

Listening to you

Our plan to make Wokingham Borough an even better
place to live, work and raise a family

Conservative Manifesto

Wokingham Borough elections, 4 May 2023





Our Wokingham Town Centre Regeneration



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A personal message from the Conservative Group Leader

Dear Resident,

Wokingham Borough is a great place to live, raise a family and do business - and we want to build on this success.

When residents made the decision to leave the Council with no overall control last May, they signalled that they wanted something different. We accept that. But a year on, it's becoming increasingly clear to local people that the Liberal Democrat-led experiment has not only failed, but it is also one that they can ill afford.

The Liberal Democrats' record is one of dither and delay on planning and development, on education and schools, and on investing in the future. The Liberal Democrats have no plan. Under them parking charges are doubling, weekly waste collections are being cut, and road maintenance and pot hole repair budgets have been frozen. What's more, Liberal Democrats have ignored residents by disregarding consultations and petitions and attempting to stifle debate.

I believe you deserve better. You deserve an administration that will invest in services, not cut them. You deserve to have your taxes and charges kept to a level you can afford. You deserve to have a Council Leader who will listen to you and actually act to cut housing numbers and plan for future development, not just talk about it. You deserve to have a Council that will deliver on local communities' priorities.

You will get all this if a Conservative administration is elected in May.

Pauline Jorgensen



Cllr Pauline Jorgensen speaking in the Council Chamber



Conservative councillors with petition to stop car parking charges increase

General Principles

Our Key Principles

It is important that parties show consistency and keep the promises they make. The current Liberal Democrat-led administration in Wokingham has repeatedly failed to live up to pledges it made at the last election. A Conservative administration won't promise something it cannot deliver.

If the Conservatives are elected to run the Council, our administration will work on the following principles:

- **there will be no cuts to customer-facing services:** we will not reduce services that residents need from their Council
- **fees and charges will be fair:** if we need to increase fees and charges, they will rise by no more than the rate of inflation in our first year
- **the Council will have balanced and sustainable finances:** we will look to be innovative and efficient to ensure that taxpayers' money is used wisely
- **we will listen to you:** unlike the current Liberal Democrat-led administration, the Conservatives will take on board the views of local people, businesses and organisations, and ensure that consultations are meaningful





Housing and Planning

Protecting Our Borough from Unsustainable Development

Conservatives believe that a thriving local community is one where everyone who wants to own their own home can do so. Although it is vital that more appropriate and affordable homes are delivered, ensuring that young people in particular are not forced to move out of Wokingham Borough we have seen excessive levels of development. At the same time, we have campaigned over a number of years to reduce the Government housing target to one that is sustainable. When we previously ran the Council, until May 2022, we got the Government to agree to halve our target, but there is still more to do. A new Local Plan also needs to be produced to protect our communities and countryside from opportunistic developers. The Liberal Democrats, backed by Labour and the Independents, promised the earth to get votes and have shamefully dithered since they took power, preferring talk over action.

If elected, we will:

- **complete a Local Plan to protect the Borough from planning by appeal:** we will get on with producing a draft Local Plan for consultation. This will help put an end to the string of lost planning appeals under the Liberal Democrat-led administration
- **continue campaigning to cut the Borough's housing target:** building on our previous success we will continue working with local Conservative MPs to persuade the Government to reduce housing numbers

Our plan for planning

- Get on with the Local Plan
- Work with local MPs and Central Government to cut housing targets
- Protect against unsustainable development
- Deliver more affordable homes

- **defending us from planning appeals:** we will ensure that we vigorously fight appeals on applications that the Council has rejected as being unsuitable.
- **explore new schemes to help local people buy their own homes:** housing in this area is very expensive, we will investigate ways that the Council can support residents with access to affordable homes and accruing deposits
- **continue our regeneration schemes to replace worn-out Council homes:** where the Council's stock of housing has reached the end of its usable life, we will use regeneration schemes to supply new homes
- **maintain the Council's housing companies to provide affordable and social homes:** the previous Conservative administration saw great success with its housing companies, including having the first council company to be recognised by the Government as a for-profit provider of social housing





Highways and Transport

Getting About: Travel, Transport and Highways

Wokingham Borough Conservatives believe that you should have the choice of how you want to travel in your local area. When we ran the Council, our policy was to invest in sustainable transport and in roads – creating options for walking, cycling, using public transport or taking your car. We also kept costs as low as possible for motorists, only increasing car parking charges where it was necessary. Sadly the Liberal Democrats, backed up by Labour and the Independents, have rammed through an agenda of restricting choice and punishing car owners. This includes doubling car parking charges in the face of widespread opposition from local residents and businesses.

If we are elected to form an administration, we will:

- **only increase parking charges when the local economy has recovered, and only by inflation:** while households and businesses are still on the road to recovery following the pandemic, we believe it would be wrong to take more money away from local people
- **ensure that free car parks owned by the Council stay free:** we will not introduce charges in Highways and Leisure car parks that don't currently charge
- **increase spending on road repairs by inflation, and renew the focus on reducing congestion:** we will get the balance right between sustainable transport, pedestrians and other road users, bidding for more grants with an aim to repair more pavements
- **invest to reduce congestion:** work which was cut by the Liberal Democrat/Labour Coalition



- **support the provision of new cycleways:** we will build on the success of the previous Conservative administration of delivering new cycle routes across the Borough where residents want them, solving more missing links. We will encourage town and parish councils to highlight cycleways their residents want
- **scrap plans for California Crossroads:** saving £3million to invest in road improvements and anti congestion measures
- **provide more Electric Vehicle charging points:** Conservatives in power had started a scheme for more public EV points. It is vitally important that we do more to provide the infrastructure for more vehicles that will reduce our climate impact.
- **provide funding to support bus services:** until demand returns to pre-Covid levels



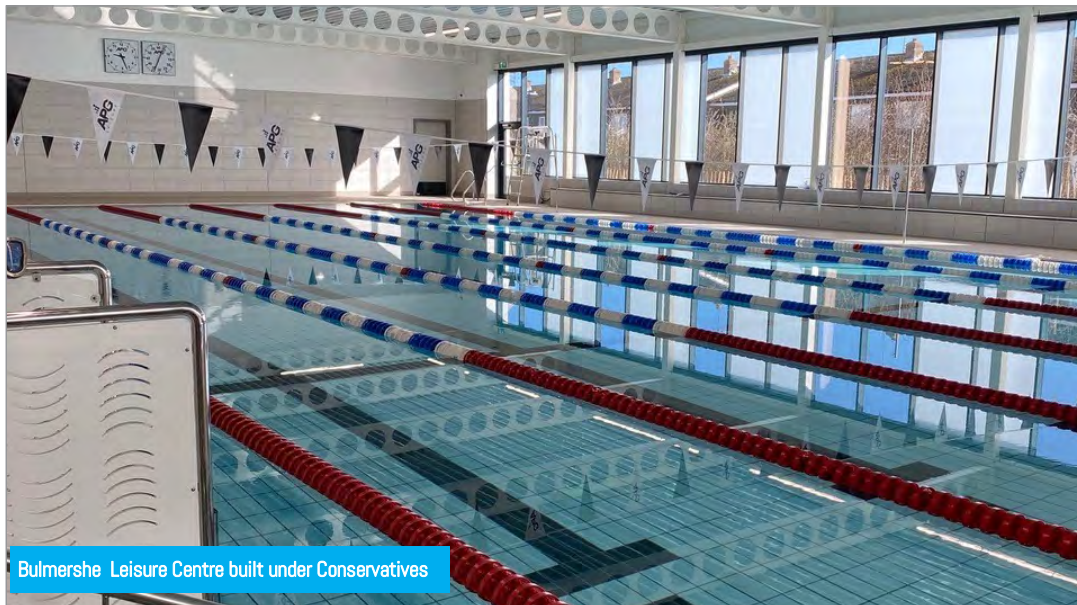
Lib Dem Watch



Since the **Liberal Democrat-led coalition** took charge of Wokingham Borough Council they have:

- **Doubled your parking charges**
- **Introduced charges for evenings and weekends**
- **Cut spending on road repairs in real terms**
- **Scrapped anti congestion measures**





Environment and Leisure

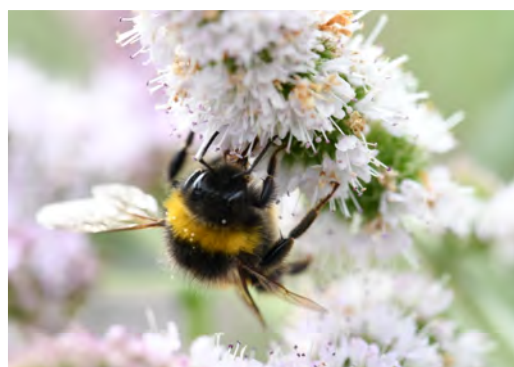
Leisure, Environment, Waste and Recycling

Conservatives delivered two country parks, refurbished and provided new leisure centres in Wokingham, Woodley and Arborfield. We provided more green spaces and oversaw library improvements that increased the number of users. We have massively increased the Borough's recycling, introducing food waste collection. We kept weekly bin collections, and we were one of the first local authorities to declare a climate emergency, putting in place a deliverable strategy to reduce our carbon footprint.

If elected, we will:

- **maintain weekly waste collection:** we know that many families could not cope with having their bins collected fortnightly. We will scrap the ludicrous Liberal Democrat/Labour policy that would see collection lorries still coming to your house every week, but not collecting your bins
- **provide free food caddy liners to be collected at libraries and Council offices:** the Liberal Democrats scrapped free liners, even though we warned that this would discourage food waste recycling -they claimed food waste recycling would increase significantly but instead it has plateaued. We would ensure that caddy liners are available for people who need them
- **Provide extra blue bags to families with young children**

- **improve the commercial waste service:** we will work to investigate commercial waste disposal outside the working day
- **maintain the Conservative record of providing excellent leisure facilities and libraries in communities:** we will continue the programme started under the previous Conservative administration of investment in leisure centres, libraries, parks, playgrounds and more
- **improve parking for Laurel Park:** we will work with local residents to reduce the impact of football parking on local residents in surrounding homes
- **review duplication in Council departments:** to make the services more efficient
- **deliver solar farms faster:** we will accelerate delivery of the solar farms project started under the Conservatives. The Liberal Democrats have significantly delayed the project by pointlessly starting from scratch, losing out on energy generation and income for Council services



The **Liberal Democrat** and **Labour** coalition held a consultation on the future of waste services, with no option for weekly bin collection. Councillors voted to overturn the Lib Dem/Labour decision to scrap weekly collection, listening to a petition from residents. But the Lib Dems/Labour continued with their decision.
The Lib Dems simply do not care what residents think.



Children's and Adults' Services

Schools, Children's Services and Adults' Services

Children's Services and Adults' Social Care are two of the most important functions of the Council, and form a large part of the authority's spending. The previous Conservative administration had a strong record in these areas.

If elected, we will:

- **increase Special Educational Needs provision in the Borough:** the previous Conservative administration delivered new SEND schools thanks to grants provided by the Conservative Government
- **support Bohunt School expansion**
- **accelerate solar panels on schools,** initiative started by the previous Conservative administration. This is projected to save £600,000 per year
- **increase capacity of Local Authority care homes** to provide good quality care for residents who need it
- **continue to campaign for better funding** settlements for Children's Services and Adults' Social Care in Wokingham



Finance

Finance, Assets and Partnerships

Since they took office, the Liberal Democrat-led administration has claimed that they had inherited finances in poor health.

But the Council's own Chief Finance Officer said that the Council's finances were in good shape under the previous Conservative administration. In 2020 Wokingham was rated in the top 20 for financial sustainability by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy.

If elected, we will:

- commit to offer value for money for tax payers
- reduce the use of high-end consultants, saving hundreds of thousands of pounds each year
- maintain strong finances and ensure reserves remain good
- stop the Liberal Democrat Coalition's increased spending on unnecessary back-office staff
- scrap the extra Liberal Democrat spending on the Council's PR and self-promotion

The choice at this election



Residents have the choice between a Liberal Democrat administration with a record of failure and broken promises — or delivering on the priorities of local people under the Conservatives.

Liberal Democrats have:	Conservatives will:
Doubled car parking charges	Freeze car parking charges
Cut spending on road repairs in real terms	Increase spending on road repairs by more than £1million in the first year
Scrapped weekly bin collection	Keep weekly bin collection
Increased spending on publicity for the Council	Cut PR spending and use the money on services
Dithered on a Local Plan, exposing the Borough to uncontrolled development	Get on with delivering a Local Plan that listens to residents
Ignored residents' feedback in consultations when it did not fit the Lib Dems' political priorities	Listen to residents when making decisions
Scrapped food caddy liners	Reinstate food caddy liners for collection at Libraries and Council offices

Your Conservative Council Candidates



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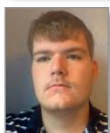
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