

# **Our Town, Our Choice**

# **Our History, Our Future**

## **The Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Colchester 2010**

Since we took over the running of Colchester Council in 2008, we've been doing our best to make Colchester a better place for everyone.

After years of Tory failure we've:

- Cut back the development of flats, and got developers building houses
- Reversed Tory cuts to the hours of free bus passes
- Got work started on a new A12 junction in the North of Colchester
- Committed the Council to building new council houses
- Ensured that Colchester will soon get a permanent Park and Ride scheme
- Begun work on a new multi-million pound Business Incubation Centre
- Supported and assisted the Roman Circus appeal
- Brought in the lowest ever Council Tax rise in Colchester's history

We've helped residents and businesses keep their heads above water as the global recession has begun to bite, and we've stood up and fought for Colchester regionally, nationally and internationally. The Carnival's even returned to Colchester's streets!

There's more to do, and that's why we're asking for your support in this year's elections, so we can do even more for our Borough in the future. We know that we're in tough financial times, and there are limits to what the Council can do, but we'll ensure the Council does the best for everyone in Colchester with what resources it has available.

We believe the people of Colchester, not bureaucrats in Chelmsford or Whitehall, know what's best for them. Decisions that affect Colchester should be made in Colchester, and we'll campaign for your right to decide whether Colchester should become a Unitary Authority. This would mean that the people of Colchester would control services such as schools, roads and social care, and decide local priorities.

Inside this manifesto you'll find more about what we want to do for the people of Colchester. We want the Council to ensure fairness throughout Colchester Borough, creating a place that everyone can feel part of and proud of.

**Martin Hunt**  
Leader, Colchester Liberal Democrats

**Anne Turrell**  
Leader, Colchester Borough Council

# **Our Town, Our Choice**

Liberal Democrats believe that power needs to be closer to the people. If decisions are going to be made that affect Colchester, it should be the people of Colchester who make them.

The Council should respond to the needs of the people it represents, and should be doing as much as possible to find out what the people of the Borough think as well as giving them the power in their own neighbourhoods, towns and villages.

- We will work to make Colchester a Unitary Authority, separate from Essex County Council, so we control our own schools, roads, libraries and other services, as has happened in Southend
- We'll ask Essex County Council to devolve powers so decisions about Colchester are made by the people of Colchester
- Where possible, we'll devolve powers from the Borough to Town, Parish and other local councils
- We will work to develop new Parish and Neighbourhood Councils
- We will use the Sustainable Communities Act to get more local control over central Government spending
- We will work with the Liberal Democrats nationally to create elected local Health Boards to set NHS priorities in our area

# **Our History, Our Future**

Colchester's status as Britain's oldest recorded town means that the Council has a special duty to both protect and promote our local heritage. We will ensure that the Council not only protects our history, but ensures we can all have a sustainable future.

We've already taken action to ensure that new developments in Colchester don't swamp us with more unwanted empty flats, and we'll make sure that any future development fits in with what's already here, and that it can be sustained for the years to come.

- We will protect, preserve and promote Colchester's unique heritage
- We will work to keep the Roman Circus for the people and turn it into a major visitor attraction
- We will continue work to make Colchester the cleanest and greenest Borough in the country, reducing our energy usage and carbon emissions
- We will work to reduce traffic in the town, make Park and Ride a success, and promote walking, cycling and public transport
- We will get 20mph speed zones in place in all residential areas throughout the Borough where residents want them
- We will campaign for better and affordable rail services, and work for more rail lines to be built or reopened, such as the old Colchester to Cambridge line

# Getting Colchester Moving

- Ensure that Park and Ride is up and running as quickly as possible
- Consult widely on plans for Town Centre traffic, and only implement a scheme that has the support of the people of Colchester
- Work with train and bus companies to improve and integrate our public transport service
- Work to expand the range and frequency of public transport services
- Extend the foot and cycle path network in Colchester
- Continue to promote Colchester as a Cycling Town

# Improving the Town Centre

- Work with shops, businesses, Destination Colchester and residents to promote and co-ordinate work in the Town Centre
- Encourage more events in the Town Centre, such as the Colchester Carnival, to bring in a wider range of people at all times of the day
- Ensure that residents and businesses are fully consulted and involved in new developments like the Cultural Quarter and the St Botolph's regeneration
- Use our Licensing policies to curb anti-social behaviour, and target pubs and clubs that don't take responsibility for the behaviour of their customers
- Work with landlords to reduce the number of empty shops, and promote organisations like Slack Space to make empty shops look good

# Cleaner and Safer Streets

- Continue our Days of Action, targeting the resources of multiple agencies on one area
- Work with developers and businesses to get more waste bins in the Borough
- Get takeaways and other major sources of litter to clean up their own mess, or contribute to the cost of cleaning it up
- Improve street lighting and work to keep footpaths and cycleways clean and secure
- Work with businesses and residents so they can 'adopt' a street, path or road
- Work with community groups to help residents make where they live safer for everyone
- Bring in a policy of cleaning all graffiti within the Borough

# Protecting Colchester's Environment

- Continue cross-party work to increase the amount of household waste that is recycled, and consulting widely with residents over any alterations in collections
- Oppose the incineration of waste and the introduction of wheelie bins for waste collection

- Ensure that there is funding available for replacement trees and tree maintenance
- Continue the Trees for Years scheme, which sees over 2,000 new trees planted every year
- Create or find open space that can be given over to local residents for community gardens or community trees that everyone can take part in looking after
- Use Planning rules to raise the environmental standards for all new buildings in the Borough and ensure that new developments are sustainable
- Promote energy efficiency to residents and businesses and support them in putting these measures in place. This not only reduces carbon emissions, it saves money, benefiting the local economy
- Promote micro-generation, energy conservation and water saving throughout the Borough, including requiring new developments to commit to using energy from renewable sources
- Create more allotments in the Borough and encourage more people to use them
- Provide support for local markets and farmers markets

## **Housing fit for the 21st Century**

- Work to reduce the ridiculous levels of construction and development that the Government is trying to force on us
- Ensure that a high level of social and affordable housing is developed, so everyone in Colchester has a chance of their own home
- Keep developers building the range of houses we need, including housing suitable for people of all ages, and not swamping us with more flats
- Review and scrutinise the work of Colchester Borough Homes to ensure it's fit for purpose, especially in maintaining the Council's housing stock.
- Ensure that vacated council properties are ready for occupation again in the shortest possible time.
- Develop an inspection system and register for private landlords.
- Preserve amenity space when new developments are built, and encourage the creation of more open space in all areas of the town
- Ensure that there is proper infrastructure (transport, schools, medical services, shops and jobs) before new developments are built

## **A Colchester For Everyone**

- Continue to work in partnership with arts organisations and the University of Essex to allow all residents of the Borough to enjoy the rich cultural experience the borough offers
- Extend facilities for young people, to provide them with activities and opportunities that will keep them active, healthy and safe
- Encourage residents to keep healthy by promoting and developing high quality sporting facilities
- Ensure that access for the disabled is a priority throughout the Borough

- Promote a wide variety of services for older people throughout the Borough, and assist them in claiming the benefits they're entitled to
- Regularly review Council services and facilities to ensure that they're accessible to every Borough resident

## **Promoting Colchester**

- Promote Colchester nationally and internationally as an important historical centre
- Preserving our unique heritage, including the Roman Circus, Colchester Castle and Roman Walls
- Look for innovative ways to promote Colchester and its history, such as encouraging film and TV companies to film on location here
- Working with hotels and tourists businesses to help them promote themselves throughout the UK and Europe
- Encourage the growth creation of local groups and organisations that will promote Colchester
- Ensure that new buildings have high quality designs, to preserve the look of Colchester's streets

## **Helping Colchester's Businesses**

- Work with businesses and the Colchester Business Group to attract regional, national and European funding to the Borough
- Support the establishment and development of new businesses through Business Incubation Centres
- Increase the number of businesses in the Borough, and promote a diverse local economy to ensure there are well-paid local jobs
- Work with businesses to spread the 10% Forces Discount scheme throughout the Borough
- Promote the use of Credit Unions within Colchester, and aim to make them accessible to people throughout the Borough
- Promote apprenticeships and bid for funding so local businesses can recruit and train apprentices

## **Being Democratic and Accountable**

- Push for the Borough Council to take power back from Central Government
- Consult as widely as possible on Council policies and decisions
- Ensure that all consultations we hold are open and accessible, and that the Council listens and acts on the results of them
- Seek to introduce a fair voting system for the election of councillors and until one is introduced, campaign to keep annual Council elections in Colchester
- Give individual councillors more powers to make a difference within the Council