

Brighton & Hove Green Party

Our policy proposals, May 2019

This document is supplementary to our published local election manifesto. It sets out at greater length and in greater depth many of the measures that we would hope to implement as a Green administration for Brighton & Hove.

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Dear Resident,

We are proud of Brighton & Hove and know that you are too. We have heard you want change as well though, and we are committed to delivering it. Like you, we are ambitious about creating a city where everyone has a safer, happier future – and we want to do it together.

We have listened on the doorstep, in the community and to the experts. We know you want Brighton & Hove to remain a bold, vibrant, welcoming city and one where jobs pay enough for people to live well. Where small businesses thrive. Where everyone has a roof over their head. A city which leads the way on tackling the climate emergency. Where you benefit from the city's own generation of clean power and heat. Where we take care of everyone in our community. Where we can all breathe clean air, and the city is walkable, cyclable and crisscrossed by affordable electric buses. Where we have slashed plastic use and have a recycling service that is fit for purpose. Where residents are consulted on the decisions that shape their lives.

We will be honest about what is possible. No council can make this change alone, especially with funding cut to the bone. We want to draw upon your creativity and knowledge to transform Brighton & Hove into the country's greenest, fairest, and most democratic city. Greens across Europe are showing what is possible.

And where the Greens lead, we know others will follow

A City to be Proud of

A clean city: plastics, waste and recycling

We know that residents know that the recycling currently provided by the council in Brighton is not fit for purpose. Residents are confused about what they can/can't recycle and dismayed that the range of plastics the Council takes for recycling is so limited. Caroline Lucas MP and Councillor Leo Littman have already approached Veolia to discuss how this can be improved and we are confident that a Green council could do better.

In the longer term, we believe the answer is to reduce overall waste and encourage re-use ahead of recycling. But in the meantime, we will start by revisiting the expensive private finance initiative (PFI) contract Labour agreed with Veolia in 2003, which a Conservative-led council extended to 2033, and which currently limits recycling levels. We would alleviate the situation by introducing more frequent recycling collections (possibly in return for less frequent collections of general household waste). We would also tell residents exactly what they can recycle by sending out information (perhaps on fridge magnets for convenience) with their council tax bills. And we also plan to set up a long overdue pilot food waste collection and promote projects that use food waste to generate renewable energy.

Many residents have spoken to us about how disappointed they are by the general appearance of the city. We would start to address this by improving street cleaning and addressing the problem of tagging, for example by lobbying government for higher fixed penalty notices for fly-tipping and graffiti. We would also restore funding to the graffiti team for three teams to operate across the city instead of the current two staff. If Brighton is to thrive then it needs to be an attractive place to visit.

In recent years, Brighton & Hove Green Party has been campaigning for a reduction in single-use plastic. We would ensure that all major events in Brighton & Hove are single-use plastic free by no later than 2020 and would help reduce the need for single-use plastic water bottles by installing water fountains.

Transport and the environment

If we are to meet our target of a carbon neutral Brighton & Hove by 2030, we need to be much more courageous about our transport options. More clean air zones would not only make Brighton & Hove a pleasanter place to get around but a safer and healthier one too. We intend to work with local communities to establish green spaces and increase walking, cycling, car-pooling and greater use of public transport. We will work with any new large employers setting up in Brighton & Hove to minimise the impact on the city of their employees' journeys to work. We will do so by introducing vehicle charging levies, thereby raising funding for enhanced local public transport.

The key to reducing car use is to make public transport options, walking and cycling more attractive. We will try to persuade more residents to cycle by expanding the cycle share scheme, improving cycle lanes and introducing cycle parking shelters throughout the city. We will lobby public transport providers to reduce fares and improve services throughout the day and we will oppose cuts to train services and fight for more frequent trains during busy commuter periods.

In addition, we will encourage the switch to cleaner, greener vehicles. We will discount pay-by-phone parking charges for plug-in vehicles and will continue the roll-out of on-road, high-speed charging points for electric vehicles.

Ahead of the roll-out of vehicles programmed not to exceed the speed limit, we will improve road safety through education as well as on-street measures.

Homelessness

We will tackle homelessness by providing the 365-day-a-year shelter that Green councillors have long been campaigning for. A vicious circle exists of homeless people being given accommodation, only to become homeless again because other unresolved issues mean they are unable to remain in the accommodation provided. We will address this by expanding the Housing First programme, an initiative that provides homeless people with secure accommodation, by 300%. We will also:

- develop a partnership with community homeless and church projects
- support the development of homeless guardianship schemes
- explore use of the Community Infrastructure Levy to fund the expansion of homelessness support
- replace privately-run temporary and emergency accommodation with council-owned provision, thereby also saving money in the longer term and look at converting existing council commercial residential accommodation into homeless accommodation to maximise social value from council assets
- deliver a programme of quick-build non-traditional and modular homes, as is already being done by Community Land
- sign up to a Bill of Rights for the homeless
- explore support for a homeless tour guide enterprise
- negotiate a new Seaside homes agreement which ends the loss of funds for the council under the current deal, protects current tenants and enables Seaside Homes to develop new ways of supporting homeless people (such as providing properties for Housing First)
- push for a voluntary contribution to be added to restaurant bills to fund homelessness support

A City for Everyone

We know residents are also proud of Brighton & Hove as a bold, vibrant, welcoming city. Secure, well-maintained and affordable housing, adequate services and proper support for marginalised groups should all be part of that welcome.

For years, council finances have been squeezed by increasing demand for critical services and savage funding cuts imposed by Conservative-led governments. Nationally, councils have begun to go bust. Greens will fight for adequate funding for local government, for progressive funding approaches and sources that allow councils to plan beyond the next financial year, and we will challenge PFI contracts. We will invest in infrastructure that meets our environmental sustainability objectives *and* raises revenue, maintain strong in-house financial and project management resources to ensure council spend is managed effectively and seek every opportunity to maximise social value in all council activity.

Housing for everyone

The Green council (2011-15) built Brighton & Hove's first council houses in a generation, oversaw the delivery of 508 affordable homes and set in motion construction projects that are still transforming the city today, including the new homes in the North Laine. In addition, we renovated council homes to make them more energy efficient, saving residents money, and we installed solar panels on 300 council homes. We will improve on that legacy by developing 1500 homes over four years on mostly brownfield sites including those above car parks and shopping centres. We will seek to buy the Brighton General Hospital site to avoid its privatisation and develop an emergency plan to ramp up housing supply within 100 days. We will also:

- spend the unused council borrowing resources of £31.3 million towards building 600 new council houses (compared with fewer than 200 built under the current Labour administration)
- greatly increase the provision of new council housing at social and living rents
- increase the social housing stock by buying off-plan from developers
- bring at least 650 empty properties back into use
- borrow to buy land for affordable housing (for example, the Brighton General Hospital site and others)
- bolster council support for those who struggle to afford the cost of housing
- encourage the building of well-insulated, carbon neutral housing with solar panels
- explore scope for "mixed developments" that can achieve mixed communities and cross subsidies to fund more truly affordable social and Living Rents

Rights for tenants:

We know how expensive private rented accommodation in Brighton & Hove can be and that council tax debt is the greatest problem for households. We have already pushed the council to adopt the Citizens Advice council tax protocol to help people in financial crisis. We will ensure that tenants get a fairer deal by setting up a council-run not-for-profit lettings agency and will press for rent controls. We would support the expansion of the Good Landlord model for more affordable private rented housing and set up a tenants' forum for those in the private rented sector. We will also:

- develop expand and promote lodger provision to maximise the use of spare rooms
- make full use of discretionary housing payment funds
- protect from eviction any tenants in arrears resulting from the bedroom tax or Universal Credit shortfalls

- campaign for an end to “no fault evictions” under Section 21 of the Housing Act in the private rented sector
- take action against landlords found guilty of criminal breaches of environmental health and safety regulations
- step up moves to pick up and prevent illegal sub-letting and fraudulent right-to-buy applications.
- ensure that information about decisions on legal action against landlords is passed on to councillors

Supporting and unlocking new-build community housing

Greens would provide under-used publicly owned properties and land for community-led housing at a price that maximises social value (e.g. to provide Living Rents for people in housing need). We would look at creating a local community-led housing ethical loan scheme funded by community investors and matching BHCC loans and, in the meantime, would increase access to empty properties and land for community-led (and other) not-for-profit organisations.

Expanding Home ownership

We will:

- Provide 500+ affordable shared-ownership homes
- Support an expansion of self-build opportunities
- Provide grants for households releasing council tenancies and moving out to buy their own homes

Council housing improvement and community involvement

We will:

- review community involvement in housing
- explore measures to improve transparency and accountability in the housing department (taking the proposals of the Brighton & Hove Housing Coalition as a starting point)
- extend participatory budgeting on environmental improvements to estates
- develop and implement a decent environment standard for council estates to go alongside the decent home standard
- treble spending on PV and fuel efficiency measures setting ambitious fuel poverty reduction targets
- meet the regulator's Involvement and Empowerment standard
- establish "co-production" in decision-making around housing policy and service delivery
- involve residents in fire safety

A fairer deal for council leaseholders

We will:

- reduce the high interest rates charged when proving a loan for residential leaseholders struggling with large bills for works
- introduce greater transparency and earlier involvement with leaseholders over proposed capital works (an approach of negotiation rather than legal action)

Campaigning for national housing reforms:

We will campaign:

- for a national landlord licensing scheme to improve conditions in private rented housing

- for rent controls set by local councils moving towards living rents
- for public subsidies for building low-rent accommodation rather than subsidies on rents themselves
- to end the right-to-buy in areas of high affordable housing need
- to end the cap allowing councils to determine what percentage of right-to-buy money they invest in new affordable housing
- for a right for councils to use land left vacant for up to five years to provide temporary housing
- for VAT on new builds rather than renovation and extension
- for stronger national carbon footprint limits on new housing

Children and Youth Services

We will protect funding for youth services and support the delivery of a new Brighton Youth Centre and more playgrounds. We will also:

- create a long-term health plan for the youth of the city
- maintain provision for children with additional support needs and for those from marginalised groups, including refugees and LGBT+ young people
- support early intervention programmes in schools to address sex discrimination and sexual harassment
- work with schools to encourage access to sports facilities and kitchens during school holidays
- ensure staff, children and young people all have a say in shaping children's services

Health and Care Services

Greens believe in a publicly-owned and publicly-run National Health Service that is free at the point of use and includes social care and wide-reaching public health programmes. We will lobby for better mental health provision for the over-25s and tackle the causes of ill health: dirty air, barriers to getting active, malnutrition and poverty. We will also:

- resist cuts to the National Health Service and call providers to account over lengthening waiting times
- fund an HIV education and prevention programme, support funding for sexual health services and work to reduce rates of other sexually transmitted infections
- push to have privatised local health services returned to the public sector, and for the reinstatement of bursaries for nurses
- tackle malnutrition among frail older people and help them stay in their homes for longer
- reverse the policy of rationing provision of adult social care
- lobby central government to properly fund the Staying Put programme for 18-year-olds leaving care
- campaign to support the passing into law of the NHS Reinstatement Bill
- lobby to have the autonomy of the democratically elected Brighton & Hove Council restored in relation to the unelected Clinical Commissioning Groups
- strengthen the role of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and resist the move to merge it into a body to match the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership footprint
- campaign for social care to be provided free at the point of use and paid for by public funding, as it is in Scotland
- increase local funding for local health and social services, including Mental Health Services

- support NHS and other health workers fighting to defend services and fighting to stop the erosion of pay and conditions
- campaign locally to end NHS charges for non-UK citizens resident in the UK
- work with other Local Authorities across the country to challenge Government policies which reduce local authority funding and public services

Equality and Diversity

We intend to protect, welcome and celebrate our BAME, LGBT+ and international residents. We will do this partly by reserving seats on the council's powerful Policy & Resources Committee for the BAME community. Between 2011 and 2015 the Green council adapted 3,580 homes to meet the needs of disabled council and private tenants, was named the country's leading council for LGBT+ education and won awards for its work on trans equality. Since then, annual cuts to services have disproportionately affected carers (usually women) and those with disabilities or from marginalised communities. We will always oppose these unfair cuts, and if re-elected we will:

- improve support for residents with disabilities
- protect funding for Brighton Women's Centre
- lobby against the state pension inequality affecting women that has resulted from increases in the state pension age
- protect per capita funding for Violence Against Women and Girls programmes and run an awareness-raising campaign aimed at local employers to promote the needs of domestic violence survivors
- make anonymised CVs mandatory within the local public sector to ensure that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) candidates are treated fairly
- work with the BAME and LGBT+ communities to protect them from discrimination, for example by setting up an LGBT+ housing group, and encourage front-line workers to challenge prejudice
- support annual celebrations of the civic contribution of BAME and LGBT+ communities

The Community and Voluntary Sector

Brighton & Hove is fortunate in having a very active community and voluntary sector that works in neighbourhoods the Council is less able to reach. A Green council will:

- support investment in, and oppose cuts to, the community and voluntary sector
- help community groups access resources and in-kind support through providing buildings, meeting rooms and funding advice
- increase collaboration between the Council and other public-sector bodies
- undertake a "Communities Impact Assessment" in case of budget proposals impacting the sector
- encourage information-sharing on volunteering opportunities and digital resources

An International City

We are proud that ours is an outward-looking city, a City of Sanctuary that stands up for refugees' and asylum seekers' rights. We all have friends, neighbours, work colleagues or family members who have come to this country from elsewhere. We value the skills they bring to our economy and public services, and the diversity that enriches our society.

The Green Party has consistently opposed Brexit and campaigned for a People's Vote. Whatever the final outcome of this process, we will work to ensure that the many residents of and visitors to our city who come from elsewhere in the EU feel welcome and supported.

A City for the Future

Addressing climate change is a huge challenge. But to ignore it is not an option. Recently, United Nations climate scientists gave us 12 years to address global warming and an international report found that up to 46% of animal and plant species could be wiped out by 2050. This would have a devastating impact on food security, resources more generally and on migration.

Many of the city's diverse and visionary small businesses are already promoting ways of future-proofing our city by recycling, reducing food waste and providing clean transport and renewable energy. We want to work with these businesses to identify ways of making the city carbon neutral by 2030. We intend to encourage district heat networks (supplying cost effective, low carbon heat through a network of insulated pipes) and community energy projects, so residents have warm homes and lower energy bills. The Green council (2011-15) ran pilots for Neighbourhood Governance schemes which support community decision-making on local budgets. We will also expand public consultation so that residents are genuinely involved in the decisions that affect them. Following up on our recent motion to Council, we will work to identify further ways of ensuring the city becomes carbon neutral by 2030, including by working with the Greater Brighton Economic Board.

Building Brighton & Hove's economy

The potential impact of Brexit is forecast to be equivalent to over 4,200 job losses among Brighton & Hove residents. In the face of that, we believe it is doubly critical that the council supports the local economy. We will do this by changing the way the council outsources its services so as to help small local suppliers win council contracts or by bringing services in-house. We will focus on what the city already does well - its key sectors of technology, culture, design and education - and we will encourage local financing cooperatives, such as the Credit Union, to ensure that the local economy benefits all of us. We will also:

- ensure regeneration schemes provide social and sustainability benefits
- use empty shops on the high street to encourage business start-ups
- work with local urban designers, ecologists, architects and residents on a design charter for the city
- deliver major development projects such as Shoreham Harbour, Station Gateway and the King Alfred and explore the possibility of the council itself becoming a developer
- restrict the conversion and spread of short-term holiday-let homes or Airbnb property development
- work with public-sector pension funds to encourage divestment from the fossil fuel industry
- encourage the wider adoption of the Brighton & Hove Living Wage, which we introduced for council employees
- work with organisations such as the Brighton & Hove Food Partnership to implement a sustainable food strategy for the city, building on the Silver Sustainable Food Cities Award achieved under the Green council in 2015
- work to persuade public sector pension funds to divest from the fossil fuel industry
- foster the city's tourism industry by, among other things, caring for our streets and sea front through more regular and effective street cleaning

Education

We will work with schools to help them manage the funding crisis and bridge the gap in achievement for disadvantaged pupils. We will campaign for better school funding and will continue our opposition to the introduction of academies. We will also:

- work with our universities to invest in lifelong learning, to promote Brighton & Hove as a centre of innovation and educational excellence, to enhance the city's skills base in key sectors and to encourage greater partnership between the universities and local communities
- promote outdoor education and programmes to increase children's exposure to nature, theatre, music and sports
- build on earlier Green Party initiatives, the BikeShare scheme and bus passes for eligible school children, by working to introduce free bus passes/free annual subscriptions to Brighton BikeShare for teenagers
- encourage schools at both primary and secondary level to achieve the Arts Council's Artsmark gold standard

Wildlife, eco systems and food sustainability

A Green council will work to address the climate and biodiversity emergency by boosting the protection of species, habitats, biodiversity and ecosystems throughout Brighton & Hove. We will also:

- work with tenant farmers on council-owned downland to ensure it is managed for wildlife, supports sustainable grazing and increases chalk grassland areas
- work with stakeholders to set up a downland advisory board
- cut the use of herbicides and pesticides (including a 90% cut in the use of glyphosate) in our parks and open spaces
- work with local partners, landowners and communities to plant bee- and pollinator-friendly flowers and native trees to reduce air pollution and flooding, and to capture carbon emissions
- work with the Brighton Food Partnership to develop a local food strategy for the city that focuses on the environmental (carbon) impact of what we eat and the benefits to the community

Sustainability and zero carbon housing

Too often, developers design for the present but not for the future. The result is too many poorly constructed, poorly insulated homes which are expensive to heat, and which rely on conventional fossil fuels. We would build new council housing at Code 4 sustainability levels wherever possible. We would also save residents money by buying photovoltaic solar panels, insulation and other energy-savings resources in bulk and passing them on at reduced cost to residents, Brighton Energy Coop, third sector organisations and/or commercial installers in the Brighton & Hove area. We will also:

- borrow and relend at sub-market rates for domestic and third sector installers of photovoltaics, insulation, ground source heat pumps etc.
- develop low-carbon housing as a model in conjunction with the Community Land Trust or other partner
- explore recycling building materials as a first step towards a circular economy

- make community sustainable energy the first port of call for housing developments requiring sustainability installations
- increase the number of [district heat networks](#) approved through planning

Animal Welfare

We want Brighton & Hove to lead the way in promoting the highest standards of animal welfare, and we will oppose cruelty to animals at every opportunity. We will

- push for proper care and respect for animals where they are used for sport or entertainment and oppose the use of performing animals in shows
- promote best practice in animal care in pet shops
- campaign for cats and dogs to be microchipped to encourage responsible pet ownership
- fight for higher animal welfare standards in purchasing, including in cleaning products and in all catering

Arts and leisure

Residents are justly proud that, despite years of austerity, Brighton & Hove remains the region's cultural hub. The Greens have protected local arts organisations, saved Hove Library from closure and will continue to provide in-kind support to arts organisations and studios. We will

- address the delays in the King Alfred scheme, including exploring the option of bringing the redevelopment in-house, to deliver the leisure facilities the city needs
- invest in public parks and develop Stanmer Park as a recreational resource and gateway to the National Park. We would work with partners – South Downs National Park Authority, BHCC, Plumpton Agricultural College, Sussex and Brighton Universities, Brighton & Hove Estate Conservation Trust – to put Stanmer Park into a trust.
- implement a 10-year cross-party Arts Plan for the city to enable those within the sector to plan projects with confidence
- continue to protect and improve the city's libraries and provision for the arts
- build on Brighton & Hove's Film City status
- invest in a programme of sustainable business models for the arts