



Our Manifesto for Barnet Council - 2014

Barnet Council has been controlled by the Conservatives for 42 of the last 50 years. The Conservatives have become tired and jaded and contemptuous of local residents. This is reflected in how they run the Council. We believe it is time for a change. Our residents want a Council that will listen to them, a Council that is open and transparent, and a Council not driven simply by ideology.

A Liberal Democrat controlled Council will:-

- Restore the 50 street enforcement officer posts cut by the Conservative administration. We want to be a proactive Council when it comes to maintaining and enhancing our street scene.
- Increase street cleaning, particularly in shopping areas and surrounding roads. Our residents tell us that they rate Barnet as poor when it comes to the state of roads and pavements.
- Make our roads safer by introducing 20 mph speed limits near schools and other appropriate locations. Safer roads are near to the top of the list of issues residents raise with us. Reducing traffic speeds near schools makes sense. It encourages pupils and parents to walk or cycle to school.
- Overhaul the way the Council deals with planning applications. Residents are often baffled by the system and feel left out of decision making. Too many planning decisions are being made behind closed doors. Enforcement action against unauthorised buildings is painfully slow. We will set demanding targets. We will ensure that all planning applications are vigorously scrutinised to make sure new developments are not inappropriate and respect the local environment. We will introduce a policy to ensure planning applications that include digging out basements are subject to strict criteria to protect neighbouring properties taking account of water tables, potential flooding and subsidence.
- Help residents set up local forums with real power to get things done. The Coalition Government's Localism Act provides for residents to set up Neighbourhood Forums. We will encourage and support residents to do this. These forums will have real

powers to get things done. They will also have the powers to draw up local plans which will guide what can be built in the local area.

- Restore the weekly collection of green waste.
- Expand the weekly doorstep recycling service to all flats that want to be included.
- Ensure Barnet audits all of its open spaces to produce a full bio-diversity plan. Our green spaces and parks are vital amenities for our residents especially in the built up area of our Borough. We guarantee their protection.
- Reverse the cuts to the drug and alcohol rehabilitation services. Drug and alcohol addiction knows no social boundaries. It is not just the user who is affected but also their circle of family and friends and the wider community. Drugs and alcohol are major contributors to crime, family break up, and poor health.
- The Council has a patchy record on equalities. We will ensure the Council pays due regard to 2010 Equalities Act. Council services and policies must for example take real account on the impact of people with disabilities
- Barnet has one of the highest numbers of residents over sixty five and indeed over eighty five. We will ensure their needs are integral to the service the Council provides.
- Make sure there are more and better facilities in our libraries by restoring the book and media fund. Our Libraries continue to be a key resource for many residents. We want to encourage our residents to use them.
- Spend more money on the Youth Service. Provide more affordable youth activities. Youth facilities always seem to take more than their fair share of cuts. We want to reverse this trend. There are no lack of volunteers in our Borough but they need our support to continue delivering a comprehensive programme of activities for our young people
- Review the amount of money Barnet contributes to making up the Government funding shortfall to people on housing and council tax benefits who are facing hardship. Other councils of all political persuasion are more generous.
- Work closely with our local police to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour. We want to ensure, for example, that the police are enforcing the Borough wide alcohol free zone to stop anti-social behaviour on our streets.
- Crack down on 'beds in sheds' in garden developments. This is a serious problem in the Borough. The Council has not given it sufficient priority.
- Closely scrutinise the outsourcing contracts which the Conservative administration has entered into, and seek legal advice on whether these could be ended without loss to the Council.
- Work within our published costed budget, and keep council tax down. The conservatives described our alternative 2014/ 2015 Budget as "sensible". We proposed a council tax freeze instead of the Conservatives pre-election gimmick of a one per cent cut worth only 21p per week for the average household. The £1.4 million in lost revenue has put council services at risk.

- Review Parking Charges. We believe our residents are paying too much for parking. There is no reason why residents' permits need to be so high and the same goes for visitors vouchers. Barnet is renowned for the high number of independent traders. They are the life blood of our town centres. We believe that a period of free parking in our town centres will bring back shoppers and boost trade.
- The Conservative last time voted themselves a massive increase in allowance. We pledge this will never happen again. Special responsibility allowances will be cut. Any increase in allowances will be in line with inflation.

Above all we want a Council that has the political will to act in the interests of all our residents. Tough decisions of course sometimes have to be taken when it comes to spending tax payers' money. Our residents know this, but the Council must change the way it interacts with local residents. We want to restore confidence in the way the Borough is run. We take pride in the diversity of our Borough. We want everyone to play their part. That is why we believe in real consultation, listening to and empowering our residents. This is the road to a successful Borough.



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