

KENT COUNTY ELECTIONS MANIFESTO 2025

Kent's Fairer Future





Kent Liberal Democrats will:

Deliver Community Care

- ♦ Aim to achieve 50% of care receivers using personal care budgets.
- ♦ Develop a care accommodation strategy with Districts to keep elderly individuals out of hospitals and provide suitable places in every District to meet demands.
- ♦ Implement robust public health campaigns to protect the NHS and prevent smoking, addiction, obesity, and other common health problems.

Support our Bus Services

- ♦ Reduce congestion and pollution for the benefit of all.
- ♦ Connect communities for work, leisure, and education.
- ♦ Maintain council subsidy funding for school buses and essential routes.
- ♦ Ensure developer contributions are allocated to maintaining and enhancing bus services.
- ♦ Collaborate with central government to rebuild bus services through council-run initiatives.

Improve NHS Services

- ♦ Increase availability of GP appointments
- ♦ Develop a Kent-wide technology strategy to free up GP appointments.
- ♦ Improve GP patient ratios across the county by using developer contributions to focus on primary care services.
- ♦ Collaborate with Kent and Medway Medical School to ensure adequate training of doctors within the county.

Increase NHS Accountability

- ♦ Use the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) to hold the NHS accountable in Kent.
- ♦ Increase patient representation on the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and leverage KCC's role as ICB chair to advocate for improved patient care.



*Antony Hook, Leader of Kent County Council
Liberal Democrats Group*



Photo credit: John Stratford, Flickr.

Vote Lib Dem, Elect a Local Champion



We have set out our policies that will **deliver a fairer future** for all residents in Kent. By voting Liberal Democrat on 1st May you will also be electing **local champions**.

All our candidates will be supporting campaigns that will **deliver for your local area**. There is not space to include them all in this manifesto. You will be able to find out what they are from local literature and posts in community groups.

Here are a few examples of what we mean

In Maidstone, Chris and Tony are campaigning to stop anti social behaviour, deliver better street lighting and reduce litter to **make Maidstone Safer and Cleaner**.

Tim in Folkstone is campaigning to hold Southern Water to account for **tipping sewage into the sea**.

On the other side of the county along the A25 from Westerham to Sevenoaks, Sandra is campaigning on **road safety**, speed reduction and stopping the utility companies just **digging up the road**.

Mike in Canterbury is continuing his campaign of the last four years to **improve the road network** in his rural Division.

Mark in Tunbridge Wells is campaigning for **safe crossings** on busy roads outside his local schools.

Antony in Faversham is campaigning on air quality and **environmental protections** for the town though his campaign to save the local tip.

Trudy in Tonbridge and Malling is campaigning on getting KCC buildings designated as assets that can be taken over by the **Parish Council**.

All over the county, Liberal Democrats are **making a positive difference** to the life of Kent residents. Elect a Liberal Democrat and you will give power to their elbow.

Finance

» Fair Funding Settlement for Kent

» Fair Taxation

» Using Kent's Assets Well

Government Funding

We advocate for **fair central government funding for Kent**.

Historical underfunding has created challenging financial conditions for Kent. **The situation is urgent, impacting all local government services.** We call on the government to deliver a multi-year, fair funding settlement.

Funding for Communities

The current **government funding formula** does not consider **coastal deprivation**. Efforts will be made to address this issue along with other coastal authorities.

Fair Contracts

We will end the practice of renewing important contracts at short notice, ensuring a **competitive tendering process**. This will provide better value for taxpayers.

Fair Taxation

Most of KCC's revenue comes from Council Tax. The Liberal Democrats will lobby for the **abolition of Council Tax** in favour of a **fairer** system. We will highlight the disparity between taxes paid to HMRC and the amount returned to Kent.

Making Good Use of Assets

County Hall is currently underutilised. We will ensure the building is used effectively, potentially as office or residential space, and to **explore its use by NHS or educational institutions in Maidstone**.

The location and architecture of County Hall present opportunities to **generate revenue** by using it as a wedding venue and opening public facilities such as a bar, restaurant, and others to increase revenue.



Health

- » Closing the health gap
- » Supporting a Healthy Kent
- » Democratising the Integrated Care Partnership

We will use Kent's place on the ICB to **demand better for patients.**

We will demand better for children and young people.

One example of where we will demand better is the treatment for **hearing** problems for **early years children**. It is unacceptable that waiting times in Kent are over a year to receive treatment.

Over 1800 children in Kent are **waiting for a wheelchair** and currently 50% of Kent children who need a wheelchair wait longer than the NHS target of 18 weeks. We consider the NHS target to

be unacceptably long and the failure in any case to meet it is a disgrace. We will create a **Kent target of 7 days** for a child to receive a wheelchair and will buy wheelchairs so that any child in Kent who needs one will get one.

We will also lobby through the ICB to lobby for **equality for LGBT people** in provision of medical treatment to them. We will lobby for Kent NHS services to follow other local areas and scrap the requirement that currently applies in Kent that women in same-sex relationships must pay for several rounds of private IVF before they can

receive NHS treatment. **We will lobby for gay and straight women to receive the same access to reproductive healthcare.**



Environment

- » **Preserve Green Spaces and Maintain Biodiversity**
- » **Clean Our Coastlines**
- » **Deliver Strategies to Improve Air Quality**

Kent Lib Dems will create a **Green industrial strategy for Kent** to support the transition to **net zero** and encourage **green investment**. We will collaborate with water companies to reduce pollution in Kent rivers and ensure all beaches are fit for swimming.

Net zero 2050

All council decisions should include an **environmental impact assessment** to determine the construction, usage, and maintenance impacts of any decision to reduce future risks of costs and environmental impacts. Major suppliers (annual turnover exceeding

£1m in 2024) should operate a recognised independently assessed Environmental, Quality, and Health and Safety Management system. Their annual external reports should be submitted to the procurement department within one month of their external audit date. Smaller suppliers should be encouraged to operate similar systems, and KCC procurement should have the competence to assess these suppliers through third-party audits. Suppliers should provide their scope one, two, and three carbon emissions to KCC before March 1 each year and confirm their target to achieve

Net Zero by 2050, reporting both progress and future intended actions.

Air Quality

We will work hard to **improve air quality in Kent**. Air quality management areas (AQMA) have increased significantly over the years, needing permanent monitoring due to poor air quality. Numerous locations in Kent breach legal air quality limits. An **action plan will be developed for each AQMA** to bring air quality within legal limits and improve further. As a statutory consultee on planning applications, Kent will highlight where



proposed development may worsen air quality.

Clean Beaches

Collaboration will occur with district and borough councils to **increase the number of Blue Flag Beaches** in Kent and create a **Blue Flag Scheme for rivers and waterways**. This initiative aligns with the UK Lib Dem manifesto from the General Election, and efforts will be made to co-operate with other counties and local areas, aiming for a national scheme run between councils.

Ancient Woodland

We oppose extending Hermitage Lane (Gallagher Quarry) into Ancient Woodland Oaken Wood (Barming Wood). We support Gallaghers in developing 'cradle to cradle' recycling of construction aggregate from demolished buildings, road projects, and incinerator ash. Virgin ragstone should mainly be quarried for skilled

workforce production of vernacular Kent architecture stone. We support extending the quarry into less environmentally sensitive areas if recycled aggregate cannot meet Kent's local demand.

Save our Tips

Liberal Democrats will **keep all HWRCs in Kent open**. We will use booking system data to adjust opening times as needed and within budget.



Childrens' Services

» Discontinue Closure of Children's Centres

» Review Cuts to Kent Youth Workers

» Deliver a Young Carer Pupil Premium

Children's Services

Kent is rightly proud of its record in children's services in the last few years. It is **under threat** because of recent cuts to children's centres and the **ending of EHCP's** for children and young adults for whom we are responsible.

Liberal Democrats would preserve and enhance that reputation as a **corporate parent**.

We will discontinue the Conservative programme of closing children's centres.

We will also review the **youth work cuts** made under the last administration, which are so damaging to outreach work in our towns and villages.

Kent Lib Dems will Introduce a **Young Carers Pupil Premium** as part of an 'Education Guarantee' for young carers.





Social Care

- » Well Resourced Care Homes
- » High Quality Community Care
- » Support the NHS

Modern, Excellent Care

We aim to provide truly **personalised care in Kent** that **empowers** individuals by:

- Trialling **wider use of personal health and social care budgets**, allowing individuals to control what care they receive.
- Implementing **digital platforms for care users** to develop networks, relationships, and opportunities, facilitating connections with care workers, friends and family, and voluntary groups.

- **Enhancing communication standards** so carers can assist care users in co-producing and monitoring care plans.

- Developing a comprehensive **Kent digital strategy for tech-enabled lives**.
- Establishing a **Kent Independent Living Taskforce** to support independent living at home.

Equality in Care

We seek to eliminate the postcode lottery of service provision and ensure national, **high-quality care for everyone in need** by:

- Providing **predictable and consistent funding** for personal care.
- Increasing **transparency** and accountability regarding expenditure in the authorities.
- Creating a **Kent Care Agency** to set county-wide minimum standards of care.
- Enabling individuals to transfer their care packages to mitigate the feeling of being confined to their locality due to care needs.

Support Carers

Our goal is to provide unpaid carers with equitable support by:

- **Advocating for Carer's Allowance** and lobbying to expand its eligibility.
- Supporting a statutory guarantee for **regular respite breaks for unpaid carers**.
- Promoting **paid carer's leave**, building upon the entitlement to unpaid leave secured by the Liberal Democrats.
- Endorsing the recognition of caring as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and requiring employers to make reasonable adjustments for employees with caregiving responsibilities.
- Introducing a **Young Carers Pupil Premium** as part of an **'Education Guarantee' for young carers**.

Recruitment

We strive to make careers in social care more attractive in Kent and value experienced staff to enhance retention rates by:

- Supporting the creation of a **new Carer's Minimum Wage**, increasing the minimum wage for care workers by £2 per hour as a starting point for improved sector-wide pay.
- Establishing **clear career pathways in Kent** linked to recommended pay scales, addressing the undervaluation of skills within the sector.
- Collaborating through the Kent ICB to create a career ladder allowing **flexibility** to work across the NHS and social care, enabling staff to gain experience in both areas.
- Recruiting additional staff to the sector using a **social care workforce plan**, like the NHS

England workforce plan, which includes ethical national and international recruitment.

Ageing Well

We aim to support healthy ageing by:

- Appointing a **Kent Commissioner for Older People** and Ageing.
- Rolling out **active aging programmes** and conducting trips and falls assessments for everyone over seventy-five to prevent falls, avoid unnecessary hospital admissions, and promote healthy ageing.
- Trialling **fracture liaison services** to ensure osteoporosis patients receive necessary treatment, preventing long-term issues and costs.
- Refreshing the national **strategy for loneliness** collaboratively with service providers and individuals with lived experiences of loneliness, overseen by a



dedicated Minister for Tackling Loneliness.

Children in Care

We propose supporting children in kinship care and their family carers by:

- Introducing a **Kent policy for kinship care**.
- Expanding the existing pilot programme to develop a **weekly allowance** for all kinship carers.
- Recognising **care experience as a protected characteristic** in Kent decisions to strengthen the rights of individuals who are or have been in care.



Transport and Highways

» Safer

» Fairer

» Greener

- ◆ Boost **Active Travel**
- ◆ **Connected Communities Campaign**
- ◆ **Bring Back Buses**
- ◆ Focus on Safer, Fairer, Greener transport
- ◆ Support **20mph schemes**
- ◆ **Fix the Potholes**
- ◆ Work to end Operation Brock

Good Design

Kent will leverage its statutory consultee status on planning applications to advocate for **development near public transport** and oppose projects that increase vehicle journeys.

Location will be a key factor in decisions about new schools or KCC facilities, aiming to maximise **accessibility without driving**.

Active Travel

We support active travel in Kent by encouraging walking and cycling, offering safer alternatives to car travel.

We promote the **benefits of 20 mph speed limits** in residential areas and will work with communities to implement changes that **enhance pedestrian-friendly** streets.

Safe Walking

We will tackle **pavement parking** issues by penalising those who obstruct pathways, ensuring safe passage for pedestrians, buggies, and wheelchairs.

Barriers to Movement Across Kent

We will **campaign to remove Brock** and EES damage from Kent, restoring pre-Brexit movement across the Channel for freight and passengers. This includes lobbying for political actions necessary to rejoin the Single Market for economic growth.



Education

- » **Fair Access to Education**
- » **Early SEND intervention**
- » **Skills for 2040**

Selective Education

We will **review our academic selection for Kent schools** with a view to making the system as fair as possible. KCC does not have power to scrap academic selection even if it wished to so that is not something we would do.

Term Dates

We will consult parents, schools, and teaching unions on setting the standard **Kent school dates** slightly differently to other parts of England. If an option can be found that works for parents, schools, and school staff we will do this to enable parents and school staff to be slightly less vulnerable to **extortionate**

holiday prices – saving families money and making Kent a more attractive place to work for teachers.

School Travel

We will seek to give more children the opportunity to **get to school safely on foot or by bicycle**. When deciding where schools will be built or expanded, we will model the modes of transport that are likely to be used and seek to maximise the journeys by foot or bike. In short, we will **build and expand facilities where people live** that are not already walking distance to existing facilities.

We will encourage, but not force, people to use schools that their children can get to on foot. We will change the **Kent admissions applications website** so that when parents provide their postcode it will show parents which schools are closest to them and remind them of the health benefits of being able to walk to school.

SEND transport has been an area of great weakness for KCC under the Conservatives. This has caused distress for many families. KCC pays over the odds to taxi firms to provide SEND transport in many cases.

We will seek to create a Vulnerable Child Transport Service. We will recruit drivers to this who want to work part-time (usually just making two return journeys a day) and who, instead of seeking to do general taxi work, are motivated to do the very special and socially valuable task of taking a vulnerable Kent child with SEND to their school. We would target people who have retired from the emergency services (who often retire in their fifties and seek further part time employment) as a potential source of driver for the VCTS. This is something that has never been tried before.

Libraries

We will **preserve our libraries** at the heart of our communities and will make greater efforts to encourage people of all ages to make more use of them. We will upgrade the content and technology

in libraries. Many Kent libraries are closed and empty for much of them time. We will make efforts to ensure that the space in our libraries is available for community use.

We will also support **co-location of other services in libraries**, such as CAB, parish council office space, post offices, and cafés.

Challenging Ideas

The crises that Kent faces warrant trying new things.

Kent has a higher-than-average number of **single-sex school places**. The evidence is unclear whether this advantages or disadvantages pupils in academic attainment or personal growth. We will seek to collaborate with other local authorities or other parties to achieve more research in this area

and ensure that decisions about how our schools are organised are grounded in the best possible evidence.

Kent no longer has **free school transport** to grammar schools if (as in almost all cases) the pupil has a non-grammar school nearer to their home. This means that access to grammar schools is affected by families' **ability to pay transport costs**. We will ensure free school transport for any grammar school pupil whose parents are on benefits or a low income if they live more than the statutory distance from their school.

Kent's school transport arrangements are currently more generous to children at **faith schools** than to children who attend non-faith schools. We will make sure that **children are treated equally**, regardless of school.



Growth

» Business Support

» Tourism

» Kent By The Sea

We will always seek the maximum possible **business investment** especially in Kent's most deprived areas where there is a great need for extra prosperity.

Kent's economy is held back by the **skills base** in Kent being lower than the Southeast and England averages. We will make this a high priority for our **education and adult education services**.

We will expand Trading Standards to **protect Kent people against criminal traders** and smash criminal seeking to exploit people in Kent. We will seek more prosecutions and seek to

use powers to **seize criminal assets** to compensate victims.

We will continue to support the work of the [Kent and Medway Business Fund \(KMBF\)](#) and to investigate whether its work could be expanded to help more Kent and Medway based enterprises.

Kent Lib Dems will work proactively to encourage both **private and public sector apprenticeships** through the full range of activities including the setting of targets to help better understand the take up of apprenticeships and what actions can be taken to improve the take up and thereby create a workforce fit for Kent's Future.

KCC must also ensure that it's "Spending the Councils Money' (SCM) policy is implemented with particular attention to its updated key principles, including focusing on how to maximise public benefit and encouraging the growth of local businesses.

The **cyber threat** is a significant and growing concern that could compromise the effective operation of the Council and affect the quality of service provided to residents. All agencies and organisations accessing KCC data must operate an independently audited ISO 27001 Information Management System or equivalent.

The annual report must be sent to KCC Officers within one month of completing the external assessment, including a summary of actions taken to address any non-conformances. Any cyber breach detected by agencies and organisations must be reported to a KCC Officer immediately, regardless of its impact on KCC data, to allow appropriate evaluation and action by KCC.





Local Democracy

» Devolution of Power to local level

» Inclusive, Fair Democracy

» Transparent, accessible Governance

Devolution

We will advocate for **maximum devolution of power from Whitehall to Kent**. We will lobby for the establishment of a **legislative assembly** for Kent with powers comparable to those of assemblies in Wales or London. In collaboration with Medway, our goal is to **decentralise power** from Whitehall to a more local level.

We are **opposed to the concept of an elected mayor** for Kent. It would lack **accountability** compared to a council leader, who can be removed by the council mid-term. Mayoral campaigns also need substantial **financial resources**, unlike council elections

which are accessible to individuals without significant financial backing. We believe effective governance should be vested in a group of elected officials, whether it is called a council or an assembly.

Fair elections and citizen inclusion

We will advocate for the implementation of **proportional representation in local elections** throughout Kent at all levels.

Furthermore, we propose a trial of **citizens' juries** in Kent. This approach, successful around the world, involves a randomly selected group of citizens deliberating on issues to determine the best course of action. The jury chooses

input from all angles to ensure an impartial and balanced process.

As a council, we aim to foster **stronger relationships across the Channel** and mitigate the adverse effects of Brexit with a **pro-European** stance.

We intend to develop an exhibition and visitor attraction at County Hall, akin to those found in democratic institutions worldwide to engage the public.

Finally, we will improve members' and the **public access to information** and ensure that KCC complies better with its FOI obligations. Now, statutory timescales are often not met. We will ensure that papers longer than four pages have a succinct executive summary.

Immigration

- » Humane Support of Refugees
- » Fair, Decent Removal Process
- » Support International Conventions

Refugees and Immigration

Taking care of refugees is a national responsibility and Kent should not bear a greater burden because of its location.

We supported KCC successfully taking the government to court to secure **fairer funding for Kent** to meet its legal duties under the Children's Act to children who arrive as refugees without adults.

KCC does not have significant expenditure on refugees or other types of migrants and we will push back against any false suggestions that refugees or migrants drain KCC's resources.

Money that KCC spends looking after refugee children is largely refunded by the national government.

We will seek to work further with central government to **ensure the unaccompanied refugee children are looked after decently** and appropriately throughout the country.

We believe that people waiting for their asylum application to be determined should be allowed to work and support themselves. We believe that **asylum applications** should be decided more quickly and people who are not granted asylum or otherwise have a right to be in the UK should be removed promptly.

We support the **European Convention on Human Rights** and the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**, both of which the UK is signatory to and which safeguard the basic rights of us all.



