



Our borough... Our future... Our choice

Manifesto 2018



Colchester Liberal Democrats

CREATING BETTER TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND JOBS FOR COLCHESTER

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What do you want Colchester's future to be?

Building on our success

01 **RETURNING POWER TO COLCHESTER RESIDENTS**

We believe Colchester can be one of Britain's most dynamic and vibrant places. A place where ancient history and 21st Century industries exist side-by-side, making it a desirable place to live, work and learn. We want Colchester to be a first-choice location for cutting-edge business and start-ups, a place for people keen to progress their ideas and achieve new goals.

02 **TRANSPORT FOR COLCHESTER**

We want to build a community that lives life to the full and takes care of its environment. We want new homes built with sustainable green technologies that are placed within new green infrastructure and protected open spaces. We want a forward-thinking and greener transport system that's cheap, clean and convenient for everyone.

03 **BUILDING HOMES FOR COLCHESTER FAMILIES**

We want a Borough where the power to make decisions remains in hands of local people, where people in Colchester decide what's best for them. We want to empower you to build your own future and your own success.

This is a future for Colchester the Liberal Democrats are committed to achieving - and it's a future we've already started to bring to life. Businesses are relocating into the borough, wage levels are rising, and more and more tourists are visiting here. Every year, people come here who want to live, work and study in Colchester to be part of our bright future.

This is the future we want for our borough, and your vote can make it happen.

Transport For Colchester: time for a new approach



Just getting around Colchester is a problem for so many people. Whether it's unreliable trains, expensive buses, poorly-maintained and congested roads, ill-thought out cycle routes or a lack of safety for pedestrians, we can all see problems in our transport networks.

Spending millions on short-term small-scale road schemes isn't the solution, and even building new roads won't solve the problems in the long term - evidence from across the UK and the rest of the world shows that building roads just generates more traffic which clogs them up.

It's time to do things differently. We need to look at our transport networks strategically and work out how we're going to organise transport for decades to come for the whole Borough.

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Moving forward for Colchester

We will:

- Create a new strategic transport body - **Transport For Colchester** - to look for long-term and innovative solutions for moving people around the whole Borough. We'll get everyone with responsibility for the different parts of Colchester's transport - the Department for Transport, Essex County Council, Highways England, Network Rail, Greater Anglia, bus companies, and groups representing users and businesses - to sit down together and plan for the future.
- Use this co-ordinated voice to get funding from Government for new integrated transport initiatives that are built for the long-term.
- Improve the bus network with better, cheaper and greener buses, running on more routes across the whole borough and put ourselves forward as a test location for advances in bus technology.
- Give Transport for Colchester a clear remit to tackle air pollution from transport and make our streets healthy again.
- Seek ways to develop the public transport network that allow us to wholly or partly pedestrianise the High Street in ways that doesn't reduce access to the Town Centre.
- Work with rail companies to improve and reduce the cost of trains, and lobby for building/reopening rail links to Stansted Airport and Cambridge.
- Seek to develop Park and Ride schemes to the east, west and south of the Borough to join the one we now have in the north.
- Continue to support cycling with more bike lanes and support for new bike-share and hire services to set up in Colchester.
- Work with schools to develop more Safe Routes to School schemes, taking traffic off the road and keeping kids healthy.
- Make it easier to introduce 20mph zones in residential areas when residents want one.
- Encourage more use of zero and low emission vehicles throughout the borough, including encouraging greener taxi services.
- Improve the condition of roads, pavements and pathways by bringing back true local control of repairs and maintenance.

Grow through innovation: New jobs and investment



Since 2011, we've seen over 1,000 new businesses created in Colchester accompanied by over £100m of investment from businesses who recognise our borough's potential for the future. We've seen wages rise in the Borough, and they're now above the average for the East of England, having lagged behind for many years. Over 1,400 apprenticeships have been created in the Borough every year since 2012.

There's still much more to do. Creating the jobs of the future needs a commitment to innovation and flexibility, providing individuals with the skills they need and giving businesses the opportunity to experiment, take risks and grow in a welcoming environment.

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Creating opportunity for all

We will:

- Continue to develop the Ultra Ready high-speed broadband network, looking for ways to expand it throughout the borough, including delivering good broadband access to rural areas.
- Deliver the Northern Gateway development as a regional hub for sports, leisure and business, bringing new investment and new jobs to Colchester.
- Promote the Borough widely as a place for growth and innovation, continuing schemes like the Colchester Ambassadors that use our existing businesses to attract new ones.
- Develop ways to encourage more start-up and innovative businesses, including support for business development and incubation centres
- Introduce ways where new and developing businesses can pay their business rates through equity shares and service provision to develop new links between business, the Council and the community.
- Work with our world-class University to encourage more graduates to stay in the area and develop the Knowledge Gateway as a dynamic location for new businesses.
- Support the introduction of a Business Improvement District in the town centre, and when it starts, work alongside it to promote and develop the area.
- Involve businesses in planning for the borough's future with Transport For Colchester and encourage new and existing companies with innovative transport solutions to trial them here.
- Conduct a localism audit on all council expenditure to determine how we can best use its spending to boost the local economy and support local jobs.

Build houses for the future, and for everyone



The UK has a massive housing shortage, and every part of the country needs to step up and do its part to ensure that future generations can have secure, affordable, and environmentally-conscious housing.

Developing new Garden Communities means Colchester will have more control over the development of new housing, and we'll make full use of those powers to ensure we build new communities and provide housing solutions for the century to come.

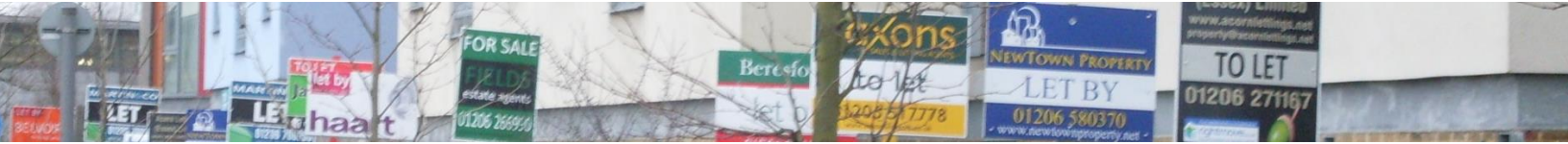
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Building for everyone

We will

- Continue to take an infrastructure first approach to these new developments, using Transport For Colchester as a way of making sure they don't add to existing problems.
- Ensure there is provision for new jobs, community facilities, education and community open space within these developments.
- Seek to set aside space within these new communities as Housing Innovation Areas, where we'll look for ways to develop new styles and models of housing. This would include working with architects to give them space for new ideas, encouraging low- and zero-carbon houses like Passivhaus and Earthship housing, providing space for self-build housing, developing cohousing schemes and much more.
- Improving the environmental standards for all new buildings, encouraging more solar and wind micro-generation alongside water recycling and waste minimisation.
- Ensure all new houses and housing developments are equipped for charging electric vehicles.

Providing decent homes for everyone



As well as building homes for the future, we need to make the current housing stock better for everyone. Continued indifference from Government has reduced the stock of council housing and forced more people into the private rented sector.

Most private landlords and letting agencies provide safe homes and good service, but we want to make sure that they all do, and that people in rented accommodation have safety and security.

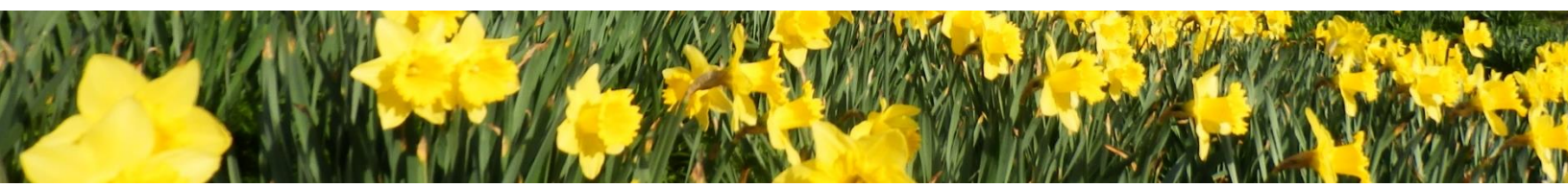
We need to tackle homelessness in all its forms, from reducing the number of rough sleepers on the streets to providing help for those reliant on friends, family or 'sofa surfing' for somewhere to live. This year we've invested £3m in buying new housing for the homeless, but there's still more to do.

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A decent home

We will

- Build new Council housing and continue to pressure the Government to give us the power to build more.
- Promote fairness in the private rented sector by establishing a Colchester standard for landlords and letting companies, to ensure renters are treated fairly and honestly and homes are of a good standard.
- Continue our work on homelessness reduction, including schemes to provide deposits for people renting properties without significant assets.
- Continue to work with organisations that provide help, support and advice to rough sleepers and seek to introduce a scheme like London's 'No Second Night Out'.



We've taken the lead in protecting Colchester's natural environment in a number of ways, from the Council's free 'Trees for Years' scheme through to improving our recycling rate and drastically cutting the amount of waste that goes to landfill.

Protecting the environment needs continued action from the council. We need to make the environment central to our planning and decision making, across all services, not stuck on as an afterthought.

Although, the last 10 years we've cut the council's CO2 emissions by 40%, introduced schemes like the Love Your Car Colchester campaign to encourage car-sharing, and more recently we've obtained funding from the Government to retrofit many local buses with cleaner engines, reducing fuel use and air pollution.

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Our future in our hands

We will

- Completion of a heat exchange energy system at the Northern Gateway development.
- Establish a new country park around Salary Brook as part of the Garden Community development.
- Introduce a new village green as part of development on Mill Road, and ensure all new developments contain community open space like this.
- Work to reduce air pollution from vehicles through Transport For Colchester. This would include introducing low and zero emission buses, providing more infrastructure for electric cars, reducing traffic in congested areas, and encouraging more walking and cycling.
- Introducing more charging points for electric cars in public car parks and ensure that all new housing contains facilities for charging electric vehicles.
- Provide more opportunities for domestic recycling, including improving the service offered to residents in flats and easier recycling of TetraPak and similar containers, either through doorstep collection or a new deployment of collection bins.
- Be a pioneer in reducing waste from single-use and non-recyclable plastics, by working in partnership with shops and residents to provide alternatives and lobbying government for the power to introduce a local bottle deposit scheme.
- Introduce more public recycling bins alongside regular waste bins.
- Set an example by minimising the use of Non-Recyclable Plastics in all Council facilities
- Urge the adoption of paper or bio-degradable bags instead of plastic shopping bags. Plant more trees and ensure space for tree planting in new developments.
- Support businesses that want to reduce their environmental impact and build networks across the borough to share best practice.
- Encourage the development of new innovative environmental businesses and provide opportunities for them to test new products and solutions in the Borough.

Promoting our heritage and culture



Colchester is one of Britain's leading heritage sites as well as being one of the main cultural centres for the East of England. Heritage and culture are important for our Borough in so many ways, not least in the number of jobs they provide and the support they provide for our tourist industry.

We've secured investment in many of our facilities, including a redevelopment of the Castle and the recently announced multi-million pound Mercury Rising project to expand and improve our theatre.

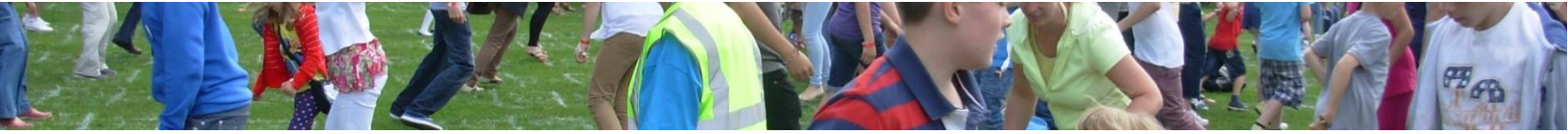
We want to continue to improve our heritage and culture facilities both to provide more for our residents and to encourage new visitors and businesses to come to the Borough.

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Proud of our past

We will

- Create a Team Colchester organisation to create more opportunities for volunteers within heritage and culture activities.
- Develop Borough-wide culture and heritage events and promotions, linking venues and destinations as well as providing events outside of the centre.
- Seek to create new large-scale activities to bring heritage and culture out to the wider community like 'Big Dig' archaeology tours, a modern version of the early 20th century Colchester Pageants, and open air music and theatre events.
- Work with businesses to create more family-friendly activities in and around the town centre throughout the year.
- Find ways to open up our historical archive, especially in our museums, so more people can see the artefacts within there.
- Explore innovative ways to use archival material in partnership with businesses, cultural groups and heritage organisations.
- Investigate sites and funding for historical-themed public art, such as a life-size Roman centurion for people to take selfies with.
- Develop more guided walks and heritage trails, including long walks that link several parts of the Borough.
- Seek ways to fund the permanent lighting of heritage buildings that doesn't cut the funding available for other work within them.



The Council has an important role to play in providing leisure services to the people of the Borough. We have a proud record of defending and developing our leisure services.

At a time when other councils are closing them down or selling them, we're continuing to invest in our facilities so they can keep serving everyone.

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Investing in our health

We will

- Complete the Northern Gateway development, providing a whole new range of sports and leisure activities for people.
- Seek to develop more fitness opportunities accessible to all the community such as outdoor gyms in parks and open space.
- Work in partnership with community organisations to provide events and activities for all.
- Continue to support organisations like Parkrun and GoodGym that provide a fantastic service and opportunities to the local community.
- Continue our programme of activities and events in Castle Park, and look at ways to run similar events in open spaces across the rest of the Borough

Keeping Colchester safe for everybody



The fear of crime is a leading concern for many people across Colchester Borough and we know that these concerns have only risen with cuts to the Police that have come from central government and Essex Police. The council only has limited powers in this area, but we can do things to make Colchester safer.

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Feeling safe

We will

- Lobby government to provide more funding for the police
- Work closely with the police and other agencies to reduce crime across the Borough of Colchester
- Support the police in their Street Weeks.
- Promote alternate family-friendly uses of the town centre and other areas at night as this will reduce the amount of anti-social behaviour.
- Use the Council's zone teams and other resources to work with the police in targeting graffiti and other anti-social behaviour.
- Continue working to get street lights turned on at night, reversing the decision forced on us by the Conservatives in Chelmsford.
- Introduce schemes such as LED lighting to reduce the cost of keeping lights on at night.



We know that local government is confusing to many residents and it's hard to work out who's responsible for delivering which service and who should be accountable when things go wrong. We believe local government needs to be local to be properly accountable to you, and to make the right decisions to meet the needs of residents.

We think Essex County Council isn't representing the needs of residents anymore. It is too mired in bureaucracy. It's too far away to be good local government, and not big enough to be a useful regional strategic body. It needs to be abolished and replaced.

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Your town – Your say

We will

- Petition the government to create a new unitary authority, based in Colchester, that takes on the powers of the district and county councils.
- Where possible, ensure the powers of any new council are decentralised and as close to the community as possible.
- Create Transport For Colchester in order to better represent and implement the needs of local residents.
- Continue our policy of giving councillors locality budgets to fund improvements, projects and priorities in their wards.
- Continue to review the way the Council works and seek to keep opening it up to the people to make decision-making more accountable and open.
- Request the power to run our local elections using a fairer and more representative electoral system, like the Single Transferable Vote used in Scotland and Northern Ireland and proposed for use in Wales.