THE 2019 MANIFESTO

THE LIB DEM MANIFESTO
A Real Plan for decisive ACTION for Colchester from the Colchester Liberal Democrats

30 March 2019
The Colchester Liberal Democrats 2019 Manifesto

Our Plan

Colchester needs a real plan to answer the public’s call for decisive ACTION, and to cut through the excuses and the fake news to deliver what they need most. We know our town and borough. We hear what the people want. **We will respond** and:

- **Divorce the County Council** to get the powers and the money back to Colchester, to fix our broken roads and keep our libraries open
- **Keep Us Safe** with yet more police officers on our streets and more robust action on anti-social behaviour
- **Deliver a New Town Centre Master Plan** to make our town centre more of a destination to visit and to make the most of our public space
- **Act on Drugs** and save lives by helping users to keep safe
- **Preserve and Protect our Environment** tackling pollution, improving recycling and focusing on conservation of our beautiful natural habitats around the borough
- **Strengthen our Communities** to reduce isolation and loneliness and build trust between communities, with better support and facilities for our young people. **Build Civic Pride** to highlight and support the best, ancient or modern, that Colchester has to offer visitors and residents
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**Divorce from the County Council**

Who is cutting our libraries? Conservative run Essex County Council. Who leaves potholes in our roads and causes chaos with their roadworks? Conservative run Essex County Council. Whilst they are in charge, we will be a good partner. We will provide £200,000 towards highways improvements and to explore **pedestrianisation** and improved **cycling** provision. But it would be better, faster and cheaper if we could take back control. **We need a divorce.** To become a unitary authority with **the power to act** for our residents. And **to keep our libraries open.**

**Keep Us Safe**

**Police numbers and youth services** have been cut by the Conservative Government and Conservative led County Council. Our response has been to take the lead and fill some of their gaps. We have already invested £300,000 to **strengthen community policing.**

We will invest again to increase their numbers. We will remain **tough on anti-social behaviour** and aggressive begging (whilst helping those in need). We will **strengthen rural policing**, take ASB enforcement action, further improve town centre CCTV and strengthen car park security and. put more police on our streets.
Deliver a New Master Plan

We hear the voice of residents about the St Botolph development. We understand they want more public space and to have a voice in the choices ahead. We can and will consult afresh and build a consensus about new developments and the public realm and deliver a New Town Centre Master Plan for Colchester. New developments in such locations will only proceed if they have broad support from the public and the experts.

We will also develop new Council Design Guide. We must raise the bar for developers. We must expect and get more. New developments must have the space, facilities and links needed to work well. And their designs and building materials must stand the test of time and allow for different needs and the less able bodied.

Act on Drugs

We cannot stop the widespread use of drugs like cocaine. Use is rampant. We will support the police and the law. But we can save lives by helping users to keep safe. To do so we will get a Naxolone spray kit into every pub and club in town as this can revive people who have overdosed, to set up a drug testing facility on the SOS bus to tell people what’s included in the drugs people want to take. We will work to improve communications, including Drug Alerts, to ensure people are aware of poor quality and dangerous drugs hitting the streets.

Preserve and Protect our Environment

This Conservative Government has allowed businesses and consumers to be indifferent to the damage to the environment. We have acted. We have led the Council to a ‘top 3’ in England position on recycling. We will continue to campaign for less use of plastics by businesses, a ban on plastic straws, cleaner air and less litter and dog fouling by the public. We will take robust enforcement action to help change behaviours. We will expand collections to more flats to increase our plastics recycling. We will increase our recycling rate to 57 percent and aim to be the very best in the UK.

We will act on pollution and congestion, to secure the expanded use of the park and ride, looking for another P&R site, securing funding for a community ‘hopper’ or shuttle bus to serve the hospital (and to relieve some of the pressures there), to add more electric charging points and to press ECC for progress on cycling and walking routes.

We will press the Government to tax plastics. We will press them and business to introduce refundable bottle deposit schemes. We will review licensing conditions to ensure business and consumers preserve and protect our environment

We will take robust action to improve conservation and preserve bio-diversity within our borough, wherever we can, to explore methods of conservation of natural habitats and biodiversity, whether through adapting existing practices and places or creating new ecologically diverse environments with sustainable practices built in. To encourage renewable energy generation and carbon footprint reduction in both the public and private sectors across the borough. We will draw on expert and public views through a Council Task and Finish Group.

Strengthen Our Communities

Despite Conservative austerity we will continue to deliver high quality and award-winning services, particularly valued by the most vulnerable. We will continue with a generous Council Tax support scheme and to support partners who help those most in need.
Conservative right to buy policies, rent and borrowing controls have made it more difficult to build, increased the homeless and damaged social and youth services. That means less affordable homes, more demands for help that cannot be met and less resources than ever before. Our communities suffer.

We will respond. We have committed to a new building programme. We have insisted on affordable private homes with every development. We have made sure we have kept pace with and actively addressed homelessness. We will root out poor landlords and encourage good practice.

We have committed also to invest £100,000 next year in new youth and community projects that help a sense of belonging, give purpose and support to those in need and reduce the risk of disengagement and crime. We will hold a Youth Summit to hear their and expert views, to look at borough wide community needs and transformational initiatives elsewhere in the UK, such as Youth Zone.

We will work with partners including Community 360 and parish councils, to reduce isolation and loneliness and to build trust between our faiths and communities. We will continue to support vulnerable communities and work with them and the arts and creative sector to celebrate diversity in every form. And we will campaign to keep libraries open, for the learning they encourage and as crucially important community hubs.

We have led on investments into the Colchester Orbital, as paths and bridleways around the town that will help connect rural and urban areas and residents to nearby green spaces, to encourage walking and cycling and help awareness and the health and well-being of our residents.

We will revisit the Military Covenant to ensure we fully welcome and support the Garrison and their families and to help them contribute and support Colchester in return.

**Build Civic Pride**

We will celebrate our heritage, adding interpretation boards, informing the public, lighting up our walls and Castle. We will continue to keep our town attractive and clean, with enforcement action on litter and dog fouling and aggressive begging.

We will continue to support local businesses, large and small, high tech and innovative and to celebrate and support their expansion with new investments in ultra-fast broadband. We will welcome the jobs and higher wages that will bring and will work with the Business Improvement District (BID) and others to ensure the town remains attractive to visitors and residents.

We will work with our arts and other partners to make the most of our significant cultural strengths and the richness this adds to life in the borough. We will continue to ensure our publicly owned Companies deliver high quality music and other events and Leisure World services to residents and visitors, with income that helps us maintain high quality services.

We will deliver the Northern Gateway as a fantastic Regional Sports and Entertainment Hub, working with Sports England, the FA and others to raise sports and health providing participation across the Borough. We will share and involve the public in the regeneration and renewal of Britain’s First City in which all can take pride. For our part we look forward to leading again a Council that has the ambition and vision necessary for a Better Colchester.
Our Values and Our Approach

We will remain an inclusive and welcoming and vibrant local Party. We will continue to welcome the help and ideas and support of every part of the community. We will continue to value and safeguard the rights of every citizen within a fair, free and open society. We will continue to welcome new residents and visitors and all they can contribute to our attractive, vibrant and prosperous borough.

We will do what we say we will do. We will continue to listen, learn and respond to the residents of Colchester. We will work with other parties and the wider community in the interests of all residents.

We will help form a new administration, able to deliver positive and progressive plans for a Better Colchester, that deliver real, lasting and meaningful improvements to life in our borough.

We will continue to make sure the Council remains cost effective, value for money and high achieving with all profits from our Companies going into services to the public. Unlike some Councils we will continue to ‘balance the books’ and to keep sound financial reserves, whilst still providing high quality services.