



New Town & Christ Church Rose

Spring edition News from your local Labour Councillors



Cllr Lee Scordis
County Councillor



Cllr Lorcan Whitehead
Borough Councillor

Delivered free by volunteers

ELECTION DISAPPOINTMENT

There's no denying it was a devastating result in December's general election. Local councils have already had to endure a decade of senseless and savage cuts, with £12 million a year cut from Colchester Borough Council's budget alone. That's less money to clean your streets, collect your waste and recycling, maintain our parks, and fund vital local charities and support services.

Locally we are proud of the ambitious, positive campaign we ran and the huge amount of work put in by our candidate Tina McKay. While Labour was having a tough night nationally, we held our ground locally and showed once again we are the clear challengers to the Tories in Colchester. But this is little consolation when we face another 5 years of Tory cuts to our town. One thing is certain: your Labour councillors and our local party as a whole will do whatever we can to minimise the impact of the incoming government's policies and ensure we win next time.

General Election 2019: Colchester

PARTY	CANDIDATE	VOTES	%
	Will Quince	26,917	50.4
	Tina McKay	17,494	32.8
	Martin Goss	7,432	13.9
	Mark Goacher	1,530	2.9
	MAJORITY	9,423	11.4



LIBRARIES STILL THREATENED BY CLOSURE BY STEALTH

Despite the change of strategy by Tory-run Essex County Council last July (and their claims to the contrary) our libraries are still under threat of closure.

This is because the new strategy means that any library could be palmed off onto volunteer groups to run, fund, house, and staff themselves, with a measly stock of just 200 books. Clearly this isn't a sustainable future for our libraries, so the fantastic Save Our Libraries Essex (SOLE) campaign continues.

The campaign started 2020 with a county-wide day of action in January with speakers, singers and a flash mob at Colchester Library to promote the campaign and the new petition: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/save-our-librarians-no-closure-by-stealth>

Lorcan and Lee will continue to support the campaign in the new year and until all our libraries are saved.

GREEN LIGHT FOR NEW COUNCIL HOUSING

12 new council houses were given the go ahead in January as part of the Council's commitment to delivering 350 new social homes for individuals and families on our local Housing Needs Register.

In Colchester we have thousands of people on the register unable to access suitable housing they can afford, and many thousands more paying a huge chunk of their monthly income on housing costs. Despite this, like other councils we have been prevented from building the the low cost, high quality housing local people need by policies of successive Tory governments which have prevented us from raising funds.

The plans for new council housing show Colchester Labour and our Housing Portfolio Holder, Cllr Adam Fox, are committed to tackling the housing crisis despite the obstacles put in our way by Tory governments.

HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT IN COLCHESTER

Late last year, Lorcan was contacted by a local resident who risked being left unable to work because despite living in the UK since childhood he didn't have the relevant right to work documents. Thankfully, Lorcan was able to put him into contact with representatives from local organisation Fresh Beginnings, who were able to assist him in acquiring the necessary documents. It was a stark reminder that the Tories' callous hostile environment policy regularly forces people into extreme insecurity and loss of livelihood and home through no fault of their own. This issue is becoming even more pressing with millions of EU citizens set to lose their automatic right to live and work in the UK. EU citizens have until 30th June 2020 to apply to stay through the EU Settlement Scheme, and there are machines to scan and upload your ID documents at Colchester Library, but there are also worrying reports of applications being rejected. If you are facing similar issues Lorcan would like to hear from you. Email him at: lorcan.whitehead@colchester.gov.uk

ESA ASSESSMENT CENTRE STILL NOT SORTED

In our last newsletter, we hailed the success of Jaki and Ali's campaign to ensure that the ESA disability benefit assessment centre is actually accessible to all disabled people.

This is essential so that local residents don't lose vital support due to not being able to enter the building. However, despite planning permission for the necessary changes being granted way back in May last year, and despite local Tory MP Will Quince's claims during the election campaign, the work still hasn't been carried out! Jaki and Ali have therefore launched a new campaign to get this issue resolved once and for all.

Please support them by signing the new petition at: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/we-fought-for-access-now-let-us-in>

NEW CROSSING FOR MILITARY ROAD?

We're delighted to support residents' calls for a pedestrian crossing on Military Road, near Roberts Road, to make this junction safer for all. After a recent accident here, as your county councillor, Lee has signed off an application for a pedestrian crossing and passed on a petition to the head officer to show this has the consent of residents.



END IN SIGHT IN CAVALRY ROAD PLAY AREA SAGA?

One of the first issues raised with Lorcan after his election in May 2018 was the play area off Cavalry Road which has stood unopen for the past 9 years.

Since then, Lorcan has been doing what he can to help resolve the issue, meeting with residents, contacting the developer Bovis Homes, and liaising with council officers.

After many false starts it seems an end may be in sight. In November, Lorcan met with representatives from Bovis and their contractor, as well as council officers and other councillors, and following further communications agreement now appears to have been reached about the remaining issues and what needs to be done to resolve them. Bovis have agreed to complete the work required so that the Council can take over the play area and it can at long last be used by families in the area.

HARSNETT AND MORANT ROAD SURVEY

Thank you to all the residents who returned our survey for a one-way system in King Stephen, Harsnett and Morant Road last year. In the end we received over 100 replies.

Residents of King Stephen Road were against a one-way system in the end but 80% of respondents in Harsnett and Morant Road were in favour of a one-way system in their streets. We have therefore just applied for an application for a one-way system for Harsnett and Morant Road. This will be looked at by the Local Highways Panel and by Essex Highways engineers to see how viable this is to put in place. Local Highways Panel schemes can take some time to be completed due to funding cuts so this change, if viable, will not happen immediately.

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

Lorcan was pleased to be able to attend an open day at Irvine Road Orchard late last year which is a wonderful community asset and a haven for wildlife and local residents alike, and a wonderful community initiative. He was also glad to help fund another community initiative through a contribution from his locality budget in the form of a new community noticeboard on Irvine Road.

Each year each councillor is allocated £2000 to spend on projects that will benefit the local community. Other recipients from Lorcan's budget this municipal year were the Castle Park Theatre project, the GO4 Café – who received a contribution towards new IT equipment, and local environmental group en-form – who received money for a terracycle weighing machine. If you know of a local project that you think should be supported let Lorcan know.

Working all year round



COMMUNITY CLEAN UP

Already this year, Lee and Lorcan have been out with local residents on community litter picks to clean up our ward. Unfortunately, Tory cuts to local council budgets mean resources for regular street cleaning are stretched, but we do what we can to make a dent and it is always nice to work with residents to look after our ward. Look out for announcements on Lorcan and Lee's Facebook pages if you'd like to join the next one, or email if there's somewhere you think is in particular need of attention. You're also very welcome to borrow some litter pickers if you like to run one yourself!



CRIME IN NEW TOWN AND CHRIST CHURCH

Lee and Lorcan are working hard with the police to clamp down on drug-dealing and anti-social behaviour in the ward, especially in the folleys across New Town, which offer drug dealers an easy escape route.

As many of you will be aware, police are incredibly under-resourced after 10 years of cuts from the Conservative government. Instead we as local residents are expected to pay more council tax to fund extra officers. However the police are now running operations in New Town, much of it plainclothes operations, so they will not always be in clear sight.

Remember that we as residents are the best line of intelligence for police. Please make sure you report anything suspicious to the police with location, time and descriptions at 101 or online at <https://www.essex.police.uk/do-it-online/report-a-crime>

Contact us – we're here to help

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