

CALDERDALE COUNCIL LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Budget 2015/18

Our principles: As Liberal Democrats, we believe that it's important that Calderdale has a thriving economy, and cares for its local people. Supporting local businesses has to be an important feature of this, while making sure that Calderdale is a good place to live in and visit.

We also believe that the role of the Council, as the elected representatives of local people, is to lead, co-ordinate and facilitate local services. In our extensive consultation exercise in 2010, local people told us that they wanted us to protect local services but that the Council doesn't have to directly provide local services.

We also know that local people want efficient and effective services, with an open, responsive and accountable Council. They have told us that they are prepared to pay more for some services in order to protect others.

Our achievements: In taking a leading role in running the Council in recent years, we have ensured that:

- Youth unemployment has reduced significantly, with more apprenticeships
- Schools have benefitted from some protection of funding and the Pupil Premium (worth some £25m)
- Investment in local businesses and transport through the Council's Economic Task Force, and active partnership in Leeds City Region/Combined Authority
- Green economy and environmental issues taking a higher priority: highest waste recycling in West Yorkshire and the Community Energy scheme

Our aspirations for this budget period: In these next 3 years, we are looking to:

- Keep Council tax increases to the lowest possible with no increase next year
- Continue to improve the efficiency of the Council through reducing "back office" costs and explore sharing services with other Councils, etc
- Work with local people to protect local Council services alongside developing and supporting local community services
- Continue to support local businesses and the local economy, reducing unemployment and providing more apprenticeships and training for young people

In particular, we want to see the Council take action on the following two specific issues and commit to one general one:

Real action on energy reduction

As Liberal Democrats we are committed to real action to tackle climate change and reduce our reliance on unsustainable fossil fuels. Some targets have been placed on the Council to reduce its energy bill. We think it's time for a much bolder and radical approach. We will set a tough target of saving 20% from our energy bills by 2018. This is achievable through a major investment in solar energy and LED lighting in Council buildings. This invest to save scheme would pay for itself through the savings in energy costs. After about five years the cost of the investment will have been paid off and the Council will then benefit financially from these savings.

This measure will be self-financing and will result in reduced energy consumption and the creation of more renewable energy. It's a bold and forward thinking approach modernising Calderdale Council's estate of buildings.

Affordable Warmth Scheme

In Calderdale in 2013 there were 93 excess winter deaths attributed to cold homes. Improving the insulation in homes, particularly those of vulnerable people, will help reduce the number of people suffering in cold homes. It will mean fewer people living in fuel poverty, fewer fossil fuels burnt to heat homes, and more money in residents' pockets to be spent in our local economy.

The National Institute of Environmental Health and the Building Research Establishment have suggested that targeting the borough's worst housing with a £1.4m investment programme could save an estimated £4.65m in associated health care costs. At a time when health services are under pressure this is a sensible and pragmatic measure the Council could take to help save lives in Calderdale.

Through smarter working and the use of technology we believe that the Council could save even more money than currently suggested. We are therefore proposing to increase the savings target for making better use technology by £100,000 and use the additional savings to fund the repayment of a £1.4m capital investment to combat cold homes in Calderdale.

Involving Local People

The public consultation referred to above was carried out nearly five years ago. It was an extremely useful piece of work, but its relevance and usefulness will necessarily diminish with the passing of time. For a number of reasons, then, including the forthcoming general election, we believe that this summer is the right time for the Council to undertake a similar consultation and engagement exercise that will assist in shaping the Council's policies and budgets for several years to come. That is why we welcomed the Cabinet's proposal to

carry out such an exercise and why we now call upon the Council as a whole to make a commitment to undertake this work.

Cllr Janet Battye

February 2015