

The Liberal Democrat vision

Commitments

Description		2014/15 £ 000
A new approach to housing and planning	<i>Liberal Democrats will stop Labour's mass sell-off of council homes. We will invest more in planning officers to fight for 1 in 3 homes in every new development to be affordable. We will get the planning, housing and regeneration teams working together on the side of residents, not developers.</i>	137
Free childcare hours for all 2, 3 and 4 year olds	<i>Childcare is one of the biggest costs facing many Southwark families, with some paying charges that are higher than private school fees. Liberal Democrats will ease this burden by offering a day's free childcare a month for all 2, 3 and 4 years olds from September 2014, on top of the entitlements already offered by the government.</i>	1,750
Create job opportunities with a new 'Jobs and Enterprise Hub' and 1,000 new apprenticeships	<i>Getting people working in the right roles for them is a key priority for the Liberal Democrats, so we will change the culture of job hunting by opening up a new hub bringing together all the resources required by traditional job hunters with facilities for entrepreneurs to develop their business plans. Apprenticeships are a vital way of helping residents develop the skills required to secure permanent work, so we will focus resources to create 1,000 new apprenticeship opportunities for Southwark residents who are out of work.</i>	150
Cut council tax for every resident by 1%	<i>Council tax is one of the most regressive forms of taxation residents are faced with, and during difficult economic times the council should look to ease this burden. The Liberal Democrats will cut the Southwark element of council tax by 1% in 2014/15. The cost of this will be balanced by a 1% increase in the council tax collection rate, which can be achieved now that the service has been brought in-house.</i>	769
Community Councils	<i>Liberal Democrats believe that power and money are best given to local communities to make their own decisions. We will re-introduce community councils that genuinely represent Southwark's neighbourhoods. We will give them their own budgets to manage and will have a revolution in the way council services are run. Community councils will need budgets for street cleaning, play areas and eventually every other possible decision and budget that can be passed to more local decision makers.</i>	1,000
Flexible business rates	<i>Business rates are often the third largest cost faced by businesses after rent and wages, and regular increases have discouraged potential new businesses from setting up on our high streets. The Liberal Democrats will introduce a flexible business rates scheme led by local communities, who may chose to bring empty shops back into use, promote mixed high streets or pursue other local priorities.</i>	250
Introduce a supermarket levy	<i>Supermarkets and other big retailers bring a lot to our local economy, but they can also make it difficult for small, local businesses to thrive. The Liberal Democrats will level the playing field by applying an annual levy of 8.5% of their rateable value on the largest retailers. This will take some time and a small budget to set up, and once it is established we expect it to generate over £1.1m a year for the council to use to help small businesses in Southwark.</i>	10
Invest council money more wisely and ethically	<i>The council has millions of pounds of investments and savings that should be put to better use. The Liberal Democrats will invest council pension money in new homes rather than tobacco firms; lend money the council has invested elsewhere to valued local businesses; and use some of the council's £250m in cash reserves to invest in assets that will benefit the community. A small revenue sum will be required to initiate a new vehicle for investing pension fund money in housing, and to get the other new systems up and running.</i>	50
Roll out free wireless internet access across the borough	<i>Internet access has become more and more important to modern life, and modern cities should be equipped to meet this need. The Liberal Democrats will reach an agreement with an internet service provider to supply free Wi-Fi around town centres and in other social, business and retail hubs, as has already been achieved in other London boroughs.</i>	20
Establish a new "I'm shopping locally" scheme	<i>To help get people spending their money in local shops, rather than online or with multi-national chains, the Liberal Democrats will introduce a parking scheme to allow a period of free parking outside smaller shopping parades.</i>	20

Description		2014/15
		£ 000
Introduce a dedicated phone line for older residents	<i>Older people can find the process of accessing council services complicated and daunting, so the Liberal Democrats will simplify the process by introducing a single dedicated phone number specifically for older people to access all council services, staffed by older people. A team will be retrained to ensure older people are not routinely transferred and their enquiries are dealt with quickly and efficiently.</i>	50
Support high quality day centres, both through the council and through voluntary services	<i>The council's proposed dementia centre is funded, but the Liberal Democrats want to ensure that it meets the needs of residents and that officers provide personalised support to older residents, with face-to-face reviews in residents' own homes. We will also re-provide some additional emergency funding to voluntary day centres while we carry out a review of their future role in day centre provision and preventative services.</i>	100
Invest in Southwark Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (SASBU)	<i>The Southwark Antisocial Behaviour Unit is one of the country's leading examples of efficient ways to tackle ASB. Labour's decision to reduce SASBU to solely assisting in high risk cases means that low-level ASB that affects a large number of Southwark's residents often goes unaddressed. The Liberal Democrats will restore SASBU funding to previous levels, charging the funding to the Housing Revenue Account, which deals with tenant safety.</i>	135
A noise team that works when noise nuisance occurs	<i>Given the nature of their work, a night time noise team is often more important than a daytime one, but Labour chose to cut the noise team to a daytime-only service in order to save money. The Liberal Democrats value the role the team can play in making busier parts of the borough comfortable places in which to live, so we will restore the funding required to provide a 24-hour service.</i>	250
Clamp down on irresponsible bars and clubs	<i>Alcohol-related crime and disorder can be a real blight on residents' lives, so the Liberal Democrats will impose levies on businesses selling alcohol late at night, and use the money to provide community safety improvements. We will also use licensing powers more effectively to remove licences from nuisance bars and clubs.</i>	50
Supporting troubled families and victims of domestic violence	<i>The Liberal Democrats will do more for victims of domestic violence by adding to existing government funding, retraining staff to become expert at providing support and making behaviour-change programmes a condition of tenancy for council tenants who have perpetrated domestic violence.</i>	50
Make Southwark London's premier cycling borough	<i>We will fund physical improvements such as segregated cycle lanes from capital budgets and new cycle parking stands through sponsorship. However, revenue funding is also required for dedicated cycle officers at the council to work with community councils and plan where the physical measures will go, as well as to ensure the Cycle Hire Scheme is extended further east and south throughout the borough.</i>	100
Southwark in Bloom	<i>As well as reintroducing borough-wide awards for the best balconies and gardens, Liberal Democrats will help community councils to promote more planting, flowers and food growing across the borough. Supporting gardening schemes will lead to a greener and more pleasant Southwark.</i>	50
Establish a Voluntary Sector Commission	<i>The Liberal Democrats will make the voluntary sector a real partner of the council by establishing a voluntary sector commission to represent local voluntary organisations at the council, which will be consulted on all relevant council plans before important decisions are made.</i>	10
Making sure carers get the support they deserve	<i>Carers provide an extremely valuable service that is often overlooked, and the council should do more to support them. The Liberal Democrats will launch a review of the help offered to carers to make sure they get the support they deserve.</i>	10
Reduce Labour's cuts to services for adults with learning disabilities	<i>Labour's budget chooses to make over £3m of cuts to services for adults with learning disabilities - one of the most vulnerable groups in the borough. Labour also plan to plough a further £800,000 into its welfare hardship fund, even though over 85% of the fund has not been spent this year. The Liberal Democrats will divert this £800,000 in order to reduce Labour's savage cuts to adults with learning disabilities.</i>	800
Reduce the impact of Labour's cuts to Children's Centres and the Youth and Play Service	<i>Childcare and young people's services are priorities for the Liberal Democrats and we will reduce Labour's proposed cuts to these important services.</i>	557

Description		2014/15
		£ 000
Total commitments		6,318

Savings

Description		2014/15 £ 000
Reduce contingency to £1m	<i>Contingency funds regularly remain unspent at the end of each year and are returned to the council's reserves - which are increasing by huge sums every year. The Liberal Democrats will reduce contingency to ensure that residents' money is spent on services that benefit them, rather than sitting unspent in the council's bank accounts.</i>	3,000
Cut council spin	<i>In difficult economic times the council should be investing residents' money in providing top-quality services, rather than on publicity, but marketing and publicity budgets remain excessive. As well as reducing general budgets, we will delete Southwark Life and use the council website and local media to get important information out to residents.</i>	300
Delete two cabinet posts and all three deputy cabinet member posts	<i>Council staff numbers have fallen dramatically in recent years, and the amount of money the council spends on cabinet posts should also be reduced. We will cut two cabinet posts, moving responsibilities into other portfolios, and all three of the deputy cabinet member posts and the additional councillor allowances Labour created in 2011.</i>	76
Cut council catering	<i>At a time when some families are struggling to put food on the table, it is not right that the council continues to spend over £500,000 a year on catering and refreshments for meetings and events. The Liberal Democrats will reduce this budget so food and drink is only paid for by the council when absolutely necessary.</i>	300
Review senior officer salaries and perks	<i>Senior council staff are offered a range of benefits including car leases and cash payments, as well as performance-related pay. The Liberal Democrats will review the system to save money and to make staff pay more transparent. We will also pay bonuses to the best performing lower-paid council officers instead of those on salaries over £100,000.</i>	300
Cut consultant fees by 10%	<i>In the context of big cutbacks across council departments, the council should not be spending £2.8m a year on fees for expensive consultants. The Liberal Democrats will reduce this budget by 10% in 2014/15, with a view to cutting it further in future years, providing more cost-effective internal services if necessary.</i>	279
Cut external lawyer fees by 10%	<i>With big cuts being made across council services, the council's annual spend of £2.5m on costly external lawyers is excessive. The Liberal Democrats will reduce this budget by 10% in 2014/15, with a view to cutting it further in future years, providing more cost-effective internal services if necessary.</i>	251
Properly fund the Housing Revenue Account	<i>The housing revenue account is responsible for tenant safety, so the Liberal Democrats will charge our increased funding of SASBU to the HRA.</i>	135
Divert Labour's hoarded cash into support for adults with learning disabilities	<i>Labour plan to plough a further £800,000 into its welfare hardship fund, even though over 85% of the fund has not been spent this year. The Liberal Democrats will use this cash to reduce Labour's cut of over £3m to services for adults with learning disabilities.</i>	800
Total savings		5,441

Revenue

Increase council tax collection rate	<i>Now that the collection service has been brought in-house, improvements in collection rates can be achieved. The Liberal Democrats will increase the collection rate by 1%, with the revenue being used to fund a 1% cut in council tax for all residents.</i>	797
Impose levies on irresponsible bars and pubs	<i>Bars and pubs should be discouraged from disturbing their neighbours, so the Liberal Democrats will impose a levy on those that produce excessive noise, and use the revenue to fund community safety improvements in the local area.</i>	50
Additional funding from Government	<i>The final settlement from Government of 5th February was £30k more than indicated in the provisional settlement.</i>	30
Total revenue		877

Total savings and revenue		6,318
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Balance	Savings + revenue - commitments	0
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