

Lib Dems to take 'different approach'

BY SIMON ALLIN,
LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Enfield's Liberal Democrats want to "bring back local accountability", give individual councillors more freedom and be up-front with residents on key issues.

The group plans to contest every seat in the borough following a national resurgence that saw them win recent parliamentary by-elections in Chesham and Amersham and North Shropshire.

At the moment, they currently have one seat in Enfield, which is held by former Labour councillor Ayfer Orhan in Ponders End. She will now be contesting the newly-formed Whitewebbs ward alongside Rob Aaron-Wilson, the local Lib Dem chair who says the group hopes to win over voters by taking a "different approach" to local politics.

"It is to really bring back some sort of local accountability," he said. "The other two main parties block vote. We wouldn't do block voting – so you are actually there to represent your residents. I think there



Rob Aaron-Wilson is leading the Lib Dem charge in Enfield

are many things kicking about at the moment that need different approaches."

In contrast to what he described as an "almost dogmatic" approach taken by the current Labour administration at Enfield Civic Centre, Rob said the Liberal Democrats would "properly consult"

with residents on key issues such as low-traffic neighbourhoods.

"You've got to be honest with people," he said. "Say what it's going to be, and if it's a success it stays, and if it doesn't work, it comes out. We seemed to have turned it into a culture war, which is something that it really didn't need to be."

"We want to bring back local accountability"

Although the construction contract for the new Edmonton incinerator has been awarded, and no council can unilaterally cancel the scheme, Rob said the Lib Dems would back a pause and review of the project as part of the North London Waste Authority.

"We have got to go carbon neutral in five or ten years," he explained. "This isn't going to do it. You're making a case to keep burning stuff. You need something – there is medical waste that needs burning – but we can't go on as we are.

"You can life-extend what's there. If you life-extend what's there, you haven't got the massive financial case to keep burning."

The Lib Dems want to foster social inclusion by setting up community hubs in schools and libraries. "We need to have a lot more social inclusion," Rob said. "I think a lot of mental health issues are caused by isolation.

"We're here to make people's lives a bit nicer. We have a lot of council facilities we could open up for cheaper nurseries. [The cost of] childcare is astronomical. We can run things at a local level that aren't free but are cheaper."

The Lib Dems also want to create a sustainable food programme for those in need by working with charities and businesses. Rob warned that more people are going to start to run out of money for food because of sharp increases in the cost of living. He said: "We seem to be focusing on our cars while people are going hungry – and they really are."

For more information about the Lib Dems in Enfield: Visit enfield-libdems.org.uk