

The South Hams is a wonderful place to live. The natural environment is second to none. We have vibrant towns and local communities to be proud of. However, there are underlying trends and hidden pockets of deprivation including rural isolation and loneliness. Housing, protecting the environment, inadequate infrastructure and an aging population must be priorities. This manifesto will spell out how a Liberal Democrat run District Council will build on our strengths while addressing the issues and challenges facing us.

We have divided the policies into six different areas. However, there are policies which are relevant in more than one area. This is especially true of our environmental agenda. All policies will be assessed for climate change and biodiversity impacts. This will also help to enhance policies to maximise positive outcomes in this area.

## **Housing**

The provision of affordable housing for young working families will be moved to the top of the list of priorities. We shall also look to provide affordable housing for elderly residents so they can remain in the areas where they live.

- 1) Make the construction of council/housing association houses the focus of capital spending.
- 2) Give priority to affordable social rented housing.
- 3) Set up a Community Benefits Society for the Council to build houses without delay.
- 4) All new developments have carbon neutral homes.
- 5) All new developments to be connected to nearest town or village centre by segregated cycle route.
- 6) All new homes built should be primary residence only.
- 7) Charge all holiday and second homes double council tax.
- 8) Review all capital projects.

## **Environment**

Climate change and the degradation of our planet is the World's greatest challenge. We must all play our part. As a local authority we must lead by example and be a beacon of excellence in everything we do.

- 1) Commit to investing £0.5M per annum to address climate change and biodiversity.
- 2) Work more closely with community groups such as Sustainable South Hams.
- 3) Develop a network of Electric Bicycle hubs across the District
- 4) electric car charging points in car parks
- 5) Introduce incentives to decrease waste
- 6) improve local bus services, develop new schemes to provide public transport for rural areas
- 7) Reduce food miles in the South Hams by 50%
- 8) Introduce a 'scores on the doors' scheme of environmental sustainability for our tourism industry.

## **Planning & Enforcement**

Over recent years the planning and enforcement function of the Council has left a lot to be desired. Applicants have experienced unacceptable delays and enforcement issues not progressed in a timely manner. It is clear the department needs more resources.

At the same time our Joint Local Plan (JLP) will be reviewed during 2024. This is a great opportunity to improve our delivery of affordable and environmentally sustainable housing. It will also allow us to lay down our strategic approach to economic development in the South Hams. We will not hesitate to challenge government diktats that harm our local communities.

- 1) Boost the numbers of planning officers, including enforcement, tree and landscape officers.
- 2) Introduce cradle-to-grave CO<sub>2</sub> and potential for reuse criteria for materials in assessment of planning applications.
- 3) All new builds to be carbon neutral in respect of energy usage.
- 4) All applications to increase net biodiversity.
- 5) 'Primary residence' to be part of the planning rules for the whole South Hams.
- 6) Remove all thresholds when assessing applications for affordable housing.
- 7) Adopt a pro-active supervision approach to S106 and planning compliance on large developments.
- 8) Only work with constructive developers and agents on allocated sites.
- 9) Challenge housing numbers.

## **Town centres/Economy**

We are lucky to have four vibrant market towns in the South Hams. We also have a number of smaller equally important community centres including Salcombe and South Brent. It is not the Council's job to run these towns or businesses but we must support and facilitate our local entrepreneurs and artisans.

- 1) Support and lobby for improvement of mobile network coverage throughout SH.
- 2) Continue to support provision of high-speed internet throughout SH.
- 3) Town centre car parking charges will be cut by 50%.
- 4) Keep public toilets open and free to use.
- 5) Protect sites (Baltic Wharf) from unnecessary and damaging developments and change of use.
- 6) Council's Capital Investment strategies to be based on investment in local community projects and businesses.
- 7) Support local retail centres by investing in local shops.
- 8) Provide incentives for local start-up businesses.
- 9) Work to build a local green sustainable economy.
- 10) Creation of a Council owned company for property and ground maintenance.

## **Local Democracy/Governance**

For too long, the direction of the Council has been set by unelected officers. This will stop. All strategic decisions will be taken by elected councillors – including any capital projects. The chain of command will follow from the bottom up with the hopes and fears of our local communities being any starting point.

- 1) Create a Town & Parish Council forum to inform strategy
- 2) Improve partnership working
- 3) Enhance the localities team
- 4) Review the entire capital program.
- 5) Commit to an in-house waste collection and recycling scheme.
- 6) Regular street sweeping and litter picking
- 7) Devolve assets, including car parks to relevant Town & Parish Councils
- 8) Create a community/social enterprise support and development hub with dedicated officers
- 9) Find a way to involve young people in decision making.

### **Health and Wellbeing**

The health and wellbeing, especially of the most vulnerable, is paramount. A strand of fairness, equality, and access for all will run through our policies.

- 1) Supporting local leisure centres
- 2) Protecting green spaces and increasing tree preservation orders
- 3) Supporting the construction of cycle paths and traffic free cycle routes
- 4) Playparks and other assets should belong to their communities.
- 5) Work with volunteer and community groups in partnership.