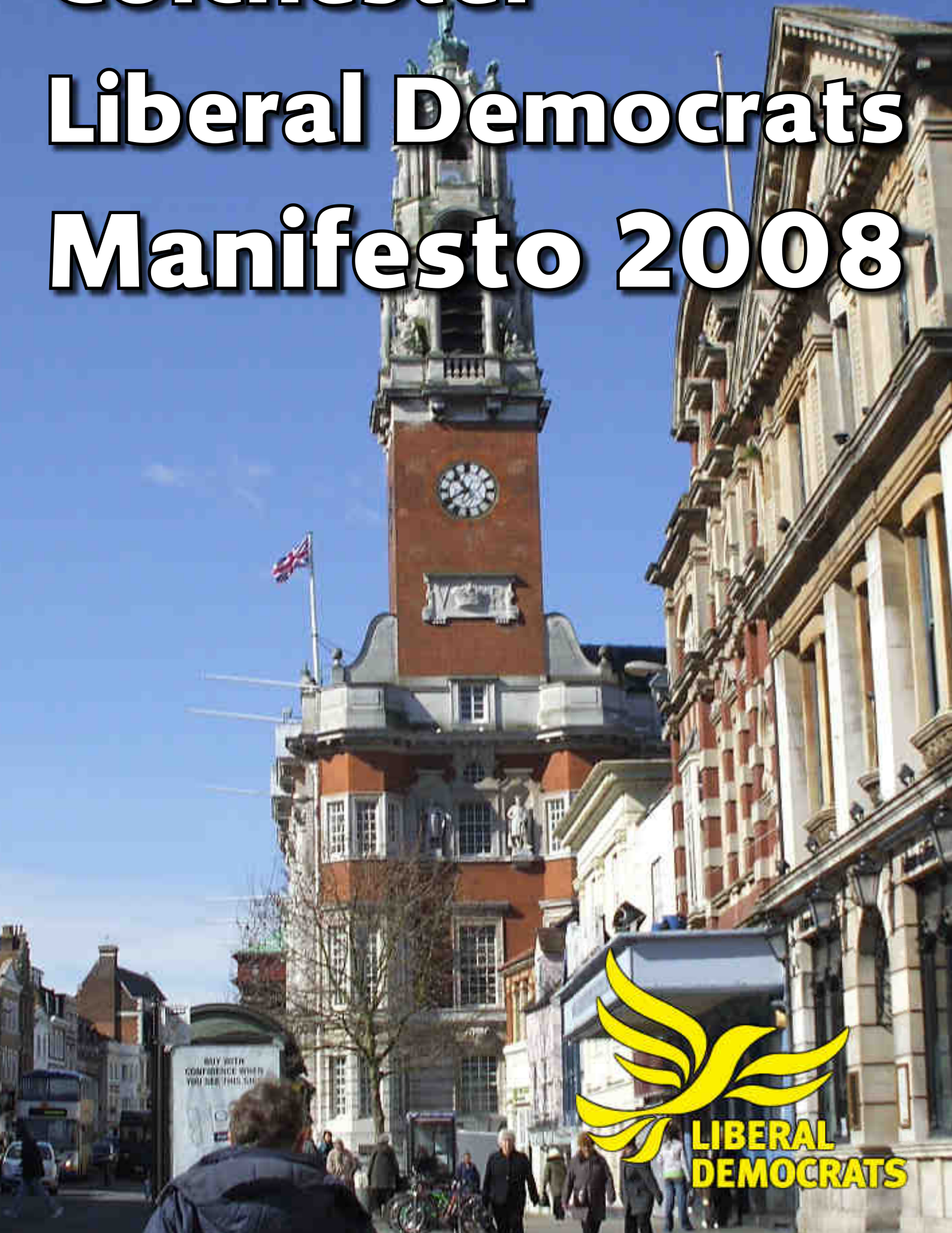


Colchester Liberal Democrats Manifesto 2008



The Liberal Democrat Manifesto for Colchester 2008

Under the current Tory administration, Colchester has lost its way. Taxpayers' money is squandered on badly-managed projects and headline-grabbing stunts, while the real problems of the town are ignored. While other towns and cities in our region develop and improve, Colchester is left behind to be choked by gridlocked traffic and buried under a mountain of rubbish while hundreds of new houses and flats are built all over the town with no attention paid to the effect they're having on what's already here.

We think the people of Colchester deserve better. They deserve to be able to travel around town without being caught up in endless traffic jams. They deserve clean and safe streets, and a Town Centre that's accessible to all throughout the day and night. They deserve a better local environment, with open spaces protected from development and pollution. Most of all, they deserve a Council that listens to them, and solves the problems that are affecting their lives.

We don't claim to be able to wave a magic wand and make Colchester a better place overnight, but we do believe that our policies are ones that will make Colchester a better place for everyone who lives, works and visits here.

- **We will work for all the citizens of Colchester**
- **We will make Council services available for all, and treat Army families and students as proper residents, not transient visitors**
- **We will work to promote Colchester for business, bringing new jobs to the area**
- **We will promote Colchester as an important part of the East of England**
- **We will keep in touch with residents and consult widely on proposals**
- **We will work with local partners including the University, the Garrison the Institute, Colchester 2020 and others to create a town we can be proud of**

"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. We champion the freedom, dignity and well-being of individuals, we acknowledge and respect their right to freedom of conscience and their right to develop their talents to the full. We aim to disperse power, to foster diversity and to nurture creativity. We believe that the role of the state is to enable all citizens to attain these ideals, to contribute fully to their communities and to take part in the decisions which affect their lives."

Transport

- **Park and Ride for Colchester**
- **Better public transport**

Colchester is a town on the verge of gridlock, with more and more cars on the roads while public transport becomes progressively more expensive. With yet more housing to be built in the Borough over the coming years, it's imperative that we take action now to ensure that we will be able to get around town in the years to come.

We will:

- Get a full Park and Ride scheme for Colchester running from three locations.
- Work with train and bus companies to ensure we have an integrated public transport service.
- Use all our powers to extend the public transport network, ensure that all new developments are on bus routes and that there is a regular, reliable and affordable service to rural communities.
- Campaign for reduced fares for all students and young people.
- Work to extend the foot and cycle path network in Colchester and ensure that existing paths are kept clean and secure.

Town Centre

- **Reducing traffic in the Town Centre**
- **Working with everyone to make a better town for all**

Colchester's Town Centre is frequently complained about by local residents. By day, it's hard to get to and the selection of shops and facilities is poor compared to other regional centres and by night, it has become a no-go area for many residents, dominated by nightclubs and bars. We think the people of Colchester deserve better from their Town Centre, and it will be one of our priorities to ensure the benefits to the viability of businesses in the night-time economy goes hand in hand with the justified wish of the residents for a peaceful existence by forming a policy for the town centre which benefits both..

We will:

- Reduce traffic by introducing Park and Ride and better public transport services. When Park and Ride is in place, we will look at ways to restrict the traffic in the Town Centre, particularly the High Street, making it safer and more accessible for pedestrians.
- Support and fund the proposed SOS Bus service to make the streets safer at night, including looking for ways to fund the Bus through the Planning and Licensing systems
- Work with shops, businesses and residents to establish an effective agency to run and promote the Town Centre
- Make sure that residents and existing business are fully and properly consulted over new developments such as the Cultural Quarter and the regeneration of St Botolph's
- Ensure that public displays such as Christmas lights are properly funded.

Waste and Recycling

- **Keeping weekly black bag collections**
- **Increasing recycling rates past 60%**

When Colchester was run by the Liberal Democrats, we were a pioneer in introducing recycling services and had one of the highest recycling rates in the country, yet under the Tories, we have consistently slipped in the rankings. We want to see Colchester leading the way again. Across the country, Liberal Democrat-run Councils are some of the cleanest and greenest, and we'll seek to learn from them and their experience to make Colchester the same.

We will:

- Aim to be recycling at least 60% of household waste by 2011 by collecting food waste at the kerbside and giving assistance and education to households to increase their recycling
- Reject Essex County Council's expensive plans for large scale waste treatment and incineration, such as the proposed Stanway plant, by aiming for higher recycling and ensuring all separated waste collected at the kerbside is in fact recycled. We will push for smaller plants – such as Combined Heat and Power facilities for new developments – that will recycle waste locally.
- Extend recycling services across the borough, so all households – such as people living in flats, or on the Garrison - can make use of them and a wider range of waste, especially food waste, can be recycled
- Work to get more waste generated by businesses recycled, and set up better recycling services for schools, colleges, hospitals and charities.
- Work with businesses and consumers to find ways to reduce the amount of waste that is generated, particularly seeking ways to reduce packaging and plastic carrier bags.
- We will seek to recycle waste locally where possible, thus reducing carbon emissions generated by transporting waste around the country, but we will resist attempts to make any part of Colchester a dumping ground for waste from elsewhere in the country.
- Continue to collect black bags weekly, while working to make it possible for every household to generate no more than one bag of non-recyclable waste each week.

Street Services

- **Annual cleaning blitzes for every area**
- **Getting litter off the streets**

One of the most frequent complaints we hear from local residents is about the amounts of litter and waste that gets scattered in our streets. We want to reduce this and get Colchester back as one of the cleanest towns in Britain, somewhere that local residents can be proud of and visitors will be impressed by.

We will:

- Work with the waste collection services to create a more efficient and cleaner service.
- Work with developers and businesses to get more waste bins installed throughout the borough, and install more dog bins in heavily used areas.
- Have all waste and dog bins numbered, so it's easier for residents to report full ones and get them emptied
- Institute annual cleaning blitzes for all areas, and publicise the timetable for street cleaning operations so residents know when their streets are meant to be cleaned.
- Work with residents to identify problems in street cleaning, such as parked cars, and find solutions so everyone can live in a clean environment.
- Enforce the responsibility of takeaways to clear up the rubbish they generate
- Introduce a system where businesses, organisations or residents can 'adopt' a street, path or road and take the responsibility and the credit for keeping it clean.

Environment

- **A Climate Change strategy for the Council**
- **Greening all new developments**

The Liberal Democrats have taken the lead on protecting our environment, locally and nationally. Our Green Tax Switch policy, which would switch the burden of taxation from people to polluters, has proven so successful that other parties have 'borrowed' parts of it for their own policies! We believe that the Council has a leading role to play in protecting Colchester's environment by setting the best example possible to the people, leading by example and not strangling residents and businesses with more red tape.

We will:

- Abide by the principles of the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change, which we pressured the Council to sign
- Produce a Climate Change strategy for the Council, containing specific targets to be met by us to reduce carbon emissions
- Ensure that there is funding available for replacement trees, and for at least 500 new trees to be planted every year in the Borough.
- Work within the Planning system to raise the environmental standards required for all new buildings in the Borough
- Promote energy efficiency to residents and businesses and give them the support to put these measures in place. This not only reduces carbon emissions, it also 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
- Seek to create more allotments in the Borough
- Provide support for local markets and farmers markets

Housing and Neighbourhoods

- **Improving the service of Colchester Borough Homes**
- **Building new homes that people want**

We take seriously the Council's responsibility to provide housing to many residents through Colchester Borough Homes, and also its responsibility to ensure that good quality housing is available to all residents of the town, whether that be through ensuring there are sufficient stocks of affordable and social housing, or that new and existing private sector housing is of good quality.

We will:

- Thoroughly review the work of Colchester Borough Homes to make sure that it is fit for purpose, especially in maintaining the Council's housing stock to meet the Decent Homes standard.
- Ensure that vacated council properties are ready for occupation again in the shortest possible time.
- Allow tenants and leaseholders to have works done by an accredited contractor of their choice if this is cheaper than using the Council's contractor.
- Make sure that every tenant has a single point of contact within Colchester Borough Homes, and that response times are measured and monitored.
- Review the Council's planning policies to ensure that new developments are composed of types of housing that people need, and to try to limit the number of flats being built.
- Aim to increase the percentage of new developments are given over to affordable housing, with a target of 40%.
- Increase the number of spot checks on social and private landlords, and work to develop an inspection system and register for private landlords.
- Commit to preserving amenity space when new developments are built, and seek ensure that there is proper infrastructure (transport, schools, shops and jobs) before new developments are built.

Community Safety

- **Making the streets safe for everyone**
- **Properly enforcing licensing rules**

We all want Colchester to be safe and secure for everyone who lives here. We'll take action to ensure that Colchester can once again be safe for everyone.

We will:

- Support and fund the SOS Bus scheme
- Work with the police to get more police officers and PCSOs on duty and on the beat in Colchester
- Extend and promote the Street Wardens scheme

- Introduce the use of Parental Control Agreements to curb anti-social behaviour, and introduce restorative justice schemes – for instance, making vandals repair property that they've damaged
- Promote the Neighbourhood Action Panels scheme more widely, and be prepared to review and amend the scheme to local needs so it functions more efficiently
- Improve street lighting and work to keep footpaths clean and secure
- Review licensing policy in the town to see what can be done to limit anti-social behaviour at night as well as making clubs and bars responsible for the behaviour of their customers
- Seek to expand the number of licensing enforcement officers
- Extend Licensing Stress Areas to better protect residents, and use our licensing policy more effectively to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and protect public safety.

Heritage, Culture and Leisure

- **Protecting and promoting our historic sites**
- **Making sports and arts services available to all**

As Britain's oldest recorded town, Colchester has a rich and unique heritage that the Council has a duty to protect and promote on behalf of all the residents of Colchester past, present and future. The Council should also be working to support Colchester's cultural life and ensure that everyone can benefit from it.

We will:

- Ensure that our many historical sites and buildings are properly protected and appropriately maintained
- Ensure that local planning regulations both protect existing heritage sites and ensure that new developments are in keeping with the history of the town
- Promote Colchester nationally and internationally as an important historical centre
- Look for innovative ways to promote Colchester and its history, such as encouraging film and TV companies to film on location here
- Ensure that there is strict scrutiny of firstsite:newsite (the Visual Arts Facility) and the Community Stadium to ensure that your money is not wasted and that they are providing their promised benefits to the local community
- Continue to support local arts organisations and facilities such as the Mercury Theatre and Colchester Arts Centre, as well as helping new groups to develop and thrive
- Encourage use of sporting and leisure facilities across the Borough, and seek to build new facilities where there is local demand
- Improve access to sport and leisure facilities for those on low incomes
- Do all we can to ensure Colchester benefits from the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics in London

Democracy and accountability

- **An open and accountable Council**
- **Value for money for all residents**

Liberal Democrats believe that decisions that affect you should be made locally, not by bureaucrats in Chelmsford or London. We believe that local councils should have more power to decide on local priorities, and that the Council should be open and accessible to all residents of the Borough. Decisions should not be made behind closed doors and then presented to the public as a *fait accompli* – the people of Colchester should always be an integral part of the process and all Council processes should be open and transparent.

We will:

- Seek to gain more powers for the Borough Council, including taking back responsibilities that the Tories have handed over to the County Council.
- Work with our Party nationally to seek more powers for local authorities.
- Support Parish Councils and provide assistance and support to areas who wish to establish new Parish or Neighbourhood Councils within the Borough.
- Encourage more representatives of the community, such as Residents Associations, pensioners groups and the Youth Council, to speak at Council meetings
- Investigate broadcasting Council meetings on the internet, so all residents can see decisions being made
- Campaign to replace the unfair Council Tax with a Local Income Tax
- Keep Council Tax rises as low as possible, as increases to it affect the poorer members of society the hardest
- Reduce the number of members in the Cabinet and the number of Council committees to save money that can be better spent on services
- Seek to link Councillors' allowances – particularly the Cabinet – to their performance
- Campaign for Councillors to be elected using a fair voting system.