

A FRESH START FOR EAST SURREY

East Surrey Liberal Democrat Manifesto 2026

New Council

New Thinking

Principles and Vision Statement

- This manifesto outlines Liberal Democrat ambitions if given the opportunity to run the East Surrey Council.
- Our first objective will be to ensure that essential services continue to run effectively and that the necessary changes required in the transition are planned responsibly to ensure their success.
- Realism and honesty are critical to the Liberal Democrat approach which recognises the significant constraints imposed by inherited debt and the continued reduction in central government financial support.
- The experience and expertise successfully nurtured in running Borough and District Councils in Surrey combined with new ideas, new perspectives and new thinking will be invaluable in making a success of the new Council.
- Under Liberal Democrat control East Surrey Council will provide efficient, user-friendly, services, transparent communication of policies and decisions; and will always take residents' views seriously.
- Recognising that Councillors are elected to serve their residents and their communities, transparent decision-making and responsible stewardship of resources will always be our priority.
- The culture of the Council, from day one, will be collaborative and inclusive and will always treat people with respect and compassion.

Priorities and Policies

Financial Stability and Value for Money

Bringing proven financial competence and ensuring value for money in all areas

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- Always act responsibly with tax-payers money; run a fiscally prudent Council and never undertake risky gambling with Council funds.
- Undertake a robust and transparent asset and service review taking account of the community asset transfer schemes currently underway in several Districts and Boroughs.
- Prefer In-House provision for undertaking Council services over commercial contracts with private companies where In-house operation can be justified on grounds of best value and quality of service; particularly in circumstances where contracting out does not offer genuine competition and clear deliverable outcomes.

- Campaign for a rapid and fair redistribution of government funding to support essential services such as adult social care, especially when increasing demand cannot be fully supported from Council Tax.

Roads, Pavements and Buses

Ensuring the basics are right with an accountable highways team to fix potholes, improve road safety and invest in public transport.

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- Address, as resources permit, the massive road and footpath repair backlog by prioritising resurfacing over patching and investing in long term re-construction.
- Provide better planning and management of council roadworks and highways projects with careful scheduling to minimise traffic queues and congestion.
- Ensure that members of the public can report potholes and highway damage easily and that requests receive an appropriate response; and when there are a number of potholes close together, they are all repaired.
- Expand the School Streets initiative with measures to increase safety for students by for example implementing 20 mph zones outside and approaching schools, to encourage walking and cycling.
- Seek to provide better public transport options appropriate to the urban and rural communities that they serve with improved links to our town centres.
- Improve the quality and quantity of walking and cycling routes.

Social Services for Adults and Children

Putting children, young people and adults who need support at the centre of decision-making with joined-up support, early help, and fair outcomes.

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- Ensure that the significant resource required to provide this essential service is used effectively and that clients are always treated with dignity and respect.
- Invest, as resources permit, in social workers and care workers to provide the necessary workforce numbers, essential training, and time to engage appropriately with service users.
- Ensure that communication with clients set out clearly the timing and status of the care to be provided.
- Expand the provision of Council owned and operated care homes to reduce dependence on more expensive private provision.
- Improve services for children and young people with a particular focus on more local and better SEND provision for children and their families. Improve both access to and quality of Child and Adolescent Mental Health services.
- Review inherited policies on Home to School transport and direct available resources better to meet the needs of parents and their children, particularly those with EHCPs.

- Ensure that communications with parents are open and transparent in all services making tribunals and legal battles the last resort and not the result of inadequate first responses.
- Review the provision of facilities such as youth clubs for young people with a view to expanding their availability, through Council and voluntary sector involvement, in communities where these resources have been depleted.

Environment, Climate Change and Waste

Protecting and celebrating Surrey's unique environment, tackling climate change and ensuring effective waste management

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- Work towards making the Council's operations net zero.
- Protect our natural environment and enhance biodiversity; in particular, preserve, maintain, and enhance areas of countryside and parks and open spaces owned and leased by the Council.
- Ensure separate recycling, food waste and garden waste collections are operated and that recycling centres are retained and enhanced.
- Fully implement the government's Simpler Recycling directive where possible and put in place measures to ensure 70% of waste is recyclable.
- Develop in partnership with appropriate commercial operators, a programme of installing on-street Electric Vehicle charging facilities and Electric Vehicle Chargers in Council car parks.

Local Economy and Regeneration

Targeting support to help local economies thrive and revitalising our town and village centres.

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- Establish an economic policy that will be delivered town by town and community by community, recognising the distinct roles of each of East Surrey's places.
- Target and focus public investment aimed where appropriate at supporting private investment rather than replacing it.
- Introduce an economic policy focused on revitalising our towns and villages, strengthening their character and restoring vibrancy to our town centres.
- Help to improve the retail and leisure offer in town centres whilst bringing back service and civic hubs, thereby creating employment opportunities and enhancing town centre viability.

Planning

Putting communities and residents at the centre of planning decisions

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- As far as government planning policy allows, seek to protect our towns, villages, and important green spaces by safeguarding local character, protecting valued countryside, and opposing overdevelopment.
- Ensure that approved infrastructure is in place, whenever possible, before development takes place, for example, the provisions of roads, schools, healthcare, drainage, and parking at an early stage in any development.
- Plan for the delivery of well-designed and good quality housing of mixed sizes and types including affordable homes that genuinely meet local needs.
- Seek to ensure that development control decisions are made locally, strengthen enforcement, involve communities, and fairly apportion development throughout the authority.

Housing

Prioritise building social and affordable, especially council homes and the early provision of infrastructure.

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- Develop a long-term housing strategy delivering well located growth with appropriate infrastructure and long-term planning.
- Seek to increase social housing developments significantly and prioritise housing for people who live and work locally. Use and support discounted market sales housing, shared-ownership, social and affordable housing for rent and other affordable routes to home ownership.
- Provide more homes by appropriate land purchase, unlocking stalled sites, buying back former Council built homes, ensuring developers meet affordable housing obligations and work with housebuilders to build Council owned homes.
- Prioritise high quality sustainable homes which are well-designed, energy-efficient and zero carbon, in locations with access to good transport and community centre facilities.

Leisure and Culture

Protect and enhance sports and leisure facilities and cultural venues as vibrant community assets.

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- Provide Council support for the theatres and community facilities in our towns and villages and commit to running them for the benefit of residents.
- Maintain, and where possible extend, Council owned Sports Centres and sporting facilities.

- Seek funding to develop sports facilities not currently available and to extend availability where existing facilities do not meet local demand.
- Initiate Sports and Arts Councils to encourage public involvement in development and develop partnerships with local clubs; seek financial support and expertise from business and the community to help local sports clubs and arts organisations provide facilities.
- Introduce measures to encourage tourism including provision of information and support the night-time economy including measures to preserve and protect pubs and community facilities.
- Support local library and museum provision utilising whatever system best suits communities.

Public Health and Protection

Ensure effective licensing and safety services to protect the public.

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- In partnership with the NHS put public health, public protection, safety, and wellbeing at the heart of local government.
- Seek to prevent crises by early evidence gathering, action to reduce health inequalities and investment in prevention services.
- Uphold high environmental health standards, protect residents from pollution and unsafe housing, and ensure that food safety and public protection are enforced fairly, and robustly.
- Enforce fair regulation to protect residents , prevent exploitation and support responsible business.

How the Council is run

Strong leadership with effective scrutiny and local decision making.

A LibDem controlled Council will:

- Operate under a Cabinet and Strong Leader governance structure as required by Central Government with Cabinet members required to consult with Council members before making decisions.
- Establish Local or Area Committees of East Surrey councillors with devolved resources and powers to take responsibility for services such as Development Management and local Highway operations.
- Encourage, support, and develop partnerships with Parish and Town Councils where there is demand from the community.

3 March 2026