

# A Green Manifesto for Bradford District



## Democracy



ShIPLEY Green Party  
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[www.shipleegreenparty.org.uk](http://www.shipleegreenparty.org.uk)



# Democracy

## The issue

The Green Party believes in democracy that is participatory and empowers citizens to take an active and informed part in the decision-making that affects their lives. Local decisions should be made by local people. More power and resources need to be devolved to the local level to attract higher quality councillors and give local people more say in the issues that matter. Yet successive governments have shifted power to London rather than handing it back to local government.

The Green Party is committed to openness and freedom of information in all aspects of government. We believe that decision-making processes should be transparent, open to all and that everyone should know how to use the Council's services.

## In Bradford

The current government has changed the structure of local government in ways that have centralised power in the hands of a small number of councillors. This makes it more difficult for ordinary people to scrutinise the work of their Council. Even though no party has a majority of the seats on Bradford Council, we now have a single-party executive. This means that meetings are held in public, but the real decision-making takes place behind closed doors.

Our green councillors have:

- ▶ argued for more Council funds to be allocated by Area Committees;
- ▶ changed the constitution to allow any resident of the district, including young people, to ask a question at Full Council;
- ▶ opposed the running of the Council by a single-party executive;
- ▶ opposed the privatisation of Council responsibilities in major services such as housing and education;
- ▶ tried to limit the power of the big-party whips and open up debate at Full Council so that all members can take part instead of having to listen to stage-managed speeches by party favourites;
- ▶ protested against 'gagging orders' that have prevented debate on vital local issues such as the future of the Odeon building, the Airedale Masterplan and free school meals, as well as a more open discussion of national issues such as the Iraq war;
- ▶ kept in constant touch with the electorate of their wards via regular door-knocking, 'Green Action' newsletters, monthly surgeries and a website.

## What would a Green Council do?

A green council would:

- ▶ devolve more powers to Area Committees and Parish and Town Councils, including re-opening a town council in Shipley;
- ▶ open up Full Council meetings to all members by allowing comment and debate on any motion after formal speeches have taken place;
- ▶ encourage the setting up of parish councils where these do not currently exist, provided that there is a public demand for them;
- ▶ treat all elected members equally by providing the resources required to allow them to do their job of representing their constituents;
- ▶ improve the way the Council is run so that it becomes more open, efficient, responsive and accountable.