

F40 A New Purpose for Politics: Quality of Life (Quality of Life Policy Paper)

Mover: Lord Marks QC

Conference welcomes policy paper 102, A New Purpose for Politics: Quality of Life, as a statement of Liberal Democrat policy on the importance of quality of life and policies to achieve it.

Conference affirms that:

- i) Pursuit of a good quality of life, for themselves and others, is most people's main aim in life.
- ii) The importance of maximising quality of life, through mechanisms other than simply increasing economic prosperity, has historically not received the attention in public policy that it deserves.
- iii) New research techniques allowing wellbeing to be measured are very welcome tools to help in improving quality of life.
- iv) Supporting people to make their own choices to maximise their quality of life, through both economic and non-economic means, should now become the central goal for public policy.
- v) The Liberal Democrat approach to improving quality of life should be based on traditional Liberal principles of supporting and equipping people to take their own decisions about their lives.

Conference welcomes the Government's action for the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to collect information on wellbeing, which will help inform further action to improve quality of life, and calls for:

- A. The traditional liberal tools of information and education to be at the heart of supporting people to improve their quality of life.
- B. The creation of a National Institute of Wellbeing to oversee the collation, development and presentation of research evidence and best practice, and to comment on the success of government policies and other measures in increasing wellbeing.
- C. The National Institute for Wellbeing to create and maintain a Wellbeing Index, allowing the public to compare how successfully large organisations promote quality of life, as a means of driving further improvement.
- D. The broadening of public health education to cover public wellbeing education, to help people make informed choices.
- E. The role of wellbeing to be included in schools' Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) curricula.

Conference believes that:

1. Government should make promoting quality of life an integral part of policy-making, particularly through:
 - a) Health and wellbeing boards including a range of wellbeing elements in their local health and wellbeing strategies.

- b) The UK Government appointing a cabinet-level champion for wellbeing, supported by a small official unit to drive policy-making across government
 - c) The European Union appointing a European Commissioner Champion for Wellbeing.
 - d) Existing suites of statutory Plans incorporating a Wellbeing Plan, and using wellbeing impact assessments.
 - e) Future Liberal Democrat manifestos considering including a Wellbeing Thread, explaining the impact of our policies on improving quality of life.
2. The concept of sustainable development, through which social and economic needs are balanced, is an integral component of quality of life, and should be incorporated into all measures of quality of life and all other relevant government policies.
 3. Public services should be accountable to the people they serve and calls for local public services to take action to present a more joined up face to users.
 4. Good mental health is crucial to quality of life, welcomes the Government's commitment to widening access to cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), and calls for:
 - a) Improved access to a wider range of therapies to improve quality of life.
 - b) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to be reviewed to ensure they provide a sufficient service.
 5. Communities are crucial to quality of life, and we should support them, and specifically calls for greater use of civic awards to recognise contributions to the community.
 6. Advertising plays an important role in our lives, and that government should consider actions to educate and inform people to understand and handle media advertising.
 7. Experiences in the first three to five years of your life are crucial to your future quality of life and should continue to be a priority for investment.
 8. Counselling and other similar support can significantly increase very low wellbeing and should be more widely available.
 9. Activities outside work such as sport and other physical activity, the arts and voluntary activity are valuable in promoting wellbeing and should continue to be supported.
 10. Working arrangements are key factors in overall quality of life and welcomes:
 - a) The actions which many employers already take to help maximise their employees' quality of life, and would like to see this approach extended to other workplaces, especially to the lowest-paid.
 - b) The information we now have about what makes a workplace which is good for its employees' quality of life.
 - c) The importance of the option of flexible working to wellbeing, and welcomes the Government's commitment to extend the right to request flexible working to everyone.

11. As there is an established link between debt and financial insecurity and diminished sense of well-being, and the cost in fees alone of debt advice to UK consumers is £250 million, the Government should therefore introduce a statutory debt management framework to ensure minimum standards, control of fees and specifically to prevent front-loading.

Conference further believes that:

- i) It is not for government to set targets for employee satisfaction and the extent of flexible working; however there is a role for improved information on them, to help level the power balance between employers and employees.
- ii) The 9,000 or so largest organisations in the UK which together employ 50% of the UK workforce, should therefore, by 2014, report on employee satisfaction and the extent of flexible working.
- iii) The existing power to disqualify someone from being a company director for financial impropriety should be extended to serious failure to protect employees' wellbeing.
- iv) Mutuals contribute to employees' sense of control over their work, which is an important factor in quality of life, and should be encouraged.
- v) Employers should be obliged to provide clear standard information to employees about advice providers such as ACAS, trade unions and Citizens' Advice Bureaux, including the processes available up to, and including employment tribunals.
- vi) Resourcing of the Employment Tribunals should be protected to ensure fairness at work.

Conference notes that our surroundings have a significant impact on our quality of life, and therefore calls for:

- I. The promotion of quality of life to lie at the heart of the planning framework.
- II. Planning frameworks generally to promote open space and exposure to the natural environment.
- III. Local people to have the ability through a petition to call a referendum on the proposed sale of any public open land, including school playing fields.

Applicability: Federal, except D and E (lines 28-31), 1 a) (lines 35-36), 1 d) (lines 40-41), 2, 3 and 4 (lines 44-52), 6, 7 and 8 (lines 55-60) and I, II, and III (lines 82-86) which are England only.