Democracy, Innovation and Delivery

The role of a directly elected executive mayor has been created in the acknowledgement that traditional council-lead local government has failed. As Mayor for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, I will seek to create a new vision of how local government prioritises, and delivers local services.

This new vision is characterised by the three words **Democracy, Innovation and Delivery.**

Democracy

The Internet and Mobile technology means that everyone can participate in key local decisions. For instance a "Twitter Poll" can be set-up in minutes and can collect the responses in real-time at almost no cost. The development of a feature rich electronic consultation platform would cost little and offer real-time response to policy proposals.

- No longer does the electorate have to balance the various policies of an individual party or councillor when the make a once in 4 year vote.
- No longer do the people who are effective lobbyists and publicists have a disproportionate influence on local policy.

So the electorate not the councillors can decide:

- If paying more for road maintenance is better value for money than repairs to cars.
- How many and where new homes are built.
- Whether the region should be a high growth centre or become a backwater.
- How much we are prepared to pay for the care of the vulnerable.
- Prioritising Training so we have the physical skills our society needs, without having to steal them from overseas.

The local electorate cannot and should not override decisions made by the wider public. For example, national priorities have to be implemented even in the face of local objections. (No one wants the sewage farm near them, but everyone benefits from the health benefits. The sewage farm has to be located somewhere!)

Using the Internet, the briefings formerly reserved for the councillors can be made available to the public; the public must be trusted with these key decisions.

Innovation

Virtually all of the services offered by local government have not changed in 50 years. Public Transport is buses and trains, Education is by pedantry, Social Care is in person, with little use of technology, and the list goes on…
There are many examples of innovation in service provision around the world, yet they fail to be implemented in Cambridgeshire, whether it is in transport, education or social care. For example:

- Use of shuttle minibuses in cities worldwide offer better services than empty "Routemasters".
- Use of computer-aided learning.

- Use of "SeeSpeak" communication devices to maintain contact with the house bound.
- Use of manufactured homes to reduce housing costs.

…there are many, many more new ideas that Cambridgeshire can be at the forefront of, rather than the laggard.

Delivery

With a real time democratic process giving clear direction and mandate for action, the delivery of services becomes easier, with less see-sawing of policy, when control of the council changes.

The mandate of the Mayor and councillors becomes one of effective delivery. They cannot hide behind arguments about balancing priorities and lack of resources.

To ensure transparency, virtually all the activities of the local authority should be visible to the electorate. The monitoring of the authorities' activities can in effect be "crowd-sourced". Individuals or groups might check contracts for loopholes. They can check their experience of delivery against the promises. They can suggest innovations and changes that might improve effectiveness or efficiency.

For a large, poorly connected county such as Cambridgeshire, could services be better sourced locally, rather than centralised? Could towns large and small, and even villages, sort their own school transport, social care, etc., under a delegated structure? Would this improve services, their responsiveness and create community? Should the Mayor trial this delegation?

Enabling, not disabling community initiatives

Local authorities must provide their statutory services, they can, but rarely do, provide additional services, and third parties often offer complimentary services. Should local authority assist them?
For example:

- Planning permission is a key risk factor for third parties considering a project. Shouldn't the local authority HELP these people find appropriate locations, rather than the current adversarial approach to planning permission?
- Shouldn't the local authority use its administrative resources and buying power to help volunteer activity by helping with insurance, "form-filling" and other barriers, rather than adding to the administrative burden they face?

Initiatives for consideration

Rather than a series of policies and promises, this manifesto provides a series of questions to the electorate about how they want Cambridgeshire to develop, and what initiatives they would like to consider. Inclusion doesn't mean that the initiative WILL be done; just that it might be put to the public for consideration. Other ideas for initiatives or changes to priorities will come from the public; these too will be scrutinised by the electorate in the same way.

1. Spacial Planning

1. Growth or status quo (by locality)
Whilst central government has mandated that Cambridgeshire HAS to increase its population by a minimum level, Cambridgeshire could choose to grow more. It also has discretion on where the growth takes place. Effective planning should seek to ensure that housing, employment and infrastructure are in balance. (Something that hasn't happened over the last few decades in Cambridgeshire.) Growth could improve some communities, justifying better infrastructure such as new schools, medical centres and roads. Other places might have surpluses, such as jobs, which need housing and infrastructure to create balance.

2. Service rich accessible housing, not dispersed travel to everything
Contrary to current priorities, many people prefer to live in dense service-rich towns, rather than "Garden Villages" or "Garden Suburbs". Would creating dense New Towns be preferred to continuing the current dispersal of housing across the county?

3. Enabling policy
The county planning policy could be one of enabling, rather than restriction. When someone want to build something, we should offer them the places we prefer it to be, not the current wasteful process of them finding a location, putting in a planning application and having it repeatedly refused until they find an acceptable location. E.g. If the electorate wants a 3000 capacity arena, why shouldn't the electorate pre-emptively give planning permission on the location it wants it to be. Thus removing many risks and costs to the potential developer?

2. Housing

1. Emergency housing using mobile tech (park homes and caravans)
Putting families into inappropriate emergency "Bed and Breakfast" accommodation is damaging to the family, and expensive. Would the electorate support the use of mobile homes located on temporary sites?

2. New build using manufactured homes
Traditional homes are expensive to build and the rate of building is limited to the availability of skills. Manufactured homes, transported complete to the site and simply connected to services, are fast and inexpensive. Moving to a style not determined by historical vernacular can also improve cost and comfort. Should Cambridgeshire pioneer these homes? Should we seek to establish a manufacturer in the county?

3. HMO for suitable people
Houses of Multiple Occupancy are suited to many people. However, the "shared house" of my student days are rare because of regulations. Should the county relax the enforcement of these regulations to encourage the supply of this type of accommodation?

4. Self-building
Enabling people to use their skills and time to make owning their own home affordable has been effective on a small scale. Should Cambridgeshire ensure adequate provision of building plots for self-build homes?

5. Novel construction
Houses are typically built using methods and technologies that are centuries old (timber, brick and tiles). Offices, factories and other buildings have adopted many other materials, from steel and aluminium, through high-tech ceramics to fabrics and composite materials. Should Cambridgeshire allow or even encourage the use of novel materials and construction methods?

6. Finance from other sources (Real Lettings Company)
Companies like Resonance Ltd and Civitas have financed £100 million worth of social housing using finance from "impact investors". Should Cambridgeshire seek to use this and other novel finance sources to finance social housing on a scale much larger than the government finance offered in the Devolution deal?

3. Transport

1. Prioritisation on transport network improvements
Within the constraints of central government policy, Cambridgeshire can allocate resources to improve some of the county's transport infrastructure. Should national, urban or rural transport be prioritised? Should spending be on improving sustainable systems, rather than petrol-based systems?

2. Adequate car parking at all train stations and key bus stops
Every rail station in Cambridgeshire has inadequate car parking for the current demand, resulting in neighbouring roads being littered with commuter cars. Should Cambridgeshire ensure adequate parking, or should it try providing shuttle buses to and from the station at peak times?

3. Out-of-town modal interchanges (coach, bus, car and cycle)
National and trunk bus routes have traditionally terminated in city centres. Should these be moved to edge-of-town sites, where people can change to local transport without going into the centre of town?

4. Self-drive minibuses for rural public transport
Should Cambridgeshire try to encourage rural communities to provide their own public transport, by providing self-drive minibuses which can pick up commuters in the morning and return them in the evening, thus providing inexpensive regular services to hard to provision rural centres, and reducing single occupancy cars on the busy commuter routes?

5. Shuttle minibuses for urban transport
In many cities around the world, public transport is supplied by shuttle minibuses that go after a short wait or when they are full, rather than the traditional UK bus system. Should this system replace buses and many taxis?

6. Electric cycles

Cycles can offer an inexpensive way of reducing the impact of commuting. Electric cycles can broaden the appeal of using cycles for local transport. Should Cambridgeshire provide encouragement such as charging points or even subsidise the purchase of electric cycles?

7. Electric "pods"

Extending the electric cycle idea, should Cambridgeshire seek the provision of weather-proof electric tricycles and quadcycles to further encourage this sustainable transport?

8. Electric "routes" segregated from motor vehicles

"Greenways" are routes designed specifically for cycles and similar vehicles and are many times cheaper to build and maintain than roads. Segregating these light vehicles from the legacy motor vehicles has massive safety benefits. Should funding for new roads be diverted to "Greenways" suitable for cycles and "pods"?

9. Goods delivery consolidation

Delivery vehicles now make up a large proportion of daytime traffic. A Cambridge college counted 120 deliveries in a typical day. Should the county catalyse the consolidation of deliveries at out-of-town hubs so the college only has three or four deliveries a day? Should the council subsidise consolidation or charge for deliveries to encourage changes in goods delivery?

10. Autonomous goods delivery

Whilst autonomous cars are in the news, could it be that autonomous goods delivery is an earlier win? Should recycling bins take themselves to the depot? Could Tesco deliver to the kerb, without drivers? Could the delivery system co-exist with the cycle system, rather than the legacy road system?

11. Extra council tax for better road maintenance to save money

Potholes cost lives and damage vehicles. Some estimates put the cost of potholes well above the cost of repair. However, as the costs of a pothole are paid by the driver, not the council, it looks cheaper to leave the potholes. Would the electorate vote to increase road maintenance spending to save repair costs? Shouldn't they be asked the question?

4. Social Care

1. Shift from high cost to appropriate care (NHS to social)

Councils, the NHS and other agencies have been playing a game of "Hot-Potato" with many vulnerable people. Councils try to get them into hospital and on to the NHS budget and hospitals try to get them out of hospital on to the council's budget. Others play similar games. We can ask the electorate if they are willing to raise council tax so that they save on NHS spending. And, of course, finally, the vulnerable get appropriate care.

2. Use of technology – Living aids, telemetry, Internet, mobile…

Many of the challenges facing vulnerable people can be mitigated by the appropriate deployment of technology. Ready meals, robotic vacuums, dishwashers, drink dispensers, etc., can keep people in their homes longer and reduce the cost of home help. Communications technology can mitigate isolation and safety issues. For example, SeeSpeak from a Cambridge company allows anyone to use Skype and for them to chat freely with family, friends and support staff.

3. Appropriate local provision

Many people are in inappropriate accommodation and do not get the right level of support. In many cases, this is because moving people to appropriate accommodation means moving them outside their community. Building flexible supported accommodation within the community could save money and give better service.

Would you support the building of these in your community?

5. Volunteers and alternative providers of services

Should councils encourage and support volunteers and alternative providers of services, rather than the current assumption that the council should provide everything? Historically, volunteers, businesses and other organisations have enjoyed providing many services. However, through various means, the opportunity and the rewards of doing so have been lost, often through regulation causing onerous documentation, or through funding competitive offerings. Does the electorate want services provided that are less regulated and not controlled by the council?

6. Education and Skills

1. Skills audit

The county has a demand for a range of skills from building workers to doctors, from tractor drivers to bioengineers. Yet it would appear that there is no county audit of what skills are needed and where. Should we fund such an audit?

2. Balance provision

The provision of education and training could be targeted to ensure the county's needs are met. Encouraging people to choose their education and training on anything other than demand is wasteful. Should we change provision and incentives to ensure the county provides the skills it needs, rather than relying on migrants to fill the gap?

3. Use of diverse, appropriate teaching techniques

People, subjects, skills and knowledge are diverse; how we teach them needs also to be diverse. Rote, practice, experiment, pedantry, groups, structured learning all have a role in creating a society with all of the skills (in the right numbers), that it needs. In schools, some subjects and students might be best taught through computer-aided learning, others by pedantry. Should educators and trainers be encouraged to offer more diverse and appropriate courses?

4. Use of technology

Decades ago "language labs" were shown to work for many students; today computer-assisted learning can be even more effective. Even pedantry can benefit from showing on-line videos by the best teachers in a subject. Should we invest in technology to support the current education system?

5. Focus away from education to training

Should we move the focus of 18+ from education to training for many students, thus re-stocking our trades? We need technicians, we need engineers…

6. In-work training

Cambridgeshire has a rapidly changing workplace. It is near impossible for a college to have up-to-date trainers using the current knowledge, skills and equipment. These are only available in the

workplace. Should most education and training in Cambridgeshire move to the workplace?

7. Role of Cambridge, Anglia Ruskin, Open universities, regional colleges, schools

7. Business

1. Specialism in locations
Should we encourage our towns to specialise, or should we promote all activities in all towns? If you choose specialisation, what area should that be? Here is a suggestion:

- **Peterborough** – High Value Engineering, Manufacturing, Office Services
- **Wisbech** – High Value Food Processing
- **Huntingdon** – Logistics
- **Cambridge** – Bio, Pharma, Silicon, Education
- **Northstowe** – Administration, Regional Retail
- **A Fen Town** – Elderly Care

2. Helping business find appropriate resources
Historically there are stories of businesses being turned away as their requirements did not fit the community's vision for the site they had chosen. Should the council seek to satisfy any site request? Should the council tailor the education and training given in an area to business needs? Should the council fund help for businesses to access other resources?

3. Supporting growing businesses, rather than failing ones
When should a council help business? Should it support failing businesses, or put resources in to growing ones?

4. Identifying and seeking to fix market failures
There will be products and services needed in the region that may not be supplied by the market for various reasons. Even though they would be financially viable. For example, there is no "A" list venue, like the Leeds Arena accessible to the county. There is no major exhibition space. The business networking scene is poor outside Cambridge. Should the council allocate resources to help fix this type of market failure?

5. Research and Development support
Should the council support or catalyse R&D in the area? Would it be appropriate if the R&D supported a town's specialism, e.g., Agriculture, Engineering and Manufacture, Food Processing?

8. Community

The benefits of an active community are legion. However, it seems that community activity has dropped dramatically over the last few decades. Many schools have abandoned their community activities in order to concentrate on exam league tables. Voluntary groups such as WI, WRVS, Scouts and Guides have almost disappeared or are greatly diminished. Should the council encourage and support these activities?

1. Providing enabling support
a) Insurance
Would a county-wide volunteer insurance scheme be more cost-effective than the current individual cover?
b) Admin support

Rather than add to administrative burden, should the council provide administrative assistance?

2. Digital communities
Should the council fund community building such as community websites and digital newsletters to connect people, and establish community?

3. Franchising successful initiatives
Where a group is successful, should the council seek to replicate this across the county?

4. Move delivery to the community
Should the council move more delivery functions to the community? Should some be provided in a community centre rather than centrally?

5. Champions scheme
Should the council laud people who contribute freely to the benefit of their community?

9. Leisure

1. Access to world-class venues
Cambridgeshire has no world-class leisure or sporting facilities; indeed there is not one in any adjoining county either! Should the council seek to catalyse
a) 2,500+ seat arena,
b) 20,000+ seat stadium?

2. Access to wide range of recreational facilities
Unused community facilities are simply a waste. The council could ensure these facilities are open and available to people and organisations.

3. Empower our volunteers
Should the council hand over responsibility for arts, sport and other similar activities to voluntary organisations? Do paid organisers get in the way of volunteer efforts? Has the "professionalisation" of charitable organisations resulted in killing volunteer enthusiasm?