty Council Houses are re-let without delay. It should also make efforts to press owners to bring unoccupied housing back into use.
- We are concerned about the quality of some privately rented housing. Apart from rigorously enforcing the HMO Licensing Scheme, the Council should work with organisations like Dundee University Students' Association to derive a landlord rating scheme, and give quality advice to students and other private tenants on leasing and other tenancy issues.
- We strongly support moves towards compulsory factoring to improve the quality of life for citizens in Dundee's tenemental properties.
- We are concerned at the growth of Houses in Multiple Occupation in parts of Dundee. The HMO Licensing Scheme is a positive step, but there must be clear administrative arrangements with the planning system to ensure that all HMOs in the City obtain both an HMO Licence and planning approval, where required. We would review the present licensing and planning requirements for HMOs to limit their growth.

## The City's Social Work Services



Liberal Democrats see a key function of Dundee's Social Work Services to be provision of quality services for our elderly people, the disabled, families, and children.

We acknowledge great work being done by the staff in the City Council's Social Work Department, and believe that retaining quality professional staff must be a key priority of the Social Work

Department directorate. Relatively few young people and people aged 60+ are employed in Social Work in the City, and staff have been lost to the new SSSC in Dundee. The Council should consider establishing a service review committee, with a generous number of staff representatives, who will report back to the Social Work Committee.

- There has been a worrying reduction - some 35% - in the number of people assisted by home helps in Dundee since 1996. Liberal Democrats will seek a review of current arrangements and charging policy.
- Liberal Democrats strongly support resourcing and development of the City Council's Community Alarms scheme, and well as Quality Warden Schemes.
- Young people often feel isolated from their communities through lack of things to do and lack of opportunities to influence what is provided for them. The City Council must work with young people to develop a range of facilities and services to meet their needs, including an expansion of outreach work.
- The Council's Welfare Rights Team should actively promote Basic Bank Accounts for those vulnerable people without bank accounts (as Midlothian Council has done).

- We will review the Garden Maintenance Scheme for elderly and infirm people to explore ways the service can be improved.
- We will run winter warm campaigns to combat problems of hypothermia for the elderly and citizens on low incomes.

## Arts & Leisure in Dundee



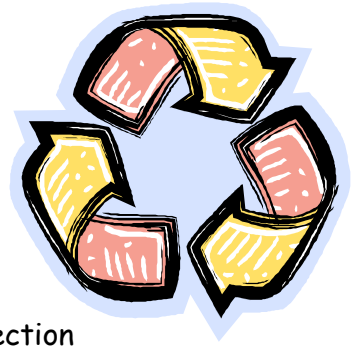
The Council has a key role to develop leisure and arts facilities in Dundee, and work with leisure and arts organisations in the City. We shall offer to facilitate and co-ordinate bids by local communities for financial support for sports, recreation and arts projects from various funding bodies such as the National Lottery.

- The Council should take greater steps to market the availability of neighbourhood libraries to local citizens. We would support sending out a free library card to each named council taxpayer along with a leaflet about the library service.
- We wish to see a higher standard of maintenance of parks, amenity areas and public open spaces. We are unconvinced that moving the responsibility for this (and the Garden Maintenance Scheme) to Dundee Contract Services has been successful and will review current arrangements.
- We should strongly promote community use of school facilities and other Council-owned facilities.
- We support Community Garden initiatives in response to demand from local communities.
- We support the development of sports facilities in the City. We wish to see the provision of decent free skateboarding facilities for young

people in the City Centre, to supplement facilities elsewhere in Dundee.

## Our local environment

The protection and enhancement of the environment should be a key priority for the Council and underpins Liberal Democrat policies.



- We will review the £5 charge for collection disposal of unwanted household items. We are concerned about the level of illegal fly-tipping in the City.
- We will continue to develop the network of local waste and recycling centres and increase the diversity of these (eg to include aluminium and plastics where not already provided). Liberal Democrats will also support resourcing more litter bins, and seek commercial sponsorship of these.
- We would seek to give greater resources to the prosecution of 'fly-tippers', with good lines of communication with SEPA, and publicity in the City for this initiative.
- We support the Environmental and Consumer Protection Department introducing a maximum response time for public enquiries on graffiti, dog dirt and fly tipping of 2 working days.
- Graffiti is an increasing problem in many areas of Dundee. Liberal Democrats call for a 'no tolerance' policy towards vandalism and graffiti through more investment in the Council's Rapid Response Unit. We are pleased that the Council has agreed to a voluntary code of conduct for City shops not to sell material which can be used for graffitiing (like spray paints and marker pens) to the Under 16s. The Council should swiftly and persistently remove new Graffiti, and the expansion of Rapid Response Team resources should be directed in graffiti-busting.
- We welcome the Scottish Executive's commitment to address problems of dog dirt and street litter. We propose a policy of placing posters in areas where there is a persistent problem with dogs - a "shame with no name" campaign against irresponsible owners. We will

enhance the Dog Warden Service and provide more dog waste bins and signage.

- Whilst many residents have welcomed the introduction of Wheelie Bins, the City Council should introduce new routes only where a clear majority of residents support removal of the traditional bin collection.
- Liberal Democrats are gravely concerned about the dangers posed by irresponsible use of fireworks. In advance of primary legislation, we support a voluntary code of practice on sales. Dundee City Council should also investigate the introduction of a licensing scheme for all firework displays, however small.
- We support the extension of CCTV facilities in the City.
- We support the principle of the Waste to Energy project at Baldovie. It is easy, with the benefit of hindsight, to criticise the project's difficulties. However, the responsible approach is to be supportive of the project rescue plan. It is vital that the Council develops an effective waste management and recycling policy.
- Dundee's LibDem Councillor has campaigned for action on derelict buildings, particularly in the City Centre. There's concern that empty buildings are an eyesore and a potential danger. The Council should strongly support action on derelict & neglected buildings.
- Liberal Democrats strongly support the decriminalisation of parking offences. It is ridiculous that Dundee has only around half a dozen traffic wardens and we are pleased that the Council has agreed to decriminalisation.
- The roads and pavements in Dundee need a speedier and more effective system of maintenance and repair than exists at the moment. Additionally, we will support the continuance of funding a programme of upgrading unadopted pavements where finance allows.
- More effective traffic calming measures should be introduced to reduce the "Rat Runs" where local demand from residents merits it. In particular we will actively promote the introduction of "Twenty's Plenty" in streets where a lower speed limit than 30mph would prove effective. We note that last autumn, our neighbouring authority in

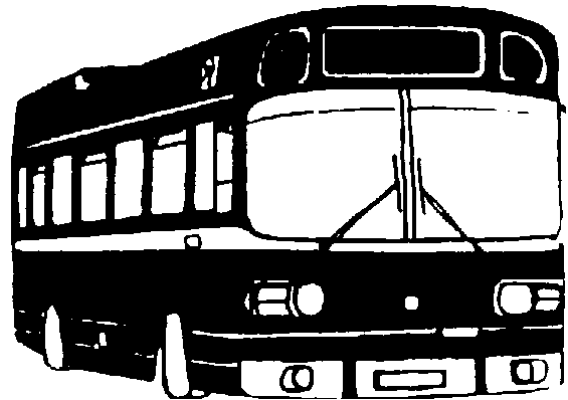
Angus announced no less than 14 "Twenty's Plenty" schemes, and wish to see a similar active approach to this initiative in Dundee.

- We are strongly supportive of the "Safer Routes to School" initiative, and "Home Zones."
- We shall invest in better street lighting where public safety is of concern.
- We see improvements to the Winter Maintenance programme as a priority.

## Transport in the City

Dundee has a good bus network. It is well co-ordinated in terms of the services and routes available due mostly to the fact that the natural monopoly of the main provider in the town has not been broken. However, the Liberal Democrats acknowledge the fact that mainstream public transport is not suitable for everyone. We

will actively seek out new initiatives to plug these gaps and encourage the development of not-for-profit community transport operators where appropriate.

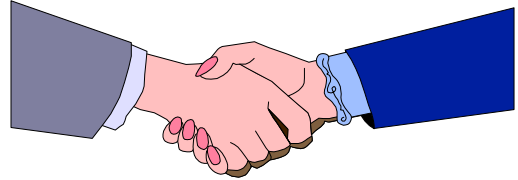


- Liberal Democrats support an effective and co-ordinated bus and rail network in the City. However, we have voiced concerns about the proposed bus interchange in the City Centre at Whitehall Street. Congestion and pollution issues must be properly resolved and alternative locations considered. We cannot support a street of much architectural merit becoming a bus station.
- Liberal Democrats will actively campaign for improvements to the concessionary travel scheme for the elderly and disabled citizens. Scottish Executive funding has meant that the scheme the City Council offers is inferior to that of neighbouring authorities. We will press the case for a more equitable funding arrangement.

- We welcome the City Council's successful bid to the Scottish Executive for funding to provide more, better quality, bus shelters and the extension of 'real-time' timetable information.

## Strengthening Local Communities

The Liberal Democrats propose that the effectiveness and productiveness of current interfaces between the Council and local communities be reviewed.



- It is highly disappointing there are so few Community Councils in the City. The City Council should more actively support the creation of Community Councils and thereafter give positive support to them.
- The City Council must consider empowering Community Councils or area committees with some decision making and budgeting affecting their local communities. The City Council has decentralised some of its services (such as the Housing Service); it is about time it decentralised some of its decision making to local communities.
- The City Council should set up a Dundee Youth Council to consult and involve young people in the City Council's services.
- Liberal Democrat Councillors will propose that the Chief Executive is charged with consulting Community Councils and other representative local groups to develop locally based action plans to allow them to determine their own priorities. Community, Residents' and Tenants' Groups should also be actively encouraged and consulted on other issues that directly affect them, such as Housing, Traffic Calming, and overseeing local community leisure facilities.
- Liberal Democrats are strongly supportive of close co-operation with local organisations working towards social inclusion, such as the Dundee Anti Poverty Forum.

## Corporate Policies

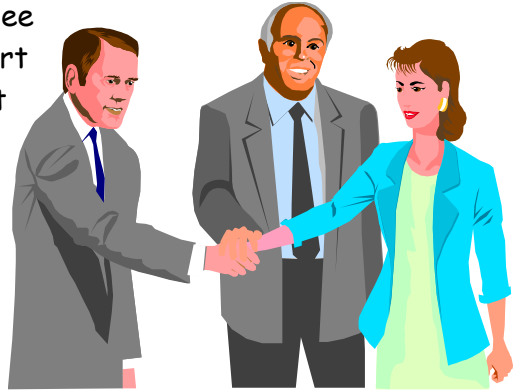
Liberal Democrats believe that the professionalism & experience of the City Council's staff is vital to City's success. We shall continually consider ways to ensure we retain quality staff within the City Council. For example, we shall encourage the development of opportunities for tele-working and home-working. Staff are the Council's most valuable asset, and we see occupational health facilities, and assisting staff with childcare and other caring responsibilities as vital.



- We shall promote a suggestion scheme for staff and the public with genuine rewards for money-saving ideas.
- Liberal Democrats support active participation of Dundee City Council in CoSLA.
- We shall discuss with all political groups on the City Council ways of improving procedures for bringing forward motions to Council Committees. It is ridiculous that, at present, some contentious items are laid before committee without the full motion being made available to all council members in advance of the meeting. This often results in unfortunate controversy and argument, causing a negative image of City Council deliberations.
- It is vital that Dundee presents an ever more positive image. We acknowledge the success of the City Council's award-winning website & will resource both its development and that of [www.dundee.com](http://www.dundee.com).
- We will review the priorities and budget for civic hospitality. Whilst being aware of the need to promote the city, we must also be mindful of the cost to the Council Tax Payer.
- We will ensure all Council forms are in plain English, and that versions in other languages of Dundee citizens are available.
- We shall appoint a Dundee City Ombudsman to deal *independently* with citizens' complaints against the Council

## Economic Development, employment and planning

Liberal Democrats believe that Dundee City Council must play a significant part in addressing local unemployment problems and creating a climate for local businesses to thrive and grow. We believe that our Economic Development Department should promote Dundee widely, to encourage inward investment, and work with local industries, educational, training and research establishments, to promote economic development in Dundee and maximise local job opportunities.



- Liberal Democrats will continue to actively campaign to bring further Civil service jobs to the City.
- We want to encourage more small-scale local employers to tender for services required by Dundee City Council.
- We believe the City Council should give strong support to the City Airport, a vital component in attracting new employment to the City.
- We shall encourage environmentally friendly policies, such as energy conservation and solar power in planning applications. All major planning and development proposals must be subject to an environmental impact assessment.
- We shall seek contributions from developers towards infrastructure costs and community facilities in all major planning applications.
- Nationally, we will support the return of local tourist boards to local authority control. In the interim, we support the review of Tourist Board areas.
- We also support moves to bring local enterprise organisations (such as Scottish Enterprise Tayside) back into local control so that performance and expenditure can be made locally accountable.