



Chiltern Green Party

Local Election Manifesto 2011

FAIR IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Foreword

Local elections will be held on 5th May 2011. These Elections give residents of the Chilterns the opportunity to vote for someone to represent their community on the local Councils.

What would we do?

Green economics would find new ways of dealing with financial difficulties on a national level. For example, a Robin Hood Tax of 0.05% on banks' financial transactions could raise £20bn a year, more than the £18bn cut to welfare, including housing benefits, disability benefits, child benefit and tax credits. Tax evasion and tax avoidance currently result in a national loss of almost £100bn. Collecting these sums would make our financial systems fairer and reduce the estimated UK deficit of £149bn in 2010/11.

The National Situation

The Conservative / Liberal Democrat Government has drastically cut the amount of money available to local government to provide services. The Chiltern Green Party continues to fight these cuts which are taking much-needed services away from our residents. As the area suffers the impact of the 2008 banking crisis and ideological coalition cuts, Green Party candidates oppose social and environmental injustice and support services for older people, youth services and investment in public transport.

The Government is saying that local councils are being given more choices than ever before, but the same government is taking money away from our councils, and no matter what choices can legally be made, the area cannot pay for them without appropriate funding. The District council will not be able to provide its current level of service with the amount of money the Government is currently providing. The Green Party realises that difficult choices will have to be made in the present situation, although we know that different policies at a national level would have made these choices unnecessary. In this challenging political climate, new thinking is essential. Arguments used locally and nationally by politicians who are cutting services don't add up financially, let alone morally.

Local Economy

The Chilterns need a healthy local economy that is more resilient to national and international economic and financial crises and to rising fuel prices, dwindling oil supplies and climate change. This means creating a far more localised economy which is less dependent on multinational businesses and has a far higher proportion of small businesses and not-for-profit organisations. We need all types of businesses and organisations to be creating a low-carbon economy for the future. The area also needs more lasting, fulfilling jobs for its residents.

What we will do;

- 🌱 Support & promote the transition town initiatives throughout the county.
- 🌱 Negotiate an amendment to the council's budget to create a new fund that can be spent on local economic development activity.
- 🌱 Lobby central government to allow councils to set business rates that encourage sustainability, re-use and repair.
- 🌱 Encourage further education institutions, including the Amersham & Wycombe Colleges, to develop courses which offer the practical skills needed to support the growing demand for renewable energy and the installation of energy efficiency measures.
- 🌱 Ensure contracts offered by the council are accessible to small and local businesses.
- 🌱 Ensure that the District council buys local goods and services wherever possible.
- 🌱 Promote the district as a Fair Trade area
- 🌱 Pay workers fairly and ensure that the salary gap between front-line staff and senior managers in the council stays within a 1:10 ratio.
- 🌱 Support initiatives that increase the proportion of our food that is grown locally, support local producers and move us towards food security.
- 🌱 Encourage flexible and part-time employment opportunities instead of redundancies.
- 🌱 Encourage the establishment of new mutuals, co-operatives and social enterprises.

Communities and Neighborhoods

We all want to live in safe communities where we feel comfortable. Green councilors will strengthen local communities by doing what we can to tackle inequality and exclusion. At the same time we will help residents to shape their own communities in the way that they want. Clean streets and clear pavements will allow residents to feel secure where they live. Green councilors will maximise access to sport, music and the arts, by promoting cultural and organised leisure activities across the area.

What we will do:

- 🌱 Oppose the closure of day centres, our local libraries & post offices.
- 🌱 Let residents have their say in a variety of ways, using digital media as well as public meetings and consultations.
- 🌱 Develop neighborhood management of council services so local areas can be shaped by the people who live there?
- 🌱 Facilitate residents using the powers in the Sustainable Communities Act to propose changes to the law.
- 🌱 Make the town centre safer through targeted enforcement of licensing conditions and enforce licensing policy to consider the number of licensed premises in a particular area.
- 🌱 Provide support to community sports clubs and organisations, especially those for young people, but oppose the wasteful use of public money being spent on the proposed Booker stadium development & protect designated Green belt.
- 🌱 Make cultural activity more accessible in different parts of the area.
- 🌱 Seek funding for small-scale soundproofed venues and subsidized shared studio space to encourage and support musicians and artists in the area.
- 🌱 Maximise financial and networking support for local charities and voluntary community organisations, in order to counter cuts to charities being made by all levels of government.
- 🌱 Establish action days to promote responsible pet ownership, so that streets are safer and cleaner, and pets better treated.

Working Towards Zero Waste

Disposing of the waste produced through daily living is environmentally costly and expensive. Using landfill sites for waste disposal is environmentally damaging and contributes to greenhouse gases like Co2, so alternatives must be found. A Green council would reduce the amount of waste produced in the town and encourage re-using, repairing and recycling materials. Central to this strategy would be a resource recovery park where materials could be re-used by traders working onsite. Greens would also treat residual waste in an environmentally-friendly way.

What we will do:

- 🌱 Work with residents to solve difficulties in the implementation of recycling schemes.
- 🌱 Help residents to identify communal recycling facilities and liaise with the council.
- 🌱 Continue to expand doorstep collections of regular food waste from houses and flats.
- 🌱 Encourage the use of only essential packaging.
- 🌱 Improve information for residents, to reduce contamination of recyclable materials.
- 🌱 Continue to develop communal recycling facilities and signposting to these.
- 🌱 Establish a local resource recovery park which would re-use and repair waste material and also create green jobs.
- 🌱 Develop and introduce a litter and fly-tipping reduction strategy.
- 🌱 Support the introduction of town centre facilities for the recycling of batteries, ink cartridges, CDs, DVDs and mobile phones.
- 🌱 Encourage social responsibility for waste and disposal and acceptance by retail outlets of returned non-recyclable materials.
- 🌱 Continue to lobby central government for a tax on packaging and mandatory charges for bags given out by shops.
- 🌱 Investigate the possibility of separating public litter bins into sections to collect recyclable waste.
- 🌱 Continue to oppose the Calvert incinerator.

Quality, Secure & Affordable Housing

Green Councilors will work for affordable, secure and energy efficient accommodation for all. We are committed to increasing the influence held by tenants and residents over housing, and oppose the control held by central government over housing policy and finances. We will seek a broad range of types of housing to suit different needs, such as sheltered housing schemes.

What we will do:

- 🌱 Oppose the privatisation of social housing and actively campaign for national government to increase funding to build new council housing, and lobby the Homes and Communities Agency to prioritise putting more of its budget into council housing.
- 🌱 Amend housing guidelines to improve services for disabled people.
- 🌱 Carry out a thorough consultation with tenants on funding more Premises Managers to act as informal caretakers for more council properties.
- 🌱 Support community proposals for cooperative housing models such as Community Land Trusts and Mutual Home Ownership, positively engaging with them on any sale of council-owned land and support self-help housing co-operatives in bringing empty homes back into use.
- 🌱 Support 'co-housing' initiatives and developments where families and individual residents have the chance to share facilities and living space.
- 🌱 Continue to work alongside other organisations to prevent homelessness through early intervention.
- 🌱 Work with tenants and Tenants and Residents Associations to establish effective ways for tenants to be involved in setting housing policies and priorities.
- 🌱 Actively encourage the setting up of Tenant Management Organisations, which allow tenants and leaseholders in a particular area to take over management of their homes and public areas.
- 🌱 Support the establishment of a private tenants' association to represent the interests and rights of private sector tenants and improve links with private landlords by increasing the profile of the existing Landlord Forum.
- 🌱 Tackle the problem of empty houses, for example, by supporting property owners who want to bring their houses back into use, making full use of Empty Property Management Orders and allowing empty houses to be reported online more easily.

Quality, Secure & Affordable Housing (cont.)

- 🌱 Investigate fast-tracking serious complaints regarding anti-social behaviour from council tenants.
- 🌱 Use the planning system to ensure an appropriate proportion of new housing is accessible to residents with disabilities.

Planning

Land is a finite resource so it needs to be used wisely. Green councilors want to see decent housing built within sustainable communities. Residents have a higher quality of life in a community with a mix of housing, shops, appropriate light industry and green spaces, such as allotments, within easy reach.

While Green candidates recognise the need for more good quality affordable housing, we believe the level of growth envisaged under the previous government was unnecessarily high and would have drastically altered, forever, our district.

In a town, it is important that buildings in a particular area have a variety of uses, so there are not times when an area is empty, and therefore, unsafe. There should be different types of buildings within an area in order to strengthen the community.

What we will do:

- 🌱 Allocate money in the council's budget for more time to be spent on planning enforcement.
- 🌱 Demand that future growth follows genuinely sustainable principles, served by high quality bus, local rail, walking and cycling networks.
- 🌱 Increase the amount of renewable energy generation in major new developments.
- 🌱 Encourage the re-use of materials when buildings are demolished and promote retention and conversion of existing buildings.
- 🌱 Request carbon audits of major development proposals and require all new developments to be zero carbon sooner than the current date of 2016.
- 🌱 Promote energy efficient build techniques in the extension and regeneration of existing buildings.
- 🌱 Require energy efficiency and resource conservation statements for a wider range of planning applications.
- 🌱 Act on the concerns and priorities of disabled residents at an earlier stage in the planning process.
- 🌱 Encourage water saving measures on existing and new properties and insist on appropriate investment in sewerage and other facilities so that, overall, new development does not result in either increased water usage or a decline in water quality.

Planning (cont.)

- ☘ Strengthen protection for pubs and other community assets.
- ☘ Encourage car-free developments which are well served by public transport and pedestrian and cycle links.

Energy & Climate Change

Green candidates support local production of renewable energy as well as looking for ways to ensure that everyone can have a warm home. We want to reduce household fuel bills, tackle climate change and create local jobs by providing and promoting insulation and local energy production. Green councilors will work with all sections of the community to cut the town's carbon emissions by 40% by 2020.

What we will do:

- ☘ Provide opportunities for all people who live in the district to fully insulate their homes.
- ☘ Encourage local residents to take advantage of Government schemes such as the Renewable Heat Incentive for heat generation and the feed in tariff for photovoltaic solar panels.
- ☘ Recognise and record the carbon emissions and the environmental impact of council decisions.
- ☘ Work with the Energy Saving Trust to provide advice on saving money and energy to residents through community based energy saving programs, targeting funding assistance towards people with low incomes.
- ☘ Make planning guidelines clearer to enable residents of the district to add renewable energy systems to their homes more easily.
- ☘ Championing a Warm-Zone insulation scheme, so every suitable property in the district can have access to free loft & cavity wall insulation & therefore creating green jobs & giving the average home the potential to save £200 per year on their fuel bills.

Green Spaces

A healthy local environment is essential if residents of the district are to have a high quality of life. Formal and informal green spaces in the area must be protected and properly managed to enhance their value to wildlife and to people.

What we will do:

- 🌿 Support Green Spaces community initiatives & encourage tree planting and community gardens.
- 🌿 Support the use of parks and green spaces by the local community and encourage input from local residents by promoting 'Friends of ...' schemes and allotment associations.
- 🌿 Increase the number of allotment plots in areas where there is a long waiting list and encourage sharing of plots, to meet the increasing demand and diversity of allotment holders.
- 🌿 Identify areas of council land where community gardens and food-growing areas can be established where there is local demand.
- 🌿 Support Garden Share schemes, such as Bare Gardens & Landshare, so people who have larger gardens than they need can share them with people who don't have a garden.
- 🌿 Safeguard and enhance existing 'green corridors' through the district and ensure that green spaces are integral to all new housing and commercial developments.
- 🌿 Promote biodiversity initiatives, hedge and tree planting and flower gardens to encourage wildlife.
- 🌿 Make the countryside more easily and safely accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

Transport

Green candidates believe that everyone who lives in a town needs to be able to travel around it, as well as in and out of it, and will lobby the council and the Government to make the changes we need. Green councilors would make decisions about transport by thinking first about how the most vulnerable road users will be affected. Pedestrians and people who do not own a car should be able to travel around the area safely and cheaply. More sustainable forms of transport, along with solar powered street lights would help cut carbon emissions within the area. Bus services also need improvement, and one way of making this happen could be through a Quality Bus Contract.

What we will do:

- 🌱 Oppose the HS2 – we will not support a scheme that will wreck our Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 🌱 Lobby the council to create 20mph zones.
- 🌱 Lobby the council to encourage bus companies to work together, so passengers will be able to use more than one bus company on a journey.
- 🌱 Include information about walking distances and destinations on street signs when they are replaced.
- 🌱 Support the publication of a map to show areas which are difficult to access for residents with disabilities and seek improvements to these areas.
- 🌱 Lobby the Council to incorporate this plan into its local transport strategy.
- 🌱 Designate advanced stop lines for cyclists at junctions and restrict bus and bike lanes to bus and bicycle use only.
- 🌱 Promote cycle training for adults and children so that they are confident to cycle safely on the town's roads.
- 🌱 Increase the annual investment in cycle parking, particularly in the town centre.
- 🌱 Require long term service contractors for the Council to use low emission vehicles and to provide eco-driving training for staff.
- 🌱 Work with the council to implement a 20mph speed limit for residential roads in the area.

An Open Council

Sometimes it is not easy to see how decisions are made at District level. Many decisions are taken in private and it is not always clear who made a decision, or when it was made. Green Party councilors want the council to be more transparent, accountable and inclusive. We will involve the community in helping the council to make better and more informed decisions. We will be inclusive rather than confrontational.

What we will do:

- 🌱 Visit residents all year round, hold regular surgeries and take up local issues.
- 🌱 Negotiate funding for participatory budgeting so residents can influence how money is spent in their local areas.
- 🌱 Give residents the opportunity to say how the council spends some of its money in their local area through participatory budgeting.
- 🌱 Consult the public well before major decisions are made, or the council's budget is set, and take account of all evidence provided.
- 🌱 Make more information available to all councilors, so the person you have elected is better able to represent you.
- 🌱 Publicise council meetings widely and clearly and find new ways for public concerns to influence council debates and actions.
- 🌱 Make timetables of work that the council is planning to carry out, for example, housing repairs, publicly available.
- 🌱 Create a Disclosure Log published online which lists Freedom Of Information requests received by the council and the responses given to them.

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Green Party 

The Chiltern Green Party represents all of South Buckinghamshire and is formed from the local Green Parties of: Chesham & Amersham, High Wycombe and Marlow

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