

**Cambridgeshire County Council
LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GROUP**

STATEMENT ON AND AMENDMENT TO THE COUNCIL'S INTEGRATED PLAN 2012

"The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity."

Preamble to the Constitution.

"This budget shows how a Liberal Democrat council would do things differently and better.

"We would tackle entrenched inequality, instead of just talking about it.

"We would share the council's resources equitably around the county. Well targeted investment in bus, rail and cycling infrastructure would allow people to access the wider community and its opportunities, regardless of age and geography.

"We would target support at young people who need it, increasing the pupil premium for poorer pupils, keeping youth clubs open, and providing free bus transport for young people out of education and employment. We would make smart enhancements to our library service and better maintain our schools.

"We would eliminate Conservative waste and bad contract management and run the council as an efficient, modern organisation, embarking on a radical program of energy efficiency that would generate big savings.

"We would implement a plan to responsibly manage Adult Care, instead of helter skelter budgeting that has demoralised staff and service-users alike and resulted in a 25% to cut in care levels mid-year.

"While we cannot find a way to protect core services without increasing council tax, we recognise that working families are hard pressed at this time and would restore public trust by not using this increase to give ourselves a pay rise."

Kilian Bourke, Liberal Democrat group leader.

Among the 67 proposals in their budget amendment, the Liberal Democrats would:

- **Help people walk safely by investing more in improving the terrible state of our pavements.**
- **Help people get around by bus, not only by completely reversing the Conservatives' abolition of financial support for bus services, but also by using "Quality Bus Contracts" to introduce more socially valuable bus services.**
- **Build "transport interchanges" around the County, so that people in isolated rural areas have access to public transport too.**
- **Enable the people of Wisbech to go by train to Peterborough, Cambridge and London by re-opening the railway line to March and having an hourly passenger service to Cambridge.**
- **Help disadvantaged young people in school, by increasing the value of the pupil premium by £250 per child per year, and provide free public transport to young people seeking education and employment.**
- **Reduce youth offending by giving young people in deprived areas more to do.**
- **Help those with dementia by ensuring that care staff are better trained.**
- **Help people facing hardship due to the economic situation by investing in the Citizens Advice Bureau so that it can give advice to more people.**
- **Engage with the challenge of Climate Change by investing in energy efficiency in our schools, saving taxpayers and schools money.**
- **Help people and businesses in isolated or disadvantaged communities by bringing faster broadband to more places in Cambridgeshire.**
- **Build the "Chisholm Trail", a strategic cycle route that would link up Addenbrooke's hospital, CB1 and the Science Park.**
- **Reinstate the "city shuttle" bus and make it the first electric bus in the County.**

Note: see *Technical Appendix* for comment on Affordability, Strategic Objectives, Public Consultation, Community Impact and Risk.

FINDING EXTRA RESOURCES

The £30 million revenue and capital funds required to fund our Council Tax and spending plans are set out in Figure 1 and summarised below:

CORPORATE SAVINGS

“Restoring public trust”

Line 1 cut provision for councillor pay rise (£500 thousand saving over 5 years)

We cannot find a way to protect core services without increasing council tax, but recognise that working families are hard pressed at this time and would restore public trust by not using this increase to give ourselves a pay rise. We have accordingly deleted provision for a pay rise in councillors' allowances and reduced council tax by a small amount.

Line 2 reduce cabinet by 3 (£50 thousand saving over 5 years)

Cambridgeshire County Council has dramatically reduced the size of its Senior Management Team of council officers. It is strange and incongruous in this context that the council should retain such a large cabinet. Hunts District Council's recent streamlining of its cabinet has produced, if anything, an improvement in quality. We would reduce the number of cabinet members by 3. Any additional savings above £10k per annum would be distributed among the rest of the Cabinet members.

Line 3 cut cabinet advisory group expenses (£2500 saving over 5 years)

Councillors should not be allowed to claim expenses to attend unminuted meetings held behind closed doors whose membership, instead of being politically proportional, is personally selected by the cabinet member. “Sofa government” is not good for democracy; getting expenses to travel to and sit on that sofa is wrong.

“Cutting corporate waste”

Line 4 reduction in business miles (£3.15 million saving over 5 years)

The Liberal Democrats have proposed big savings on mileage, on which the council spends approximately £3 million a year, and are glad to see that the council is finally beginning to listen to us and realise the potential for savings in this area. By embedding new ways of working we would realise big savings quickly, banning all non-essential travel and instigating a "big switch" to teleconferencing, Skype, etc, transforming this aspect of the council's operations. We are aware of the issues of confidentiality and legality surrounding these technologies, but still feel that not enough effort has been put into cutting this spend. Our energy efficiency team (see line 20) would provide extra resource to effect this change. Realistically, there is a hard core of business miles in highways and social care that can be delivered more efficiently but not eliminated. Our savings over five years reflect this.

Line 5 cut press, marketing and PR (£2.15 million saving over 5 years)

An internal review has shown that the Communications team costs this organisation £1.483M annually, exclusive of printing and material costs. This figure includes Comms roles embedded throughout the organisation, including staff responsible for marketing the Guided Bus. Communications at taxpayers' expense is not a priority for the Liberal Democrats. We would make aggressive cuts to spending on glossy publications and marketing activity, while protecting the consultative function of communications. To make savings of this order we would transform the way this service is delivered, form a single Comms team and implement a sharp transition from printed to electronic media, overseen by our efficiency team.

Line 6 cut catering, hospitality, affiliation costs, premium phone calls and general expenses (£0.5 million saving over 5 years)

The council is a member of numerous external organisations (e.g., SPARSE, CCN, LGA) whose benefits are not proportionate to their cost; we would cut back on such affiliations. We would also cut minor general expenses including hospitality costs and international and premium phone calls. These may seem like small sums in the bigger scheme of things, but they add up.

Line 7 energy efficiency including reduced carbon permits (£1.5 million saving over 5 years)

The Liberal Democrat group believe this council should be more ambitious in its targets to reduce energy consumption. These savings come from a 5% annual reduction in our energy usage, based on the 2009/2010 non-schools energy costs of £1,660,624.24, and include reduced carbon permits in the total figure.

Line 8 desktop virtualisation (£0.1 million saving over 5 years)

We would start to virtualise the desktop infrastructure within the County Council's offices, an industry standard procedure, freeing up staff time and reducing energy costs. We would draw on the experience of our LGSS partner council Northamptonshire, which has already begun this process, as well as the professional experience within our group. The savings forecast are highly conservative and once the implementation is proven we would look to expand it to all areas of the County estate resulting in much bigger future savings.

“Return from energy efficiency drive”

Line 9 Solar PV on council buildings (£0.67 million saving over 5 years)

Rapid deployment of Solar PV in year one, driven by our energy efficiency team (see line 20), would deliver a seven year payoff. See line 62.

Line 10 School energy savings (£1.6 million saving over 5 years)

Making our schools more energy efficient would have a transformative effect, freeing up substantial amounts of revenue for education. Delaying on this makes no sense and we should maximise our investment in this area. Our up-front £4M investment in energy efficiency in school buildings (see line 63) would deliver a five year payback. The council would recoup 50% of its outlay, allowing schools to keep 50% of the revenues saved over that period and 100% thereafter, to incentivise rapid uptake, which would also be aided by our energy efficiency team (see line 20).

Line 11 wind energy (£490 thousand saving over 5 years)

The county council has already done the work investigating these proposals. The cabinet took a decision on purely political grounds not to pursue this line of income. That decision is one with which the Liberal Democrat group profoundly disagrees. We believe that in the correct location, which would be determined by the planning process at district level, with input from the public, wind farms can provide a good source of income for the council. We also believe that if local communities could see the benefits for their own community, in improved services as a result of the way the income is spent, there would be less opposition to such developments, and that for this reason the county council is an excellent organisation to be taking on this type of development. Prudently, we have not anticipated more than half of the proposed sites passing the planning process.

ENVIRONMENT SERVICES SAVINGS

Line 12 Cambridgeshire Future Transport (£7 million saving over 5 years)

This flagship Conservative project puts marketing and business models before people's needs, and is consequently failing to deliver the promised improvement in public transport. That only one passenger has used the Duxford pilot is a massive embarrassment for an administration that has spent a year developing this project. We would scrap it and transfer the funds to a public transport fund (see line 22).

Line 13 Park and Ride (£2.45 million saving over 5 years)

It is a good start that the administration has acknowledged the inefficiencies in the Park and Ride agreement as exposed by the Liberal Democrats, and restored the departure charge to £2. We would go further and restore a proportionate relationship between departure charge and ticket price. Over the last decade ticket prices and patronage have soared while the council's share of the takings has declined dramatically, despite it owning the infrastructure. It is regrettable that the administration is allowing the monopoly operator of this service to maximise profits for itself at taxpayers' expense. (On officer advice, these figures factor into account the £150k loss that the on-street parking account is anticipated to make this year.)

Line 14 Quality Bus Contract scheme (£5.7 million saving over 5 years)

We would introduce a "Quality Bus Contract" which would enable us to use profits from the most lucrative bus services to cross-subsidise less viable ones or to provide a better substitute. The current model, in which private companies maximise profits on some routes while rural transport remains practically non-existent in other areas, is no longer acting in the travelling public's best interests. Our major investment in transport interchanges and public transport, and our guarantee to ring-fence the proceeds of the QBC scheme for reinvestment in transport, show that this is not an attempt to take money from commercial operators, but to improve our transport network. This approach would have a transformational effect on the way bus services in Cambridgeshire are delivered. We would use the QBC to prevent large increases in ticket prices for the travelling public.

Line 15 return on broadband investment (£1.65 million saving over 5 years)

Liberal Democrats believe the council's investment in broadband should be done on an equity share basis, generating an income stream rising to £600,000 p.a.

CHILDRENS' SERVICES SAVINGS

Line 16 home to school transport, inc. taxis (£2.7 million saving over 5 years)

We note that the administration has implemented our alternative budget proposals on mainstream home to school transport, realising bigger savings than budgeted for by retendering more and faster and using the council's substantial negotiating power. Some small additional efficiencies may be squeezed out of these contracts on top of the savings already budgeted for. Our biggest savings however will come from reducing the number of students eligible for transport by taxi, which will increase as the administration cuts bus services. By not only maintaining bus funding but increasing it substantially, we would aggressively reduce the number of mainstream students travelling by taxi. Our root and branch review of the bus network would also incorporate the Home to School Mainstream service in order to identify potential efficiencies between these two types of transport, and we anticipate being able to phase out a small number of mainstream home to school contracts altogether, delivering further savings. As was the case last year, we do not believe significant savings can be made on special needs transport and would concentrate our savings in Mainstream.

COUNCIL TAX

Line 17 reduce council tax (£0.55 million extra expense over 5 years)

We cannot find a way to protect core services without increasing council tax, but recognise that working families are hard pressed at this time and would restore public trust by not using this increase to give ourselves a pay rise. We have accordingly deleted provision for a pay rise in councillors' allowances and reduced council tax accordingly. We would reduce the Conservative council tax increase by 0.04% in year 1.

CAPITAL SAVINGS

Line 18 Underpass option - Ely (£12 million saving over 5 years)

Instead of the awful bypass, the County Council should build a proper underpass there and then close the level crossing. This scheme could be done quicker than the bypass, it would be substantially cheaper for Cambridgeshire taxpayers, and would not destroy internationally-important views of the marvellous cathedral.

Line 19 Northstowe (£25 million saving over 5 years)

We are not inherently opposed to this project, but consider our spending priorities to be more important.

EXTRA SPENDING ON LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PRIORITIES

The plan for new spending priorities set out on Figure 2 is summarised below.

CORPORATE

Line 20 Energy efficiency team (£700 thousand over 5 years)

Strengthening the council's existing energy efficiency team would enable us to embed new working practices quickly and to improve the deliverability of our energy efficiency projects.

ECONOMY, TRANSPORT & ENVIRONMENT

“PEOPLE”

Line 21 Socially necessary transport - reverse 100% bus cut (£10.6 million over 5 years)

We would completely reverse the Tories' 100% cut to bus services, and conduct a root and branch review of existing bus services and people's transport needs before making changes to it. Our review would look at potential synergies between different transport services (see line 17). Its outcome would depend on the evidence, but we find the model of arterial rural bus routes served by a more diffuse network of community transport feeder routes persuasive in principle; better connections between bus and rail are also a big priority. Our heavy investment in transport interchanges (line 56) and other transport infrastructure, and additional revenue from our Quality Bus Contract scheme, would enable us to deliver a higher level of public transport provision for people throughout Cambridgeshire than is provided for in the Conservative budget.

Line 22 Socially necessary transport top-up (£3.8 million over 5 years)

The revenue generated by the Quality Bus Contract scheme would be ring-fenced for improving public transport around Cambridgeshire. The intention is not to use the revenue from the Quality Contract scheme to offset existing council costs, but to improve the quality of public transport provision throughout the County. The constant reinvestment in public transport of revenue from a Quality Contract scheme would create a "virtuous circle" that would conduce to increased patronage and enhanced public transport. The figures in line 22 are the surplus of QBC income that remains for investment in new bus services, after the public transport improvements of lines 23-25 have been funded. As shown here, the Quality Contract is funding increased use of concessionary fares by the elderly, free bus travel for young people out of education and employment, and the roll-out of real time bus information signs in rural areas.

Line 23 increased use of concessionary fares (£1.5 million over 5 years)

By scrapping all bus subsidies the Conservative budget makes a double saving, also reducing the amount it spends on concessionary bus fare payouts for pensioners, on the principle that "they cannot use their bus passes on buses that no longer exist". This is contrary to the Coalition pledge to protect free bus travel for the elderly. By keeping a subsidised bus network and incurring the additional cost for pensioner's journeys on it, we would keep the Coalition pledge to protect free bus travel for the elderly.

Line 24 Free transport for young people seeking employment, education or training (£400 thousand over 5 years)

Young people today face unprecedented pressures and the prohibitive cost of transport can be a blockade against opportunity. This fund would be aimed at young people seeking education, training or employment. The council currently has no supported transport or concessions for young people in this situation. Some Cambridgeshire public transport providers have recognized and responded to this reality and have introduced helpful schemes, including First Capital Connect's student rail discount and the rolling out of free travel to job interviews and subsequent employment facilitated by Job Centre Plus. We propose a fund to be administered by advisors in our Locality Teams which would encourage first steps to job, training or education opportunities, and would allow any form of public or community transport. The principle of wider access to public transport for young people should be developed much further. Quality Bus Contracts, negotiable rates on Community Transport and discretionary powers on Concessionary Fares would allow scope for developing this theme.

Line 25 Real time bus information (£500 thousand over 5 years)

Real Time is a key way to increase the use and viability of bus services, especially in areas where their frequency is low. Because people have greater assurance about when a bus is likely to arrive (or whether it has already departed) they are more likely to use the service. We would introduce RTPi at Cambridge train station.

Line 26 QBC setup and oversight (£900 thousand over 5 years)

A small, dynamic team would be required to oversee the implementation of the Quality Bus Contract scheme and manage its operation thereafter. We have made allowance for that.

Line 27 Wisbech line subsidy (£1 million in years 4 and 5)

An hourly Wisbech to Cambridge rail service on the reopened March to Wisbech line will require a subsidy of £500,000 pa. The County Council should commit to funding that subsidy gap initially.

Line 28 disabled access – dropped kerbs (£250 thousand over 5 years)

This council's provision for disabled access is deeply inadequate, with the cost of dropped kerbs often being forced onto district councils. This small fund would allow for an annual program of dropped kerbs to be installed where demand is highest.

Line 29 Bike banks - free bikes and cycle training for young people (£50 thousand over 5 years)

A pilot scheme currently in development will give young people a six-week bicycle maintenance course and result in them coming away with an employment qualification as well as a free bike, a rolling supply being provided by the Chief Constable. We would expand the scheme, ensuring that it took place in a number of locations around the County; these would be strategically located in association with secondary schools, sixth form colleges and youth clubs. This project would complement the council's belated embrace of Bikeability, as campaigned for by the Liberal Democrats, and signal a commitment to a step change for cycling provision for young people.

Line 30 Electric Vehicle kick start (£30 thousand in year 1)

This project would make zero-emission delivery a factor in council procurement. By encouraging partner organisations to do likewise we would organically build demand for zero emission vehicles. The cost covers an initial study to put together the business case for commercial investors. The benefits include a substantial reduction in vehicle noise and pollutant emissions, improving local skill bases in new, relevant technologies, and making Cambridgeshire a national leader in this area. The electric city shuttle bus would be a focal point of this project. (See line 58.)

“PLACE”

Line 31 Extra gritting (£500 thousand over 5 years)

This small additional fund would allow for enhancements to existing gritting provision. In particular, it would allow for the core of Cambridge City Centre to be added to the reduced network and for the gritting of a small number of strategic cycleways.

Line 32 Community rail partnerships (£100 thousand over 5 years)

We would develop Community Rail Partnerships, which have been widely shown to stimulate wider use of existing rail services in rural areas, support local business and raise awareness of sustainable transport. The Council's Local Transport Plan 3 includes an aspiration for two Community Rail Partnerships, one in Fenland and one in South Cambs. Support for an officer post to develop this work would be match-funded by the relevant Train Operating Companies. This project would complement the programme of transport interchanges, cycleway links, and better transport opportunities for young people.

Line 33 Ely North rail study (£60 thousand in year 1)

The proposed massive expansion of Ely to the north will put strain on the existing station and increase congestion across the city as new residents struggle to get to it from the other side of the city. An additional station is needed to serve the huge new developments. This study would seek to establish how a station serving north Ely could work and help the success of the new development while relieving pressure on the existing city.

Line 34 Ely-Peterborough rail line electrification foresight study (£20 thousand in year 1)

The Ely to Peterborough line may well be electrified a decade from now. This study would look at the future plans for rail improvements affecting the line (particularly including the expansion of freight to and from Felixstowe), the need for electrification of connecting routes and the possible benefits of electrification. The study would prepare a provisional business case and options map for electrifying the line as soon as possible.

Line 35 maintain annual funding of the biodiversity partnership (£20 thousand over 5 years)

We will continue to provide the annual £4k support to this partnership which does important work to protect and improve biodiversity in a rural county with much intensive agriculture and high levels of housing growth. Last year's budget papers admit that the partnership is under threat through lack of funding.

Line 36 protected road verges (£130 thousand over 5 years)

The protected roadside verges should be cut properly three times a year protecting their important habitats, which the current policy threatens to destroy.

Line 37 maintain current rights of way budget (£300 thousand over 5 years)

We will maintain the Rights of Way budget at previous levels, reversing the £55k cut in 2011/12. The maintaining of the County's Rights of Way is important to encourage access to the countryside, personal well-being and encourage sustainable modes of transport.

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

Line 38 Pupil premium - extra £250 for poorest pupils (£740 thousand over 5 years)

The link between poverty and low academic performance is evidence-based and led the Liberal Democrats to propose a Pupil Premium. This has been achieved nationally in the coalition agreement. Given that performance disparity is a particular problem in Cambridgeshire, we would enhance the PP by £250 per Free School Meals pupil in the eight schools which have the highest proportion of children qualifying for the Pupil Premium. We believe that this will give these schools greater flexibility and opportunity to support those pupils who need the most help. There are 8 schools where over 30% of the pupils are on Free School Meals. 2 in Fenland, 2 in Huntingdon and 4 in Cambridge City. 530 pupils on current rolls.

Line 39 keeping youth clubs open (£1 million over 5 years)

This extra money would be used to save youth clubs from the threat of closure. Where the county youth service has withdrawn from running open access clubs a problem has arisen when parish councils are providing the funding to keep them going. The youth service is asking that they take full responsibility for staff employment and the professional management of the youth work activities. Most parish councils and voluntary groups do not have the capacity to do this and there is a prospect of losing yet more clubs. We would fund the County youth service to continue to provide management of staff and activities where required, preventing further closures.

Line 40 preventing youth offending (£500 thousand over 5 years)

We will invest more in targeted youth projects aimed at reducing offending amongst teenagers, especially in areas such as North & East Cambridge, Huntingdon and Wisbech. These projects will keep some young people out of trouble, helping to prevent them from embarking on what for a few would be a decade of low level crime.

Line 41 Targeted youth interventions - domestic violence (£90 thousand over 5 years)

Most schools struggle to provide targeted interventions for children who are experiencing domestic violence. We would provide programs run by parent support advisors who work with schools. We would target 6 clusters in the main hotspots, including Hunts, St Neots, Wisbech, Arbury and Kings Hedges. 6 targeted programs running twice a year would cost £18,000 per year.

Line 42 Free transport for young people seeking employment, education or training (see line 24)

Line 43 Cambridgeshire music (£450 thousand over 5 years)

Good music teaching has been shown to have a significant impact in improving educational attainment. It is deeply disappointing this council does not give a penny of its own money to support music education. The need for such support is especially strong this year when the music service will be undergoing a period of change and transition. This county council is planning to bid to lead the music hub in Cambridgeshire, yet will not be putting in any money other than that available through central government funding. The additional money in our budget would go to support the delivery of music teaching in Cambridgeshire, not to the hub.

Line 44 Wisbech music (£250 thousand over 5 years)

Educational achievement in Wisbech is the lowest in the County. Good music teaching has been shown to have a significant impact in improving educational attainment more generally, and is also an area where schools can make use of community resources and improve links with the local community. For these reasons we believe this funding could be a significant factor in helping to raise educational achievement in Wisbech.

Line 45 Special Education Needs provision and transport (£500 thousand over 5 years)

The Liberal Democrats would invest more in this vital service to ensure that every child with special needs gets the best education Cambridgeshire has to offer.

COMMUNITIES AND THE ELDERLY

Line 46 Libraries – new books and media (£500 thousand over 5 years)

Chronic underinvestment from the Conservative administration over a period of years has left our libraries seriously depleted and in need of proper investment. We would concentrate these additional funds on books and new media for children and young people.

Line 47 Library Access Points - improved IT (£60 thousand over 5 years)

Library Access Points are intended to facilitate electronic communication, but have been starved of adequate IT resource. The annual maintenance cost of the capital investment in IT at the volunteer-run Library Access Points is £12k. The cost of tagging existing stock is included in this. See line 64.

Line 48 New community librarian post (£230 thousand over 5 years)

The provision of a community librarian would bring substantial benefits to the service.

Line 49 Citizens' advice bureau (£500 thousand over 5 years)

The Citizens' Advice Bureau is a safeguard for the vulnerable. Investment in it is an efficient and effective way to address many of the challenges people are facing in the current financial climate. CAB saves costs to local authorities by preventing people from becoming homeless and needing to be re-housed, and also reduces levels of poverty and debt by ensuring that those who need and are eligible to claim benefits do so.

Line 50 enabling better dementia care (£830 thousand over 5 years)

At present the Lead Mental Health GP's current business case for training dementia care staff in homes cannot get passed because there is no ring-fenced budget for training. This means that essential training cannot get done despite the CCC's supposed commitment to our dementia review and to the mental health strategy paper, where training was emphasised. If you have trained personnel rather than untrained you are likely to get better clinical and therefore cost outcomes.

Line 51 Increased use of concessionary fares (see line 23)

Line 52 Community safety in Wisbech (£310 thousand over 5 years)

This amendment recognises the need to improve people's lives in Wisbech. Burglary of homes is one of the biggest crime problems in the town, while the very large Eastern European population presents different community safety issues. We would fund two extra Police Community Safety Officers for the town so that the police and others have more officers to help improve things.

Line 53 Parish council training and development (£250 thousand over 5 years)

With the Localism Act coming into force, Parish Councils become the lead bodies to respond to their communities in progressing the new agenda. Some parish councils are struggling to cope with the increased burden of responsibility. This investment will allow the Council to develop further its work with Parish Councils and, in particular, will provide funding for organisations such as the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils to extend training programmes to help Councils become aware of the opportunities in the new climate.

CAPITAL SPENDING

Line 54 Broadband (£2 million in year 2)

This extra investment in broadband would allow us to accelerate rollout of broadband throughout Cambridgeshire. It would provide targeted extra investment for areas that the Conservatives don't cover. In order to stimulate its economic development we would provide Wisbech with the highest speed broadband outside the Cambridge area. We might also install a new high-speed broadband connection to Orchard Park, for example, which, despite being almost adjacent to the science park, relies on a 5km approx. cable connection from it that results in very low broadband speeds.

Line 55 Wisbech freight and passenger rail (£6 million over 2 years)

Re-opening the rail line between March and Wisbech will connect residents easily by train to Peterborough, Cambridge and London. The County Council should commit to invest half of the £12m that ATOC says the line would cost to re-open. The benefits are huge: businesses will find it easier and cheaper to do business, potential skilled employees will be more likely to take jobs in Wisbech and it will be easier to attract and keep good teachers for the town's schools.

Line 56 Transport interchanges (£5 million over 4 years)

We would invest heavily in transport interchanges of varying size and scope, in rural areas and Cambridge necklace villages, as a structure for maximizing integrated transport systems including rail, community transport, cycling, and buses under a Quality Contracts system. The purpose would be two-fold: firstly, essential access to transport for isolated and vulnerable people and secondly, encouraging modal shift away from the private car. Design would need to be tailored on a local basis according to opportunity and need.

Line 57 community transport kick start (£1 million over 3 years)

We propose a kick-start fund to allow enhancement of community transport services. We would work on the basis of partnership and dialogue with the county's many experienced Community Transport providers who have a wealth of knowledge of local transport needs.

Line 58 electric city shuttle bus (£300 thousand in year 1)

We would reinstate the city shuttle bus service, which serves a pedestrianized area that the commercial transport network cannot access. In order to improve air-quality in the city centre and increase awareness of zero-emission vehicles, we would invest in a state-of-the-art electric bus (and charge-point) for the shuttle service. Electric buses are ideally suited to "shuttle" services.

Line 59 The Chisholm Trail (£4 million over 5 years)

Completion of the Chisholm Trail is an ambitious and necessary project. Now that Chesterton Station is poised to get the go-ahead this strategic cycle route can wait no longer. The trail would provide a fundamental north-south axis for sustainable and easy movement across a rapidly expanding and vehicle-congested Cambridge City. The Trail would join up the key employment centres of the Science Park, the CB1 area and Addenbrooke's hospital, linking also the Orchard Park entrance to the Busway and the proposed Chesterton Station. The current cumbersome driving route would be replaced by a quick cycle route benefiting drivers and cyclists, as road space is freed up. We would seek to fund a feasibility study for a bridge over the River Cam and anticipate a section by section completion of the route, as opportunities arise. The economic case for this project is overwhelming.

Line 60 strategic cycle links (£3 million over 5 years)

We would immediately implement a package of measures to upgrade and complete key cycle links. We would also replicate the outstanding work of the Bike-it officer which is critical to behaviour change and encouragement of cycling take-up where new cycling infrastructure has been provided. This fund would anticipate opportunities to provide surface upgrades to existing off-road paths which have the potential to accommodate more long-distance cycling into major centres of employment, and across villages to key rural rail stations.

Line 61 Pavement improvements (£2.5 million over 5 years)

The County Council needs to invest more than it is planning to in maintaining existing pavements. They are in a terrible state, way beyond what would be acceptable on a road, and desperately need the extra funding.

Line 62 solar PV (£1 million in year 1)

Our energy efficiency team (line 20) would rapidly deploy Solar PV in year one. We have invested almost the maximum amount into large buildings on the County estate. We would go even further but large parts of the estate are under review and we would therefore await the outcomes of these reviews before extending this program.

Line 63 school maintenance and energy efficiency (£10 million over 5 years)

The Council retains the responsibility to maintain the majority of its schools and has fallen well behind schedule. We would increase the sums available for school maintenance and would prioritise maintenance that has an energy-efficient component, investing an additional £4M in years one and two. Three quarters of the council's energy spending is on schools, yet they are the least energy-efficient part of the estate. While we do not pay directly for this spending as it comes from school budgets, we do pay the carbon tax on this spending. Our up-front £4M investment would deliver a five year payback. The council would recoup 50% of its outlay by allowing schools to keep 50% of the revenues saved over that period and 100% thereafter, to incentivise rapid uptake. After 2 years of planning the administration has only managed a negligible program of investment in school buildings. Our energy efficiency team (line 20) would allow us to go further and faster in this area than the administration intends to.

Line 64 Library Access Points - IT improvements (£100 thousand in year 1)

Library Access Points are intended to facilitate electronic communication, but have been starved of adequate IT resource. Installing better IT at the volunteer-run Library Access Points would cost circa £100k in capital (1 machine per LAP x 10 LAPs).

Line 65 voluntary sector kick-start (£1 million over 5 years)

Nationally the Conservatives trumpet the "Big Society" but locally they are gutting the voluntary sector. We would provide a £1M fund of capital grants to be provided where voluntary sector organisations can demonstrate that they have a credible plan to deliver benefits of strategic importance to the council.

Line 66 Devolving local highways decisions to lowest level (£790 thousand over 5 years)

Devolution of Highways decision making to the lowest possible level is in the spirit of localism and should be extended. We are content with the investment for 2012-2013, which will give an opportunity for proper governance arrangements to be put in place. After that, the investment should be increased to allow local communities to put in place a number of long overdue schemes that meet their needs. We would increase the level of funding to £500k from 2013/14 onwards.

CAPITAL SPENDING

Line 67 Financing of prudential borrowing (variable)

There is sufficiency to withdraw from the Invest to Transform contingency reserve. We would use transfers from it to offset the up-front cost of pushing forward with transformative investments in years 1 to 3, smoothing out the spending profile over the course of the 5-year IPP. These transfers are well within the prudent limits of the contingency reserve, leaving sufficient room to deal with additional contingencies as they arise. By the 5th year our revenue account is in credit and the cumulative spend over the five years marginally lower than that of the administration.

Affordability

The proposals set out here constitute a balanced budget taking into account the Administration's proposal and the amendments, additions and deletions suggested in our alternative proposal. Our spending proposals are affordable because of our plans to eliminate corporate waste and inefficiency. Our energy investment drive would generate big savings. We would get a return on our investment in broadband by using an equity arrangement rather than a grant. We would use a Quality Contract to get best value from the local bus monopoly, and demand a fair return for the Park and Ride. In terms of capital savings, we have chosen not to make an extra £25M investment in Northstowe, and support the more cost-efficient, less environmentally harmful alternative to the Ely Bypass – the Underpass option. These savings fund our priorities.

Strategic objectives

The current objectives are too diffuse and general to constitute clear objectives and suffer from a lack of focus. We regret the decision in 2011 to delete reference to "meeting the challenges of climate change and enhancing the natural environment" in the strategic objectives, which we would reinstate.

Public consultation

We have looked at the results of the SIMALTO consultation and consider that our proposals broadly reflect its priorities.

Last year we proposed to invest heavily in adult care, roads, libraries and buses, priorities which were consistent with the views of the public. The administration, now that it has dropped its commitment to a 5-year council tax freeze, has been able to reduce the cuts in these areas. Our amendment will go further to meet public needs and expectations.

We have prioritised transport as a means for young people to gain employment and skills, and for older people and families to access hospitals and the resources of the wider community. The consultation exercise shows that the public do not want this kind of service to be reduced.

The consultation indicated no great enthusiasm for additional spending on further "development" at this time. Informal consultation also suggests that a pay rise for councillors is not a priority for the public, although this question was not specifically asked in the SIMALTO exercise.

Finally, it is interesting - and heartening - that the results of the public consultation are consistently altruistic, and although SIMALTO did not specifically ask about inequality, we consider our investment in Wisbech to be in keeping with the spirit of its findings.

Community Impact

Having considered our proposals in outline none of them have a negative discriminatory effect. Many of them will have a positive discriminatory effect, however, in terms of tackling inequality, enabling people to access the wider community, and tackling rural isolation, as well as benefitting two specific groups - young people and the elderly.

By reversing the cut to bus services and providing extra funding for a radically enhanced rural transport network, we would not merely *talk about* social mobility but provide the real

mobility that enables it. This would have a positive discriminatory effect on almost every group there is, including young people, the elderly, those with mobility issues, and more.

Investing more in the pupil premium and keeping more youth clubs open would have a positive discriminatory effect on young people, as would our plans to invest in music and prevent youth offending. Providing free transport for young people seeking education and employment would have a pronounced positive effect on disadvantaged members of this demographic. Our disabled access fund would have a positive discriminatory effect, as would our investment in Special Education Needs transport.

Investment in Dementia Care would benefit service users, and our extra funding for the Citizens' Advice Bureau would have a positive discriminatory effect on an extremely wide range of often disadvantaged groups. Investing more in concessionary fares on our improved public transport network would benefit elderly people in rural areas, especially those who cannot drive; they would be able to access the wider community and its resources.

The transformational package of investments targeted at Wisbech would have a marked beneficial effect on residents of this disadvantaged area, which scores highly on almost every index of deprivation. It would allow access to London, Cambridge and Peterborough via the rail line. Being a part of this wider transport network would enhance teacher retention at a stroke.

We think this county is capable of going further faster than the Conservative plans set out, and doing so in an equitable way. It is imperative that the less affluent parts of Cambridgeshire are not left behind in the race for economic growth and success, and in order to achieve this we must provide a basic level of transport provision right across the County, not scattered *grands projets*. Our budget amendment would better achieve these ends.

Risk

Our proposals in general are considered to have the same level of manageable risk as the administration's proposals, but particular attention is drawn to these three areas of 'stretch' which would require sound management:

1. Our energy efficiency savings targets are demanding. That is why we have included additional project resources to ensure their delivery.
2. Introducing a Quality Contract scheme for buses is a challenge, however there is an established track record in London that we can build on. We have resourced a higher level of project management including legal resource in order to tackle these challenges head on and achieve our aims.
3. It is early in the day to state this but there is no reason why, if £20M of taxpayers' money is being put on the table by this authority, it cannot have more leverage and negotiate a better deal for taxpayers. The additional £2M we have set aside for extra improvements on top of the administration's proposals would assist in this.