**TENDRING**

 **IT’S YOUR COUNCIL**

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**The Liberal Democrat manifesto for the 2023 Tendring District elections**

**May 4th 2023**

 ***Decision day for all of us***

**Introduction**

On 4 May this year in the council elections, we, the people who live in Tendring, will elect our representatives for the next **four years**. Who we elect will determine what kind of council we get.

Sometimes it isn’t obvious. Four years ago, Tendring people elected a council in which no one party had a majority, but some independents joined with the Conservatives, keeping the same Conservative politicians in power.

Life is hard and things are worse than most of us can remember. Many people are fed up with the council and with politics. But the answer isn’t to stay at home and not vote. That just gives a free run to councillors who don’t work hard and don’t listen to their electors. There is hope.

**The answer is to speak up and to vote.**

The rest of this manifesto sets out what the Liberal Democrats will try to achieve and how. We may not be running the council on our own. But if the election gives no one party a majority, a strong group of Liberal Democrat councillors will be able to achieve a good deal of what we’re setting before you. We will aim to form an administration and work in partnership with all councillors. But even if we are in opposition, the more Liberal Democrats you elect, the more influence we will have.

**WHAT THE COUNCIL DOES – AND CAN’T DO**

Successive governments have set up a system of local government that almost seems deliberately devised to confuse people and stop them understanding who’s responsible for what. Far too much that could be decided locally is decided at Westminster and Whitehall: for example, local authorities have very limited powers to try to make sure new housing developments have adequate services and community facilities, but central government forces local authorities to make land available for given numbers of houses. Liberal Democrats in power nationally would reverse that centralisation. Where in this manifesto we say something like “endeavour to”, it’s not from being half-hearted but because the council alone does not have the power or the funds to make sure it happens. Publicly-funded bodies like the Police and Health Authorities are hived off and in some cases given their own elections. Most people do not understand what the district council does and what the county council does. It’s hardly surprising. This is how it’s divided up:

**Tendring District Council (Conservative run)**

* Planning applications (subject to appeal)
* Housing (but has far fewer council houses than formerly)
* Refuse and recycling
* Street cleaning
* Food safety and hygiene inspection
* Most sports and recreation facilities
* Environmental issues such as noise and dog mess.

**Essex County Council (Conservative run)**

* Social care
* Highways maintenance and planning (including pavements)
* Street lighting (when not down to parish or town councils)
* Youth services
* Libraries
* Childcare
* Some responsibilities for education, especially primary schools (now most secondary schools are academies, responsible to central government rather than a local council), school transport and holidays.

**MPs:** They have no power over what local councils do, but can make representations and are generally listened to.

**Essex Police and Fire Authority (Conservative commissioner)**

Oversees the Police and (recently added) Fire and Rescue Service.

**Health authorities (non-political, but ultimately depend on central government)**

There is a complicated patchwork of NHS boards independent of local authorities and answering to NHS England.

**Our plan**

**Power back to the people - a council that listens to you and acts for you**

* All councillors to share in decision-making, instead of the Conservative-led cabinet deciding everything in secret. Powers and services currently held by the district council to be given to town councils, parish councils and groupings of parish councils where agreement can be reached and there is no extra cost.
* The views of Clacton people on a Town Council for Clacton to be sought and implemented.
* Open meetings and as much information given to the public as far as possible.
* An end to the stifling of debate by a Conservative moving an issue is sent to the cabinet to decide on before it’s been discussed openly.

**Your local plan**

* The legacy of eleven years of Conservative inaction, failing to get an agreed local plan in place, has lead to uncontrolled development much to the advantage of developers and disadvantage of our communities. We will start the process towards the next plan and make sure it isn’t put on the back burner.
* Make every possible effort to ensure new housing developments are served by adequate facilities and are sustainable; press the government to adopt the same approach.

**Cost of Living**

* While high energy costs and other exceptional small business costs continue, create a fund to provide loans or grants to small Tendring businesses particularly affected to help them survive and seek government, County Council and large business financial support for it.
* Work with the voluntary sector, Social Services, GP practices and the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure those residents who need advice or help get it.

**Health and Social Services**

* Establish “Healthy Tendring”, a body to promote, and spread information to enable, healthy living throughout the district, including in particular food preparation and healthy eating. This body would work with leisure facilities and apply for grants to fund public health projects from bodies such as Public Health England, Health Education England and Sports England. It would develop a health plan to improve mental and physical health in Tendring.
* Work to increase local people’s voice in decisions by local health bodies.
* Work with voluntary and community groups to promote leisure activities for lonely people, people with heart disease, mental health issues and dementia.
* Work to improve the inadequate support for young people and adults with mental health problems throughout Tendring.
* Work to achieve free access to sexual health clinics every day of the week.
* Ensure a more effective voice on Ipswich and Colchester Hospital Trust.
* In regular meetings with the Clinical Commissioning Group, and through local MPs, press for improvements to access to GP services.

**Housing**

* Aim to increase the supply of accessible and adaptable social housing.
* Press for new housing developments to have access to adequate services and infrastructure as well as broadband.
* Seek powers to force sale of empty buildings.
* Introduce a Tendring Standard, with a quality mark, for private rented accommodation, to ensure decent standards and seek funds to support this work.
* Seek to ensure that all new housing has solar panels.
* Promote and publicise home energy efficiency and “grey water” use.
* Promote Community Land Trusts to protect community buildings and space.
* Require that planners check that planning conditions have been met and hold the developers accountable.

**Our Community**

* Work with and support local community organisations, “community hubs” and CVS Tendring to tackle youth unemployment, working with schools, voluntary organisations and businesses to help young people gain skills such as CV writing and interview technique and to volunteer to work with older people, helping reduce the isolation of older people and divisions between old and young. The scheme would be largely self-funding as more people employed would bring in more council tax.
* Conduct an audit of the council’s relations with the voluntary sector and performance in meeting the standards of the Tendring Compact (a detailed voluntary agreement between statutory and voluntary organisations about how they should work together).
* Encourage multi-use of council and community facilities.

**Our Libraries**

* Press the County Council not to revive library closures.
* If a library is assessed by the County Council as liable to be closed unless local volunteers or a voluntary organisation take it over, local councils should give every possible help to such volunteers.
* Encourage multi-use of libraries and where suitable, house district council functions in them.

**Crime and Police**

* Press the government for more funding for the Police.
* The district council to consider funding more Police Community Support Officers and Community Ambassadors as Colchester under Liberal Democrat leadership has done, probably through offering grants to town and parish councils to do this, and checking that the officers are actually used in those areas.
* Press for better co-operation across police divisions.
* Press the County Council to reverse savage cuts to youth services, which have contributed to youth crime increasing.

**Our Environment**

* Renegotiate the waste and recycling contract so more plastic items can be recycled and tetrapaks can be collected and recycled.
* Review the increase in the charge for green waste collection to ensure no reduction in take-up; examine the possibility of abolishing the charge and reassessing the plan to charge for additional red and green boxes.
* When the contract has run its course, put it out to competitive tender.
* Create a fly-tipping action plan involving the district and town/parish councils, police and Essex Highways.
* Aim towards all new and refurbished council buildings being carbon-neutral or as near as possible.
* Support the creation of local nature reserves.
* Protect community open spaces through the local plan, designation as assets of community value and support for community organisations buying them.
* In supporting clean energy and regeneration, ensure that appropriate siting and protection zones for existing communities are in place.
* Promote good insulation, solar panels and grey water use (details under Housing).

**Regenerating Our Area**

* Tackle youth unemployment through working with community hubs and employers, including Tendring for Growth Business Forum.
* Set up a fund to promote retraining for older workers, including support (either loan or grant) for families while they are training.
* Promote growth in and access to the digital economy through libraries, a digital hub with technology company support, the private sector and the voluntary and community sector.
* Create an award for local businesses meeting a good practice code including environmental standards, recycling rate, skills training, decent wages, equal wages for the same job, interviews for all long-term unemployed people applying for jobs and opportunities for young people through Tendring Citizen Service.
* Revive the Micro and Small Business Growth Grants for Tendring to respond to small businesses in difficulty because of energy prices and other cost of living increases.
* Promote food safety and quality standards to increase the attractiveness of Clacton, Walton and other seaside communities for visitors.
* Encourage and support cultural events along the coastline.
* Create a strategy for the regeneration of Clacton and Dovercourt town centres, including lower business rates for startup businesses.
* Ensure that Freeport East brings maximum benefits to Tendring people and minimum disruption and environmental damage.
* Promote co-operative action to clean up entry points to the county in Tendring, including main roads and ports.
* Clamp down on littering and continue the clamp-down on dog mess.
* Encourage co-operative ownership of community assets.
* Press for improvements in transport links such as train frequency, bus/train timetable co-ordination and dualling the remaining eastern section of the A120 into Harwich.

**Transport**

* Encourage cycling and walking, including through pedestrian and cyclist friendly buildings and paths, working with Essex County Council and cycling and walking groups.
* Actively engage in the Tendring Transport Liaison Board, including raising issues of access for buggies and wheelchair users.
* Review accessibility of transport facilities and press for improvement where needed.
* Encourage the retention of staffed rail ticket offices.
* Examine the viability of a free bus pass scheme for younger people not in education, employment or training, working with relevant organisations. This would help young people to gain employment or training.
* Continue with the free parking permit scheme for residents on the same basis.
* Campaign for local authorities, as Liberal Democrat-led Colchester has done, to devolve the budget for highway repairs so we can take charge of potholes being properly repaired. If they won’t, then keep badgering them about unfilled or poorly-filled potholes.

**A Fair Deal for All**

* The council’s equality policies and performance in delivering services and employment, including Equality Impact Assessments, to be thoroughly and annually audited.
* Putting right problems in accessibility of council services, online or by getting to and into buildings, to be a high priority.
* Pressing for improved access to other services where needed;
* The council to take an active part in supporting and integrating refugees in Tendring.

**Paying for it All**

* Carry out a review of all Council spending to identify areas where economies can be made without hurting residents.
* Establish a fundraising working group of the Council to identify new and better ways of raising money.
* Review the council’s investments and reserves to make sure we’re gaining what extra resources we can and making the best use of money
* Constantly seek efficiency savings.
* Successful regeneration will raise money through increased business rates and council tax payments.
* Putting a decent adopted local plan in place will reduce the number of appeals against planning refusals and the Council’s costs from such appeals.
* If necessary, raise council tax within the government-set ceiling.

**The Issues**

We believe these are the key issues across Tendring where the Conservatives have the wrong answers, or no answers, and we have a point:

* They run the council as if they own it and ignore everyone else;
* **we will listen and offer every councillor a chance to contribute their ideas and knowledge.**

Our lack of an adopted local plan until very recently allowed uncontrolled development and large estates are now being built with no corresponding additions to services like doctors, schools and community buildings.

**We will press for infrastructure improvements and work with voluntary organisations to integrate new estates with existing communities.**

* They nod and smile while government or county council devastate local services like libraries, the police, road repairs, old people’s homes and youth services;
* **we’ll make strong and well-researched representations and speak for local people**.

Like the government, the Council has done precious little to help people and businesses through the cost of living crisis. **If the crisis hasn’t ceased by the spring, we’ll promote targeted action to help those who most need it.**

**CONTACT US**

Please feel free to contact us with ideas or questions at: email@simonbanks.online.

**NOTES**

* **Your Local Plan:** The process of developing a new local plan began in 2011 under a council on which no one party had a majority. The Conservatives took control that year and for some reason saw the local plan as a low priority, so the process continued at snail’s pace. After they came under strong pressure on this failure during the 2019 elections, the process was finally completed, but many poorly-placed developments had gone ahead in the meantime and created a precedent.
* **Health and Social Services:** 38.4% of Tendring people consider they’re in good health, compared to 47.1% across Essex. 3.6% of Tendring people are on incapacity benefits, compared to 2.1% across Essex. Tendring has high rates of dementia, heart disease, unwanted pregnancy and obesity.
* **Health and Social Services:** People aged 75 or over are 13.3% of Tendring’s population and 8.7% (two-thirds as much) of Essex’s.
* **Our Community:** UK-wide, the most active age group in volunteering is 16-25-year-olds.
* **Our Community:** A Compact is a detailed agreement between statutory organisations like the police, health authorities and the local council on the one hand, and the voluntary sector on the other, about how they will work together and behave towards one another. It will have sections on consultation, funding decisions and so on. There is a Compact for Tendring, but few people know about it.
* **Crime and Police:** In twelve months to September 2017, recorded crime in Essex rose by 11% and violent crime by 16%.
* **Crime and Police:** Essex, along with Suffolk, has the lowest proportion of Police Community Support Officers to population in England.
* **Our Environment:** Tendring has the worst recycling rates in all Essex and refuses many recyclable plastics which authorities like Colchester (Liberal Democrat-led) and Maldon (Conservative, with remote rural areas) accept.
* **Our Environment:** When the recycling contractors upped their bill by “at least £250,000”, which later became £400,000, Tendring councillors strangely chose not to put the contract out to competitive tender, but saved some money by introducing wheelie bins, paid up and committed the council to a renewed contract for another seven years.