

They didn't set out to Wreck ...

They don't set out to be wreckers - but that's the result of twenty years Lib-Dem* control at County Hall.

In the last four years they've raised the council tax by 50 per cent (even the Labour Government's taxes took eight years to go up 60 per cent). Yet services seem to be getting worse. It's not the fault of the hard-working staff. They need leadership from councillors. Numerous reports say the Lib-Dems and Independents just aren't providing it. So what are they doing wrong?

Fire Brigade

An external inspector described it as "wholly ineffective", and Council Leaders don't oversee it properly - "ideas for change are never taken seriously." The result: we're likely to lose not only our fire control room to the mainland, but the whole fire service.

Roads and Pavements

A disgrace. The council was criticized three years ago for not spending the money allocated for repairs. Now officers have advised a costly long-term private finance deal to put right the neglect of ages.

Planning

Development is proceeding apace, encroaching onto green field sites and causing congestion where inadequate parking is provided. Now the Government-appointed regional assembly has suggested a minimum of 10,400 houses over 20 years. Lib-Dems and Independents on the IW Council said 14-27,000 was their preferred option!

Schools

Even the Lib-Dems' portfolio-holder agrees that standards are

too low and County Hall leadership has been wanting. This did not happen overnight - but only when threatened with losing control of schools did Lib-Dems take notice. Our children have been failed by Lib-Dem councillors.

Tourism

And then there's the tourist tax. Lib-Dems published a completely unthought-through proposal, without sufficient detail, obtaining damaging publicity for the Island. Wholesale revolt as Islanders realise that jobs in tourism-related businesses will be hit hard. Now the Lib-Dems are back-peddalling, claiming it will be very low. In which case, how will the collection costs be met? **It really is time to put Common Sense Conservatives into County Hall.**

*since 2001 includes Independents who joined up with Lib-Dems just after being elected

The REAL two horse race - for number 10



■ The Ashley Scurry isn't the only Two-Horse Race!

Lib-Dems love to boast that only they can beat the Tories. At this election it's only the Conservatives who can beat Labour. Lib-Dems are so far behind that they cannot form a Government. And on the Island they've failed to contest a quarter of seats on the Council, with their councillors running away from two seats which they currently hold.

Tony Blair is all talk, but only the Conservatives can get him out of Number Ten!

'You couldn't make it up' - Chronicles of County Hall Waste

County Hall has become a byword for waste and inefficiency under Lib-Dem* control. Here are just a few examples of waste from recent years, with cost to the council tax payer in red:

- Office move for Highways staff (budgetted at £25,000) - **£250,000**
- Upgrading Coppins Bridge traffic lights computer - **£100,000 and still congestion worsens**
- Prince Consort sold by Council for £100,000 and resold for £1m - **£900,000 loss to council tax payers**
- The 'Rolls-Royce layby' at Elenors Grove and 'Ryde Gateway' project - **£250,000**
- Road surfacing **£300,000** over budget
- Enterprise House leased at **£300,000 a year** and then left empty
- The Computer Mountain - **uncosted**. But think of the cost of renting the building to store it in!
- Social services taxi bill - **£30,000 a month**
- Revolving door officers and payoff to sacked Chief Executive - **they say you're not allowed to know!** But four chief executives in three years don't come (or go!) cheap
- Schools reorganization reports - at least **£½ million**
- Newport traffic experiment - **£450,000 (and how much to put it right again?)**
- Music Festival (budgetted £20,000) - **£380,000**
- Northwood House (when it was discovered that the Council has tried to sell a building it didn't own, they had to compensate the prospective buyer) - **unknown**
- New video system at County Hall - **£50,000**
- Seaview Toilets - not sold for the best price - **est £50,000**
- And most recently neglect has led to Ryde Theatre being held up by scaffolding - **what will it cost to repair?**

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What each Party says about Council Tax

The national plans of each party for the future of Council Tax are:

The Labour Party promise a one-off payment of £200 to every pensioner household, to be paid at Christmas 2005.

They could win the General Election, so they could keep this promise.

Conservatives will cut council tax bills by 50 per cent (up to a maximum rebate of £500) for every pensioner household every year with no means test. We can win the Election, and we would keep this promise.

Liberal Democrats have said they would replace council tax with extra income tax. It is estimated that this would cost more for most two-income households. They cannot keep this promise because they have no prospect of forming a Government.

In the budget Gordon Brown also promised other benefits to pensioners (such as free off-peak local bus travel). Conservatives back these proposals.

For further information visit KeepAndrew@IsleofWight.com