

ALEX CHALK, PROSPECTIVE CONSERVATIVE MP FOR CHELTENHAM

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Dear Business Owner,

Cheltenham does not have an up-to-date economic plan. Even the Council admits the current version is 'out of date' and 'no longer fit for purpose'.

If elected, I would prioritise creating a clear plan, with a strategy for securing the jobs and investment for tomorrow.

I am determined to stand up for Cheltenham's small businesses. They are the lifeblood of our town, but I believe they are being put under pressure by short-sighted policies, such as the Council's refusal to lower parking charges or back key infrastructure projects such as the A417 Loop . We need to attract shoppers and businesses to our town, not deter them.

That's why I have created a Business Manifesto for Cheltenham, outlining the 4 key areas in which I pledge to take action to support businesses in our town if I am elected in May.

But above all I want to be your voice in Parliament, so if you have any other issues you would like to raise with me please do complete my business survey by clicking [HERE](#).

Best Wishes,

Alex Chalk

ALEX CHALK
PROSPECTIVE CONSERVATIVE MP FOR CHELTENHAM

MY BUSINESS MANIFESTO

If elected in May, I would take action in a number of key areas to support Cheltenham's businesses.

1) Bringing down the cost of parking

If elected, I would campaign for Cheltenham Borough Council to reform their inflexible parking regime. The Lib Dems' approach is deterring people from visiting our town. I would like to see them adopt some of the initiatives used in places including Gloucester and Cirencester, such as introducing free shopping days and offering free parking to visitors after 4pm. In some Council-run car parks you currently have to pay until 8pm - that sends out the wrong message.



2) Reducing the burden of business rates

I understand businesses' frustration with the rates system - rates often make up the biggest chunk of a firm's operating costs and that puts pressure on our small businesses. This Government has already made good progress in this area, but there is still work to be done. For example, rates are still based on pre-recession property values.

Since 2013, the Conservative-led Government has allowed local councils to retain up to half of the business rates collected. Councils can use this money to grant discretionary local rate discounts. I believe Cheltenham's Lib Dem council should be more transparent about how they are spending their share and would like to see it used to help small businesses keep their head above water and stimulate growth in those areas of our town with above average vacancies.

3) Ensuring our infrastructure is up to scratch

After years of campaigning and personally lobbying the Prime Minister, £255 million of funding has been won to end the notorious bottleneck at the Air Balloon roundabout. It means hope for the hundreds of motorists stuck in daily traffic jams, as well as a solution to this dangerous accident black spot.

Cheltenham's Lib Dems refuse to back the scheme, despite admitting that it is "the best one on the table". This muddle risks delaying or even preventing funds being released. We need to get behind the plans.



On broadband, I am determined to find a solution for local businesses and residents who are missing out on high-speed fibre rollout. I am pressing providers to explain why they have deemed parts of our town as 'commercially unviable'. I would also push for changes to EU state aid rules which stop the Government stepping in to tackle the issue of substandard broadband in areas like Cheltenham.



4) Cleaning up grot spots on our high streets

Cheltenham is a renowned shopping destination and its reputation continues to attract a wide range of retailers to our town. But parts of our town centre need a shot in the arm. There are too many empty units, which can attract graffiti and anti-social behaviour - so-called 'grot-spots'.

The Brewery Phase 2 and the Odeon Cinema works are both welcome developments. But I believe we need more widespread investment in our high streets to maintain our reputation as a key shopping destination. We must not fall behind our competitors, such as Gloucester, Worcester and Hereford, all of which have received high levels of investment in recent years.

We all know money is tight for local councils. But with CBC having just received £8 million from the sale of the key North Place car park, I am calling on them to use some of this money to clean up 'grot-spots' in our town and bang the drum for Cheltenham's shopping districts.