

**For a
safer**

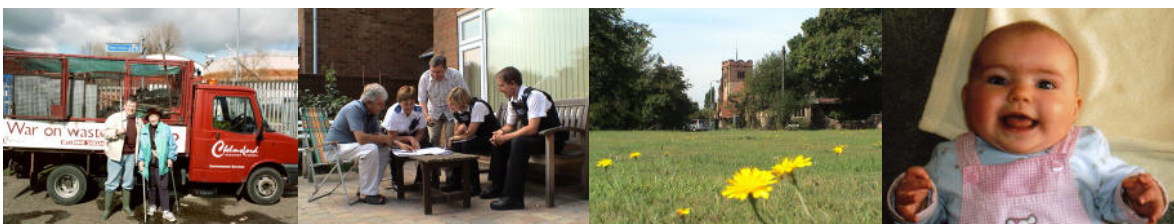
greener

fairer

Chelmsford



**The Liberal Democrat Manifesto
for the 2007
Chelmsford Borough Council
Elections**





Introduction

from Chris Rycroft

Group Leader of Chelmsford Liberal Democrats

When the Liberal Democrats first took control of Chelmsford Borough Council in 1983 we started to transform Chelmsford into a thriving, prosperous and lively Borough.

We had the foresight to start maintaining and restoring Hylands House to achieve the wonderful facility which is now the jewel in our crown.

We brought democracy to the Council – we were the first to open up meetings to public. We consulted with parish councils and community organisations to achieve improvements in all areas of Borough life for our residents.

If we had retained control in 2003, Waterside could now be developed with a concert hall and conference facility, a hotel with space for a museum for the Marconi archives, which have instead been lost to Oxford.

Our communities need a programme of measures to lift them from the ordinary. Our people should enjoy a strong local economy derived from successful neighbourhoods with a well educated and well trained workforce. They should experience quality and responsive services that deliver value for money. They should feel part of a caring, safe and confident larger community that leads a sustainable and friendly lifestyle meeting the needs of all its residents.

A Liberal Democrat-run Council will devote itself to this vision and also speak out for all those it represents on matters dealt with by other agencies, such as the County Council and Government Departments.

Liberal Democrats have always been ahead of the game in terms of green policies and, in the past, were often derided by the media and other parties. The other parties have taken a long time to see the light and now claim the conservation of the environment as their own! The Conservatives delayed our plans for recycling plastic, cardboard and food waste when they took over four years ago and consequently Chelmsford has slipped down the Essex recycling league.

The legacy of the Conservative administration over the past four years has been dither and delay:

- failure to carry through the plans for recycling that the Lib Dems drew up four years ago;
- inaction following their rejection of the Lib Dem Local Plan so we are no nearer the building of a new railway station;
- inaction and the withdrawal of funding for pavements and so on.

This manifesto outlines our plans for the next four years to make Chelmsford a safer, fairer and greener place to live and enjoy.

Your vote matters. Your reward will be high quality public services reflecting your needs and wishes, delivered efficiently and at reasonable cost, by an honest and open Council.

10 Reasons to vote Liberal Democrat

We will

- ✓ Increase recycling
 - *(Not incineration)*
- ✓ Promote policies to help buses, trains, walking and cars
 - *(Not policies that just help motorists)*
- ✓ Ensure cleaner streets and public places
 - *(Not more litter)*
- ✓ Propose any major new development to be in a sustainable new community
 - *(Not continuous urban sprawl round Chelmsford)*
- ✓ Promote energy saving and green energy generation
 - *(No new nuclear power station in Essex – or elsewhere)*
- ✓ Work to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour before it starts
 - *(Not ineffective, sound-bites)*
- ✓ Put more police and community support officers on the street
 - *(Not wasting £ billions on a massive national database and ID cards)*
- ✓ Open up local government with decisions taken more locally
 - *(Not decisions behind closed doors and ignoring your views)*
- ✓ Spend more on pavement and pothole repairs
 - *(Not cuts in spending on pavements)*
- ✓ Campaign for a fair system of local tax, related to ability to pay
 - *(Axe the unfair council tax, backed by the other parties)*

Issues

Our surveys show that you are concerned about

- vandalism and anti-social behaviour
- global warming and the related energy and CO₂ issues – sustainability
- support for the disadvantaged in our community

In a nutshell, you want it and we will provide it....

....a safer, greener, fairer Chelmsford

Action for Safer Communities

We will work with the police, neighbourhood watch (NHW), crime prevention agencies, the emergency services, and community groups to target local crime hot spots and keep this Borough safe. We will reduce the causes and fear of crime and anti-social behaviour by:



- ✎ Campaigning for more police on our streets, especially at night when we most need them. The introduction of ward based units by the police is a welcome start. But, if good behaviour and good citizenship is encouraged, then there is less need for policing.
- ✎ Providing finance for more police community support officers to walk the beat in our communities.
- ✎ Working with police and all other agencies, including neighbourhood watch, to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- ✎ Being vigilant in reviewing alcohol licences where nuisance problems occur and carefully monitor the effect of longer hours on the quality of life, particularly in residential areas.
- ✎ Seeking more funding to extend and integrate CCTV cameras to deter crime and oppose Conservative plans to switch off street lighting from midnight to 5.00am.
- ✎ Developing the 'pub-watch' and 'park watch' schemes and improve the response time for graffiti removal.
- ✎ Targeting advice to vulnerable groups like the elderly and victims of crime.
- ✎ Using all public officials as the 'eyes and ears' of the local community.
- ✎ Making use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts between people who have been involved in anti-social behaviour and the Council and other agencies. This helps the individual acknowledge their behaviour and its effect on others with the aim of stopping that behaviour.



- ✎ Empower local communities – e.g. by enabling local communities to decide on 20mph zones where appropriate.
- ✎ Improve the quality of life by insisting that the design of buildings and places are safer – e.g. through support of the "secured by design" initiative which encourages the building industry to adopt crime prevention measures in development design to assist in reducing the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime, creating a safer and more secure environment.

Action for a Fairer Chelmsford

It is apparent that the town areas, which do not have Parish Councils to represent them, are not able to respond to consultation in the same way. They also lose out on grant applications for funding of local projects.



It is also apparent that the 'cabinet' system is not enabling proper scrutiny of the Council's decisions. The vast majority of councillors are excluded from the decision making process and are prevented from properly representing their constituents.

We will therefore

- ✨ Explore best practice where Area Committees exist in other Councils like Cambridge in order to develop local decision making and enable greater involvement by our residents.
- ✨ Investigate ways of devolving budgets to Area Committees so that local people can decide on local priorities.
- ✨ Re-establish genuine scrutiny and policy making committees of the Council to ensure all councillors are involved in decisions which affect their local areas.
- ✨ Take steps to improve voter registration and encourage increased turnout at elections.
- ✨ Have genuine and wide consultation on services and proposals – using public forums where appropriate – not just on the Council's preferred options.
- ✨ Explore setting up a Youth Council, elected by local high schools, and a Pensioners' Council.
- ✨ Reduce the 'democratic deficit' by enabling councillors to be real representatives of the community.
- ✨ Ensure fairer access by the whole community to Borough activities.
- ✨ Campaign for a fairer voting system.



Action for a Greener Chelmsford








Waste

Liberal Democrats want our children and grandchildren to have as good a life as ours, if not better. We do not wish them to be threatened with shortages of energy and raw materials or with climate changes that will bring extreme weather conditions, world conflict and mass migration. In the UK, we consume, per person, three times the resources that our planet can produce.

Liberal Democrats give a lead by encouraging our communities to

- 1) Reduce** – buy goods that have less packaging and create less waste. Why not re-use bags and adopt the slogan – “no new bag, thank you”?
- 2) Reuse** – return containers where possible and give unwanted clothes, books and bric-a-brac to jumble sales and charity shops.
- 3) Recycle** – use the kerbside collections provided by the Borough Council for paper, plastic bottles, glass bottles, cans, foil, textiles and shoes. Cardboard is at last being collected. Metal objects, timber and wooden objects and electrical equipment can be taken to the Civic Amenity Sites.

We will

-  actively encourage everyone to get into the habit of recycling everything for which a kerbside collection is provided. Ultimately our target should be ‘zero-waste’ as we reduce, reuse and recycle.
-  take a lead in helping businesses to recycle.
-  provide separate collections for food waste, to remove the risk of maggots or bad smells in the black bins. (The neighbouring Councils of Uttlesford and Braintree are already making food waste collections so we would be able to learn from their experience.)
-  bring in fortnightly collections of residual waste because so much will be collected separately for recycling.
-  continue to press the Government to implement further stages of the system by which producers are required to take back or pay for the waste that their products create.
-  oppose the use of incineration, which is still permitted by the County Council’s Waste Local Plan.
-  oppose any long-term contracts for large capacity treatment plants.
-  press for small modular biological treatment plants owned by the Council and funded by loans from Banks in the normal way.

Action for a Greener Chelmsford

Energy

In order to conserve the nation's energy resources and reduce greenhouses gases, Liberal Democrats will actively pursue policies that provide people with a framework that allows them to put the environment first themselves.

The introduction of 'green taxes' will signal what is good for the environment by making the polluters pay. The result will be that it will reduce taxes elsewhere.

We will

- ✎ ensure the Council sets an example to other developers and the public by building in environmentally friendly features to use alternative energy sources, minimise consumption of fossil fuels and water consumption, e.g. by reuse of 'grey' water and collection of rainwater.
- ✎ provide support for house insulation and actively encourage energy efficient building.
- ✎ show a good example in the use of low energy bulbs.
- ✎ conduct an energy saving audit within the Council's operations.
- ✎ move towards the use of solar panels and wind turbines where appropriate for energy production for hot water and heating in the Council's buildings.
- ✎ address the conversion of Council vehicles to LPG or battery power.
- ✎ sign the 'Nottingham Declaration', which would pledge the Council to actively tackle climate change in the Borough and work with others to reduce emissions country-wide.

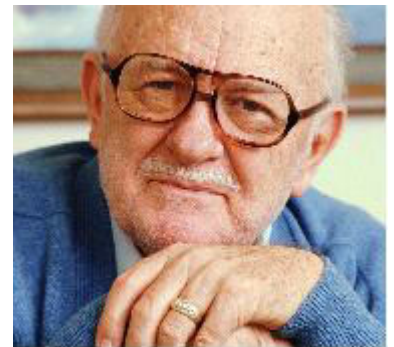


Action for people

Chelmsford people are largely tolerant, energetic, enterprising and compassionate. But there is a need to counteract a sense of greed and self interest within certain sections of the community.

There is a need for overt concern for the individual while recognising that society works best in communities – so there is a need to create communities and recover a sense of neighbourliness.

- ✎ As issues are addressed we will encourage people to “think of their children and their grandchildren” and take a longer term view.
- ✎ The easiest answers are not always the best. We will address the real issues and adopt solutions that are best for our communities.
- ✎ Liberal Democrats put people first rather than the thirst for investment income, whilst recognising that a sound local economy is in all our interests.
- ✎ We will work with and for young people and pensioners to address their specific needs.
- ✎ We will develop and drive an anti-poverty strategy to tackle the ongoing cycle of poverty and disadvantage and social exclusion within the Borough and demonstrate that Chelmsford values all its citizens.



Action on the Council Tax

Nationally the Liberal Democrats wish to see the unfair Council Tax replaced by a local income tax based on the ability to pay.

Council Tax levels depend to a great extent on the amount of central government funding given to local authorities – currently about three quarters of total local authority expenditure.

So

- ✎ When in control of the Chelmsford Borough Council we kept the Council Tax rise below the rises set by the Conservative controlled County Council in their budgets.
- ✎ During each of the last four years the Liberal Democrats presented alternative budgets which showed we could improve services and reduce Council Tax rises below those of the Conservative administration, but they rejected our proposals.
- ✎ This Conservative County Council set rises as high as 16.7% in 2003 and 14.9% in 1998.
- ✎ Also, when the Liberal Democrats were in control of the Borough Council, Council Tax rises were amongst the lowest in the 12 other districts and boroughs in Essex, whilst we continued to improve services. **We pledge to do so again.**

Action for the Arts and Leisure pursuits

The Liberal Democrats want to build on their proud record, having built the facilities at Riverside, saved Hylands House from decay and so invested in its restoration as to attract the £ multi-million Heritage Fund grant to the final phase now nearing completion. The experience of the Chelmsford Spectacular laid the foundation for the V Festivals and Scout Jamborees, with the World Scout Jamboree about to bring unprecedented publicity to the Borough in July and August 2007.

- ✎ We will explore the possibility of bringing back a Spectacular-type event in 2008, possibly with a commercial partner.
- ✎ We welcome proposals to extend the museum at Oaklands, including an art gallery to display the Council's collection to go on display. We will investigate whether Chelmsford also needs smaller issue museums and interactive museums for children looking at history and helping young people to look to the future.
- ✎ We support proposals to look at the feasibility of replacing the dated facilities at Riverside, on that site or as part of a major redevelopment of the Civic Centre site. In any event we would only redevelop on an equally central location, to maximise access on foot, by bicycle and by public transport.
- ✎ We recognise the need for Chelmsford to have a larger concert hall and conference centre, as part of the Civic Centre redevelopment or at Waterside.
- ✎ We worked for the recent return of Chelmsford City FC to the Borough and welcome their success.
- ✎ We insisted on the retention in future planning documents of the 'cut' linking the Navigation to the River Chelmer above the weir, so permitting boats to access the river upstream.
- ✎ Chelmsford has play area provision in small areas but there needs to be a vision for a large provision to which people would come a distance, such as an adventure playground.
- ✎ Leisure facilities must be accessible and affordable – we will investigate the possibility of issuing residents' loyalty cards.
- ✎ We will promote healthy living – fitness centre (combating individual obesity) at Melbourne.
- ✎ With hotter summers, an obesity health problem, and an expanding regional population, an open air swimming pool is needed more than ever.
- ✎ We will actively sell Chelmsford as the water leisure capital of Essex by opening up the riversides and canal side.



Action for our communities

Chelmsford has to sustain a high number of new dwellings, allocated by central government, and we must ensure that the infrastructure is in place to cope.

Liberal Democrats firmly believe that new developments should be in reach of public transport, ideally not more than 800 metres from a station or high capacity bus service route or interchange. The quality and quantity of public transport must be considerably enhanced so that the occupiers of the new dwellings will find it attractive and efficient to use. Any new development must provide an improved public transport infrastructure and additional Park & Ride. This would also have the effect of alleviating congestion in the town.

- ✎ We are concerned at the continued outward peripheral development of Chelmsford which has provided too many unattractive places to live and not provided appropriate infrastructure e.g. secondary schools, doctors' surgeries. At present there is a dire lack of secondary school places to the east of Chelmsford and many children have to travel across town to schools in other areas, thus creating extra journeys.
- ✎ We believe that the best option for such a development is the area north of Boreham, the airfield and gravel workings. It will deliver the secondary school and the station and will probably create a new community with its own centre. A green wedge can be created and retained between Springfield and the new settlement.
- ✎ Chelmsford town must be environmentally attractive to visitors. The retail areas should be pedestrian only and there should be no new through traffic routes across the town centre.
- ✎ An attractive environmentally friendly town depends on high quality and frequent public transport reaching all areas of the town and surrounding villages with efficient routeing and we will play our part in negotiating contracts to achieve this. The development of more Park & Ride schemes and a completed cycleway network are vital to reduce car journeys into the town centre.
- ✎ We welcome the residential and community facilities at Waterside. Any access route to the Waterside peninsula should end on the peninsula and not become a through route.

Other issues that we will address include:

- ✎ the need for more 'affordable housing' – including in the villages.
- ✎ the local shortfall in public open space.



- ✎ improvement to the local environment by reviewing Post Offices, dentists, opticians.
- ✎ accessibility – particularly to shops for the disabled – and a “left luggage” kind of arrangement to help people use the town centre for as long as possible and a home-delivery service to make it easier to use public transport to go shopping.

Action on Transport

Our policy is to minimise the effects of traffic in our towns and other village community centres. Our transport strategy to achieve this is an integrated one, and all the issues mentioned here are part of it, but not all of these things are the responsibility of the Borough Council. However, we will be pushing for all of them to be implemented.



Our aim is traffic reduction, which could be achieved primarily by the provision of choice in an individual's means of travel. Such a reduction will mean that the extremely high, in some cases unaffordable, cost of expansion and modifications to the road network will not be necessary and instead the limited resources diverted to more sustainable options.

Specific elements of such a policy are:

- ✨ Make provision for a network of four Park & Ride routes for Chelmsford.
- ✨ Provision of a Circular Bus Service for Chelmsford Town Centre, connecting up the car parks, shopping areas and other key facilities. We will review the costs to see if this service could be free.
- ✨ Greatly enhanced bus service provision through Quality Bus Contracts (rather than Partnerships). Bus provision should be primarily a service to the community rather than a purely commercial operation.
- ✨ A modified approach to the road network, as part of the evolving "Town Centre Action Plan". This would offer a better distribution of residual traffic flows and access, including a new eastern approach road to Chelmer Waterside, preferably on the basis of the 'cul de sac' principle. In the main, access roads used to service the various parts of the town without providing through routes.
- ✨ NE Chelmsford Study to address local transport provision as well as the NE bypass linking the A12 with the Great Leighs bypass.
- ✨ The provision of a complete and well signed network of cycleways, including other facilities for cyclists.
- ✨ The recognition that air quality is a major environmental issue.
- ✨ The need for repairs to pavements and the collapse in Conservative funding that there has been for this over the last few years.
- ✨ More priority for pedestrians rather than cars through provision of crossings etc.

In 2005 the Liberal Democrats won all five Chelmsford town seats on the County Council and took the Lawns Ward by-election with a swing of 17.7%

Winning for you and for Chelmsford



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