

Green News



For Witham Central ward

Local news and views from your Green Party Councillors

Spring 2021

Local elections to go ahead on 6th May

The Government has decided that the elections can go ahead so long as Covid safe rules are followed. County Councillor James Abbott is standing for re-election as the Green Party candidate for the Witham Northern division.

Witham Northern division includes:

- Witham Central ward
- Witham North ward
- Silver End and Rivenhall
- Terling and Fairstead
- White Notley and Faulkbourne
- Black Notley
- Bradwell

James Abbott was first elected to Essex County Council to represent Witham Northern division in 2013 and was re-elected in 2017.

He has been campaigning on environmental and local community issues for nearly 40 years.

James is also a Braintree District Councillor and has represented Silver End and Rivenhall for 22 years.

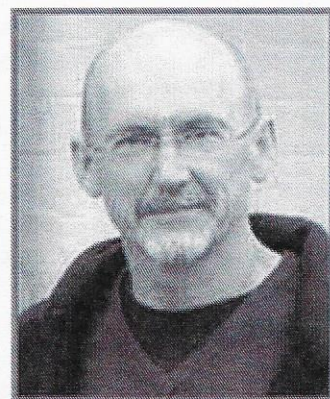
James lives in Rivenhall with his family having previously lived in Witham town where his family on his mother's side have roots going back to the 1800s.

He went to primary school at Templars in Witham and then secondary school in Colchester. He went on to study at University College London, from where he graduated in 1982.

James said: "It has always been an honour to represent local people as their councillor.

Looking ahead there will be many challenges – recovery from Covid, development pressures on our local area and the need to improve local services. I support securing better access for residents to local health

services: **Witham needs its own Community Hospital.** I hope to be able to continue for another 4 years on ECC, working on behalf of local people, attending at Witham Town Council meetings to give reports and supporting local projects."



Greens & Independents to stand in all seats at the May local elections

Cllr James Abbott is the Leader of the Green & Independent Group (G&I) at Braintree District Council. The G&I Group has 9 councillors and is the main opposition to the Conservatives.

All voters in the district will have a G&I choice at the ballot box on 6th May. **G&I councillors are dedicated to supporting local communities and protecting the environment as top priorities.**

G&I initiatives currently underway include:

- ✓ New community woodlands
- ✓ More opportunities for recycling
- ✓ Restored funding for the Braintree District Local Highways Panel
- ✓ New cycling routes connecting Witham to nearby villages

Keeping you in touch with local issues – not just at election time !

Call for 'Back to Basics' at County Hall

Greens are calling for a 'Back to Basics' approach at County Hall – making sure that potholes are fixed in good time, drains kept clear and footways are safer.

The ruling Conservatives at County Hall promote 'grand plans' such as New Towns and major new roads, but local maintenance has suffered, with highway defects and surface flooding issues taking too long to resolve.

Cllr James Abbott reports highway work that needs doing on a daily basis and many defects have been repaired. However, ECC often leaves significant potholes or blocked drains for months despite reports from councillors and residents. James is pressing for a better service, with more time spent fixing potholes and clearing drains instead of repeatedly inspecting them.

Essex Waste Review

A major waste services review is due at County Hall. ECC has stated there could be closures. Cllr James Abbott is calling for all Recycling Centres - including at Witham on the industrial estate – to stay open.

Cllr Abbott said: *"I have asked at County Hall that services that were reduced in 2016 at the Witham Recycling Centre are restored - so that the Witham RC has the same level of service as the Braintree RC. I am also pressing the ECC Tory administration to clearly rule out any suggestion that the Witham RC might be closed as part of the Waste Review. It is essential for the town that it stays open."*

Cllr James Abbott continues to work with councillor colleagues and local communities to oppose plans for what could be one of the largest waste incinerators in the UK being built at Rivenhall Airfield. If built, the plant would produce emissions that would lower local air quality. All the waste to the incinerator would come by road - that could mean more HGVs through Witham.

Braintree District Local Highways Panel funding restored

At its Budget meeting in February, Essex County Council agreed to restore the budgets to the Local Highways Panels (LHPs). The LHPs comprise county, district and parish representatives and recommend projects such as

local highway safety schemes, new pedestrian crossings, lower speed limits, etc. LHP budgets were halved 5 years ago, resulting in the Braintree District LHP having a waiting list for schemes that would have taken many years to fund.

County Councillor James Abbott, who is a member of the Braintree LHP said: *"The restoration of the Braintree District LHP budget is very welcome and is something I have been pressing for with G&I colleagues. We hope now to be able to deliver more safety and access improvements in Witham."*

Cllr James Abbott is also a member of the Essex Climate Action Commission and the BDC Cycling Steering Group. A key G&I policy is to connect up the incomplete cycling network in Witham and to create new segregated cycling routes connecting nearby villages.

Local Plan progresses - but after years of delays due to New Towns plan

Following the Local Plan Inspector finding the "Garden Communities" (New Towns) Plan Unsound for a second time, the ruling Conservatives at Braintree District Council have at last abandoned the West Tey and West of Braintree New Town project.

The 'Section 1' New Towns Plan was supposed to deliver a series of New Towns, with the largest at West Tey amounting to over 20,000 houses.

During years of problems with the project, the actual Local Plan for Braintree District (Section 2) has been sitting on the shelf, resulting in many housing developments being allowed on greenfield sites.

The Braintree Conservative's 'New Towns fiasco' has wasted Essex taxpayers' money on a huge scale. Direct costs to local taxpayers in the district exceed £1 million.

Now that the New Towns have been withdrawn, the Local Plan can progress. **G&I district and county councillors support getting a Local Plan completed as soon as possible.** This will offer greater certainty over where homes and jobs are to be provided and will help protect the countryside around Witham. It is also essential that Witham gets improvements in services to support housing growth already underway. **That should include town centre improvements, a community hospital - and having a police station again.**

This Green News is delivered by volunteers following Covid-secure guidelines

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