



# Colchester Liberal Democrats Manifesto 2007

## **KEEPING COLCHESTER SPECIAL**

### **Our 7 key promises for 2007:**

We will find ways to **cut congestion** and **improve public transport** throughout Colchester

We will **recycle at least 60% of household waste** by 2010

We will **make the town safer** by improving the street warden scheme

We will have **a planning system that responds** to what the people of Colchester want and need

We will introduce **annual cleaning blitzes** for every area

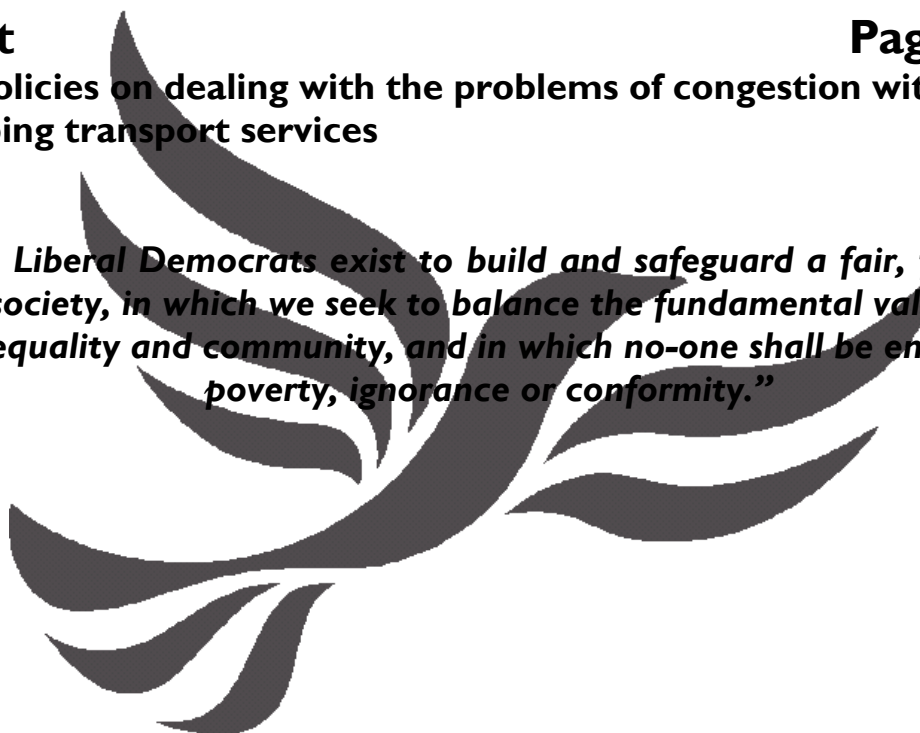
We will push for **three Park & Ride schemes** for Colchester

We will **bring the Council closer to you**, increase public involvement and remove secrecy

# Contents

<b>Environment</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
Our policies on climate change, waste, recycling and planning	
<b>Community Safety</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
Our policies on preventing crime, creating a safer environment and tackling crime and antisocial behaviour	
<b>Housing</b>	<b>Page 6</b>
Our policies on improving social housing and providing help for all, including private tenants and owner-occupiers	
<b>Community Services For All</b>	<b>Page 7</b>
Our policies on leisure and cultural facilities within Colchester, including the Community Stadium and VAF	
<b>Services For All</b>	<b>Page 8</b>
Our policies for ensuring that Colchester is accessible to and benefits everyone within the Borough	
<b>Open, Accountable And Efficient Local Government</b>	<b>Page 9</b>
Our policies on how we will improve the Council itself, including openness and accountability, value for money and supporting and involving local communities	
<b>Transport</b>	<b>Page 11</b>
Our policies on dealing with the problems of congestion within Colchester and developing transport services	

*“The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no-one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.”*



# Environment

## Climate Change

- We will commit Colchester Borough Council to abiding by the “Nottingham Declaration”, which we pressed it to sign (see Appendix I).
- We will insist that the Borough council produces its own climate change strategy, containing measurable targets by June 2007.
- We will ensure that there is funding available to replace trees that have to be removed and plant an additional 500 trees a year.

## Planning

- We will campaign for review and reform of the planning system to ensure that it is used to promote and, where necessary defend the interests of local communities. The planning system must be used to protect the local environment first and foremost. This will include pressurising the owners of unused land to seek planning permission or sell when appropriate.
- We will make the planning system more open and transparent and accessible to local residents.
- We will take stronger enforcement action against fly tipping.
- We will ensure that all new developments meet the highest environmental and visual standards.
- We will ensure that all new-build schemes have a third of their energy coming from renewable sources.
- We will promote micro-energy, e.g. solar power and the use of solar panels in council buildings and aim to provide grants to local residents.
- We will promote energy conservation in buildings throughout the Borough.
- We will promote water saving and recycling.

## Recycling

- We will extend recycling with the aim of 60% recycling by 2010. This will include a service for recycling kitchen waste.
- We will promote an assisted collection service for the disabled.
- We will enforce the proximity principle for treatment of recycled and un-recycled refuse. This means that we will recycle waste locally, but resist waste from outside being sent to Colchester. We will work to ensure that locally produced recycling material is dealt with in the area, and not sent vast distances for use or treatment.
- We will not enter into expensive long-term contracts for refuse treatment financed by PFI.
- We will not enter into contracts with contractors which allow incineration of refuse on site in the Borough or produce Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) for incineration elsewhere.

- We will extend paper, glass, cans, plastic, and green waste recycling to all parts of the borough, including military housing and all flats.
- We will work to ensure that a much higher proportion of waste from local businesses is recycled. E.g. bottles/cans from pubs, restaurants, schools and hospitals.
- We will work with other authorities to reduce the packaging materials produced by businesses and to make provision for their recycling.
- We will provide extra cleaning for heavy use hotspots.
- We will make it possible for all households to limit themselves to one bag of non-recyclable waste per week.
- We will develop the council's website so that it provides a forum for the buying and selling of a large number of surplus materials which would, otherwise be thrown away.
- We will provide cleaning blitzes in partnership with local residents in each local area once a year. Over a few days the council will focus the concentrated effort of a number of departments and staff in one area to bring sustained improvements. We will provide skips for rubbish removal, check for and remove dumped cars, clear graffiti, check pavements and paths for repairs needed, check which trees need pruning, and plant trees.
- We will discourage littering through education, linking with schools, to enhance the effect.
- We will integrate collection of domestic and commercial waste outside the town centre as soon as obstacles to this are removed by the government. This will save money and a high mileage by vehicles that collect commercial waste from individual sites, such as schools.

# Community Safety

## Tackling crime and antisocial behaviour

- We will improve and develop the existing street warden scheme and provide renewed funding for the longer term. Although this program has involved local communities in addressing community safety issues, more needs to be done to ensure the Council listens to and acts in response to local concerns.
- We will ensure that the dedicated 24-hour anti-social behaviour/noise nuisance telephone and patrol service, is always available.
- We will promote the use of Parental Control Agreements as a first step in dealing with anti-social behaviour problems, and include the use of restorative justice solutions where possible.
- Domestic violence, both physical and mental, is on the increase. We will work with the Council's local partners to both raise awareness, and to encourage and support the victims who come forward and report this crime.

## Preventing Crime

- We will extend youth activities using any money saved by improved efficiency of services. For example, we will improve recreation facilities, both supervised and unsupervised for teenagers.
- We will have a dedicated youth budget, and enable young people to engage in the decision making process.
- We will work with other agencies to tackle drugs problems, in particular in residential areas where drug supplying and use are known by local residents to be taking place.

## Creating a Safer Environment

- We will campaign to improve street lighting and the condition of public footpaths and public spaces.
- We will campaign against the switching off of street lights.
- We will campaign against litter, graffiti and fly tipping, the dumping of supermarket trolleys, and increase enforcement action.
- We will promote local involvement in community safety issues, e.g. by advertising Neighbourhood Action Panel meetings.
- We will tackle the misuse of mini-motos, which are a danger to children using them as well as to others.
- We will implement cumulative impact policies in licensing to prevent over-saturation of licensed premises in certain areas.
- We will advertise licensing applications effectively so that people get a fair chance to put their views.

# Housing

## Improving social housing

- We will do all that we can to improve the Councils housing stock.
- We will ensure that vacated properties remain empty for the shortest possible time.
- We will review, and if necessary reform, the property allocation system.
- We will ensure that an appropriate proportion of all new homes are given over to affordable housing, at a level of 40%.
- We will allow tenants and leaseholders to have works done by a contractor of their choice if this can be done more cheaply than by the Council contractor or if there has been an unacceptable delay and quoted prices are reasonable. A list of approved contractors will be developed.
- We will ensure that each tenant has a single point of contact within Colchester Borough Homes, and that response times are measured and targets met.

## Tackling homelessness

- We will redouble efforts to reduce homelessness in Colchester, learning from good practice elsewhere.
- We will ensure that homeless people are housed safely.

## Private tenants and owner occupiers

- Genuine and committed Council support is needed for tenants' management organisations and other residents' organisations. We will ensure a greater role and involvement of these groups in policy decisions and provide more in the way of training and support for them.

## Help for all

- We will increase spot checking on the environmental and safety standards set by social and private landlords.
- We will introduce an inspection system for properties owned by private landlords that will govern their entry onto a private landlords register.

# Community services for all

## Leisure Facilities

- We will ensure that the borough council plays its full part in completing the community stadium, and access to it, as speedily as possible.
- We will encourage the increased use of all sports facilities across the Borough and work to improve their condition, access and number.
- We will give priority to increased facilities for young people, particularly teenagers, situated in the localities where there is most need.
- We will do all that we can to ensure that Colchester residents benefit from and are enriched by the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

## Culture

- We will continue to support the arts, ensuring that Colchester remains a well regarded artistic centre.
- We will do all that we can to make the visual arts facility a credit to Colchester, and ensure that the Council's subsidy remains capped at the present level.
- We will work hard to ensure that Colchester benefits more from Heritage Lottery funding.

# Services for all

- We will promote equality in council services, and fight discrimination.
- We will, in particular, ensure that council services for soldiers and their families are brought to the same level as those for other residents. To regard them as transient guests in Colchester is totally unacceptable.
- We will develop a green burial site.
- We will develop opportunities around the borough for elderly people to meet together and socialise or engage in cultural or learning opportunities.
- We will do everything that we can to promote better access for disabled people in all spheres of life.
- We will encourage more businesses to settle in the borough and support local businesses.
- We will accelerate the appropriate usage of waste land and abandoned properties in the Borough.
- We will promote and provide resources for the development of more local markets and farmers' markets across the borough.
- We will increase the number of allotments particularly in areas where there is high demand.
- We will do more to promote Colchester's role as part of a developing East of England, working closely with regional and national agencies to ensure that Colchester gets the resources that it deserves.
- We will ensure that the Council develops closer relationships with Essex University, the Colchester Institute and other educational organisations particularly in the fields of job training and creation.

# Open, accountable and efficient local government

## Openness and Accountability

- We will reduce the number of cabinet posts and committees, reducing their cost by 20%.
- We will increase the number of full and public council meetings to at least six per year.
- We will seek to reform the scrutiny system to ensure that the Cabinet is properly held accountable for its decisions.
- We will establish an advice charter so that Colchester residents know what services the local advice centres have been paid to provide.
- We will more actively publicise the freedom of information policy and the right of residents to request files or specific information and undertake to respond to requests within the required 22 working days.
- We will campaign to convert Colchester into a unitary authority.

## Value for Money

- We will promote good financial accounting practices throughout the Council.
- We will make greater use of advertising and generate income streams through limited sponsorship and advertising on council property.
- We will seek to minimise further council tax rises. Council tax is a regressive tax, hitting those on low and fixed incomes hardest. Although Council tax bills are largely dependant on grants from central government and cost pressures that cannot be controlled, we will seek to do everything within our control to minimise council tax rises above the rate of inflation.
- We will continue to campaign vigorously for the replacement of Council tax by a local income tax.
- We will work to ensure that outside consultants are only used when necessary and that the tax payer receives value for money.

## **Involving Local Communities**

- We will encourage a larger number of people to speak and participate at Full Council and other Council meetings.
- Where there are Lib Dem councillors we promise to keep in touch all year round by producing regular news letters and asking for feedback from local people.
- We will introduce a system of area forums, consisting of groups of wards, which will have their own small capital budget. Individual wards will be able to put up schemes that will enhance their environment, thus bringing spending decisions closer to individual council tax payers.

## **Supporting Local Communities**

- We will improve Colchester's engagement with the voluntary sector and increase civic participation.
- We will work closely with organisations of all kinds; tenants, residents, green groups, and local charities we will encourage and support the development of such organisations where they do not already exist.
- We will make all planning and licensing applications easier to obtain via local libraries and the internet.

# Traffic and Transport

## Congestion

- We will campaign for the provision of three park and ride facilities as a matter of urgency.
- We will discount pricing for park and ride passes to benefit the owners of low polluting vehicles.
- We will commission a wide ranging review of Colchester's traffic problem, including an option appraisal for solutions such as congestion charging, a tram system and restricting parking close to schools to encourage more parents to walk their children to school.
- We will examine the possibility of making the High Street a pedestrian only zone, taking account of the views of Colchester's residents and business owners.

## Transport

- We will use all the influence that the Council can muster to improve main line and local train services, thus improving the working lives of Colchester's commuters.
- We will work with train and bus operators to ensure that Colchester has an integrated public transport system that serves the needs of young and old alike.
- We will campaign for reduced fares for students.
- We will campaign for improvement and enlargement of the cycle network in Colchester, to promote more and safer cycling.

## **Appendix I: The Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change**

We acknowledge that:

- Evidence shows that climate change is occurring.
- Climate change will continue to have far reaching effects on the UK's people and places, economy, society and environment.

We welcome the

- Social, economic and environmental benefits which come from combating climate change.
- Emissions targets agreed by central government and the programme for delivering change, as set out in the UK Climate Change Programme.
- Opportunity for local government to lead the response at a local level, encouraging and helping local residents, local businesses and other organisations - to reduce their energy costs, to reduce congestion, to adapt to the impacts of climate change, to improve the local environment and to deal with fuel poverty in our communities.
- Endorsement of this declaration by central government.

We commit our Council from this date to

- Work with central government to contribute, at a local level, to the delivery of the UK Climate Change Programme, the Kyoto Protocol and the target for carbon dioxide reduction by 2010.
- Participate in local and regional networks for support.
- Within the next two years develop plans with our partners and local communities to progressively address the causes and the impacts of climate change, according to our local priorities, securing maximum benefit for our communities.
- Publicly declare, within appropriate plans and strategies, the commitment to achieve a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from our own authority's operations, especially energy sourcing and use, travel and transport, waste production and disposal and the purchasing of goods and services.
- Assess the risk associated with climate change and the implications for our services and our communities of climate change impacts and adapt accordingly.
- Encourage all sectors in our local community to take the opportunity to adapt to the impacts of climate change, to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions and to make public their commitment to action.
- Monitor the progress of our plans against the actions needed and publish the results.

Council acknowledges the increasing impact that climate change will have on our community during the 21st century and commits to tackling the causes and effects of a changing climate on our borough.