

Quality services for a quality city

**THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT
MANIFESTO FOR THE CARDIFF
2008 LOCAL ELECTIONS**



**Welsh Liberal Democrats
Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru**

FOREWORD

BY COUNCIL LEADER RODNEY BERMAN

In 2004, the residents of Cardiff threw a deeply unpopular Labour administration out of office. Fed up with Labour's failings on basic services, their tendency to put themselves first ahead of the needs of the people and an average yearly council tax rise of 11%, people in Cardiff rightly wanted a change.



Under Labour:

- Cardiff's social services were condemned as the worst in England and Wales.
- Our streets were ranked as the dirtiest of any city in England and Wales.
- A large percentage of the city's population did not have access to a kerbside recycling service, and many who did were charged for the privilege of using it.
- Our schools were some of the poorest-funded in Wales.
- School buildings were suffering from a £50 million repair backlog with no plans in place to address it.
- The council's Labour leader, Russell Goodway, became the highest paid councillor in England and Wales.
- £2.5 million of councillors' allowances were paid out unlawfully, something Labour refused to accept, leading to the council heading for a high court battle with its own District Auditor. And because Labour councillors stubbornly refused to accept the council might have been wrong, a huge legal bill of £5 million was run up at local taxpayers' expense.

The Liberal Democrats offered a fresh start and a firm commitment to put the needs of local people first. The 2004 local elections saw us emerge as the largest party on the council and, because other parties were not prepared to join with us in a cross-party administration, we have run a minority administration ever since.

This has not always been easy without a majority in the council chamber, and other parties have often seen fit to derail us on issues they had previously been prepared to support. But despite these challenges, we have overseen significant improvements to local services during the past four years and acted on the pledges we made at the last local elections.

Our social services provision has been overhauled, with improvements being recognised by Welsh Assembly inspectors. This has led to a lifting of the special measures imposed on the council by the Welsh Assembly when Labour was in charge.

Funding for schools has been increased year on year. Compared to other local authorities, Cardiff is now amongst the top ten spenders on schools in Wales. We have also begun to grasp the nettle of the need to reorganise schools because of falling birth rates – having inherited a situation of over 8,000 surplus places in Cardiff's schools wasting around £3 million a year. Our aim is to provide the very best quality of education for future generations of children, in whichever part of the city they live, and to ensure we have schools that are fully fit-for-purpose for the 21st century. To date, we have brought forward proposals to invest around £160 million in school buildings.

We have also significantly invested in making Cardiff cleaner and greener. The council is now employing significant extra street sweepers and litter enforcement officers to keep our streets clean. And we have built one of the largest local authority-run recycling plants in Europe. This has allowed us to provide every street with a kerbside collection of waste for recycling and composting. We have also abolished

the charges for recycling that were put in place by Labour. In just two years, the city's recycling rate has doubled, and we are now well on the way to exceeding national targets in future years.

Cardiff has also moved forward in leaps and bounds under the Liberal Democrats with major regeneration projects taking shape across the city – including the massive redevelopment of the city centre that will bring John Lewis to Cardiff; the newly-opened 50m International Pool in Cardiff Bay replacing the Empire Pool knocked down by Labour; the new stadium for Cardiff City FC currently being constructed; the redevelopment of Glamorgan County Cricket Club's ground at Sophia Gardens which will secure an Ashes Test in Cardiff in 2009; the new athletics stadium; the creation of a new visitors' centre at Cardiff Castle; and the new, much-improved Central Library set to open in 2009.

But we haven't forgotten the needs of local communities either, with significant improvements either delivered or planned for a number of local shopping centres and branch libraries. By working with local police, we have also secured a network of additional uniformed officers on our streets and estates to help in the fight against crime and anti-social behaviour


All of these ongoing improvements have been achieved whilst still delivering much better value for money for local taxpayers than under Labour. Under the Liberal Democrats, the council has significantly reduced expenditure on external consultants, hospitality, senior management and the use of agency staff. On day one, we cut allowances for senior councillors by 10% and have refused all annual increases in councillors' allowances over the last four years. This alone has saved over £0.5 million.

Through our prudent management of the council's finances, we have delivered an average annual council tax increase during the last four years of just 2.8% – the lowest of any local authority in Wales.

The message is clear – **Liberal Democrats deliver more and cost you less.**

Our work is not yet over, however. We may have fixed many of the failings in council services that we inherited from Labour, but we are determined to continue our work to ensure that local services can be made even better in the years to come.

Cardiff must continue to flourish as a quality-of-life capital city that is cleaner, greener and safer – with the top quality services its citizens deserve.



Rodney Berman
Liberal Democrat Leader of Cardiff Council

Our five key pledges to the people of Cardiff:

- Make Cardiff cleaner by employing more street sweepers and taking tougher action against graffiti, fly-posting and fly-tipping
- Make Cardiff greener by providing new weekly food waste collections to boost recycling and new park and ride sites around the city
- Make Cardiff safer by employing neighbourhood wardens and fighting to retain the 101 hotline for reporting anti-social behaviour
- Continue to prioritise funding for schools and investment in school buildings
- Continue to deliver value for money, building on our record of reducing the average annual council tax rise from 11% under Labour to just 2.8% under the Lib Dems



GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY

Progress since 2004

During the past four years, the Liberal Democrats have put in place a much more open and transparent governance structure across the council, taking fully on board the findings of the commission established by the previous administration which roundly condemned the way that the council was then being run by Labour.

We have ensured that all political groups on the council are fully briefed before decisions are taken, and reduced the number of decisions that were previously taken by just the council leader or executive alone – putting more power in the hands of the council as a whole. The role of scrutiny committees has been strengthened, including by allocating scrutiny committee chairs across political groups and by ensuring scrutiny recommendations are taken more seriously by the executive.

The Lib Dems also quickly ended the costly legal dispute between the council and the Wales Audit Office on councillors' allowances, accepting that £2.5 million of allowances had been paid out unlawfully under the previous Labour administration. We acted on our promise to cut allowances to senior councillors by 10%, reduce the number of senior councillors receiving additional payments and freeze all allowances for the entire council term. To date, this has saved Cardiff's taxpayers over £0.5 million.

We have considerably strengthened the role of consultation in decision-making, including by consulting residents each year before agreeing the annual budget and also by establishing a citizens' panel to input into key council decisions. Additionally, we have re-introduced the opportunity for the public to ask questions at meetings of the full council. This was previously rejected under Labour.

Under the Lib Dems, the council has also strengthened communications and consultation with staff; successfully restored the civic, charity and ceremonial role of the Lord Mayor; overhauled the council's complaints system; strengthened its equalities policies and its Welsh language scheme; and improved relations with the Welsh Assembly Government.

2008-2012 aims

A Liberal Democrat council would:

- take forward the development of 'one-stop shop' advice centres into communities around the city,

to provide better access by the public to council services.

- further involve local councillors and communities in decisions affecting local areas by introducing a system of Local Area Committees with devolved decision-making and funding. Local community members would be given the right to attend and participate in these meetings, but without voting rights.
- continue to prioritise robust action on reducing sickness absence rates amongst council staff in order to achieve better value for money for Cardiff's taxpayers.
- by cutting allowances for senior councillors by 10% and freezing all councillors' allowances since the 2004 elections, we have brought councillors' allowances down to a more reasonable level below the maximum allowed in law. As of 2006–07, the basic allowance payable to all councillors had been reduced to 93.5% of the maximum allowed, and special responsibility allowances had been reduced to 79.5% of the maximum allowed. Assuming the basis for calculating the legal maximum does not change, we will continue to set councillors allowances at no more than these percentages of the maximum allowed throughout the next four years.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Progress since 2004

In Cardiff we believe that small is beautiful and the intimacy which we cherish means that housing in the city does not have to grow beyond its natural borders. But we also embrace the strength and vitality of the wider city region – specifically the advantages of a diverse economic base and a more strategic planning framework – and will continue to work with surrounding local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government.

We have maintained a strong economy, built around the skills of our flexible workforce and manifested in the optimism of investment and development which is shaping the city in which we live today. A recent survey published by the Financial Times concluded that Cardiff was perceived as the seventh best city in Europe, and the seventh best for foreign direct investment. This is real evidence of how far we have come in persuading an international audience of the potential that exists in Cardiff.

Investment has risen, and will continue to rise, at community level. Economic success is not simply a story of large developments in the city centre or

Cardiff Bay. It is important that all our communities share in the economic prosperity of the city. Years of underinvestment in local communities under Labour means it will take time to reinvigorate neighbourhoods with an ambitious capital programme.

2008-2012 aims

A Liberal Democrat council would:

- refocus our efforts on supporting Cardiff's communities and neighbourhoods with an ambitious programme of capital investment. Libraries, community centres, shops and parks need vital funding after years of underinvestment under Labour.
- further develop our skills base and allow more people to share in our economic success. We will work with partners to improve opportunities e.g. through an enlarged construction skills centre.
- work with employers to determine where new jobs and opportunities exist and bring more people back into the jobs market by investing in Local Training and Enterprise Centres.
- invest in our education system, and ensure that we give our young people the skills they need to benefit from the advantages Cardiff has to offer.
- adopt ambitious targets to reduce carbon emissions to ensure Cardiff becomes a "carbon lite" city.
- increase the use of environmentally friendly energy by developing a network of combined heat and power (CHP) units at locations throughout the city.
- have a cluster of environmental businesses in an Energy Park to ensure that the council is strategically placed to be a leading carbon trader.

FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Progress since 2004

Since 2004, we have allocated additional resources to our social services with investment rising from £77m to £113m over the last four years, a rise of 40% at a time when the council's overall budget has increased by 23%.

We have invested more in schools so that on funding per pupil we have risen from fourteenth to seventh in Wales over the last four years, compared to other Welsh local authorities. The budget for 2008–09 outlines spending plans at 2.1% above Assembly guidelines on education. We have also been able to afford a significant expansion in recycling and more resources in controlling litter – while recognising that yet more investment is required.

In order to achieve this we have been tough on waste and inefficiency while minimising the impact on front-line services. We have exceeded all Welsh Assembly Government efficiency targets in identifying over £42 million of savings during the last four years.

We have been able to deliver an average rise in council tax of 2.8%. This is the lowest average rise in council tax of any local authority in Wales during the last four years, and is in stark contrast to the 11% average annual increase previously achieved by Labour.

Cardiff has the fourth lowest band D council tax in Wales. If we had continued with Labour's average annual increase of 11%, a band D household would have paid £754.82 more in council tax during the last four years.

2008-2012 aims

A Liberal Democrat council would:

- work with the Welsh Assembly Government and the private sector to consider new methods of financing major capital schemes. A network of park and ride facilities around the city and the Eastern Bay Link remain our key strategic transport priorities, but we do not believe that use of the Private Finance Initiative (PFI) would offer value for money in the long-term for delivering such projects.
- expand the 'Connect to Cardiff' contact centre, recognising that investment in new technology is essential to achieve long-term efficiencies in service delivery.
- explore opportunities to provide better value for money for local tax payers in the way we deliver services, including by exploiting opportunities for trading and developing shared services with other public sector organisations. In doing so we will seek to maintain existing terms and conditions for our staff and, if setting up a new entity to deliver a service, we will endeavour to provide staff with the option of either transferring their employment to the new entity or allowing them to undertake a secondment that would enable them to return to work for the council at a later date.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Progress since 2004

Since 2004 environmental issues have been of increasing priority for the Liberal Democrat administration.

The council's Sustainable Development Unit is now fully staffed and able to drive forward the new Sustainable Procurement Policy. All council strategies and policies are now screened to establish if a strategic environmental assessment or audit is required. The council has also appointed an energy manager and set tough energy efficiency targets for council buildings.

A new strategy for parks and green spaces has been adopted, Roath Park Lake has been de-silted and appraisals of all the city's conservation areas are almost complete.

In the area of waste management, free kerbside recycling for every street has been brought in by the Liberal Democrat administration, and significant investment in a new recycling plant has resulted to date in 27% of the city's waste now being recycled or composted – almost a doubling of the figure we inherited from Labour.

A series of new small-scale recycling bring points are being rolled out across the city while major new or refurbished civic amenity sites are either complete (Bessemer Close), under construction (Waungron Road) or planned (north of the city).

The problem of what to do with the city's residual waste when the main landfill site is full is being addressed on a regional basis. This was a problem ignored by the last Labour administration.

Wheelie bins have been successfully introduced, where appropriate, resulting in better street cleanliness thus allowing resources to be directed to areas where split refuse bags are still a problem.

The number of street sweepers has been dramatically increased as well as a significant increase in enforcement activity resulting in better awareness of the citizen's responsibilities. Cardiff now issues one of the highest amounts of fines for litter offences in the UK.

Linking with the universities, the end of year "Get It Out for Cardiff" campaign has resulted in a significant clean up of the central city core area each June.

£240,000 is being invested in tackling graffiti and fly-posting in 2008–09. A dedicated anti-graffiti officer has also been appointed.

Funding has also been allocated to establish a 24 hours a day, seven days a week noise nuisance team.

2008-2012 aims

A Liberal Democrat council would:

- employ more street sweepers, and more staff to tackle graffiti, fly-posting and fly-tipping.
- further boost recycling by introducing a new free of charge food waste collection. This will be collected weekly along with other compostable waste, helping to guarantee that we achieve all externally imposed targets for waste recycling and diversion from landfill.
- provide better recycling facilities in all council buildings and then, by working with major employers and the council's planning service, ensure that all possible opportunities are taken to collect segregated waste in order to help achieve as high a level of recycling as is possible.
- roll out our street cleaning and enforcement approach that has so far concentrated on the central core area to all areas of the city that require it.
- extend the graffiti response teams in number, and better co-ordinate their activity so that the scourge of environmental vandalism can be checked and removed.
- increase the budget for new litter bins and recycling bins together with increased resources for emptying them.
- undertake more pro-active efforts to deal with accumulations of litter within the frontage of houses, particularly in terraced areas.
- aim to make Cardiff a "Carbon Lite" city by adopting an overarching strategy for carbon reduction.
- maintain the city centre as an attraction to visitors by improving public areas and providing world class facilities, both in the built environment and in the open spaces surrounding the city centre.
- investigate innovative ways of building and maintaining public toilets across the city, not only in the central core but in conjunction with other council-run facilities across the city.
- endeavour to minimise the waste that cannot be recycled or composted throughout the city by working with partners to deliver a consistent message as to what can and can't be recycled, and by working regionally to provide a solution to the problem of disposing of the residual waste that will remain.

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION

Progress since 2004

Attempts to better and fairly manage the road and kerb space of our city's streets for all road users have been blocked by opposition parties. They do not appear to see the need to control on-street parking, and the aim of moving to a more sustainable transport policy, as a sufficient priority. Despite claiming that they share our aim of enabling the council to take over responsibility for enforcing parking regulations, the opposition parties have prevented this from being taken forward by voting to remove the funding required to progress the initiative.

City centre voucher parking has been replaced by a more user-friendly pay and display system. Park and Ride schemes have increased in co-operation with the private sector (IKEA), and will be added to as more locations become available (e.g. the new park and ride facility which is part of the development for Cardiff City FC's new stadium). A new-build park and ride facility at Llanrumney Reserve will be fully operational in 2009.

Travel to work plans and car sharing arrangements are now in place for staff working in County Hall. A city-wide cycling strategy has been approved with significant extra spend on cycling facilities each year. There is also experimental trialling of commuter cycling on Queen Street.

Improvements to the environment of St Mary Street/ High Street have been brought about by limiting private car access on an experimental basis, with a view to further improving the public realm if the experiment is deemed to be a success.

There is a commitment to finding the money for Cardiff's contribution to the new Pont y Werin Bridge across the River Ely to facilitate walkers' and cyclists' access to the Sports Village and beyond.

2008-2012 aims

A Liberal Democrat council would:

- continue to promote and market sustainable and integrated public transport, especially for commuting, with more bus lanes where they are achievable and with better enforcement. This will be driven by a new sustainable transport initiative which would be a partnership between the council, public transport operators and transport organisations. It will work on improving accessibility to public transport by co-ordinating information

and making services more customer friendly. This would go hand in hand with a complete overhaul and re-alignment of the council's transport policies, budgets and processes so that priority is given to sustainable transport.

- review the provision of residents' parking across the city, with more flexible criteria being adopted as necessary, including in areas of acute parking pressure.
- take over responsibility from the police for enforcing parking regulations to deliver an increased number of traffic wardens across the city.
- deliver the new park and ride facility on the east of the city in 2009 and continue to investigate and progress opportunities for other sites on key routes into the city, including from the north of the city, by working with neighbouring local authorities where necessary.
- initiate a complete reappraisal of the way in which highways improvement and road safety schemes are assessed and subsequently budgeted for. This will be delivered in conjunction with the devolving of some powers to local area committees.
- rule out the adoption of a congestion charge in Cardiff during the next council term.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES & SOCIAL JUSTICE

Progress since 2004

The Liberal Democrat administration has overseen a number of initiatives aimed at tackling crime and anti-social behaviour during the past four years.

Working with South Wales Police, we have helped deliver a network of nearly 80 Police Community Support Officers across the city.

We also established what was recognised as the most successful UK pilot for the single non-emergency number for reporting anti-social behaviour, 101, along with a new tasking centre to ensure community safety resources are effectively deployed where they are most needed. We were shocked when the UK Labour Government subsequently withdrew all funding for 101 in February 2008. However, together with South Wales Police, we have secured funding to keep the service going for 2008-09 and are fully committed to seeking a way forward to maintain the service on an on-going basis.

Working with the Cardiff Community Safety Partnership, we have adopted an approach to tackling anti-social behaviour based on intervention. Since August 2006, the ASBO process has been initiated in

Cardiff on 1154 occasions through the issuing of Stage 1 letters. The fact that these interventions have only led to 8 final-stage ASBOs being issued demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach in nipping anti-social behaviour in the bud before it escalates.

Another approach based on intervention that we have followed to tackle anti-social behaviour involves closing off or gating alleyways across the city. Over 120 alleys and gulleys have been closed or gated since 2004. We have also appointed a dedicated alley-gating officer to help in the co-ordination of the alley-gating process.

Good-quality housing and, in particular, affordable housing is in greater demand than at any time in last decade. Such housing should be a right and not a privilege. We want everyone in the city to have that right – regardless of whether they are an owner occupier, or a tenant in either the private sector or in social housing.

The Liberal Democrat-run council has been publicly praised by the Assembly Government for the amount of affordable housing Cardiff Council is providing. During 2006–07, Cardiff provided 43% of all new affordable housing recorded in Wales.

We have introduced a Low Cost Home Ownership Scheme which is of particular benefit to first-time buyers. We have also developed a common waiting list with Cadwyn Housing Association so that anyone looking to rent from them or the council will only have to complete one set of forms. We are working towards extending this with other housing associations in Cardiff.

Our Wasted Homes strategy has made significant progress with 163 empty homes brought back into beneficial use in the three years from 2004–05 to 2006–07.

For those who have no home, we have developed our hostel provision so that no one has been placed in bed & breakfast accommodation since July 2006. This has meant a better living environment for those with no home, especially for those with children, as well as delivering savings for council tax payers. We have established homelessness prevention as an integral part of our statutory homelessness service.

We have continued working towards the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, providing new kitchens and bathrooms for many of our tenants.

We have invested resources to improve the repairs service for our tenants. A new system is in place to expedite responses to repairs requests. This has

been welcomed by the Cardiff Residents & Tenants Association as this not only will bring a quicker response but will mean the lessening of repeat calls. There will also be better monitoring of our performance.

2008-2012 aims

A Liberal Democrat council would:

- employ neighbourhood wardens in communities across the city to assist in the fight against crime and anti-social behaviour and improve the co-ordination of action to keep communities clean.
- invest in crime prevention through improvements to the built environment – supporting better lighting, alley-gating and CCTV where appropriate.
- deliver more affordable homes through, for example, partnership working with housing associations.
- retain the council's housing stock within the ownership of the council.
- further develop the unified housing waiting list to include more housing associations operating within the city.
- continue to put wasted homes back into use, particularly by developing commercial premises.
- encourage more sustainability of newly built properties by housing associations.
- improve response times for council housing repairs.
- continue to work to avoid the use of bed & breakfast provision in Cardiff for homeless people.
- aim to expand the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Scheme to include more properties in the city.
- continue to work to achieve Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2012.
- seek to achieve best-quality designs and more environmentally-friendly buildings through tougher planning guidance.

EDUCATION

Progress since 2004

In 2004 we inherited an education service that had been neglected by Labour. Under Labour, delegated spending per pupil fell consistently below the Wales average and investment in school buildings had failed woefully to keep pace with need. Labour had failed to take account of demographic and other changes and had demonstrated an unwillingness to address the historical and institutional problems that beset the education system. As a consequence, Cardiff's school system was characterised by a worsening mismatch between provision and demand, with over 8,000

surplus places wasting £3 million per year, and no plans to address the shortcomings highlighted in 2004's Estyn inspection. As a result of Labour's mis-management, Cardiff languished at the lower end of the league tables in many key indicators of educational performance.

Under the Liberal Democrats there has been a steady improvement in education funding. The spend per pupil in schools has risen every year – so that today Cardiff is at the upper end of the spending league. We have explored innovative ways of investing in the education infrastructure and have to date earmarked over £160 million to improve school buildings.

The Liberal Democrats have confronted the sensitive issue of surplus places highlighted by the National Assembly, the Wales Audit Office and Estyn by taking this matter forward in the context of an all-party stakeholder committee which has made progress in transforming Cardiff's schools system. The administration has backed this up with the investment to match.

Under the Liberal Democrats, educational performance has exceeded the Welsh average in many areas and, in most areas, has improved at a rate greater than the Welsh average.

The provision for pupils with special educational needs has been recognised as a priority and has attracted a considerable uplift in funding.

The Liberal Democrat administration has also sought to keep pace with the rising demand for Welsh-medium education.

2008-2012 aims

A Liberal Democrat council would:

- prioritise the Youth Service by increasing the provision of detached youth workers and extending the opening times of youth centres across the city to ensure a greater number of young people can access the Youth Service. This will provide a broader range of activities to engage young people outside school hours.
- continue to resource schools, and work with key educational professionals to further drive up standards in all schools across the city.
- invest in school buildings across the city to make them fit for purpose for the 21st century.
- continue to be committed to Welsh-medium education and seek to match provision to demand. This will include working more closely with the health authorities to access live birth data to help the council better anticipate the demand for Welsh-medium education in the early years.
- continue to work with all political parties on the council and other stakeholders to achieve a schools system that reflects the demand for places in all sectors, and that achieves an investment in education that will ensure the best outcomes for all pupils. Savings would be ring-fenced and reinvested back into schools.
- build upon the successful restructuring of the special educational needs service by continuing to invest in SEN provision through more innovative projects such as the relocated Ty Gwyn School. We will also work more closely within the South East Wales Educational Consortium to explore cost effective ways of meeting common challenges.
- work more closely in partnership with the health authorities to address the needs of young carers to ensure they are not disadvantaged educationally by the caring and humane services they render.
- work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to further reduce the number of permanent and fixed term exclusions from Cardiff's schools.
- work closely with schools, the Education Welfare Service and other agencies to reduce truancy levels across the city.
- extend and enhance community-focused schools – so that school buildings become focal points within the communities they serve and provide a range of educational and other services to those communities that extend beyond the normal hours of operation of schools.
- work to improve the attainment of looked after children.
- further improve and enhance school meals and encourage healthy eating, whilst maintaining menus at a price that is accessible to all pupils. We will also explore new ways of overcoming practical obstacles to on-line ordering and payment for school meals for those who require it.
- continue to develop measures to combat bullying in schools by fully funding an anti-bullying team, fostering closer links with partner organisations and ensuring that schools are required to report all incidents of bullying.
- build upon the close links with the Children and Young People's Partnership with a view to improving communications between young people and the council. We will continue to support and develop the Youth Forum and the Schools Forum.
- enhance family learning provision and the facilities for English for Speakers of Other Languages to raise standards of literacy and skills in all communities across the city.
- build upon the successful provision of Integrated Children's Centres by enhancing and extending their provision across the city.

- continue to maintain and enhance the high standard of provision of Community and Adult Learning opportunities across the city by instituting a programme of investment in Adult and Community Education Centres, effectively consulting adult learners on the nature and range of provision on offer and working towards the introduction of online registration and payment for those who require it.
- make Cardiff the first ever Welsh city to achieve World Health Organisation 'Healthy City' status, by enrolling in the fifth phase of the programme.
- work with the Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust and Cardiff Local Health Board (or their successor bodies) to bring the Cardiff Royal Infirmary more fully back into use.
- improve the retention of social workers by simplifying progression through career grades.
- double the current respite care provision for both adults and children.
- continue the development of the fostering and adoption service so that the council is less reliant on 'out-of-council' placements.
- continue to ring-fence the Carers' Grant, and continue to develop services for Young Carers.
- improve day services for people with learning disabilities in the east of the city so that they better match those in the west of the city.
- ensure that every looked after child has a comprehensive Personal Education Plan that is used to maximise their educational outcomes.
- redevelop the council's children's homes so that they can provide placements for children with more complex needs closer to their families.
- Better integrate the council's social services for children with its schools service, so that there is a more holistic approach for services provided to children with an autistic spectrum disorder.
- continue to ensure that young people have a range of opportunities to influence council policy and decisions.
- better integrate social care and NHS services in the city, using flexibilities in the Health Act legislation, to improve the co-ordination of services for children and adults, and release efficiency savings.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Progress since 2004

When the Liberal Democrats formed a new administration in 2004, we inherited a social services provision that had been condemned as the worst in England and Wales. Since then, Labour's historic under funding of both adults' and children's social services has been ended; recruitment and retention of staff is improving; and services have been redesigned and recommissioned so that they better meet today's needs.

Under the Liberal Democrats, children's social services has been taken out of the Assembly's 'Special Measures', and inspectors have noted that Cardiff has made steady and sustained progress.

It is our intention, over the next four years, to continue to ensure that social care needs are properly funded, to continue to build on our record of progress and to continue to develop services that protect where necessary, and promote independence where possible.

2008-2012 aims

A Liberal Democrat council would:

- tackle delayed transfers of care ("bed blocking") by working with health partners to commission services more effectively – focussing resources on those areas, such as elderly dementia care, where the demand is greatest, and investing in high-quality extra care housing schemes to give the very best quality of care and maximise opportunities for independence.
- provide increased funding for community-based services that provide support to older people with lower level needs, such as luncheon clubs and good neighbour schemes, and ensure that there is a better distribution of such facilities throughout the city.
- continue to shift the emphasis of children's social services towards family support to keep children with their families whenever possible.

CULTURE AND LEISURE

Progress since 2004

Libraries have seen significant improvement under the Liberal Democrats. More library standards are now being met and significant progress has been made in improving our libraries. New libraries have been built in Splott, Grangetown and Llanrumney, with major refurbishments also having taken place to the libraries in Llandaff North, Rhydypenau and Ely. A new branch library is being built in Penylan and the new Central library is scheduled to open in 2009.

Additional resources have also been allocated to the library service allowing book stocks to be increased and the opening hours of some branches to be extended.

Our parks continue to go from strength to strength. Cardiff has been recognised as having high quality parks and now boasts three award winning Green Flag Parks. In addition, Bute Park has been awarded major investment through the Heritage Lottery Fund which should further see improvements to this historic park. Under the Liberal Democrat administration, Cardiff won Britain in Bloom in 2005–06 and its European equivalent, the Entente Florale, in 2006–07.

Following Labour's shameful demolition of the Empire Pool, the Liberal Democrats have now built a 50 metre International Swimming Pool at the site of the International Sports Village.

This administration supported Glamorgan County Cricket Club in its successful bid bring test matches to Cardiff, including an Ashes Test in 2009, and is working with the club to further develop grassroots cricket in the city.

Significant improvement has been made to our play areas and the city now boasts fifteen Multi-Use Games Areas.

Progress on the Cardiff Museum has been good, with consultation underway on delivering the Museum in the Old Library. A new Museum Development Officer post has been created to develop the scheme.

This council has valued the cultural diversity of our city and resources have been allocated to support festivals including the Chinese New Year.

Heritage trails have been progressed around the city for residents and visitors to learn more about the fantastic story of Cardiff.

We have continued to support various arts organisations in the city as well as providing significant resources to the New Theatre and St David's Hall.

2008-2012 aims

A Liberal Democrat council would:

- set up a fund to protect the city's heritage.
- introduce Park Rangers to our parks with a more wide ranging role to ensure they remain safe, clean and enjoyable places to visit.
- introduce more flexible opening hours of our branch libraries – including Sundays and evenings.

- recognise the enormous contribution that the New Theatre and St David's Hall provide to the cultural life of our city. We would ensure that both are retained and remain under council control.
- work with other agencies to create a national St. David's Day celebration for Cardiff and Wales.
- explore funding opportunities for restoring Cathays Cemetery Chapels.
- honour this administration's commitment to restore Insole Court with an initial re-opening scheduled for September 2008.
- successfully host the 2008 Eisteddfod.
- reduce the carbon footprint of our leisure centres through the use of more efficient heating systems and pool covers.
- continue to improve our leisure centres in order that they are of a standard comparable to that offered by the private sector.
- ensure that Cardiff plays a major role in the 2012 Olympics – particularly the Cultural Olympiad associated with it.
- continue to develop the network of sports development officers in conjunction with the city's sports clubs.
- successfully host the UK School Games in 2009.
- work with other agencies to explore the hosting of a top European football final.
- endeavour to bring the 2012 Tall Ships race to Cardiff.
- explore the introduction of a wet play area in at least one of Cardiff's parks.
- continue to improve play areas for children and young people throughout the city.
- keep Roath Park lake de-silted.
- continue to improve the quality of our parks and ensure that they are accessible to all.
- introduce recycling facilities in our parks.
- look to achieve Green Flag awards for more parks.
- continue to address Labour's neglect of the branch library network and continue to meet more library standards.
- allow books to be borrowed from other community buildings through the Radio Frequency Identification project.
- consider the introduction of other agencies to libraries in light of the experience of having C2C in the new Central Library.
- progress the refurbishments of Penylan, Radyr and Cathays libraries.
- continue to develop proposals for a new library at Thornhill.