

A message from the Leader of the Council and of the Conservative Group, Cllr Robert Bliss



Dear Elector,

Some people say it doesn't make any difference who you vote for in local elections. Here in Shepway, we've seen it really does make a difference.

When we won control of Shepway, we re-opened the public toilets the Lib Dems had closed. That's because we believe toilets are an important public service, whereas they saw them as an optional extra that could be closed to save money.

We've frozen the Council Tax, whereas the first bill they sent you when they took control was for a massive 39% increase to fund their overspending.

And even in these tough times, we're still cutting the grass, whereas they overspent the budget, couldn't afford to cut the grass, and had to accept a humiliating bail-out deal from Kent County Council.

And our refuse collections kept going through the bad winter.

That's why, under the Lib Dems, the Audit Commission rated Shepway as a "weak" council. Under our leadership, Shepway's been upgraded twice to a "good" council.

It's not that they're bad people. They just have different priorities. In this manifesto, we've set out ours. If you agree with us, I'd ask you to vote for us on 5th May.

It really does make a difference.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Robert Bliss

GARDEN WASTE SERVICE SAVED. WAITING TIMES DOWN. PROCESSING TIMES CUT. HOMELESSNESS CASES PREVENTED. AFFORDABLE HOMES BUILT. MANAGEMENT COSTS SLASHED. PRUDENT CONTINGENCY PROVISION RESTORED. WILDLIFE CORRIDOR CREATED. CANAL BANKS RENOVATED. HGV PARKING AT SCHOOL ENTRANCES BANNED. RECYCLING LITTER BINS INTRODUCED. NEW DOG WASTE BINS INSTALLED. TOILETS RE-OPENED, AND LONGER HOURS, AND NEW INVESTMENT. 24 HOUR PAYMENT LINE INTRODUCED. PAYMENT COUNTERS INCREASED. SPORTS PAVILION FUNDED. HOME-VISITING ADVISORS PROVIDED. ADVICE SURGERIES EXPANDED. NEW STREET FURNITURE INSTALLED. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS FUNDED. BUSINESSES SUPPORTED. PARKING PAYMENT BY MOBILE PHONE INTRODUCED. BUSINESS INVESTMENT BROCHURES DISTRIBUTED. CAR PARK RESURFACED. DISABLED PERSONS FACILITIES GRANTS AWARDED. CHOICE FOR TENANTS INTRODUCED. HOME IMPROVEMENTS SUPPORTED. WEEKLY BIN COLLECTIONS BEING RESTORED. MORE RECYCLING COLLECTED. AUDIT COMMISSION RATING UPGRADED TO GOOD. ENQUIRIES RESOLVED WITHIN 24 HOURS INCREASED TENFOLD. STREETS CLEANER. GRASS SHORTER. COUNCIL TAX FROZEN.

**A RECORD OF ACTION
A PROMISE OF MORE**

 **Conservatives**

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**A RECORD OF ACTION
A PROMISE OF MORE
THE CONSERVATIVE MANIFESTO
FOR SHEPWAY DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

**10 PRIORITIES FROM YOUR
CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES
SHEPWAY DISTRICT COUNCIL
ELECTIONS
THURSDAY 5TH MAY 2011**

OPEN HERE TO READ OUR PLEDGES TO YOU...

 **Conservatives**

1 RESTORING WEEKLY BIN COLLECTIONS

The current recycling & waste service was badly planned by Liberal Democrats when they ran the Council. It's wrong to leave people with smelly food waste for up to a fortnight. It's crazy that you can recycle a plastic bottle, but not a yogurt carton made of the same plastic. And it's wrong to deny residents in blocks of flats a recycling collection. The new service we've planned will let all residents recycle more, but will still cost less on the council tax. And our service kept going through the bad winter.

So, if re-elected:

- We will restore weekly collections of food waste within weeks of taking office.
- We will dramatically expand the range of materials that can be recycled, again within weeks.
- And we will launch free email alerts giving a day's notice to remind residents what sort of collection will take place the next day.

2 ZERO TOLERANCE OF DOG-FOULING, LITTERING, AND FLY-TIPPING

We know it takes only one or two anti-social people to turn our streets, country lanes or verges into a mess. We've already started to crack down. We've increased the penalty for dog-fouling from £50 to £80 (the legal maximum). We're installing the first new dog-waste bins for over a decade. We installed an innovative talking camera to warn offenders. And we've recently had several successful prosecutions for fly-tipping. But we need to do more to crack down hard on the anti-social minority.

So, if re-elected:

- We will introduce a zero-tolerance policy for dog-fouling, littering and fly tipping.
- We will pay for the additional enforcement officers from penalties issued to offenders, and any surplus we receive will be put straight back into buying new litter and dog-waste bins. That way, there will be no additional burden on the council tax.

3 REDUCING THE BURDEN OF THE COUNCIL TAX BY WORKING WITH OTHER COUNCILS TO DRIVE DOWN COSTS

The last thing our residents need in tough times is a soaring council tax bill. That's why the Conservatives will never send the bill for a 39% increase in council tax that the Lib Dems sent you when they took control of Shepway. Indeed, we've frozen the council tax this year. But controlling our costs doesn't mean cutting frontline services. We've taken money out of management overheads and re-invested it in frontline services.

We can further reduce the pressure on the council tax by awarding more joint contracts for our services, like our award-winning refuse contract, to enable economies of scale. And by using information technology to improve efficiency, we can share more senior officers with other councils to help drive down staffing costs while still improving services.

So, if re-elected:

- Within weeks we aim to appoint a joint Chief Executive Officer, shared with another council, and
- Within a year, we aim to have a shared senior management team, based on our tried and tested model in our Environmental Services.

4 PUTTING LOCAL JOBS & LOCAL COMMUNITIES AT THE HEART OF SHEPWAY'S ENTERPRISE CULTURE

We want to promote a dynamic and enterprising Shepway. The Council doesn't create the jobs that bring prosperity to Shepway. But we can create the environment where the businesses that do provide jobs can flourish. The Council doesn't open new shops, but we can ensure our high streets are clean and tidy places where customers will choose to spend their money, making it worthwhile for shops to open. The Council doesn't invest in new industry, but we can attract new investors with a "can do" attitude and a welcoming, helpful, and flexible approach to new ventures.

We know new developments can bring short-term pain to local communities. Yet they also bring benefits, providing the funding for investment in improved local services. We believe it is only right that those who take the pain of new development also share the gain that development brings.

So, if re-elected:

- We will continue to work with partners such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Town Centre Manager to attract new businesses and retain existing businesses throughout Shepway.
- We will work to ensure a prosperous and safe future for all our residents on the Romney Marsh, and will continue to fight for the future of the Marsh's main employer, Dungeness power station.
- We will ensure local communities share in the proceeds of new development and have a voice in how their area can be enhanced.

5 ENHANCING OUR LEISURE FACILITIES

We know that our tourist attractions and leisure facilities not only improve our residents' quality of life, but they also generate over £200m annually for Shepway's economy and provide 4,000 jobs.

So, if re-elected:

- We will work with developers and other partners to make a new swimming pool a reality.
- We will continue to work with partners to promote tourism in Shepway, and with leisure operators to enhance the District's facilities, including the possibility of attracting a multiplex cinema.
- We will work to ensure that those who visit us are greeted by clean and tidy streets and welcoming parks, beaches, and open spaces.

6 CLEANER, BRIGHTER PUBLIC TOILETS; LOWER COST TO TAXPAYERS

We believe public toilets are an important public service. That's why we re-opened all the toilets the Liberal Democrats closed when they ran the Council. But we know that old toilet blocks with old fittings are often expensive to clean and maintain. We all know that very often, you can reduce your ongoing running costs by investing a little more up front.

So, if re-elected:

- We will start work as a trial on two new public toilets with state-of-the-art materials, fittings, lighting and ventilation.
- We will monitor this trial, and if successful, we will draw up a phased plan for similar improvements for public toilets across the District.

7 HELPING FIRST TIME BUYERS AND PEOPLE ON LOWER WAGES GAIN THEIR FIRST FOOT ON THE HOUSING LADDER

We know how difficult it can be for aspiring first-time buyers, or those on lower wages, even to afford a deposit for their new home. Shared ownership can provide a helping hand to get the first foot on the housing ladder. Yet last year, just 10 of these homes were built in Shepway.

We also know that if Shepway is to grow and prosper, we must meet everyone's need with the right mix of dwelling types. We believe that in recent times, there has been a rush towards building (or conversions to) rented flats, and not enough emphasis on family houses.

So, if re-elected:

- We will amend Council planning and housing policies to encourage developers to build more family houses in a range of prices and sizes.
- We will ensure that where affordable housing is built, a higher proportion is for shared ownership.
- We will explore other ways to help first time buyers and those on lower wages take new opportunities provided by the Government and mortgage lenders to get the first foot on the housing ladder.

8 GIVING RESIDENTS THE RIGHT TO REQUEST RESIDENTS' PARKING

We worked successfully with residents around Folkestone West station to remove commuter parking and give them back their own streets. We want to give all Shepway residents the right to control their own streets.

So, if re-elected:

- We will give all residents the right to request residents' parking for their neighbourhood, and if the scheme would not have an adverse impact on surrounding streets, we will introduce a self-funding residents' parking scheme where it has majority local support.

9 FAST BROADBAND FOR ALL SHEPWAY

We believe that in the modern age, a fast broadband connection is the key to promoting a new generation of rural and urban enterprises, creating wealth and jobs, as well as to ensuring all our citizens benefit from faster internet services for leisure or communication.

So, if re-elected:

- We will take every opportunity to press the case for fast broadband for all of Shepway, and will work with other Authorities and partners to pursue its successful roll-out.

10 STAYING IN TOUCH ALL THE YEAR ROUND; NOT JUST AT ELECTION TIME

We will stay in touch with you, we'll be open and transparent in all we do, and we'll never forget that it is you who elect us to work on your behalf.

So, if re-elected:

- We will stay in touch with you, listen to you, speak up for you at the Council, and tell you what we are doing on your behalf. After all, if we're elected by you, then we're also accountable to you.