

# **The Coalition:** our approach to local government in Reading

- ✓ Better value for our residents
- ✓ Better service to our residents
- ✓ Pride in our town and ambition for its future

**Reading Conservatives**  
**Reading Liberal Democrats**  
**May 2010**

# The Coalition: our approach to local government in Reading

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## **The Liberal Democrat Conservative Coalition - Reading Borough Council May 2010**

This document sets out broad agreements reached between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats that will form the basis of this coalition and will enable us to work together as a strong and stable local administration.

We have focussed deliberately on areas about which both parties agree and we recognise that we will need to have further constructive discussions in the future about those areas that will require compromise on both sides.

Overriding themes governing this agreement are:

- Better value for our residents
- Better service to our residents
- Pride in our town and ambition for its future
- Fairness for all residents, and in particular addressing the widening gap between the rich and the poor in the town
- Innovation in all aspects of the council to bring about positive change to its operations and service provision
- Making Reading greener, by tackling climate change and protecting and enhancing our environment

### **1. Finances and Efficiency**

We will introduce a council tax freeze for 2011/12 to reduce the burden on residents.

We will continue to work with the current agreed budget for 2010/2011.

We will instigate a review of all council services to ensure they provide value for money and good service quality, properly reflecting the needs of Reading's residents. In addition, we will lead the current Performance Improvement Programme (PIP).

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We are committed to maintaining and improving front line services and where practical will seek to reduce the costs of delivery. Any cost savings will be prioritised in back office functions before front line services.

## **2. Transparency**

We will promote greater transparency in local government in Reading, to improve community confidence in the council.

We will work to promote strong and open working relationships with council officers.

## **3. Cabinet Make-up and Scrutiny Panel Chairs**

The Leader of the Conservative Group will be Leader of the Council. The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group will be Deputy Leader of the Council.

The Executive will comprise nine positions, including Leader and Deputy Leader. Positions are to be filled by a ratio of 2:1; Conservative to Lib Dem.

In recognition of the challenging economic situation faced by the council and residents, we agreed that all Special Responsibility Allowances paid to councillors will be cut by 10% with immediate effect.

Chairmen of Scrutiny Panels will be elected in secret ballot by the members of the Scrutiny Panel at their first meeting. A wider review of the nature and make-up of scrutiny panels is already underway and further decisions in this area will await the result of this review.

## **4. Services**

As part of the full review of council services, we will look specifically at ways in which service and spending decisions can be taken at the most local and appropriate level.

### **Children and Schools**

- we agree that child protection must be a top priority
- we will work to ensure that there are sufficient, high quality school places
- we will work to improve the educational attainment of pupils in our schools

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## Environment

- we will introduce weekly refuse collection in priority areas (e.g. those with a large proportion of terraced housing) in a phased programme in consultation with residents
- we will review what can be collected/recycled at the kerbside (e.g. glass, food waste)
- we will work to improve street cleaning Borough-wide
- we will promote green jobs and sustainability across the council and borough
- we will promote the climate change agenda as a high priority

## Community Care

- we will work to develop the appropriate policies and high quality funded services to address the increasing services needs of the aging population.
- we will retain the current eligibility criteria for social care for the rest of this financial year

## Transport

- we will campaign actively for investment from the funds replacing the Transport Innovation Fund
- we will support the redevelopment of Reading Station in principle whilst recognising a potential need to look further at the interconnection with public transport and taxi services
- we will use the planned review to develop a parking strategy that reflects the wishes of residents across Reading
- we will introduce low emission zones and take steps to reduce the number of heavy goods vehicles passing through Reading

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- we will promote greener and more sustainable transport across the Council and in the Borough

### **Communities**

- we will place greater emphasis on local shopping areas for shopping and local commerce
- we will maintain the total grant funding to voluntary, community and neighbourhood groups at current overall levels, whilst re-evaluating how the funding is meeting the council's objectives and services
- we believe community cohesion is important and that there should be a Reading-wide approach to achieving this, rather than an agenda which focuses on any one community
- we will enhance joint working with other agencies to reduce crime across Reading

### **Housing**

- we will focus on speeding up the provision of affordable housing to address chronic housing need
- we will use powers available to reduce the number of empty homes and improve quality in the rented sector
- we will review the additional service charges on tenants for cleaning and lighting
- We will work to promote safer, greener estates for all

### **Council Personnel**

- we will look at providing 'added value' benefits to council employees through negotiation with council suppliers and other organisations
- we will promote apprenticeships within the council

Better value for our residents

Better service to our residents

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