

# Colchester and District Green Party For the Common Good

## Our Manifesto for 2016

### **The Green Party will work for:**

- ✓ An economy that gives everyone their fair share
- ✓ A society capable of supporting everyone's needs
- ✓ A planet protected from the threat of climate change
- ✓ A more democratic political system

The Green Party is the only Party that offers **a genuine alternative** to the other Parties to develop the local economy, to protect the local environment and to create a new kind of democratic politics.

### **Local economy**

- We would work to ensure that the growth of our town is matched by appropriate investment in infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals and public transport links.
- We will support local businesses, encouraging schemes which keep money circulating within the local economy, instead of letting it be siphoned away by multinational corporations.
- We will prioritise the town centre rather than out of town shopping centres.
- We will explore ways of reducing the overheads of small businesses in the town centre.
- We will seek to attract businesses to Colchester that focus on recycling, generating renewable energy, energy saving and home insulation. This would bring investment and new jobs to the area.
- We will promote the building and upkeep of greener homes by giving grants for insulation and favouring design and build with low carbon materials and methods.

### **Our environment**

The Green Party has long recognised that climate change is the worst environmental hazard facing us.

- We call for more stringent targets for reduction of global, national and local greenhouse gas emissions and for the establishment of effective enforcement mechanisms. **Our local policies** in areas such as transport and planning reflect

this commitment.

- We will protect green spaces from development and utilise brownfield sites.
- We are opposed to the Council's use of dangerous herbicides on our pavements.
- We will work with the Essex Wildlife Trust to promote bio-diversity.
- We will strive to protect Salary Brook Valley from development and oppose plans for a 'West Tey' huge new town site on green fields.

## **The NHS**

**Our NHS is the most effective public service ever created in the UK.**

The Green Party will end the creeping process of privatisation that is eroding it. We believe the NHS should remain a unified public service and we oppose Private Finance Initiatives.

- We will match growth in local population sizes with greater NHS investment.
- We will establish Community Health Centres that will provide community-based services.
- We are the only party to consistently oppose cuts to local council services and the NHS.
- We will ensure there are sufficient numbers of qualified staff.
- We will ensure that mental healthcare has parity with physical healthcare.

## **Work and Welfare**

We can reduce the cost of healthcare by building a healthier society. This will involve tackling air pollution, reducing the stress and stigma of unemployment, reducing inequality and overcrowded housing, and ensuring that everyone can have access to healthy, affordable food.

- We actively support foodbanks for as long as people are in need of them
- No-one who is working should be paid less than a living wage. The National Living Wage is discriminatory in that it excludes under 25s. This section of the population are the most prone to insecure zero-hours contracts. We will push for employers in the Borough to pay their staff the National Living Wage, regardless of age.
- Benefits payments should rise. The benefits sanctions regime is cruel and unnecessary.

## **Housing**

- We all want warm, safe and secure homes. The Tories have presided over the worst housing crisis in living memory.
- Colchester Green Party will work to build and refurbish homes to meet

everyone's need for secure and comfortable housing. Council and co-operative housing will be prioritised for funding, housing associations democratised and protections for private tenants improved.

- We will work to ensure that private landlords maintain their properties adequately.
- We will push for Colchester's derelict buildings and shops to be brought back into use, including those above shops and particularly the old cinema in Crouch Street.
- Colchester Green Party opposes the bedroom tax. No-one will be evicted who ends up in arrears because of this tax.

### **Local democracy**

- Time and again decisions affecting Colchester are made by Essex County Council with no understanding of what Colchester really needs.
- **Localism** is central to Green Party politics. We would campaign for more powers to be devolved from county council level to the borough, particularly roads.
- We believe that council meetings should be as open and transparent as possible.
- We will work to increase the involvement of residents and residents' groups in council decision-making processes by holding consultations at an early stage, before decisions are made by officers.
- The National Green Party is campaigning for a change to a proportional representation electoral system, replacing the undemocratic and unfair 'first past the post' system. We would campaign for Colchester to pilot proportional representation systems for local elections.

### **Defence**

- Colchester is a garrison town. We would campaign to ensure that our armed services have the up-to-date equipment and resources they need to do their job properly and safely.
- Cancelling the replacement for Trident will save an estimated £167 billion, some of which could be used to ensure that our soldiers have the best up-to-date equipment.

### **Air pollution**

Surveys show that air quality is now poor in many areas of the town. The central corridor that runs from Mersea Road down to North Station has some of the worst quality air in the Borough.

Air quality is one of our top priorities. We will use local council powers to tackle air pollution by:

- Reducing traffic flows at key points
- Providing better alternatives to driving for local journeys
- Curbing speeds
- Introducing 20mph speed limit areas to decrease the release of air pollutants and reduce traffic accidents
- Working with bus companies to run cleaner and more reliable vehicles in Colchester
- Providing more cycle lanes

## **Transport**

- We will work to bring the railways back into public ownership, saving money and improving services, a policy supported by 66% of the population.
- We will campaign to return control of our roads to the Borough.
- CGP will work to end the traffic problems in the town centre with a combination of affordable and efficient public transport, improved cycle routes and by encouraging more walking and car sharing.
- CGP will press Essex County Council to make more effective use of the new park and ride bus lane with stops at the hospital and train station.
- We will lobby for more affordable fares and a proper bus station.
- We will introduce shared spaces for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians – initially in Queen Street, with a view to creating an inner ring of the High Street, Queen Street, Osborne Street, St Johns Street and Head Street..
- We will extend a 20mph speed limit in urban areas. Through these measures we would cut congestion and pollution, as well as reduce road casualties.
- GP councillors would push for safe and properly planned cycle routes, and for the increased availability of cycle parking and storage facilities.

## **Community safety**

- We will seriously examine why Colchester has a higher crime rate per person than inner city Birmingham and Liverpool. Solutions are complex, but include a number of measures that the Council can influence, such as venue licensing, design of public spaces and youth and leisure facilities.
- We will work to halt cuts to police numbers and insist that any new development has a corresponding increase in policing resources.

## **No nuclear at Bradwell**

- We are strongly opposed to the proposed new nuclear power station at Bradwell on safety, environmental and economic grounds.
- Bradwell is already a nuclear waste site for radioactive waste from other power stations. New nuclear development would increase the amount of waste.
- There were radioactive leaks into the ground over a 14-year period to 2009 and a fire in 2011.

- Since 1952 there have been more than 17 major accidents at nuclear power stations throughout the world. Bradwell is only nine miles from Colchester.
- A new nuclear power station would take six times as much cooling water from the estuary as the old one, seriously damaging the ecology of the estuary and its world-famous oyster industry.

## **Education**

- The Green Party believes that all education should be free at the point of delivery.
- We would end tuition fees for students and replace loans with grants. Students leaving Essex University now face average debts of £45,000.
- We would promote a comprehensive system of local schools and bring Academies and Free Schools back into the Local Authority system.
- We would campaign for increased education spending. Funding cuts are seriously affecting sixth form colleges, of which Colchester has a very high profile example in the form of the Sixth Form College.
- Many children now have to travel several miles to school every day, often because their parents don't have confidence in their local schools, or because school places aren't available. We would work to ensure that every child can attend their local school.

**COLCHESTER GREEN PARTY**

**FOR A CLEANER, GREENER COLCHESTER**