

Norfolk Liberal Democrats

## Annual County Conference

*Saturday 12 November*

*Saint Margaret's Church Hall, Old Catton, Norwich*

### Preliminary agenda

The County Conference will be held at Saint Margaret's Church Hall, Blacksmiths Way, Old Catton, NR6 7DT from 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday 12 November. A map will be supplied with the final agenda.

Amendments to the draft Norfolk County Council election manifesto (*attached*) and motions (*also attached*) must be submitted by noon on Thursday 10 November to Paul Burall, email: [pols@burall.one](mailto:pols@burall.one). Subjects for discussion the afternoon open session should also be sent to Paul by that date. Paul can also be contacted on (01603) 927289.

#### Draft agenda (the final agenda is subject to change)

10-00 Introduction and report from the County Coordinating Committee and East of England Regional Party

10-20 Report from Norfolk County Council Liberal Democrat Group

10-40 Debate on the draft County Council election manifesto (*attached*)

Noon Presentation on how our by-election victories were achieved

12-15 Debates on the three submitted motions (*attached*)

13-00 Lunch

14-00 Discussion on campaigning about Brexit

14-20 Speech by Norman Lamb MP followed by Q&A session

15-00 Open session for delegates to discuss national and local policy issues

16-00 Close of conference

<p><b>The final agenda will be distributed on the evening of Thursday 10 November and will include a map of how to find the venue</b></p>
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#### Registration

The registration fee for the conference is £7; new members (those who have joined the Party in 2016) can register for just £3.

Please register by sending a cheque (made out to 'Norfolk Liberal Democrats') with your name, address, email address, and name of your local party to: Kate Sayer, Buttermere, Lynn Road, Hillington, King's Lynn PE31 6BJ.

Alternatively, if you wish to pay by electronic transfer the account name is 'Norfolk Liberal Democrats'; the sort code is 20-99-21; and the account number is 90669113. Please put your name and local party in the reference box; and please send your email address and local party to *pols@burall.one* to ensure that you receive agenda information.

### **Lunch arrangements**

Lunch will be provided together with tea and coffee throughout the day at a cost of £6 payable on the day. We will assume that anyone registering will want lunch: if not, could you please let Paul know at the above email address.

## Draft

### **Liberal Democrat Manifesto for the 2017 Norfolk County Council elections**

#### Guiding principles

1 **Working with others:** Liberal Democrats at national and local level have demonstrated that working  
2 with other Parties in government usually leads to the best results for ordinary people. For the first  
3 three years following the 2013 elections, we played a leading role in the Rainbow Alliance that ran  
4 Norfolk County Council in collaboration with three other political Parties. This ensured that  
5 decisions were fully debated before being finalised, enabling sensible and sustainable policies that  
6 were not driven by the usual Party political dogmas.

7 Among the achievements of which we are especially proud to have taken the lead are:

- 8       ▪ Reversing the decision to build an expensive and polluting waste incinerator and instead  
9       setting Norfolk on a course to achieve a zero landfill waste strategy;
- 10       ▪ Transforming failing child protection and education services that saw Norfolk children  
11       achieving the national average for GCSE results for the first time in years;
- 12       ▪ Faced with a budget gap of £111 million inherited from the previous Conservative  
13       administration, setting a three-year financial strategy to balance the books – even the  
14       Tories were forced to support this.

15 We also recognise that politicians do not have all the answers and sometimes get things wrong. So  
16 we are committed to working with organisations and communities in an open way to make sure  
17 that we properly understand the issues and learn from the ideas and knowledge of others.

18 **Supporting vulnerable people:** Our health and social care services are facing ever-increasing  
19 pressures and are committed to doing whatever we can to meet the needs of those who cannot  
20 fully look after themselves.

21 **Giving young people the best start in life:** Building on recent improvements in educational  
22 attainment and ensuring access to good education for everyone will be one of our key priorities.

23 **Supporting economic growth:** We all depend on a thriving economy and we are committed to  
24 playing a role in supporting infrastructure projects and working with central government and other  
25 organisations to provide the environment in which local companies can thrive and grow.

26 **Improving the quality of life:** We recognise that culture, sports and the arts contribute much to the  
27 quality of life of people in Norfolk and we will support these where we can.

28 **A long-term view:** Crucially, we will eschew short-term political expediency and make sure that our  
29 decisions are right for the long-term, taking account of such far-reaching challenges as global  
30 warming and technological change.

#### Our detailed proposals

##### **Adult Social Care**

32 We are committed to work to integrate the health and social care services in Norfolk into a single  
33 service with a combined budget. This will bring substantial benefits both in preventing people  
34 being forced to stay in hospital longer than necessary and making more hospital beds available to  
35 those who really need them.

36 We recognise that people with a mental illness have been getting a very poor deal from the NHS  
37 and other services, sometimes ending up with them being homeless or in trouble with the police.  
38 The dedication of our local LibDem MP Norman Lamb promoting better mental health services is  
39 impressive and we will make sure that the County Council plays its part in revolutionising mental  
40 health care in Norfolk.

41 With an ageing population, we recognise that loneliness can make the lives of some elderly people  
42 miserable. So we are committed to supporting services that help people keep in touch with  
43 families, friends and the rest of the world.

44 **Finally, we are well aware of the dedication of many carers looking after vulnerable people, often at the**  
45 **expense of their own family life. Carers themselves need greatly improve support** and we will work to provide  
46 easy access to advice and, if possible, help to improve the life of carers and those they look after, recognising that  
47 their work often prevents the need for social care intervention and the costs associated with this.

### **Children's Services**

48 Although our schools improved dramatically during the three years of the Rainbow Coalition, there  
49 is still room for improvement. One of the challenges is recruiting good teachers and we will  
50 investigate how affordable accommodation could be earmarked for teachers, possibly even building  
51 homes specifically for teachers.

52 We have to reluctantly accept that, under the current government, academies will replace almost  
53 all of the schools that are currently the responsibility of the Council. However, we are aware that  
54 not all of the new academies are performing well and we believe that there is scope for the County  
55 Council to work co-operatively with local businesses to develop its own model of academy schools  
56 to set a standard for others.

### **Environment, Transport & Development**

57 One of the major challenges facing Norfolk is that of how to accommodate necessary growth while  
58 maintaining our county is one of the most pleasant and attractive places to live in the UK. We are  
59 concerned that the existing policies of accommodating growth by the virtual piecemeal expansion  
60 of existing towns and villages is leading to low quality development that overloads such local  
61 services as surgeries and schools. We believe that the alternative of accommodating development  
62 in one or two major new settlements could bring substantial advantages, not least by releasing  
63 resources to ensure that these new, green, towns built with all the necessary infrastructure. We  
64 will seek to initiate a proper study of the potential for this approach with the planning authorities in  
65 the County.

66 The County Council is fully involved in the Norwich sub regional planning processes. We will play a  
67 full part in the forthcoming review by the Greater Norwich Development Partnership of the Joint  
68 Core Strategy and, alongside this of the Norwich Area Transport Strategy. These offer huge  
69 opportunities to change the approach to the development of the Norwich sub region way that is far  
70 more sustainable and better protects existing residents.

71 Key to our approach to all development issues will be to ensure that they do everything possible to  
72 minimise global warming emissions and mitigate the consequences that we know will result from  
73 already-committed climate change, not least in terms of flood risk.

74 In this context we will promote the development of community solar farms and identify further  
75 opportunities for the County Council itself develop solar farms on the lines of that brought in by  
76 the Rainbow Coalition at the Scottow Business Park, recognising that this has brought  
77 environmental gains and an income for the Council.

78 We will ensure that, where the County Council can play a role in environmental protection, it takes  
79 full advantage of its powers. For example, when the next franchise for the Norwich park-and-ride  
80 system is negotiated we will insist on a switch to electric buses – the benefits have already been  
81 demonstrated in places such as York. We will also seek to restrict and eventually ban diesel buses  
82 from urban centres.

83 We will examine whether the County Council should give priority to seeking the electrification of  
84 the Norwich to Ely railway line, believing that this could bring substantial and rapid benefits for the  
85 economy and the environment. Electrification of this line would greatly improve links between the  
86 economies of Norwich and Cambridge, a particular benefit of the rapidly growing science and  
87 research base in Norwich. It could also provide a near-90 minute Norwich to King's Cross through

88 service as an alternative to the problem-ridden Liverpool Street line. As well as benefiting Norwich,  
89 this would greatly help places such as Wymondham and Thetford.

90 We believe that there are relatively simple and cheap ways in which we can promote biodiversity  
91 and wildlife. We will implement a programme to maximise the benefits for wildlife on the council's  
92 own landholdings and work to ensure that the opportunities for wildlife offered by roadside verges  
93 are exploited. For example, we know that, elsewhere, substantial gains have been made by varying  
94 the times of cutting verges from year to year without affecting safety or amenity.

### **Economic Development**

95 We will work with the Local Enterprise Partnerships to play our part in providing the infrastructure  
96 for a successful economy in the County. We recognise that improving the education attainment of  
97 young people is crucial to employers and we also recognise that maintaining a high quality of life is  
98 essential to attracting the entrepreneurs and specialist and high level staff that are essential to  
99 enable businesses to flourish. We recognise that, in an age when staff and many businesses are  
100 able to choose their base that Norfolk is in a competitive environment not just with the rest of the  
101 UK but, often, with Europe and even the United States.

102 Two ways in which the Council can help directly are in its work to ensure an efficient and effective  
103 transport system to provide access for people and markets and in the provision of business parks  
104 such as that at Scottow – an initiative led by the Liberal Democrats.

### **Culture & Community Services**

105 The County Council directly influences the quality of life for many people living here. For example,  
106 the quality of the 'public realm' in which people move around public spaces is important: people  
107 want clean, green, well-maintained and well designed spaces that they can enjoy. The challenge  
108 for the Council is to achieve this in a time of austerity and we will hold an open discussion with  
109 everyone interested to see how this can best be done. One area that needs attention is the  
110 simplification of signage for drivers and others which tends to multiply without thought, often  
111 leading to unnecessary maintenance costs.

112 The Council is also responsible for libraries and museums and we recognise that these cultural  
113 assets are also important to many people's quality of life.

### **Finance**

114 It was a Liberal Democrat councillor who led the restoration of the County Council's finances after  
115 the mess left behind by the Conservatives while still enabling sufficient resources to maintain key  
116 services and invest in new projects that will make a financial return to help the Council meet future  
117 demands. One example is the switching of all the streetlights controlled by the County Council to  
118 LEDs, which will save money as well as reducing global warming emissions.

119 We will work to ensure that this record of financial prudence, sound administration and a  
120 commitment to essential services continues.

### **Governance**

121 Abolishing the Cabinet system of governance and returning to decision-making through all-Party  
122 committees was key to the success of the Rainbow Coalition, ensuring proper open debate and  
123 accountability which has led to much-improved results without the vagaries of a system that was  
124 too often subject to the whims of individual Cabinet members.

125 While generally in support of the principle of devolution of appropriate powers and finance from  
126 central government, we will continue to oppose any system that requires a single elected mayor to  
127 be the key decision maker for either the whole of Norfolk or for combination of Norfolk and  
128 Suffolk. While such a system may work for major self-contained urban areas, the vast differences  
129 in the needs of cities such as Norwich; towns like Dereham, King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth; and  
130 smaller towns and rural areas require their own elected representatives to be fully involved in  
131 decision-making. A single mayor would almost certainly be unable to take account of the varied  
132 and sometimes-conflicting requirements of the people in these very different areas.

## Conference motions

### **Devolution in Norfolk & Suffolk**

*Proposed by Victor Scrivens (Norwich North)*

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3  
4 While supporting the Party's long-standing commitment to devolution for England with appropriate  
5 regional authorities under a reformed structure of local government, conference deplores the current  
6 Government's piece-meal and half-hearted approach to devolution and rejects the current proposals  
7 for a new 'Combined Authority' for Norfolk and Suffolk under a directly elected Mayor;
- 8 In particular, conference strongly objects to the suggestion that people living in areas where one tier  
9 of local government has voted against the Government's proposals will not be allowed to vote in a  
10 mayoral election, believing that this is an attack on a basic principle of democracy.
- 11 Conference therefore calls on all Liberal Democrat councillors in the two counties to oppose the  
12 proposals.

### **Bus franchising**

*Proposed by Paul Burall (Broadland)*

- 1 Conference notes that the Bus Bill currently going through Parliament extends the right for Local  
2 Transport Authorities to take franchising powers similar to those in place for the London bus  
3 system but regrets that this will only be available automatically for areas with directly elected  
4 mayors. We urge Parliament to make these powers available to any local transport authority  
5 covering an area that makes such planning for bus services sensible.
- 6 Further, we urge local authorities in Norfolk to set up one or more Local Transport Authorities  
7 covering the County and then to seek franchising powers in order to provide bus services that  
8 primarily serve the public rather than the operators. We recognise that sensible transport planning  
9 frequently involves geographic areas that do not respect local authority boundaries and that it may  
10 be necessary to set up one or more Local Transport Authorities covering some parts of Norfolk and  
11 some parts of adjacent areas.

### **Grammar Schools**

*Proposed by Richard Carden (South Norfolk)*

- 1 Conference reaffirms its support for the Party's long-standing commitment to the principles of  
2 comprehensive education and therefore opposes any attempt by the Conservative Government to  
3 expand selection at 11 and the creation of new grammar schools. Conference calls upon Norfolk  
4 County Council to reject any attempt to reintroduce any form of selective education in the County.

