

# **LISTENING TO ISLINGTON**

**ISLINGTON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS  
LOCAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2022**



**ISLINGTON LIBERAL DEMOCRATS | MAY 2022**



# INTRODUCTION

Brexit. COVID. Ukraine. It is impossible to avoid the sense that the country is lurching from one huge challenge to another without the opportunity to draw breath.

The impact at the local level is increasingly obvious. Rises in energy prices, with more to come, are creating a cost-of-living crisis that will impact all of us for years to come. Pressure on Council services is bound to increase.

**More than ever, we need local services that respond to local needs, your needs, and to the challenges our community is facing.** Too often we hear that the Council is getting it wrong. **With little or no opposition, Labour isn't listening.** That needs to change.

Over the next four years, Islington will need Councillors who listen to the concerns of the whole community and ensure that local government responds to their real needs. Only then can we build a better Islington.

The trouble is that Labour in Islington has forgotten how to listen. Instead, as we have seen with the clumsy roll-out of road closures across the borough, Labour's approach is to impose huge changes on people's lives without proper consultation. **It's time for a change.**

**The Liberal Democrats have spent the last year listening to the people of Islington and asking what you want from your Council.**

**Your views and our values combine in these policies to offer a positive alternative to Labour for our borough.**

The Liberal Democrat policies we set out here offer a positive vision of an Islington where all communities can live a good life, with the Council getting the basics right, delivering better homes, fairer policies, and a cleaner, safer borough.

Our policies will also help address two of the major crises facing us: the rising cost of living for Islington residents, and the rising cost of our lifestyles on the planet, seen in climate change.

We will make life easier for Islington's carers; and easier for the Islington community to help people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

**Our pledges summarise our key promises to you.** If elected, your Liberal Democrats councillors will never forget that we work for you, to provide the constructive alternative that Islington deserves. We will hold the Council to account, stand up for what is right and challenge when things go wrong.

**Above all, we will be listening to you, the voters.**





# OUR KEY PLEDGES

## **Helping you through the cost-of-living crisis:**

- We will never raise Council Tax by more than inflation.
- We will help leaseholders meet the cost of building works..
- We will take action to cut home energy bills.

## **Tackling the Climate Emergency:**

- We will implement an energy efficiency programme for all council homes and streamline planning for green improvements.
- We will reopen the Green Living Centre as a one stop shop for all residents.
- We will double the number of trees and protect the borough's green spaces.

## **Making Low Traffic Neighbourhoods work for everyone:**

- We will support immediate exemptions from LTNs across the borough for vulnerable groups and carers and other essential vehicle users.
- We will work to secure Citizens Assemblies in each of Islington's existing Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) and oppose new LTNs unless endorsed by a Citizens Assembly.

## **Making green transport easier and more affordable:**

- We will work to deliver step-free access at all Islington's stations.
- We will cut the cost of secure bike storage to £20: storing a bike should never cost more than parking a car in the borough.
- We will provide a hangar on every street or estate where six or more households request one.

## **Air that is fit to breathe**

- We will make improving Islington's air quality a Council front bench responsibility.
- We will make air quality impacts part of the criteria for future traffic schemes.
- We will continue to oppose the construction of the expensive and polluting Edmonton incinerator.

## **Cleaner and greener streets & estates:**

- We will work with residents, businesses, and community groups to double Islington's recycling rates.
- We will clean up Islington with more street sweepers, more bins, and a crackdown on fly tipping.
- We will promote alternative cleaner technologies for Islington's residual waste.

### **Planning the right homes for Islington:**

- We will review garage and car park sites to maximise potential for new homes without loss of green space.
- We will review conservation area rules to get the right balance on allowing family-friendly extensions.
- We will advocate for a more community-friendly design for the Holloway Prison site, with a cap on the number of new homes of 700 - as originally intended.

### **Safer streets and estates:**

- We will improve policing with more local police and a Victims commissioner.
- We will support existing youth clubs and provide a safe space for young people in every neighbourhood and large estate.
- We will conduct safety audits of every estate to help you feel safer where you live.

### **A caring borough:**

- We will defend local health services, including community pharmacies and mental health services.
- We will provide immediate exemptions for carers from LTN restrictions and review parking permits.
- We will explore developing an Islington carer's card with priority access and discounts for local shops and services.

### **A diverse and proud borough**

- We will set up Community Leaders' Networks to ensure all Islington's diverse voices are heard
- We will target resources to tackle inequality in education across all groups
- We will oppose legislation that unfairly impacts minorities

### **A prosperous and innovative Islington**

- Investing in first class infrastructure to support local startups
- Offering apprenticeships and access to City jobs to local young people
- Procuring more goods and services locally and paying bills on time

### **Playing our part for Ukraine:**

- We will work to make Islington the most welcoming borough in London for Ukrainian refugees.
- We will ensure the Council fulfils its commitment to disinvest from Russian companies.
- We will call on the Council to demand the confiscation of oligarch-owned properties in Islington for re-use as sanctuary for Ukrainian refugees.



# OUR POLICIES

## HELPING YOU THROUGH THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

We know that people in Islington, like millions across the country, are worried about rising prices.

Nationally, Liberal Democrats have a plan to save households up to £10,000 a year by:

- Doubling the Warm Homes discount, to cut bills
- Scrapping the Government's unfair National Insurance hike
- Forcing broadband providers to offer cheaper tariffs
- A windfall tax on the mega-profits of oil and gas companies.

Here in Islington, Labour's policies have included promoting the now bankrupt Angelic Energy scheme and supporting the new, highly-polluting Edmonton incinerator. They have raised council tax by the maximum allowed, while still cutting some core services.

**Liberal Democrats pledge that we will not raise your Council tax above the rate of inflation.** We will never forget that the Council is spending your money and has a duty to spend it wisely.

Our practical policies will improve services while helping you save money.

- Helping cut energy bills by making home energy improvements easier
- Helping leaseholders manage the costs of housing works
- Helping protect blue badge holders and carers from higher travel costs
- Helping cut the cost of cycling with affordable secure cycle parking
- Helping provide more affordable housing by building above car parks and garages
- Helping defend the NHS and community pharmacies on which we all rely

**Together, our policies will give Islington residents the cleaner, safer, greener, more affordable borough you deserve.**



# TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

The climate emergency requires action at local, national, and international level. But too often under the Labour Council we have seen expensive gestures and divisive policies instead of practical policies to help people lead greener lives.

We will implement **an energy efficiency programme for all council homes**: as well as cutting CO2 emissions this will tackle fuel poverty and provide opportunities for local green businesses.

**We will re-open the Green Living Centre**, shut down by Labour, to provide a one-stop shop for all residents with practical advice, access to funding and support for home energy improvements, including a streamlined planning process.

Under Labour, **we have seen too many trees lost to development**, when with better planning we could provide more homes and protect the environment. We will give more people healthy access to nature with our plan to green the borough. Liberal Democrats will **double the number of trees across Islington**, with a target of at least 750 additional trees per year, including at least fifty new trees in each ward: and **we will protect all our green spaces from development**.

Policies from across this manifesto address the climate challenge, including:

- Helping cut energy bills and support climate friendly home improvements
- Providing more electric vehicle charging points
- Making access to cycle parking easier and cheaper
- Defending green spaces and doubling the number of trees
- Boosting recycling and opposing Labour's incinerator plans
- Committing to more local procurement to reduce supply chain impacts.

***“Our policies will help address two of the major crises facing us: the rising cost of living for Islington residents, and the rising cost of our lifestyles on the planet, seen in climate change.”***



# MAKING LOW TRAFFIC NEIGHBOURHOODS WORK FOR EVERYONE

Liberal Democrats support the principle of cutting traffic levels for a safer, healthier, and greener borough. Only 30% of Islington residents own a car, yet too many are exposed to illegal levels of pollution from congested main roads.

We want to see all residents get the benefit of quieter, well-managed roads, and improved air quality across the borough. And as part of that, we support the goal of rolling out Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) across Islington.

**But under Labour, what could have been a positive policy has divided communities, with some of the most vulnerable residents paying the price.** Those who live outside the LTNs face increased congestion and pollution on their doorsteps every day.

We recognise that for a minority of Islington residents, using a car will always be necessary. **Liberal Democrats have made Labour listen on exemptions for Blue Badge holders: now we need that option for carers too.** And we need a practical solution for local traders and businesses who must use a vehicle to deliver their services.

**Most of all we need to engage local people in designing Low Traffic Neighbourhoods that work.** Labour's failure to listen has seen them impose LTNs first and consult later. That means practical solutions from the people who know the area best are too often ignored. **We believe in a listening Council that does things with you, not to you.**

We will work to set up **Citizens Assemblies** so that the community can **decide together how LTNs can work better for us all**, not for just a lucky few. Citizens Assemblies have been used successfully across the world, bringing together experts and communities, to solve problems at the local level.

In Islington, we would draw together a representative cross-section of the local community, including people who live inside the LTN and those who live on boundary roads, so that the decisions made are informed by the real experts - the people who live in the area and are affected on a day-to-day basis. All decisions will be made based on detailed, accurate data.

We will also work with Liberal Democrats across London to lobby the Mayor of London to introduce **smart road user charging**, using existing ANPR technology, so that heavy traffic passing through our borough pays for the cost on our environment.

The money raised can help mend our potholed streets, improve local public transport, and invest in measures like green walls to better protect main road residents, including those in social housing, from pollution.



# MAKING GREEN TRANSPORT EASIER AND MORE AFFORDABLE

Cutting traffic is only part of the solution. **We need make it easier to use public transport and to enjoy safe cycling, walking and other forms of active travel across our borough.**

We support **better cycle routes**, both in Islington and linked to others across London, and will work to deliver protected cycle routes on all busy roads in the borough by 2026.

Islington cyclists face long waits for scarce and costly secure parking, with the Labour Council charging local people more for cycle parking than for some car parking permits. **Liberal Democrats will cut the cost of secure bike storage to £20, funded by other parking charges.** Parking a bike should never cost more than parking a car. **And we will provide a cycle hangar on every street or estate where at least six households request one.**

We will set up a Safer Roads Task Force to examine how cyclists and pedestrians of all ages can navigate Islington's busiest streets in safety and revisit the design of the new Highbury Corner traffic scheme, to make it safer for all users.

We will prioritise **safe and attractive space for pedestrians**: pavements that are wide enough for wheelchairs and prams, with benches and trees provided without causing obstruction. We will work to improve pedestrian crossings on busy roads across the borough, to ensure they allow people time to cross safely.

Liberal Democrats will work to provide **easier access to public transport**, working to secure step-free access at every Islington station, and getting bus shelters across the borough upgraded to meet local needs.

We support **priority lanes for buses** wherever possible to speed up bus journeys and encourage more people to take the bus and promote greater use of shared mobility schemes such as Car Clubs.

Much of the traffic on our roads is from delivering goods, not transporting people. We will work with local businesses to secure **more local collection points**, and better freight delivery infrastructure with more of the final delivery of packages to homes and businesses undertaken by **non-polluting**, sustainable means, such as cargo bikes.



# AIR THAT IS FIT TO BREATHE

Too many Islington residents are still living with illegal levels of air pollution, which causes thousands of premature deaths and gives children lifelong health problems. It's a disgrace.

**We will make improving Islington's air quality a top priority**, making this a front bench Council responsibility so it gets the attention it deserves, with the appointment of a dedicated "Clean Air" cabinet member responsible for driving down pollution levels across the Borough.

**Our action plan for cleaner air** includes:

- More pollution sensors on busy roads and outside our schools.
- Better publicity of local air quality health dangers, including live pollution levels and specific pollutants at specific pollution hot spots.
- Planting 'green screens' at schools, nurseries, and playgrounds to reduce pollution
- Quadrupling the number of electric vehicle charging points, including from lamp-posts, by 2024.
- Introducing a scrappage scheme in partnership with local firms to help people replace older vehicles, aiming for a diesel-free borough by 2030.
- No new parking permits for diesel cars from 2023.
- A crack down on vehicle idling and mini-clean air zones around schools.
- Where possible, 'School Street' schemes to be implemented for all schools by 2025, with alternative measures for schools on main roads.
- A plan to phase out wood burners and support greener energy options.

And we will fight to reverse Labour decisions on transport and waste that have made air quality worse:

- We will make **air quality impact** part of the criteria for future traffic schemes
- We will continue to **oppose the construction of the expensive and polluting Edmonton incinerator**, instead promoting cleaner technologies for Islington's waste.

## WE SAY NO TO THE £1.2BN INCINERATOR

Islington Liberal Democrats have long opposed Islington Council's support for the North London Waste Authority's plans to spend £1.2 billion on a new incinerator to burn Islington's waste - 60% of which is recyclable. Labour Islington and its allies will be by relying on unrecycled rubbish to keep the incinerator running; it's the wrong choice for our future.

Burning waste produces massive amounts of carbon dioxide and particulates, making climate change and air pollution worse. Instead of sending our rubbish up in smoke, Liberal Democrats will focus on minimising waste, boosting recycling, and promoting moves to a circular economy.



# CLEANER AND GREENER STREETS AND ESTATES

Keeping our streets and estates clean is a basic service that the Council should deliver for every neighbourhood across Islington. But too many local people are facing the opposite.

Under Labour, fly-tipping is up by 23%, and litter bins across Islington are overflowing.

Less than 30% of our household waste is recycled – well below the London average of 34% and badly behind the England-wide average of over 40%. Meanwhile four of the top five local authorities with the highest percentage of household waste re-used, recycled, or sent for composting are led by Liberal Democrats

Our policies will boost recycling rates and give Islington the cleaner streets and estates residents deserve

- We will work with residents, businesses, and community groups to double Islington's recycling rates
- We will work with local businesses to reduce plastic waste and provide a wider range of recycling options
- We will clean up Islington with more street sweepers, more bins, and a crackdown on fly tipping
- We will invest in modern technology to deal with residual waste, not Labour's incinerator plans.





# PLANNING THE RIGHT HOMES FOR ISLINGTON

Islington is a borough with great wealth within its borders and a thriving economy. But there are too many people and families poorly housed, and others driven out by unaffordable rents. We will continue the work started by Islington Liberal Democrats twenty years ago, providing much-needed council homes through building and conversion: our target is to provide 1000 homes in the next four-year term, an average of 200 a year.

Demands on the planning system from developers mean too often that residents are left facing a slow and complex process to get positive changes to make their homes more energy efficient or family friendly. We will review conservation area rules to get the right balance on allowing family-friendly extensions.

Too many developments come at the expense of trees and greenspace instead of making best use of previously developed land. We will review garage and car park sites to maximise potential for new homes without loss of green space and bring underused space above existing buildings into use. Our climate change policies will see a doubling of the borough's tree cover.

The redevelopment of Holloway Prison should have been a once-in-a generation opportunity to develop much needed affordable and social housing on an iconic site. But once again the Labour Council failed in its duty to listen to local people. Liberal Democrats will ensure that future largescale sites are planned in partnership with the surrounding community.

**Liberal Democrats have policies to make planning work for you and focus on getting the right homes in the right place for our borough.**

- A target of 200 new Council homes a year across Islington.
- Use the planning system to make the Islington housing stock more energy efficient, helping the switch to renewable energy sources, cutting both CO2 emissions and bills, while respecting the borough's environment and heritage.
- Reopen the Green Living Centre (pioneered by the Liberal Democrats and closed by Labour) to provide a one-stop shop on funding and planning for renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements.
- Embrace 'gentle density': more housing within existing sites, without losing precious greenspace and mature trees.
- Ensure that the biodiversity net gain from new developments exceeds the new legal minimum of 10%, including protecting existing trees and planting more.
- Continue the Liberal Democrat-initiated building of new Council housing and affordable homes above car parks and garage sites.

- Provide a streamlined planning service for good quality residential conversion of offices and space above shops.
- Run a design competition for an approved Islington mansard design, to help keep families together.
- Introduce a neighbourhood planning approach for major sites like the Holloway and Pentonville prisons.
- Campaign for a more community-friendly design for the Holloway Prison site, with a cap on the number of new homes of 700 - as originally intended.

As a landlord **too often Islington's Labour Council keeps residents waiting for essential repairs or facing frighting costs** that are beyond individual households' control.

**We will work for a fairer deal for tenants and leaseholders:**

- Reintroduce the Repairs Time Guarantee for council housing developed by the previous Liberal Democrat council.
- Keep tenants and leaseholders informed about works and incidents in real time, via a live webpage for each estate
- Enable estates to have Tenant Management Organisations or Co-operative Management where a majority support.
- Provide a dedicated contact team for vulnerable tenants and estate residents with a 24-hour helpline.
- Assist leaseholders facing costly bills with affordable payment options, including developing a bespoke savings plan with Islington Credit Union.
- Launch an immediate audit of all Islington properties – whether publicly or privately owned – facing cladding or other fire safety challenges and the development of actions plans to help those faced with excessive costs.





# SAFER STREETS AND ESTATES

Crime in Islington is a serious problem. **There were over 7000 violent offences in our borough last year.** Theft from people is more than twice the London average. Bike theft in Islington is nearly twice the London average. Even the former Labour Mayor of Islington said that Labour has failed to act against knife crime. **No wonder people tell us they don't feel safe** and that the Labour Council isn't listening to their concerns.

With the Mayor of London closing police stations and Islington Labour making poor spending choices, residents' concerns are too often ignored. And while most police officers do an amazing job, we have also seen women, black people, and LGBT+ people failed by the system.

**Liberal Democrats have the right policies so that everybody, wherever they live and whatever their age, can feel safe.**

We will join up services to provide **a united front to cut crime:**

- Knife crime reporting from hospitals
- Mental health support in every police station
- Safety audits of every estate

We will work to get **policing that serves all our communities:**

- More locally-recruited police and strengthened neighbourhood teams
- No more closures of police stations and counters
- A local Victims Commissioner to give every victim a voice.

We want Islington to be **a safe place for our young people**, but under Labour spending on youth services has fallen by 74% since 2010.

- We will support existing youth clubs and provide a safe space for young people in every neighbourhood and large estate
- We will work with local businesses to develop borough-wide mentoring and skills developments programmes for young people, especially those most at risk.





## A CARING BOROUGH

The last two years have tested our healthcare system more than anyone could have imagined. Thanks to the courage and skill of our healthcare professionals, Islington has emerged from the pandemic with head held high. Politicians from across all the parties worked together in Mutual Aid Groups to ensure that the most vulnerable had the support they needed.

Liberal Democrats believe that **everyone deserves access to good quality health care** at the time and in the way they most need it. **We are proud of the NHS and will always fight to protect local NHS services.**

If elected, we will:

- Continue to oppose any threats of closure to Whittington or Barts Hospitals
- Campaign for an updated Pharmacy Needs Assessment for Islington and support our vital local pharmacies
- Work with HealthWatch Islington to improve information and access to local services
- Work with community groups to increase the low take-up of breast cancer screening and other vital checks

During the pandemic we have seen pressure rise on vital services, and people's mental as well as physical health has suffered. **We believe mental health should be treated as seriously as physical health**, ending the stigma around mental ill health, & making local mental health services easier to access.

We will:

- Work to ensure there are always mental health staff on duty in police stations
- Work with the local NHS to deliver a guaranteed response time for mental health emergencies
- Improve the support for young people's mental health, including through a network of safe youth spaces in every neighbourhood.

Carers are more vital than ever, but **we have seen carers let down** by the Conservative government nationally and the Labour council locally, who don't listen to carers' needs.

Nationally Liberal Democrats are campaigning for an increase in Carers' Allowance and oppose the ending of free COVID tests which vulnerable people need to stay safe.

Locally, Liberal Democrats helped secure LTN exemptions for Blue Badge holders and are fighting to get the same for carers. As part of **our fairer deal for Islington carers** we will review the rules on parking permits and explore developing an Islington carer's card with priority access and discounts for local shops and services.



## A DIVERSE AND PROUD BOROUGH

Islington has a proud tradition of diversity which we foster and celebrate. **Britain's first Asian MP**, Dadabhai Naoroji, was a Liberal MP in Finsbury. The **first gay rights demonstration** in Britain took place in Highbury Fields in 1970. Both are marked by plaques installed by Islington Liberal Democrat councillors. Islington Town Hall was the venue for some of the **first same sex marriages** in England, **made possible by Liberal Democrats** in Government.

Liberal Democrats have long campaigned to protect the rights and opportunities of everyone in our community including women, LGBTQ+, Black, Brown people and people with disabilities, from measures to end the gender pay gap and introduce better parental leave, to standing up for Trans rights.

Liberal Democrats are opposing the Conservative Government's moves to criminalise peaceful protest and reintroduce suspicion less stop and search, which disproportionately affect minority communities including here in Islington.

**Liberal Democrats will always promote justice, human rights, and the rule of law.** We reject hatred and discrimination, and are committed to tackling all forms of injustice, inequality, and institutional bias throughout society.

If elected we will:

- Work to tackle inequality in school performance across diverse groups, building on the Pupil Premium model to target resources where they are most needed
- Set up Community Leaders Networks for each of Islington's minority communities to be a powerful voice to hold the Council to account and shape real change
- Appoint a local Victims' Commissioner to give every victim of crime and injustice a voice.

***“The Liberal Democrat policies we set out here offer a positive vision of an Islington where all communities can live a good life.”***



# A PROSPEROUS AND INNOVATIVE ISLINGTON

**Good jobs and thriving businesses are vital for our borough.** Islington has a strong local economy including many sole traders and small businesses, often working from home. It is a magnet for start-ups in the cultural industry and the digital sector. Yet we have heard many complaints raised about the reliability of broadband and slow internet speeds, particularly in high density housing.

**We will support local small businesses,** increasing the percentage of goods and services procured locally by Islington Council, and ending the scourge of overdue payment.

We are also very conscious that while the wealth of the City of London is our on our doorstep, **too many Islington residents miss out.** We will build stronger partnerships to ensure that the benefits of good jobs and access to high quality training are available to more people in our borough.

If elected, Liberal Democrat councillors will:

- Work to provide a high-quality broadband offer to residents, starting with council estates
- Develop a dedicated Islington offer of apprenticeships and paid professional internships for care leavers & other young people in need.
- Revive the City Fringe partnership with the City of London to connect local people with Square Mile jobs.
- Work with local start-ups to help ensure that Islington provides the welcoming environment and high-class infrastructure to support the jobs of the future.
- Oppose any further loss of high street bank branches from our borough
- Set up a local Skills Advisory Panel focused on the needs of small business
- Assist local procurement of goods and services by subdividing large council contracts
- Target to achieve a third of council procurement from local suppliers by 2026
- End overdue payments by the Council.





# PLAYING OUR PART FOR UKRAINE

It may seem strange to have an international crisis in a local election manifesto. But as part of our listening to Islington, we have heard loud and clear that **local people want to help**, whether by sending aid or opening their homes. And they want the Council to show a lead.

A terrible human tragedy is unfolding before our eyes, as a direct result of Putin's aggression. Every day our television screens show the plight of families desperately fleeing war with their children and neighbourhoods under attack.

It is a source of national shame that the Conservative Government has so far failed to set up the simple, rapid scheme for resettlement of Ukrainian refugees in the UK that we are seeing elsewhere in Europe.

Nationally the Liberal Democrats are calling for:

- A fast, ambitious resettlement scheme for Ukrainian refugees to come safely to the UK.
- Scrapping of the law that criminalises Ukrainian refugees coming here to claim asylum.
- A five-year funding package for every person a local council resettles.

Locally, Liberal Democrats are committed to support efforts to **make Islington the most welcoming borough in London for Ukrainian refugees**.

We have already demanded that Islington Council **disinvest from Russian businesses**. We also urgently call on the Council urgently to determine the number of **properties in Islington registered to anonymous shell companies**. Where these are found to be owned by individuals connected to the Putin regime, the Council should press the government to allow these properties to be **reused for the housing of refugees**.

We call on the all the political parties in Islington to **unite in a support of a generous offer of resettlement to Ukrainian refugees**. Islington has a proud and long history of supporting those fleeing war and persecution, and we must once again step up.

# LISTENING TO ISLINGTON: OUR POLICIES, YOUR CHOICE

This manifesto has set out **our positive alternative for Islington**, based on **listening to the people who matter**: the individuals, families and organisations that live here and make our borough so special.

**Now it's your chance to make that vision a reality.** On **Thursday 5 May** you can choose to end Labour's virtual one-party state here in Islington by **voting for the Liberal Democrats**.

To find out more, or to join our campaign, contact us at [liberalislington.com](http://liberalislington.com).



## Islington Liberal Democrats