



ISLAND INDEPENDENTS

PEOPLE BEFORE POLITICS

2017

KEY PRIORITIES

This document sets out the key priorities of the Island Independents for the period 2017-2021. The Island Independents offer Islanders strong and effective leadership and direction based on local consensus and focussed on the needs and wishes of residents in line with our core value of putting people before politics.

-  1. Supporting economic growth and jobs.
-  2. Protecting key transport routes.
-  3. Keeping children safe and improving their education.
-  4. Protecting the most vulnerable with health and social care.
-  5. Delivering housing in the right places, for the right people.
-  6. Encouraging and promoting healthy lifestyles and activity.
-  7. Protecting our natural environment.
-  8. Keeping the Island a safe place to live work and visit.

1. Supporting economic growth and local jobs

Since 2013 we have shielded the Island from the most harmful Government cuts, and through innovative financial strategies and a strong Medium term financial plan created a foundation platform for economic success, ensuring that all the resources available to the Island are used in the most effective and efficient way.

We have created strong working relationships with Island Business', establishing a memorandum of understanding with the Chamber of Commerce and Federation of Small Business.

An emergency budget

We will commit to undertaking an interim budget to seek to reverse the most damaging cuts imposed by the temporary conservative administration, where those cuts are not beyond the point of no return, and to reassess the council's capital spending priorities. We know this is possible from the alternative budget we put before the Council in February which contained many of these proposals but were rejected by the Conservative Liberal Democrat and UKIP alliance.

Regeneration

We will carry forward and continue the regeneration agenda we set in motion in 2016 to improve our towns, retain the Island's natural beauty and support a growing and thriving economy. We recognise that regeneration activity must be sustainable and must respect the local environment which is in itself a key part of the Island's economy. Building on our assisted area status, we will seek a funding review incorporating an approach to the solent local enterprise partnership for an Island deal.

Finance

We will build upon the sound financial strategy we put in place in 2016 to protect Council run services from government austerity and limit cuts to front line services where-ever possible. We will grow the Island's tax base through innovative financial management.

Value from the highways PFI

We will investigate any potential savings that could be achieved from re-financing the highways PFI contract including any necessary negotiations with the Department for transport relating to the implications for the PFI grant. Savings released in this way will then be put into supporting the needs of residents.

2. Protecting key transport routes

In the last term of Council we successfully secured the funding to replace the floating bridge which would have otherwise been decommissioned this year, with no planned replacement by the previous Conservative Council. We supported the Transport and Infrastructure task force and have been instrumental in securing the future of Island Line with the possibility of the service being extended in the future.

Ferries

We will seek to invest with partners in Red Funnel to help generate and keep as much revenue on the Island and for the Island as possible.

We fully acknowledge that the Red Funnel sale timing is less than perfect in the middle of local election. However we are committed to using all the means at our disposal to mount a successful bid, if it proves to be financially beneficial to the Island.

Fixed Link

We will ask the Island community if they wish to have a fixed link, and will support a feasibility study, if at no cost to the Council tax Payer.

We will continue to investigate all possibilities for cross-Solent travel and pursue continued investments and improvements into our travel infrastructure when they arise.

Floating Bridge

Following the successful bid by the Independent administration to secure funding for our new Floating Bridge, we will be holding discussions with schools in Cowes and East Cowes to establish an 'accompanied child' Floating Bridge card to ensure parents are not penalised for taking the healthy option of walking their children to schools.

We will seek to prevent future rises in Floating Bridge fares by increasing advertising revenue on the Bridge.

3. Keeping children safe and improving their education.

In 2013 25% of schools on the Island were left inadequate by the conservatives. Today just one school remains to be lifted out of that status. Standards have improved across the board. Early Years results now exceed the national average and Primary Schools are meeting and starting to exceed those standards.

Schools

We will continue to assist schools with the upward trend of improvement put in place in the last four years and to continue to hold the highest aspirations for our children and young people. We will continue to support and scrutinise our education providers.

Skills

We will seek to support and develop opportunities for young people to train and remain on the Island post 16. The Island has already received £10m funding for the new CECAMM College in Whippingham under the Island Independent administration.

We will support further initiatives that provide such training opportunities in other sectors. We want our young people to have the same opportunities on Island as off Island and to grow their skills, lives and families here. Our policy is to support increased higher education provision on the Island to support young people's aspirations and entry into employment.

Protect

Under the previous Conservative administration Children's Services were deemed inadequate. While in office the Independent Administration reversed that position. We will continue to improve the safety of our children and ensure suitable systems are in place to protect children in their homes and in care wherever possible on the Island.

4. Protecting the most vulnerable with health and social care.

We have consistently resisted NHS services being moved to the mainland. This year we unanimously voted against the Conservative cuts to Social Care and proposed a fully costed alternative budget to protect our most vulnerable.

NHS

We will support and protect the Island's NHS and resist the loss of services to the mainland. We believe that just with treating illness you must look to cause of the problem not just mask the symptoms. We will continue to make a case for fair funding for our NHS.

Independent Living

We will promote opportunities for people to remain supported in their own homes for longer and seek to take pressure off already overstretched NHS services.

5. Delivering housing in the right places, for the right people.

Since 2013 we have strengthened and improved our planning system making it work better for residents and business'. We have improved planning policy, including improved standards for parking on new developments and contributions to affordable housing. We have changed policy to give Islanders priority over our limited Social Housing stock.

Housing

We will build upon our housing delivery policy to deliver affordable and market housing, and work closely with Registered Social, Private Landlords and Island developers ensuring that local people, particularly those in their twenties and thirties have access to housing they can afford in the right places.

Planning

We will review the Island Plan Core Strategy Planning Policies as agreed by following the Island Independents motion to March Full Council. We will ensure all elected Councillors are fully trained to make decisions in relation to planning matters.

We will build a strong multidisciplinary housing and planning enforcement team to ensure breaches in planning are dealt with according to policy in a swift and effective way. Strong enforcement is key to an effective Planning system. We must make sure that action is taken when there are breaches of planning rules that damage the local environment.

6. Encouraging and promoting healthy lifestyles and activity

We have invested in our leisure centres and sports facilities since 2013 and seen continued improvement in the take-up of facilities. We assisted in the transfer of assets such as Waterside pool and West Wight Sports Centre to the community to keep them open during difficult financial times.

Sports and Leisure

We will investigate further additional grant funding opportunities (e.g. through Sport England) to enable all the Island's sports and leisure facilities to be transformed into nation leading services aimed at improving the overall health and wellbeing of Island residents of all ages and providing sporting opportunities for our youth.

Ryde Arena

We will seek to ensure that Ryde Arena and the facilities it provides are brought back into community use and support any steps that will successfully put the Arena into local community control.

7. Protecting our natural environment.

We have a strong track record of protecting our natural environment. In 2013 we prevented the development of an Asphalt Plant next to the River Medina. We were the first administration to introduce an Executive role to focus on Sustainability. We invested in solar farms, tidal energy and introduced community growing schemes.

Fracking

We will take all available steps to prevent Fracking taking place on the Island which poses a serious risk to Island geology and the water supply.

Water Quality

We will support and promote schemes that improve our bathing and drinking water quality and will seek to protect the water table through stringent policy.

8. Keeping the Island a safe place to live and ensuring Island services, where possible, are run from the Island.

We will resist the merger of the fire service with Hampshire and seek to retain Island fire stations. We will investigate the possibility of a purpose built combined Fire, ambulance and police station in Newport to maximise efficiency and accessibility.

Island Independents Values

The Independent Group promotes and embodies the following values:

Integrity

- Representing our residents and being accountable
- Striving to earn and sustain a high level of trust from residents we represent

Challenge

- Being the voice of local communities and residents, without a party whip
- Providing a strong focus on scrutiny and accountability for fair decisions
- Challenging the establishment through our focus on real issues, not politics

Responsive

- Engaging and communicating with our residents to address their needs
- Ensuring our relevance by being flexible and adaptable to changing needs and priorities
- Demonstrating innovation and creativity in the delivery of projects, development opportunities and representation

Collaborative

- Respecting, valuing and celebrating the differences of our membership and committing to treating all members with equality, dignity and respect
- Working together by consensus to achieve the best outcomes for local residents
- Actively working with others both inside and outside the Council where doing so will further these aims.

Island Independents Commitment to You.

“We aren’t going to pluck promises out of the air as political parties often do. We will be realistic and tell you that we understand that the last thing people need is a list of broken promises from politicians. What the Islanders need are other Islanders, free from national party control in their corner.

We can promise that we will work to represent your views, we will fight to get the absolute best for our Wards and the Island as a whole. We will vote with our morals and integrity. We will be honest with you about what is realistic and achievable and we won’t be influenced by a party whip of any kind.”

Frequently asked questions

Q. How can you be Independent and part of a group? Surely that is a contradiction in terms?

A. The Island Independents are free from national party policy, dictats and a party whip. This means we are free to represent you first and foremost, not the interests of a national party.

Q. If you are all Independents how do you agree and get anything done?

A. Being Independent from a national party doesn't mean being independent from each other. We work by consensus which means when a policy comes forward it has been through a process where everyone's voice has been heard. This is more democratic and means all Islanders are given an equal voice by their representative.

Q. What happens if you don't agree?

A. There will be times when a member has a strong view contrary to the majority, usually because it specifically affects that members ward. If the issue cannot be resolved by making alterations to a policy because it has Island wide implications, then that member is free to vote as they see fit. This means your Councillor will always be free to stand up for you and put the ward first.

Q. If you aren't connected to a national party then how will you make our voice heard in Government?

A. We have successfully lobbied government on a number of issues and regularly meet with ministers at the highest level. Being free from party politics has never given us any less of a voice. We are also members of the Independent group at the Local Government Association which gives us a joint voice with other Councils to lobby on national issues.

Q. How do I know what my Councillor's political views are if they aren't in a party?

A. Every political group or party has a diverse range of members. Island independents are no different and we celebrate our diversity. Our view is that National party views shouldn't come into local politics as our primary purpose is to represent Island residents. However, if you are interested in your Councillor's views please ask! We will always be open and honest with you.



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