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Greens want free insulation for all

Free home insulation should be available for every resident of Greenwich borough, to help them save energy and cut bills each winter, local Greens said today.

With the current harsh winter set to leave many of Greenwich's least well-off households with crippling heating bills, such a move would help ease fuel poverty as well as cut the borough's carbon footprint.

A scheme is already up and running in Kirklees, West Yorkshire, thanks to Green councillors there submitting an amendment to the borough's budget. All householders there can now get free loft and cavity wall insulation, with the cost shared between the council and an energy company.

It is estimated the scheme saves people around £200 a year on fuel bills, and in Kirklees created about 90 new jobs.

Closer to home, a committee of Lewisham councillors has recommended a similar scheme get under way in that borough.

Peninsula ward candidate Dave Sharman said the scheme would particularly help people on low incomes.

"Fuel bills are a huge worry for many people, but much of this is because their homes are so poorly insulated. Look up at people's roofs during the snowy spell to see how many homes are losing heat - wasted energy is bad for people's bank balances as well as the environment," he continued.

"Free insulation would help ease those worries, and keep vulnerable people warm. And as insulation is the most cost-effective measure you can take to reduce carbon emissions, it'd be a wonderful legacy for the future."

Greenwich Council could use its long-established and widely-praised links with local employers to help people train for jobs installing the insulation, Dave said.

"The next time we get a harsh winter, thousands of Greenwich residents would be better prepared if the council adopted this scheme," he added.



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Greenwich Time is “dismal propaganda”

Greenwich Council's weekly newspaper needs urgent reform after becoming a “dismal propaganda sheet”, Peninsula ward candidate Darryl Chamberlain said.

Greenwich Time stifles debate, misleads local people and is putting established local newspapers at risk, added Darryl, a former BBC journalist who has recently started working as a freelance.

“All you'll ever see in Greenwich Time is what the council's Labour leadership thinks - it's just a vehicle to promote themselves and their views,” he said.

“How many times does the leader of the council think we need his photograph shoved through our letterbox?”

Darryl, who has covered council meetings for community website greenwich.co.uk since leaving the BBC, added: “It might sound odd for a Green Party candidate to say you should be hearing more from Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, but Greenwich Time should be covering our views, their views, and opinions from across the borough. There's some lively exchanges about what goes on in our neighbourhoods which we just don't hear about.

“Instead, it's just a dismal propaganda sheet to promote a select few Labour councillors at the expense of everyone else.”

Darryl suggests an independent editorial board should govern the paper and make sure it isn't abused by council leaderships in the future, and it should be compelled to offer training for local people wanting to get into the media.

He concluded, “If the council wants to publish a newspaper to get its message across, then it should allocate space for different opinions - and help local people get a start in the media as well.”



Underground link to Eltham?

Greenwich Council is right to consider transport improvements for Eltham - but could be backing the wrong scheme in a Docklands Light Railway (DLR) extension, Green candidate Arthur Hayles said.

Council leaders have approved a study into how the railway, which currently terminates at Woolwich and Lewisham, could reach the town centre. But Arthur, who will contest Eltham at the next general election, said council leaders should be pressing for a London Underground link instead.

“If a DLR extension ran on the surface, it would bring more clutter and noise-pollution to the borough,” he said. “What is really needed is an extension of the Jubilee Line from North Greenwich to Kidbrooke, Eltham and New Eltham, giving the whole borough a first-class public transport system.”

“This would bring Canary Wharf and central London within rapid reach of much of the borough. It would also encourage drivers to the Blackwall Tunnel out of their cars and onto the faster Tube.

“North Greenwich Station was designed for an extension, and almost all the work would be underground. Why not study extending the Jubilee Line to Eltham? Greenwich is worth it!”



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Vote Green to save the NHS

Recent reports in the press highlighted the crisis in our NHS, with services in Greenwich under particular threat.

Woolwich's Queen Elizabeth Hospital has a PFI debt of £65m, which will last for at least a generation. It is well above what it would have cost if it was publicly funded. Whilst the debt mounts private finance companies are reaping the profits, yet clinical services are under threat.

The A&E at QEH is already under pressure, but reductions in services, at Queen Mary's in Sidcup for example, are making the problem worse as the QEH takes up the slack. Incredibly, plans are afoot across London to close more hospital beds and A&E departments.

Green candidate for Greenwich and Woolwich, Andy Hewett commented, "The PFI scheme is only the tip of the privatisation iceberg and has been exposed as an abject failure. Private companies are being lined up to take over more vital areas of health care from the NHS, putting private profit before quality of care.

"The local Labour MP talks of only being interested in 'value-for-money healthcare'. Labour, Lib Dems and Tories all talk about how they value the NHS, but they all have a privatisation agenda and are committed to cuts.

"It is an absolute disgrace that billions are being spent on the war, Trident and bailing out the banks, when that money should be spent instead on the NHS and our public services. The Green Party is committed to keeping the NHS public and is opposed to public sector cuts, and we will fight for this all the way."

Andy Hewett was grateful to QEH when he injured his arm



Green candidate represents Greenwich at Copenhagen

Our Peninsula ward candidate, Marek Powley, was a delegate at the recent Copenhagen Climate Conference. While the summit ultimately proved unsuccessful, it was a reminder of how important it is to take action locally on climate change.

"It was supposed to be the world's chance to come together and agree on a way to deal with the human impact on the Earth. The experience was both fascinating and frustrating - fascinating to see so many countries and groups come together at a UN summit, but frustrating to witness the failure to reach a useful agreement."

Marek said, "I was in Copenhagen with the Federation of Young European Greens, writing reports for its website and giving young people an insight into how the summit worked. But the power ultimately lay not with organisations like FYEG, nor even the Met Office or Friends of the Earth, but with the 'large' country delegations like the European Union, USA, China and India. It struck me that their interests didn't seem to be in securing their people's long term futures.

"The concerns of smaller countries tended to be brushed aside, or they just got locked out of negotiations altogether."

But why is this of interest to people in Greenwich? Marek says, "Because we can make changes at a local level. That's why I'm active in the Green Party."

Marek continued, "Working from the bottom up and pushing for change can improve things in our local environment.

"It can also let the national government know that there is a desire for a different type of politics, and that we want environmental issues to have a higher priority in today's world."



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Greens call for local assemblies

Imagine being able to have a bigger say in what goes on in your local area; helping decide on matters which could improve your neighbourhood. Imagine being able to work with your local council to help solve problems, or improve local facilities.

This is a reality in Lewisham, where residents are invited to assemblies four times a year to help decide how to spend £10,000 allocated to improving life in their ward. For example, residents on the Lewisham side of Blackheath have helped fund activities for young people and made a contribution to Blackheath Village's Christmas lights with their pot of cash.

But Greenwich Council does not allow residents the same level of involvement - preferring to control things from the centre. Greenwich Green Party thinks this is wrong - and Peninsula ward candidate Dave Sharman says he will press for local assemblies if elected in May.

"Greenwich Council's attitude needs to change - it needs to stop being so scared of local people and to listen to them for once," he said. "Lewisham's local assemblies have been friendly, relaxed meetings that have brought people and the local council together.

"You'd be surprised what you can do with £10,000 - our Green colleagues in Lewisham have overseen meetings that have given money to local fun runs, arts events, and projects to combat fly-tipping and plant street trees. We think the people of Greenwich deserve this too."



Dave Sharman says Lewisham residents have more say than Greenwich's

Council should tread carefully on town centre plans

Pedestrianising Greenwich town centre is potentially a good idea - but the council needs to think more carefully about its plans, Green Party candidate Darryl Chamberlain said today.

Greenwich Council plans to pave over College Approach and part of King William Walk. Options are based around turning Norman Road, Creek Road and Greenwich High Road into a one-way system. It will also require making the shop-lined Nelson Road a busy two-way street that will be even harder to cross.

Peninsula ward candidate Darryl said, "This might be a good idea, but the council seems to be rushing this through so work can be finished in time for the Olympics," he said. "It needs to stop and think properly about a decision that will have a huge impact on Greenwich and surrounding neighbourhoods. The Olympics will only last for a few weeks, but if the council gets this wrong it will affect Greenwich for years."

Darryl said the plan had no vision for what a pedestrianised town centre would be like. "Creating a public space between the market and the river is a good idea, but it needs to think through what it wants to do with all that space, especially if Cutty Sark Gardens is redeveloped," he said. "What might be bustling on a Sunday afternoon in July could be a sad and miserable place on a Monday night in January."

Council officers also needed to look more closely at how the plans affect public transport, residents around Norman Road, and the pedestrian and cycle link with Deptford at Ha'penny Hatch, he added.



Plans need to consider the impact on shoppers & residents

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