



Liberal Democrats

Malvern Hills District Council Elections 2007

Manifesto

Liberal Democrats believe Councils should not only provide services as efficiently as possible but should provide the leadership the community wants. We conduct regular surveys across the Malvern Hills District to make sure we reflect your priorities.

The Liberal Democrats in alliance with the Green Party took control of Malvern Hills District Council in 2003 from a failing Tory administration, denounced by the Government's inspectors who said; *"service and corporate aims were not adequately understood or being effectively managed and delivered"*.

From being one of the worst-performing District Council in the UK according to government ratings (211 out of 238), Malvern Hills is now in the top 25% on the majority of measures. The government's own Audit Commission has said; "The Council provides strong leadership to the community through its new political administration and partnerships." A 'mystery shopper' exercise carried out by consumer researchers Mystery Shopper Ltd. has rated our Customer Contact Centre as the best in the country for two years running.

At the same time, rises in the District Council share of Council Tax have been among the lowest in the country, under 3% this year and the same for next year. The Lib Dem/Green Council now plans its finances on a three year cycle instead of lurching from crisis to crisis each year as it did under the Tories.

You say....

The issues you are telling us are most important to you are:-

- **'Clean and Green'**; it shocked many of us to hear that Malvern Hills has one of the biggest 'carbon footprints' in the country. There are some special reasons for this, but we believe we can do much better. You have told us you believe it is important that at local level we should be playing our part in combating climate change.
- **Local homes for local people'**; housing in the District is some of the most expensive in the country, yet incomes are below average. Many people, especially young families and key workers like nurses and firemen, are finding it impossible to get a foot on the housing ladder.
- **'Safer communities'**; we live in a low-crime area, yet many people of all ages feel unsafe or threatened at times.
- **'Healthier lifestyles'**; in the Malvern area a new Community Hospital is your first priority and you want good recreation facilities at reasonable cost across the District.
- **'Freedom to move'**; you want a range of transport choices, especially for those without access to a private car.

- **‘Sustainable rural living’**; less affluent people living in the country are penalised by the need to own and run at least one car in the family. Those who cannot must face isolation caused by the closure of village shops and the loss of other their buses and local services.
- **Post Offices** play a vital role in both rural communities and the towns, especially for those excluded from mainstream financial services, yet this government has undermined their viability by withdrawing many routine transactions from these businesses.

What we have achieved...

Since being elected to control of the Council in partnership with the Green Party the Liberal Democrats have turned the organisation around. In terms of public satisfaction with its service, Malvern Hills is now one of the best in the country. 80% of your contacts with the Customer Service Centre are dealt with by the first person you speak to.

Liberal Democrats are improving your Council services by being more efficient in the way we spend your money. For example, we have cut out one whole tier of senior management, which will give long-term savings of £250,000 a year.

Clean and Green

- Thanks to the commitment of the people of the District, we have beaten government recycling targets and we recycle a greater proportion of our waste than most other Districts. Better still, thanks to you, we collect less waste than almost all other Councils, so we pay less Landfill Tax to the government
- We have introduced recycling collections for schools in the District, helping young people to learn the recycling habit
- We have invested more money in street cleaning and the results have been noticeable. Last year showed a 25% improvement in cleanliness.
- All the Council’s replacement light vehicles are now LPG powered to reduce pollution and save money
- We’ve introduced new purchasing rules for the goods and services the Council buys so that issues like local and sustainable resourcing are considered alongside the straightforward cash cost
- We held the highly successful Homes4Now exhibition last September to showcase steps householders and others can take to reduce energy costs and carbon emissions

next steps...

We will

- Use the planning process and building regulations to encourage lower carbon emissions
- Encourage micro-generation schemes
- Take into account the contribution new planning proposals make to local employment and reduction in the need to travel, especially in rural areas
- Negotiate with Persimmon Homes to introduce sustainable features in forthcoming detailed planning applications on the former ‘North Site’

- Buy all electricity used by the Council from sustainable sources
- Reduce the number of office buildings occupied by the Council
- Enhance energy efficiency in remaining Council buildings

Local homes for local people

- 167 of the 390 new homes to be built on the old 'North Site' in Malvern will be low-cost houses and flats, at 43% the biggest proportion ever negotiated with a private developer by a local authority
- We are finalising a scheme in partnership with a housing association for 50 affordable homes in Pickersleigh Road, mostly on the former Council depot site
- We have appointed a Homelessness Prevention Officer who has substantially reduced the incidence of homelessness in the District

next steps...

We will

- Work with a housing association to build another 20 low cost homes in Albert Road North on redundant Council land.
- Require all new housing development to include a minimum provision of 50% low-cost units.
- Encourage shared ownership development schemes as well as rented
- Extend support to mediation services provided by our partners to reduce homelessness resulting from family breakdown
- Appoint a Rural Enabling Officer who will work with village communities to facilitate the development and construction of affordable housing – enabling them to decide what sort of low cost housing the local people want and where they want it
- Exclude new rented housing from the 'Right to Buy' to keep it available for those who need it
- Use our voice in regard to the Regional Spatial Strategy to influence the number, location and balance of housing units to be built in the District by 2026

Safer streets

We have

- Invested in a Street Scene Team, accredited by West Mercia Police, who provide a high-profile deterrent to anti-social behaviour such as graffiti and dog-fouling, but clearing up when incidents occur
- Worked through local Councillors with the police, Community Safety Team and residents on matters of local concern, such as anti-social behaviour
- Held Community Safety Days to build bridges between young and old, police and residents

next steps....

We will

- Examine more effective methods of providing CCTV using new technology
- Consolidate the short-term priority funding for 'street scene' improvements into the annual budget by making savings in administration.
- Campaign through the Highways Partnership for better upkeep of the District's road network

Recreation

We have

- Opened the new Sport Dyson Perrins sports hall in partnership with the County Council and Sport England
- Refurbished the Malvern Splash
- Refurbished Tenbury Swimming Pool
- Invested £162,000 in Tenbury High School sports hall for community use
- Refurbished the Sport Martley sports centre
- Conducted 564 activities for young people with 11,227 participants in 2004-2006 alone

next steps...

We will

- Commit to long-term funding for community sports coaching schemes, currently funded from the short-term priorities budget
- Continue to use Council funding to lever in funding from external sources such as Sport England

In the arts

We have

- Appointed an Arts Officer who has levered in external funding for Shindig rural touring performances at an 8:1 ratio
- Assisted local arts groups to secure external funding
- Having saved the Malvern Theatres from privatisation, we have continued to support them as an independent charitable Trust

next steps....

We will

- Seek to provide a medium scale performance space in Malvern
- Provide a funding advice service for local arts groups across the District

Healthy living

We have

- Disposed of the old Malvern council depot site for a new health centre
- Campaigned for a new community hospital for Malvern
- Held Healthy Lifestyles events in the community to promote healthy eating and exercise, in particular to combat the obesity epidemic
- Assisted the start-up of the 'Baby Latte' group to support and encourage breast-feeding

next steps...

We will

- Introduce 'Scores on the Doors' information on hygiene and quality standards at food premises in Malvern Hills District
- Work with others through the planning process to improve safe cycling routes
- Work with partners to reopen disused railway tracks as foot and cycle paths
- Remain vigilant to ensure that plans for a new Community Hospital in Malvern progress speedily

Access for all

We have

- Widened the scope for residents through the Worcestershire Hub to hold their dealings with the Council in the way they choose, by phone, through the internet or face to face, and in 80% of cases to have their issue resolved at first contact
- Introduced a very successful Concessionary Fares Scheme which has increased bus usage enormously and underpinned services under threat

next steps....

We will

- Continue to campaign against the Post Office closure programme and will offer support to Sub Postmasters to strengthen their businesses
- Promote choice in transport, with better public transport as the favoured option

Liberal Democrats in Malvern Hills have delivered on their promises, yet kept Council Tax increases under 3%, among the lowest in the country.