

CHRIS EDWARDS
CANDIDATE STATEMENT
FOR SELECTION MEETING
28 October 2020



Dear fellow Liberal Democrat

I am writing to tell you a bit about myself, and to ask you to support my bid to stand for the Liberal Democrats in St Michael's Ward at the next election. It would be a privilege for me to represent the area where my family and I have lived for the last 15 years.

Experience, skills and internationalism I worked for many years with the British Council, initially on development aid in Africa and educational projects in China, then on cultural and social programmes across central and Eastern Europe with EU partners, and the cultural programme around the 2012 Olympics. Along the way I gained skills in policy development, project management and communications, and also an internationalist perspective - which includes an eye for the common ground. Of course, I campaigned vigorously for Remain right up to the end of last year; on doorsteps, at the Buttercross and all the London marches.

With the LibDems in Winchester Whilst living abroad I was distanced from UK party-political activity, but moving to Winchester in 2005 I joined the LibDems and set about getting to know a new home. I've been a regular leaflet deliverer, and helped with GOTV etc at elections. I wrote the constituency profile for Paula's campaign - and remembered that my very first regular job was running a members' information service at Northumberland County Council in the 1970s. In 2009-10 I was a member of the Constituency Executive Committee, and I was on the cusp of doing more, but felt unable to campaign for the coalition. I self identify as a social democrat. I believe that 'fairness and opportunity' are great but not enough to address the human and structural damage caused by currently extreme levels of inequality.

Commitment to the community I've been a governor at Peter Symond's College for the last nine years. It's an extraordinary place, doing well for students whatever their needs and abilities. I was Chair (2010-16) of the Nuffield Theatre in Southampton, developing partnerships with local authorities, universities and Arts Council England, leading to the opening of the new theatre in Guildhall Square. Our ambitions for Winchester should certainly include a new multi-purpose cultural venue.

Outside politics, my **personal interests** include the arts and walking, philosophy and architecture. The pandemic has reminded us how important Winchester's many footpaths are for physical and mental health: we need to use, promote and defend them. Recently I completed a masters in philosophy at Southampton, focusing on ethics: lifelong learning of all kinds also needs defending. As for architecture, it seems to me that it is fundamental to how a city functions and feels about itself. We should promote and encourage the construction of high quality contemporary green buildings, thereby adding to as well as respecting our architectural heritage.

Why do I want to stand here now?

Because I want Winchester to be excited and confident about its future; a city that engages the resources, skills and optimism of its people to find innovative local responses to climate change and the still unknown legacy of the pandemic. For example, let's promote Winchester as a pilot for green transport partnerships.

Because I am energised by the *Council Plan 2020-2025* in which economic and social development is framed by the climate emergency. This document should be widely promoted (not buried deep in the Council's website) and used when we are campaigning. It will evolve - most obviously following the pandemic - but we should stick with it and report on it. For the first time in almost 20 years we have a significant overall majority and the ability to think and act consistently for the long-term. I'd love to help make that majority unassailable in May.

Because the ward faces some particular challenges such as city centre parking and traffic flows; living alongside the new Leisure Centre, and a people-friendly city development opposite the Guildhall. We have to listen, enthuse and take people with us.

And finally, because I am outraged by the Johnson government - its politics and its processes. The attacks on the rule of law; the contempt for civil society; the whiff of corruption, the trashing of our international reputation. I could go on but you know the score. I can't just complain for the next four years, I have to do something. I believe the tide will turn - is turning - against this dangerous administration. The stronger we are in local government, the more seats like Winchester we can win at the next general election. I want to do my bit.

I very much hope that you will support me. The selection meeting is by Zoom at 19:00 on Wednesday 28 October. It is only possible to vote by proxy if you do not have access to Zoom, and your proxy has been arranged in advance with the returning officer.

Thank you for taking time to read this.

Chris Edwards
Edgar Road, Winchester

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Chris', with a horizontal line underneath.