

Siobhan
for MAYOR

Making London even Better!

London Manifesto

An introduction



Elect Siobhan Benita for Mayor 2012

Why am I standing?

Many people have asked me why I am standing to be Mayor of London. The odds are certainly high and it is difficult for a new voice to be heard amongst the big party-political media machines and outdated, restrictive broadcasting rules.

I am standing because, like so many Londoners, I am tired of the same lacklustre candidates fighting old party battles instead of tackling the real issues and fighting for Londoners. Enough with the Punch and Judy politics. As an independent mayor, I will put people before party politics. That's what London needs and deserves.

I was born in London, grew up here and I'm raising my own family here. My connection with the city is strong and personal. My mum came to London from India when she was ten years old. The local residents in Merton and Kingston welcomed and supported her and her family when they arrived. That's my individual story of immigration and integration but it is replicated in the hundreds of thousands across London. This is the most tolerant and cosmopolitan city on earth, with more languages spoken than anywhere else, more cultures to share and more tastes to enjoy. I'm tremendously proud of London's diversity and will be an inclusive Mayor bringing people and groups together, not dividing them with gaffes or insults.

I am aware, however, that there is another, far less joyous side to London. It's a side where people don't have equality of opportunity, can't find work, don't have a place to call home and where they are trapped in poverty. It can also be a very violent side and there are too many people for whom day-to-day life in London is brutal, frightening and hopeless. We saw with last year's riots just how much damage can be done when enough people with nothing to lose vent their frustration and fury.

As Mayor, I will address these issues head on. I will place much more emphasis on improving social mobility, creating opportunities, preventing crime and improving London's education system. I have also placed young people at the heart of my campaign because it's only by listening to them and working with them, that I will be able to build the progressive, cohesive and safe future that they will inherit.



London needs confident citizens but it also requires buoyant businesses. My policies for business will ensure that the right decisions are taken on long-term investment and in support of economic growth. I am suggesting that we establish an independent Office of Budget Responsibility for London to put an end, once and for all, to any Mayor squandering the budget or playing short term, party-politics with the public purse. I don't want to hang a banker. I do want to ensure that London's world-class banking and financial services sector remains world class. I want London to attract new business from emerging markets and maintain its status as the global destination of choice for business and leisure. To do that, it needs increased airport capacity and it needs it fast.

All of these things require a Mayor who can work productively with a range of people on solutions that are best for London. With fifteen years' experience as a Senior Civil Servant employed at the heart of government, I know how decisions get made and have worked with people from all sectors and organisations to get things done. As an independent Mayor, I will be more open to ideas and innovation, less distracted by the whims of party politics and driven by a preference for collaboration rather than confrontation.

About my manifesto

In my professional life I have written too many documents, full of too much jargon, that too few people have read. I don't want this manifesto to be another one of those! I have attempted to keep it (relatively short), in plain English, and have focussed on the new ideas that I am proposing for the issues that Londoners have told me they care about most. Where other candidates have already put forward sensible policies I am comfortable supporting them and I recognise that there are many projects and initiatives that already underway or planned in London, which the next Mayor – whoever they are – will inherit and continue. For brevity's sake, I have not included all of those in this document.

There are no vanity projects in my manifesto. In these difficult economic times, my focus is on using limited resources where they will benefit people who need help most, as well as being more efficient with the assets that we already have in London. I will be releasing chapters of the manifesto over the coming days. I hope you will agree with me that it is a manifesto that makes a lot of sense; a manifesto that quietly places people – not political parties – where they should be in this election. First.