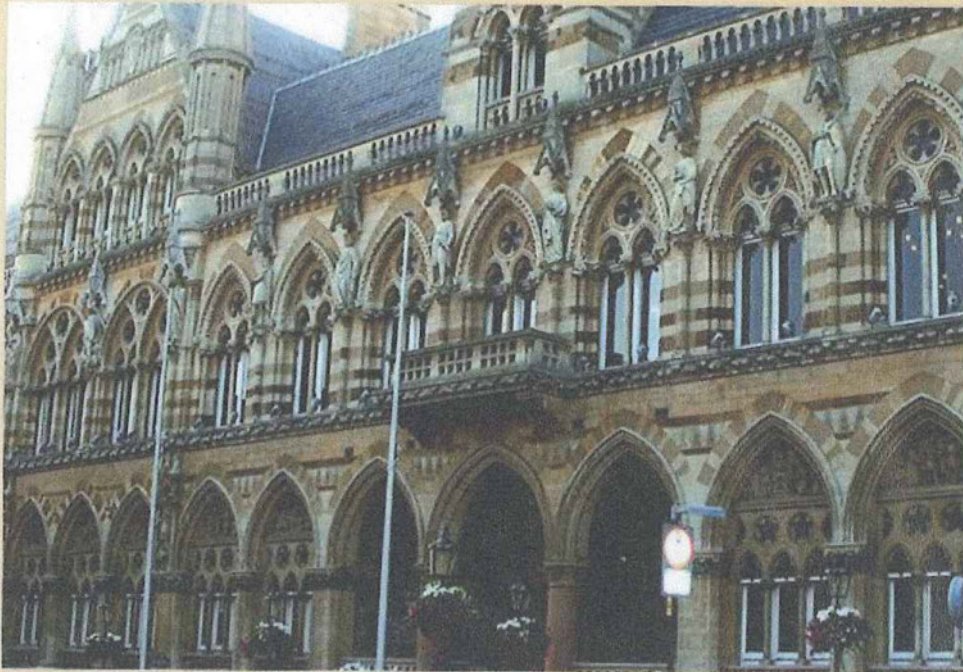


TOP SECRET

50 Lib Dem Successes



INSIDE: What the Conservatives don't want you to know!

50 LIB DEM SUCCESSES

The Liberal Democrats took control of Northampton Borough Council in 2007 from the Conservatives when the council had been dubbed by the Chronicle & Echo as “the World’s Worst Council”

Since then they improved the management of the council by appointing a new management team, sorting out the finances and protecting front line services.



Northampton's Liberal Democrat Team

THE WORLD'S WORST COUNCIL BECOMES A MOST IMPROVED COUNCIL

The Lib Dems won control of the Council for the first time in May 2007, and this year are defending the record of our administration. Before 2007, the Council was run by a minority Conservative administration and for 12 years before that by Labour.

“The last chance saloon”

We inherited from the Conservatives a Council in administrative and financial crisis. It had been rated poor by the Audit Commission in successive reports in 2004 and 2007. The local government minister had described it as one of the worst performing councils in the Country and in the ‘last chance saloon’ before government intervention.

The poor performance of the Council’s planning service had led to it being stripped of development control powers over major planning applications, and their transfer to the unelected West Northamptonshire Development Corporation.

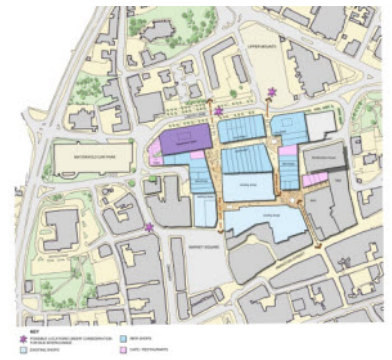
The Council was criticised for its failure to look after vulnerable people, with housing benefits claimants waiting months for their claims to be processed. Disabled people were unable to even get on a waiting list for grants for adaptations to their homes, and vacant council homes were left empty for months and months.

The Council was criticised for its poor political leadership, its failure to set priorities and take difficult decisions. The Tory Council’s 2006 & 2007 budgets made local people pay for their poor management with massive hikes in car park charges, closing public toilets, cancelling Christmas lights and threats to leisure centres.

In the pages following you can read how the Liberal Democrats have turned the Council around

1. Progressed the Grosvenor Centre Development

Lib Dems pledged in 2007 to be proactive in redeveloping the Grosvenor Centre. A development agreement between Legal & General (the shopping centre's owners) has been signed and the plans for the redevelopment of the Grosvenor Centre have been put on display.



2. Moved the Balloon Festival

The loss making Balloon Festival was successfully moved to Billing Aquadrome thereby saving the Council Tax Payer from funding a loss making event.

3. Pride in the Town Centre.

In 2009 the Liberal Democrat Council introduced The Pride of Northampton to the Town Centre. The painted lions were a roaring success and attracted many more people to the Town Centre. They were later auctioned for charity, and a number remain in the Town Centre



4. Reintroduction of Christmas lights

In 2007 the Conservative budget cancelled the Christmas Lights and decorations. In 2008 the Lib Dems reintroduced the Christmas lights, with more added in 2009 and 2010.

5. Improvements to the Market Square

Northampton's Market Square is one of the largest in the country and when the Lib Dems took over in 2007, it was in need of a facelift. The stalls were relocated, an entertainment space provided and additional events including antiques and art fairs have brought more people into the Town Centre.

6. The Fountain

The Market Square has also benefited by the additional of the fountain, which in spring, summer and autumn attract shoppers who enjoy sitting alongside it, whilst children greatly enjoy playing in it. It has proved very popular with townsfolk.

7. The Floodlights

At night the floodlights around the Market Square, (paid for by a special grant - and not the council tax) look very attractive, and the lights are designed to be energy saving and cost less to run than the conventional street lights.



8. Borough Councillors still paid LESS than the Conservative County Council.

Whilst the Conservatives still carp at the fact that councillors allowances on the Borough Council were increased, they are happy to take considerably more in allowances at the Conservative run County Council. In fact 15 of them have extra responsibility allowances for being cabinet or assistant cabinet members compared with just 7 Lib Dems at the Borough.

9. Council house services improve

Whilst the Government forces the Council to increase council house rents, the Lib Dems have ensured that the services to tenants are improved. Surveys show that the satisfaction rating of tenants has increased by over 10% in the past year.

10. Council house standards improve

Over 600 council homes were brought up to Decent Homes standards last year with another 3,000 programmed for this year. In addition a number of council homes, including Cooper Street flats have had replacement heating systems installed.

11. Introduced Choice Based Lettings

In partnership with local estate agents the Lib Dems introduced this new scheme which offer people on the council housing waiting list the choice of lettings with private landlords as well as council properties. In 2010 over 700 households were re housed in private properties which stopped them becoming homeless.

12. Reducing empty housing turnaround time

When the Lib Dems took over the Council in 2007, the number of days that council houses stood empty before new tenants moved in was on average 74 days. In 2010 it was down to only 24 days. What an improvement! Likewise the time for turning around Housing Benefit Claims has also reduced

13. New Council Houses for the first time in 20 Years

The Liberal Democrats have built the first new council houses in Northampton for 20 years. They are at Woodside Way, Kings Heath and replace a disused garage block that suffered from anti social behaviour. The houses are built to the latest environmental standards and have solar panels. The energy costs are therefore much lower for tenants.



14. More new affordable housing to come

Robinson House, a block of bedsit flats built in the 1980's in the Eastern District, is being demolished and is being replaced with 17 affordable family houses, all built to the latest environmental standards. A new Places for Change Homeless Centre is also being built close to the Town Centre.

Community public toilets

15. Although the Conservative budget of 2007 closed all the public toilets, the Lib Dem Council kept open the award winning Sheep Street toilet and reopened the ones in St. James Square and introduced a Community Toilet Scheme whereby large shops and pubs opened their toilets for the public. The council also open the Guildhall toilets for the public.

Improving the Town Centre

16. Under the Lib Dems, Northampton Town Centre has become revitalised. The number of people visiting the Town Centre has increased, more businesses are opening up and jobs are being created. Local Business have decided to work in partnership with the Council to form a Business Improvement District whereby they work together to improve the area.

Car Parks improved and Shoppers parking prices held.

17. Most of the Council's Multi Storey Car Parks now have "Pay on Exit" rather than "Pay & Display." Parking fees for shoppers using the Council's car parks have not been increased by the Lib Dem Council, whilst the Conservative County Council has increased its fees for on-street parking

Planning services improve and powers come back from WNDC

18. The Borough Planning Service has improved with a new management team and the Government is passing back to the Borough Council from the West Northamptonshire Development Corporation the power to decide planning applications for 200 or less housing developments

Improving our parks and open spaces

19. Knowing how important our parks and open spaces are to local residents the Liberal Democrats have invested in our parks and play areas with new play equipment, using the Playbuilders Scheme, and have also introduced "I Love My Parks" programme which will improve a number of parks throughout the town including the Racecourse where part of the pavilion will become a community centre. Other improvements have also been made to the Racecourse.

20. Improvements to Abington Park

These include a new Rose Garden, tree maintenance, new roofs to the Abington Park Cottages, additional play equipment, and renovation of the bandstand.

21. Delapre Abbey improvements

£600,000 has been allocated in this year's budget to improve the facilities at Delapre Abbey. In addition a water garden will also be created.



Improvements to Becket's Park

22.

These include some footpath resurfacing, new lighting, painting of the railings alongside the river, the new mooring facilities with the marina building currently under construction. Resurfacing of the promenade will follow shortly.

23.

Midsummer Meadow improvements

New cycle way and footpath alongside the river, removal of undergrowth and provision of park benches making the area a more open and safer place, plus a new footbridge across the River Nene, (and a new footbridge across the river at Upton.)

24.

Support to the museums and the arts.

The Lib Dems promised to champion our cultural heritage, and we have supported the Arts at the Fishmarket, we have promoted exhibitions including 'Venezia!' and the Sport to Street Collection at the Guildhall Road Museum.



25.

Investing in our Leisure Facilities

The Conservatives' 2007 budget earmarked Lings Leisure Centre for closure. Not only did we keep it open but we have invested in new digital equipment for the cinema. In all three of our Leisure Centres, the Lib Dems invested in new gym equipment. Usage of the Leisure Centres is now higher than ever. In April the Leisure Centres become a charitable trust. This will give them savings on VAT and Business Rates and enable them to attract other forms of funding.

26.

Support for the Voluntary Sector

Whilst the Conservative County Council continues to cut its grants to the Voluntary Sector, your Lib Dem run Borough Council not only protects the grants but in this year's budget increased them by 5%. To help the growth of the Big Society the council will be working with the organisation "Groundworks"

27.

Control of Houses of Multiple Occupation

The Lib Dems have listened to the concerns of local residents and have given notice that they intend to introduce planning restrictions that means that houses cannot be converted to Houses of Multiple Occupation.

28.

Improving Front Line Services

The revamped One Stop Shop will be opened during April providing a full range of council services. It is now also possible to pay your council tax on-line.

29.

Council provisionally granted £49 million to complete the Decent Homes programme .

In 2010 the Lib Dem council spent £730,000 on a Housing Public Finance Initiative bid to Government. This did not succeed as the government cancelled all new PFI schemes. However the money was well spent because it enabled the council to win a provisional grant from government of £49 million over the next four years to improve those council homes that are not as yet up to Decent Homes Standard

30.

A Cleaner and Greener Northampton

Working with Daventry District Council, the Borough Council has just signed a contract that through economies of scale will reduce the cost to the council tax payer of our waste and recycling services whilst improving it at the same time.

31. *More Recycling - better collections*

In 2009 the Lib Dems introduced kerbside collection of glass. This has helped our recycling rate to increase year on year, now hitting the 40% mark. Under the new contract garden waste will be collected fortnightly.



32. *Recycling Pods -*

Another tool to help recycling was the Recycling Pods introduced to the Market Square

Greyfriars Bus Station

33. In 2007 the Lib Dems promised to be proactive in redeveloping Greyfriars bus station and three possible sites have been found for a new bus interchange. This will tie in with the redevelopment of the Grosvenor Centre.

34. *No mass redundancies for Borough Council staff*

Because the Lib Dem Borough Council has become more efficient over the past four years there is no need for mass redundancies of staff, unlike the Conservative County Council who are reducing their staff by 900 jobs.

Efficiency savings, not cuts

35. Due to careful financial management over the past four years, when the Government cut the Borough Council's grant by some £5 million, the Council used efficiency savings to reduce its expenditure rather than cutting front line services.

Moving out of Cliftonville House

36. One of the council's efficiency savings is to move out of Cliftonville House, which is a large and expensive to run office block. Staff are being accommodated in the Guildhall and Westbridge, where offices have been refurbished and reconfigured to accommodate the latest technology for staff.

Management costs contained

37. The Council carefully manages its management costs which are nowhere near as high as the Conservative County Council. We recognise that staff have to be paid the going rate for the job in order to retain the expertise that has improved the running of the council.

Exeter Place green space initiative

38. Thanks to the suggestion of a Lib Dem Councillor, the local community are working in partnership with the council to safeguard the green space between Exeter Place and Kettering Road and register it as a village green. A village green was successfully registered in Billing.

39. *Supporting Sixfields*

The Liberal Democrat Council have approved the granting of a lease for a hotel to be built at Sixfields, as part of the plan to improve stadium facilities.



Supporting jobs and businesses at Brackmills

40. Working with the council, local businesses in Brackmills have set up a Business Improvement District in order to improve the area and attract more businesses, jobs and staff to Brackmills.

41. Carbon Trust Award

In 2009 the Liberal Democrat Council signed up to the 10:10 campaign. A pledge to reduce the council's carbon emissions by 10% during 2010. However, due to the efficient working of officers, the emissions were cut by 15.5%, saving the environment from CO₂, but just as important reducing the council's fuel and energy costs.

Solar Panels for 3,000 council homes

42. Several thousand tenants and their families will find their energy bills reduced due to the council fitting solar panels to 3,000 council homes with roofs which face south. Surplus energy that is generated will be sold to the National Grid which will go towards funding the panels.

43. Community Energy Saving Programme

The Council is working with a Government programme to reduce energy costs to residents in the 'deprived' areas of Northampton. This will include loft and cavity wall insulation, replacement modern central heating systems and boilers, windows, doors and solar panels and will improve a considerable number of homes over the coming years.

44. Skateboard Park on the way!

Following representations from the skateboarding community of Northampton, the Lib Dem Council has committed £250,000 towards the provision of a skateboard in the coming year. This purpose built facility will attract young (and older) people who otherwise may well be found skateboarding in unsuitable public areas.

Disabled Facilities Grant

45. Over the past four years the Lib Dem Council has gradually increased the Disabled Facilities Grant which allows elderly and disabled people to live longer in their own homes. This is very important whilst the Conservative County Council continue to withdraw services, facilities,

Looking after , and preventing homelessness

46. The Lib Dems Council's Housing Solutions Team have worked very hard using the Gateway project to prevent people from becoming homeless. In 2010 over 2,000 people were prevented from becoming homeless due to the advice and support of the team.

47. Northampton Door to Door Service

When the Conservative County Council evicted the Door to Door Community Transport Service from their Cliftonville site, the Lib Dem Council stepped in and offered them the use of facilities at the Westbridge Depot. Now the Conservative County have done it again and are refusing to pay NDDS for the Concessionary Fares Scheme on their Community Transport. So either NDDS meets this cost or the elderly and disabled people who use the service will pick up the cost. The Borough Council is negotiating with the County to sort out a solution.

48. More Pride in Northampton.

Last year the Lib Dem Council brought more pride to Northampton by winning a Britain in Bloom Award, and taking part in the highly successful Heritage Open Days weekend.

49. Out of special measures

When the Lib Dems took over the council in 2007 from the Conservatives, it was in a mess, and the government had placed it in special measures. After just over two years of the Lib Dems running the council it had improved so much that it was taken out of special measures.

50. And finally.....Your Lib Dem Council was nominated for a National Award last year as the most improved council.



