FOCUS
On Westgate Ward

Liberal Democrats
From Councillor **Michael Dixey**
and the local team



Restoring our waters



Southern Water was fined £2.4 million in September after multiple incidents of sewage pollution around Whitstable and Faversham.

The case was brought by the Environmental Agency (EA) with the support of Canterbury City Council's Environmental Team who played an important role in getting the case to court.

The EA has been keen to stress that this support helped build up the successful court case.

Councillor Michael Dixey said, "The water companies are at last being held to account for their years of under investment and the resulting pollution of our rivers and coastline. They have been putting shareholders' dividends and directors' bonuses before the safety of the public".

Profit must not be put before the environment, public health or billpayers

The privatised water industry model has completely collapsed. Since privatisation, water companies have accumulated £70 billion in debt while handing out £83 billion in dividends. Up to 28% of customer bills go toward servicing corporate debt, rather than being used to prevent the 3 billion litres of water which leak away daily and the raw sewage which continues to poison our rivers and coastlines.
Since November 2022 Lib Dems have called on the Government to:

Immediately replace Ofwat with a new Clean Water Authority, with real powers to end sewage discharges, ban unjustified bonuses, and hold executives legally accountable.

Convert failing water companies into Mutually Owned Public Benefit Corporations - jointly owned by customers, professionally managed, with surpluses reinvested in the network rather than paid out as dividends.

Introduce a nationwide single social tariff to protect vulnerable households from unaffordable bills, alongside new transparency requirements on sewage spill data and a forever chemical restriction and remediation fund.

Illegal e-bikes

The dangerous use of illegal e-bikes is an increasing problem on the streets of Canterbury - often used by fast-food delivery riders. This is a major problem in the pedestrianised areas of the city.

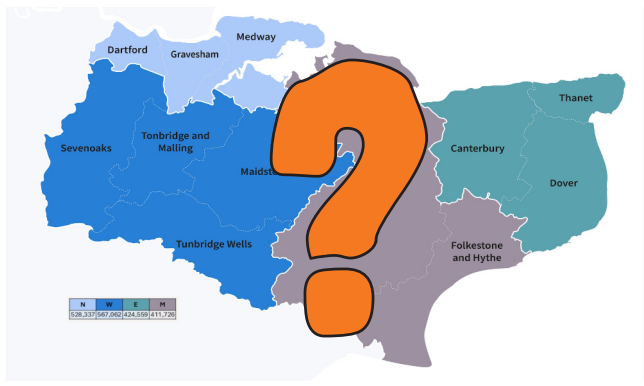


The sale of these electric bikes is completely unchecked. Many of these e-bikes have been illegally modified and are capable of reaching speeds of 50mph. They pose a serious risk to the safety of pedestrians.

At our recent Party Conference in Brighton, the Liberal Democrats have agreed a policy to ban the online sale of high-powered e-bikes and conversion kits, and to give the police increased powers to intercept and confiscate illegal bikes.

Pause on Council Reorganisation

The Government has announced that the proposals to merge Canterbury City Council with Thanet and Dover councils into an East Kent Unitary Council has been 'paused'. These proposals include the abolition of Kent County Council.



We have been given no further information on whether this is just a temporary postponement or whether the reorganisation will be scrapped. This is leading to great deal of uncertainty for council staff and councillors, but it seems there will be City Council elections in May 2027.

Canterbury City Council, like councils across Kent, have spent enormous amounts of money, time and effort preparing for the reorganisation. The Liberal Democrats are demanding that the Government reimburse them for the costs incurred.

Levelling Up Fund Update

In January 2023, our council was awarded Levelling Up Funding by central government of £19.9 million to transform the city's heritage and public spaces to reflect our status as a World Heritage Site.

The funding covers:

- the restoration of both Canterbury Castle and the Poor Priests' Hospital
- the opening of the new square at Westgate Towers
- improvements to the landscaping of a number of our gardens including Dane John, Solly's Orchard, Greyfriars, the Tower of St Mary Magdalene Garden and the Three Cities Garden
- the installation of the Aphra Behn statue in the High Street
- Riverside and other cycle routes and cycle storage improvements
- Improved signage for pedestrians
- and many other improvements.

The work is due to be completed this autumn.

Working hard all year round - not just at election time

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Westgate Parks Award

Westgate Parks has been awarded the prestigious Green Flag status which recognises parks and gardens with high standards of management, environmental practices and which involve the community to create places for people and wildlife to enjoy.



The gardens are owned by Canterbury City Council and are managed in partnership with volunteer organisations.

The gardens were gifted to the Council by the Williamson family along with Tower House. The family founded the Canterbury tannery in 1790 which closed in 2002.

Lib Dems Announce *New* Asylum Policy



City councillors James Flanagan, Lee Castle and Mike Sole joined Ed Davey at the launch of our new Asylum Policy at a damp St.Margaret's Bay

Ed Davey recently visited East Kent to announce a new policy to restore safety, order and fairness to our asylum system, and to take on the divisive rhetoric that is tearing our communities and our country apart.

We are calling for the UK to enter the EU's landmark new Migration and Asylum Pact. For over a decade, the EU has been working on a new approach to restore order. If the UK were to join, we would be able to:

- Do our bit as part of a Europe-wide effort to look after refugees and asylum seekers
- Return asylum seekers arriving by small boat to the first EU country they entered.
- Access all asylum seekers' biometric data to see who they are and whether they have already been denied asylum elsewhere.

This is the solution we need to stop the flow of small boats and implement an asylum system that is fair and effective for all.

We can be humane, orderly and cost-effective. Fair to refugees. Fair to communities. Fair to taxpayers. That is what joining this pact delivers. Not the divisive and destructive rhetoric of Reform and the Conservatives, which has so far cost British taxpayers billions and delivered no solutions.

Charter Trustees

With the possible merging of Canterbury City Council into a new East Kent Unitary Council, we need to protect our city status, the roles of the Lord Mayor and the Sheriff, and our other historic traditions.

We have received legal advice that this should be done by appointing "Charter Trustees".

Charter Trustees are local councillors appointed to preserve historic, civic and ceremonial traditions of a council which has been abolished following local government reorganisation. Their duties are limited to ceremonial activities.

Rebuilding our ties with the EU

The damage to the British economy caused by Brexit is clear – slower economic growth, far more red tape for UK businesses trading with Europe, long delays for travellers to Europe at our airports and ferry ports, and much more.

"So far, the Labour government has shown all the ambition of a dormouse" **says Michael Dixey**. "Through their timidity, they have failed spectacularly to undo the damage done to our economy by Brexit."

The Liberal Democrats in parliament are making the case for both stronger trade and defence ties between the UK and the EU. This includes us joining the Customs Union with the EU, our biggest trading partner, as a first step to joining the Single Market

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In this uncertain world, we should be at the heart of Europe, not on the fringes.



Ed Davey's challenge to Andy Burnham

Liberal Democrat leader Ed Davey has challenged new Prime Minister Andy Burnham to change the way British politics work.

"If Andy Burnham is serious about changing the way we do politics –

"About ending the performative hostility and instead working across parliament to meet the challenges we face –

"If he is serious, then my door is open.

"Our broken political system is the reason why so much in our country isn't working the way it should, and why it never seems to get fixed.

"It's why water companies are getting away with polluting our environment with their filthy sewage. And why big banks and fossil fuel companies make record profits while everyone else struggles.

"It's why the social care crisis never gets fixed and the NHS suffers as a result. And



why we can't build the affordable homes we need, in the places that need them.

"It's why our immigration system is such a mess, and why our relationship with Europe is so badly broken.

"It really matters for solving the problems that ordinary people face every day. It cannot be ignored.

"Because the best way to make any of those things happen is to put real power in people's hands – and to hold the already powerful properly to account.

"So my challenge to Andy Burnham – as he makes the critical decision about what kind of Prime Minister he wants to be – is this:

"Be bold. Be brave.

"Fix the broken electoral system by introducing proportional representation. To give everyone an equal vote and an equal voice in our democracy, and make sure no politician or political party can afford to take them for granted.

"And do it now. Don't wait until it is too late. Don't wait until after the next election – when you might be powerless to do anything about it."

Working hard all year round - not just at election time