

# CARING FOR KINGSTON

## The Lib Dem manifesto to keep Kingston a great place to live, work and thrive CARING FOR KINGSTON

Caring for our Families | Caring for our Communities | Caring for our Environment and our Planet

### INTRODUCTION

Britain faces unprecedented challenges. A cost-of-living crisis continues to squeeze families and workers across our country. Our NHS is under immense pressure. The climate emergency demands urgent action. And communities are yearning for local leaders who truly listen and deliver.

Kingston has always been a place where people matter. A borough where we look after each other. Where diversity is our strength. Where we believe that real power comes from listening to residents and working with our communities.

For too long, national Westminster politics has failed Kingston. But we know that change starts locally – in the neighbourhoods where people live, in the schools where our children learn, on the streets where our communities gather.

The Liberal Democrats are the only party that really cares about Kingston. We work all year round as local champions you can rely on. We're the ones willing to take tough decisions and act boldly to make sure we protect Kingston for generations to come. Labour are out of the race in Kingston. It's only the Liberal Democrats who can stop Reform and the Conservatives here.

This manifesto is our commitment to Kingston. Over the next four years, we will continue to focus on what matters most: caring for the families who call Kingston home, caring for our communities and the people in them, and caring for the environment we share.

We believe Kingston can continue to thrive. Not by turning inward, but by ensuring that prosperity is shared fairly; that our most vulnerable are protected; that young people have real opportunities; that our green spaces and our planet are cherished; and that every resident, regardless of their background, feels safe, valued, and has a genuine stake in their neighbourhood.

This is what caring for Kingston means. This is what Liberal Democrat leadership delivers.

**Councillor Andreas Kirsch**  
**Liberal Democrat Leader of Kingston Council**

## **CARING FOR OUR FAMILIES**

### **Giving every child in Kingston the best possible start**

The foundation of a thriving borough is strong support for families. From the crucial early years through to adulthood, children and young people deserve investment, opportunity, and care.

Liberal Democrats in Kingston have protected local children's services and are investing to ensure schools, special educational needs provision and health are supported. We've made the tough decisions to keep services running when other councils have slashed bin collections and closed libraries. That's the difference Liberal Democrat leadership makes.

We've seen the impact of recent years on our young people – disrupted education, mental health challenges, and widening gaps in opportunity. That's why we're committed to early intervention and prevention, ensuring every child in Kingston has what they need to reach their potential.

We know that families are stronger when they have the practical support they need. We will continue to invest in support for our most vulnerable children, expanding our family hubs and ensuring First 1001 Days support is available to every family who needs it.

### **How we will support children**

- Focus on early intervention and prevention through our Best Start for Life programme and continued expansion of Family Hubs
- Provide a new residential children's home for children in care with complex needs
- Expand special school places and alternative provision for children who experience difficulties in mainstream education or have medical needs
- Establish a post-16 specialist campus for young people with special educational needs to ensure they can thrive locally
- Support healthy development, including through strategies to promote children's healthy weight
- Continue our engagement with young people, expanding our youth services to ensure every young person has the opportunities they need to thrive
- Continue to increase foster carer recruitment and expand our kinship care offer
- Expand accommodation options for care leavers to ensure they have the support they need as they become independent
- Narrow attainment gaps for our most disadvantaged children and young people and work closely with our schools to achieve this
- Lobby the Department for Education for further special needs school provision in our borough

## **Supporting adults and maintaining independence**

We will keep our most vulnerable residents at the heart of everything we do. Our vision for Adult Social Care and Health is simple: maintaining a clear focus on prevention and early support, working with health partners to help people live the lives they want to live, independently and with dignity.

We will continue to invest in support for our most vulnerable adults and children. This includes building more council houses and investing in care at home. We're committed to ensuring that our health and care system is properly funded. We'll campaign alongside local partners to ensure the government understands that without fixing social care, the NHS cannot be fixed either. And we'll continue our campaign for a Fair Pay Agreement for adult social care workers whose skilled, compassionate work is absolutely crucial.

We are campaigning for better community-led healthcare in Kingston, including continuing to redevelop Tolworth Hospital and expanding family hubs. Because we care about the wellbeing of every person who lives in Kingston, quality health facilities in our borough are non-negotiable.

## **How we will support adults**

- Put vulnerable residents at the heart of everything we do, working with the NHS and our highly skilled Voluntary and Community Sector partners to align support and create better outcomes
- Create better pathways and processes with the NHS to promote more efficient hospital discharge
- Continue to utilise Technology Enabled Care options and make AI tools more readily available for people with care needs
- Campaign to ensure our health and care system is properly financed
- Campaign for a Fair Pay Agreement for adult social care workers who deserve recognition for their essential work
- Continue to lobby the government to address the crisis in health and social care
- Campaign for better health facilities in Kingston, including the continued redevelopment of Tolworth Hospital
- Provide Family hubs accessible for our most vulnerable families

## **Building homes where families thrive**

Having a safe, affordable home is a fundamental right. Yet too many Kingston residents struggle to find homes they can afford. We believe every person has the right to a good quality place to live. We have delivered many council homes over the last four years and we are committed to building more council houses, improving accessibility for those with disabilities, and ensuring our housing serves everyone who calls Kingston home.

We will focus on delivering quality, affordable homes in line with the needs of local people. This will reduce the amount of time people are waiting for a council house and ensure the most vulnerable people in our community are looked after.

## **How we will provide homes for Kingston families**

- Build a major programme of council housing to provide genuinely affordable homes for our residents
- Put our tenants at the centre of everything we do
- Deliver the Acre Road housing scheme for sheltered accommodation and people with learning disabilities
- Further improve accessibility in our council homes, with safe spaces for bikes on housing land
- Explore a Care Worker housing scheme to support those in essential roles
- Continue our investment in quality, affordable housing that meets the needs of all our residents

## **CARING FOR OUR COMMUNITIES AND EMPOWERING THEM**

### **Building a borough where everyone belongs**

Kingston's greatest strength is its diversity. Our communities, with their different faiths, cultures, and backgrounds come together to make Kingston a special place. We're committed to fostering a culture where every individual feels safe, valued, and can thrive – regardless of their background.

We believe that real leadership means listening to residents and empowering communities to shape their own futures. That means making decisions locally, supporting our voluntary and community sector, celebrating our shared heritage, and ensuring that Kingston remains a place where everyone has a voice.

### **How we will ensure Kingston is inclusive and welcoming**

- Continue to support all faiths and beliefs across our borough and strengthen our Faith and Belief forum
- Continue to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls and enhance our women's domestic abuse hub
- Launch an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board covering all nine protected characteristics to ensure we reach into every corner of our community
- Support the Disability Forum and help with disability awareness events to empower disabled people
- Ensure blue badge parking spaces remain accessible and adequate across the borough
- Celebrate the diversity in our borough through events like LGBT History Month, Black History Month and cultural festivals from our diverse communities
- Tackle digital exclusion and support residents to become more digitally literate
- Strengthen the role of Neighbourhoods in decision-making
- Develop Community Resilience guidance and set up a Community Risk Register

## **Celebrating our heritage and culture**

Kingston's history is extraordinary. From the coronation of King Athelstan to our vibrant contemporary cultural scene, our borough has stories to tell and culture to celebrate.

We're committed to enhancing our cultural offer – through the Rose Theatre, our libraries, adult education, and events that bring our communities together. We'll develop a new Cultural Strategy building on the success of our Kingston 2025 celebrations, and ensure that our heritage and diversity are celebrated and shared.

## **How we will celebrate Kingston's culture and heritage**

- Promote and celebrate Kingston's rich history, heritage and the diversity of our communities
- Develop a new Cultural Strategy building on the findings and experience of Kingston 2025 Celebrations
- Enhance and improve our library offer, expanding them as community hubs where residents can access services, enjoy events, and attend adult education courses
- Continue to support the Rose Theatre as a cultural and community hub in Kingston
- Provide an Adult Education core offer working with partners like Kingston College
- Enhance and improve our leisure offer in our parks and green spaces
- Deliver the Kingston Leisure Centre a fully accessible and environmentally sustainable facility for everyone to enjoy
- Complete a business appraisal to enhance the Malden Centre/Cocks Crescent provision

## **Strengthening our communities and supporting our high streets**

Strong communities are built on connection, trust, and practical support. We're expanding our community hubs so residents can easily access council services locally, enjoy cultural events, and connect with their neighbours. We're committed to continue working with our partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector to build resilience and support those most in need. We know the invaluable work they are doing for our residents and communities.

## **How we will strengthen our communities**

- Continue and expand our community hubs programme so residents can access council services, enjoy community and cultural events, attend adult education courses and enjoy live performances
- Create strong partnerships and networks that support our most vulnerable residents with a focus on resilience, independence and collaboration
- Work with partners and the Voluntary and Community Sector to enrich and improve the lives of our residents
- Work with our citizens panel to strengthen our engagement offer and ensure residents genuinely shape decisions
- Enhance and modernise our CCTV network to keep Kingston safe Support our High Streets and parades of shops across the borough to keep them vibrant and thriving
- Encourage and support Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) across the borough

## **Keeping Kingston safe for everyone**

Kingston is one of the safest boroughs in London. Because we care about the safety and wellbeing of every person who lives here, we will continue to campaign for quality CCTV, more neighbourhood policing and keep police front desks open. This will help keep Kingston a safe place for all our residents to live.

### **How we will keep Kingston safer**

- Continue to campaign for quality CCTV coverage across the borough
- Campaign for more neighbourhood policing in our communities
- Keep police front desks open in Kingston
- Work with the Metropolitan Police and community partners to maintain Kingston's status as one of London's safest boroughs
- Support community initiatives that build trust and safety
- Reaffirming our commitment to 20mph on our roads to help keeping residents safe

## **Financial stewardship**

Keeping Kingston's finances on a stable footing is really important, as financial stability underpins anything we want to achieve for our residents and communities. We have a track record of financial stewardship for our borough. And we continue to be responsible with Kingston's finances.

### **How we will be good stewards of Kingston's finances**

- Be responsible with Kingston's finances, striking the right balance between investment and efficient service transformation
- Ensure Kingston's financial sustainability and protect services for generations to come
- Continue to lobby the government for a fairer funding settlement for Kingston
- Use our responsible investment policy as a basis for investment and engage with the London CIV (Collective Investment Vehicle) and other London councils to ensure these policies are adopted by the London CIV. This includes ensuring consistency with the UN OCHR database of enterprises involved in activities in the occupied territory in Palestine.

## **Creating opportunities and supporting business**

Kingston is a great place to work, study and do business. We're committed to supporting job creation, particularly green jobs, helping residents develop new skills, and ensuring that all those who work in Kingston are paid fairly.

We'll continue our work with major employers, the University, Kingston College, and the Chamber of Commerce to generate opportunities. And we'll ensure that all our suppliers and

contractors pay the London Living Wage – because every person who works in Kingston deserves a wage that enables a decent standard of living.

### **How we will create opportunities in Kingston**

- Support the community and voluntary sector, building on strong relationships
- Work collaboratively with our blue light services, the NHS and other strategic partners to improve health, wellbeing and reduce health inequalities
- Build further on our strong record of the London Living Wage across all our suppliers and contractors, and promote London Living Wage with our partners and businesses
- Support our High Streets and parades of shops to help them thrive economically
- Continue our work with the Large Employers Forum
- Work with partners to improve opportunities for job creation in our borough
- Increase the number of apprenticeship opportunities available through the Council
- Encourage and work with providers for better internet and WiFi connectivity to the borough

## **PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT AND OUR PLANET**

### **Acting on climate and creating a greener Kingston**

The climate emergency is the defining challenge of our time. We've already made real progress – from electric waste vehicles to EV charging points, from street lighting conversion to tree planting. But we know there's far more to do.

We're committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions for our council operations by 2030, and carbon neutrality across the whole borough by 2038. This means reimagining how we build, heat our homes, travel, look after our green spaces, and manage our waste. It's ambitious. It's necessary. And it's achievable – but only if we work together with residents, businesses, and partners.

In tough times, Liberal Democrats have made tough decisions to protect local services and our environment. We will continue to put the needs of people in Kingston first and protect our area for the future.

### **How we will deliver a greener Kingston**

- Reaffirm our commitment to Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions for our own operations by 2030, if government policies allow
- Work with residents, partners, and businesses towards carbon neutrality for the whole borough by 2038
- Continue to develop the Kingston District Heat Network, using waste heat from the Hogsmill sewage plant to provide low carbon heating for buildings in central Kingston

- Apply to central Government for agreement to set up a low carbon district heat network zone in Kingston town centre
- Change council vehicles to electric vehicles by 2030 and encourage council contractors to do the same
- Provide advice and assistance to community groups and schools to install solar panels
- Promote and take part in regional schemes to help retrofit homes
- Complete the programme to convert our streetlights to the most efficient LEDs
- Support the Kingston Green Business Community and continue Think Green events and the Kingston Efficient Homes Show

### **Protecting and enhancing our natural spaces**

Kingston's green spaces are the lungs of our borough. Our parks, rivers, and natural habitats are home to wildlife, provide space for recreation, and contribute to our health and wellbeing. We're committed to protecting and enhancing them for generations to come.

We are opposing building on our greenbelt. The Labour government want to bulldoze greenbelts regardless of local needs, but we will fight to protect Kingston's precious green spaces. We are continuing to crack down on fly-tipping and are working to clean up the Thames and the Hogsmill. We're expanding wildlife habitats, creating 'Wildways', and making Kingston a bee-friendly borough. And we're working with other local authorities to protect and enhance our magnificent river heritage.

### **How we will protect and enhance our natural spaces**

- Continue to protect and improve our parks and green spaces
- Work with community and friends of parks groups to enhance our green spaces
- Protect the Green Belt, our parks and green spaces
- Enhance biodiversity in our borough through expanding the wildways, becoming a bee-friendly borough, and extending biodiversity initiatives to our housing land
- Protect the biodiversity of our rivers, including our stretch of the Arcadian River Thames and the ecologically rare Hogsmill chalk stream
- Work with the Environment Agency and other local authorities to conserve and promote the river Thames and Hogsmill
- Continue to plant more trees in our borough
- Continue to crack down on fly-tipping and work to clean up the Thames and the Hogsmill
- Explore opportunities to enhance the quality and water quality of the river, including through initiatives like Mayors for a DrinkableThames as well as initiatives to acquire bathing status for the river Thames
- Establish an effective mechanism to manage Kingston's stretch of the river Thames to address biodiversity, heritage conservation, and sustainable management
- Continue to support the Thames Landscape Strategy

- Investigate the viability of a dark night skies policy with nature-friendly lighting
- Protect and enhance green spaces like Tolworth Court Farm
- Oppose expansion of Heathrow Airport and campaign to halt central Government plans for an additional runway

### **Sustainable transport for all**

Getting around Kingston should be easy, affordable, and good for the environment. We're committed to improving public transport, expanding our cycle network, supporting sustainable travel, and ensuring that those who need vehicles for mobility reasons are never excluded.

#### **How we will improve sustainable transport**

- Work with neighbouring councils and TfL to improve public transport in our borough and region
- Continue to lobby TfL for less polluting fully electric buses in our borough and sheltered bus stops
- Continue our safer school streets programme and work with schools to implement further schemes
- Improve infrastructure for sustainable travel whilst ensuring mobility needs are met
- Encourage rail companies to provide more secure cycle parking at train stations
- Protect and improve train links in our borough
- Campaign for step-free access for all our rail stations
- Make transport hubs more accessible for disabled people
- Link up the Cycle Network in conjunction with TfL
- Create a Care Support Worker initiative to provide free parking across the borough
- Increase the number of on-street charging points and apply for funding for fast-charging stations at key locations

### **Waste, recycling and environmental management**

Kingston already has one of the highest recycling rates in the UK. We're committed to continuing this excellent work, improving our recycling facilities, tackling fly-tipping and littering, and supporting businesses and organisations to reduce their environmental impact.

#### **How we will improve waste management**

- Continue working to increase recycling rates in the borough
- Continue efforts to tackle fly-tipping and littering via our fly-tipping task force and enhanced CCTV systems
- Support businesses and public organisations to recycle their waste
- Improve our recycling facility at Villiers Road

- Explore a recycling bin pilot scheme for the town centre
- Campaigning for the introduction of a deposit return scheme

### **Planning for a sustainable future**

Every new development is an opportunity to build a better Kingston. Through our planning policy, we're ensuring that new buildings are sustainable, that biodiversity is enhanced, that affordable housing is prioritised, and that our green spaces and character are protected. We will campaign for delivering quality, affordable homes in line with the needs of local people.

### **How we will plan for sustainability**

- Ensure Biodiversity Net Gain payments are used to enhance biodiversity in our parks and green spaces
- Protect the Green Belt, our parks and green spaces
- Give greater attention in planning to address overheating in buildings
- Give greater attention in planning that new buildings and building extensions to include sustainable energy
- Give greater attention to addressing the need for affordable housing in our borough
- Deliver quality, affordable homes in line with the needs of local people

## **CARING LEADERSHIP**

This manifesto is our commitment to Kingston. These aren't aspirations – they're pledges rooted in our values and our record of delivery.

Liberal Democrats believe in empowering communities. We listen. We act. We're transparent about what we can and can't do. And we measure ourselves against results, not promises.

Over the next four years, we'll continue to be responsible stewards of Kingston's finances, ensuring that investment in our services and communities is balanced with sustainable management. Labour and Conservative councils across the UK have gone bankrupt, causing disruption to residents. Liberal Democrats will continue to make tough decisions and be responsible with Kingston's money and services, protecting our borough for generations to come.

We will finish what we have started: a new leisure centre which is accessible to everyone. We will continue to protect our parks and green spaces. This will mean everyone has access to quality spaces to live an active life.

When we care for our families, invest in our communities, and protect our environment, everyone benefits. When we listen to residents and give them real power to shape their neighbourhoods, local democracy flourishes. When we work together across differences, we're stronger.

That's what caring for Kingston means.