

number of groups do co-operate with each other - if that didn't happen, the Southend Radical Fair would never have got off the ground!

If we're being honest, we're only scratching the surface when it comes to networking and working together. We are most definitely NOT calling for any kind of formal alliance... What we're looking at is a looser, more ad hoc arrangement where groups and people work together on specific projects or actions.

As well as this, we would love to see more in the way of skill sharing and mentoring between the different groups and people working on grassroots projects. There's a tremendous wealth of knowledge out there ranging from how to organise and facilitate meetings, set up blogs and websites, produce papers and flyers

through to building events such as the Southend Vegan Fair, managing a community allotment and in the case of Passionate About Hardie Park, managing a local park! If all of this could be shared, we would all be stronger and better placed to bring about meaningful change.

*This is why we have set up The Estuary ALTERNATIVE blog and paper - <https://theestuaryalternative.wordpress.com/> As well as promoting and celebrating what grassroots community projects are doing, we want to use what we do as a place where we can share skills and experiences and grow stronger together. So, it's over to you to make this happen!*

## Welcome to South Essex Radical Media



This paper (and the associated blogs) is a project aimed at bringing radical, alternative media to people across the south of Essex. We make absolutely no secret of our radical and anarchist leanings. These inform how we cover local issues - however, we try and refrain from using political terminology and do our level best not to come across as preachy in any way, shape or form!

Basically, we believe that real change leaning to a more equitable, just and saner world will not come from putting a cross in a box on a ballot paper every few years. It's only by people getting stuck in at grassroots level in their communities, workplaces and colleges, building and linking up from there to create a progressive, pro-working class movement that any meaningful change can come about.

*We would love it if any of you who share our political outlook, live anywhere across the south of Essex and are involved in a local campaign or feel you have something to say, could contribute to this paper or the blog. The aim is to make this project as inclusive as possible - so it's over to you...*

### Accomplices, allies and friends

Basildon & Southend Housing Action: <https://www.facebook.com/basacton/>

Class War: <https://www.facebook.com/ClassWarOfficial/>

Focus E15: <https://focuse15.org/>

Red & Black Telly: <https://www.youtube.com/user/RedAndBlackTelly>

Southend In Transition Community Allotment: <https://www.facebook.com/SiTcommunityAllotment/>

Spiralseed: <http://spiralseed.co.uk/>

Vange Hill Community Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/180311358699122/>

### Our alter ego

South Essex Class War: <https://www.facebook.com/cwsouthessex/>

### Blogs from South Essex Radical Media

The SOUTH ESSEX STIRRER: <https://southessexstirrer.wordpress.com/>

ON UNCERTAIN GROUND: <https://onuncertainground.wordpress.com/>

The Estuary ALTERNATIVE: <https://theestuaryalternative.wordpress.com/>

### Contact us

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/southessexradmedia/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SthEssRadMedia>

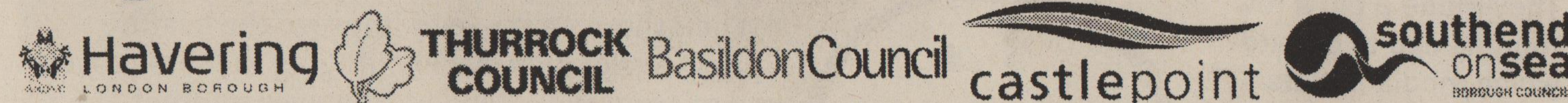
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# The South Essex STIRRER

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## Dysfunctional (and broken)



The system of local governance we have to endure is screwed. From wrong priorities and the pursuit of pointless vanity projects through to arrogant and dismissive councillors and council officials, far from local councils serving the people, they're behaving like arrogant, petty dictators who think they have the right to do what they want and routinely dismiss the legitimate concerns of their residents. Here are just a few examples running from east to west across the area we cover of just how bad it's getting...

### Southend Borough Council

They persist in the pursuit of their vanity project of a museum / gallery on the clifftops despite numerous objections from residents. Take a walk around Southend town centre and you can't fail to notice the number of homeless people on the streets. You'd have thought that a council with the slightest shred of decency and humanity would be directing resources to provide decent accommodation and support services for the homeless to help them get back on their feet but no...pointless vanity projects are more important priorities for an authority that's lost the plot.

### Castle Point Council

They seem to think there's no problem with allowing ever more development on Canvey Island against the wishes of the residents. The residents of the island have pointed out that Canvey is not just low lying but below sea level when the tide is up, and that piling more homes onto what to all intents and purposes is a flood plain when sea levels are rising due to climate change is a dumb idea. Not only that, it's also been pointed out to Castle Point Council that there are only two roads off the island, one of which leads through the suburban tract housing of Benfleet. At the best of times, these roads jam up all

too easily - in the event of a catastrophic flood when the island has to be evacuated, the consequences of the roads jamming up would be horrendous. Despite all of this, the planners seem to think that allowing more development on Canvey isn't a problem, especially if it allows the leafy heights of Benfleet and Thundersley to stay leafy...

### Basildon Council

Where the heck do we begin? Let's start with flogging off green spaces and parks (south of the A127, not in leafy Billericay) to

developers and wilfully ignoring the rationale of why green spaces were planned into the new town when it was built. The desecration of a substantial chunk of Gloucester Park for a housing development that does sod all to alleviate the (heavily doctored) housing waiting list for social housing but will potentially bring more Tory voters into the town is just one example. Social engineering and gerrymandering are two terms that spring to mind to describe this.

Then there's a rubbish collection 'system' that leaves some estates littered with uncollected bags of trash that inevitably get torn open by foxes creating a health hazard. Our friends at Basildon & Southend Housing Action - <https://www.facebook.com/basacton/> - have been laying into the council for more years than they care to remember in a bid to find out if they actually have anything remotely resembling a

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Basildon Council NOT welcome here



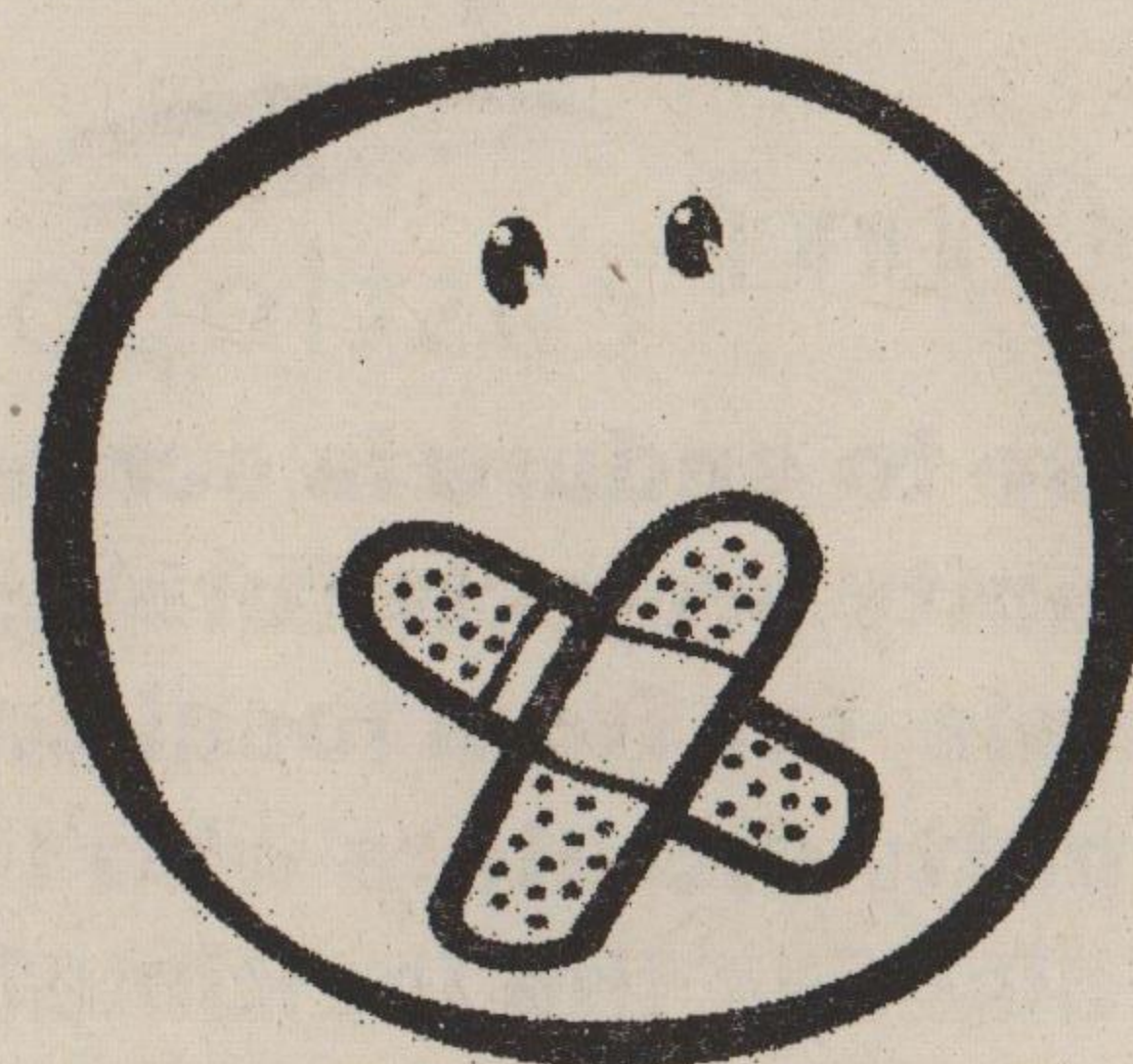


workable rubbish collection protocol - we'll let you know if they ever get an answer!

Last but by no means least, there's the dismissive and arrogant attitude of too many of Basildon Council's officers when dealing with residents, resident action groups and tenant representatives. These officers acting like petty dictators seem to have forgotten that their role is to serve the people of Basildon, not dump on them!

### Thurrock Council

They made a bid a few months ago to dictate which media outlets would be allowed to report on the proceedings of the council. This was done because the council wanted to control the narrative about what they do instead of allowing the local media to do their job of telling us the truth of what actually goes on. There have been quite a few dictators in the course of history who have controlled the narrative to ensure they were seen in the best possible light but when a local council in the UK decides it wants



## We can't go on like this, things have got to change

**Whether it's councillors going on an ego trip or council officials acting like petty dictators, power always corrupts. The only long term solution is to bring power right down to the level of the neighbourhood where it's the people who control what's going on and have a meaningful say in how their community develops and grows into the future. We do realise that a neighbourhood being able to take full control isn't going to happen this side of a major political, economic and social upheaval - one that we're very keen to help bring about!**

There are numerous ways we can start to chip away at a system that's already crumbling to bring that change about... We support a range of community action groups who all have the aim of wanting to make life in their neighbourhood better. In the current political climate, we don't expect community action groups to see themselves as having any kind of revolutionary potential. However, in their desire for transparency and accountability from the councils that are supposed to serve them and for their community to have a meaningful say in how it develops into the future, there's a clear indication they know the way things are isn't good enough and that change is needed.

No two community or grassroots action groups are the same - that's good as it means they respond to the conditions they encounter rather than work to a set

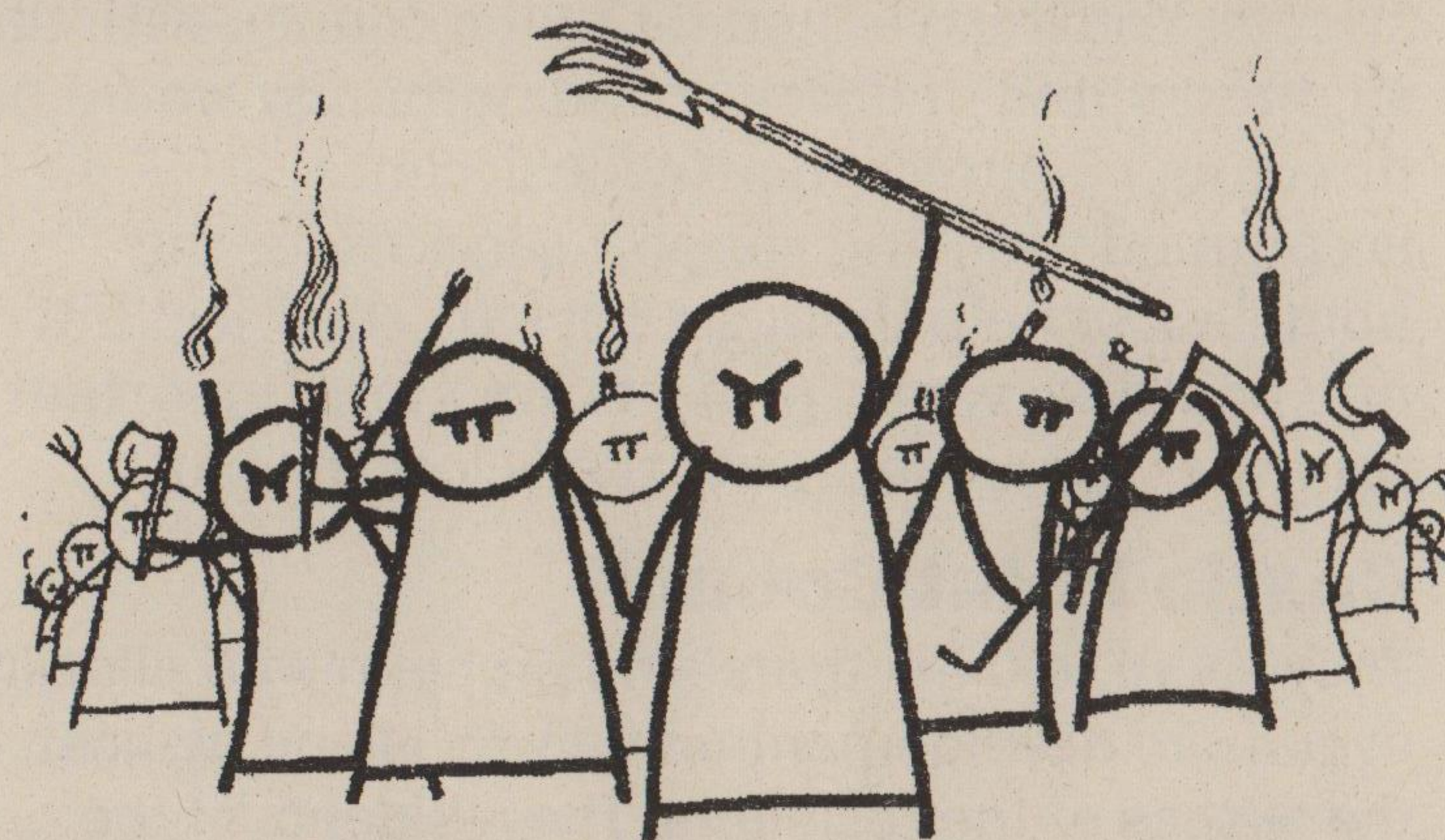
to control how it's proceedings are reported, alarm bells should start to ring very loudly. When a council wants to control the narrative, it's generally a signal they've got something to hide!

### Havering Council

Just one example of the short-sightedness of their planners is the bid to build houses on the green at Dovers Farm Estate in South Hornchurch. Like most post war council estates, the green at Dovers Farm was planned into the development to provide recreational opportunities for people living nearby. When there's a move to improve the health prospects of kids by encouraging them to move away from the screen of whatever internet connected device they happen to be using and go outside, run around and let off some steam in the fresh air, it seems perverse to build over green spaces that allow them to do this.

*We've only skimmed the surface of how dysfunctional, arrogant and out of touch the local authorities in our area are...*

*There are many more examples that need to be brought to people's attention and we're more than happy to do that on the Stirrer blog - write them up, send them in and we'll publish them...*



formula. Strategy and tactics vary from conventional lobbying and participation in 'consultation' processes through to setting up community gardens (sometimes without permission!) and starting to take over the functions that local authorities who have willingly signed up to the government's austerity agenda have abandoned.

While we respect the rationale of those who want to lobby, it's those who are taking practical action in their communities that's effectively building the new world inside the decaying shell of the dystopian one we're currently forced to endure that we as anarchists are more interested in. In the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster, the community in North Kensington stepping in to fill the void left by a corrupt and dysfunctional council is one example of this.

While we're not into electoralism, one tactic we have discussed with like minded people is residents standing

as independents or as representatives of community groups in local elections. As a tactic for raising issues and forcing candidates from the mainstream parties to acknowledge and face up to their shortcomings in dealing with them, it's worth pursuing. You may well get elected and find yourself in a position of challenging and undermining the system from within... The ground rules for this are to donate all of your councillor's allowance to the community or community group you

## Doing it for ourselves (because no one else will)

**There's only so much neglect, indifference and being mucked around by local councils that people will take before saying enough is enough and taking matters into their own hands. We'd like to celebrate these examples of people power, not just for saving neglected parks and starting to turn round troubled housing estates but also because they're the first step in bringing control back down to the level of the neighbourhood.**

We've written before about the dedicated group of residents in Stanford-le-Hope who became so fed up with Thurrock Council's long standing neglect of Hardie Park, they took matters into their own hands and they now effectively run the park - <https://www.facebook.com/LoveHardiePark/> Hardie Park used to be an unloved, litter strewn, unkempt place that many locals went out of their way to avoid. As you can see from their Facebook page, with the cafe, the events they put on and host, and the fact that the park is now a popular destination, they now do a far better job than Thurrock Council ever did of running the park.

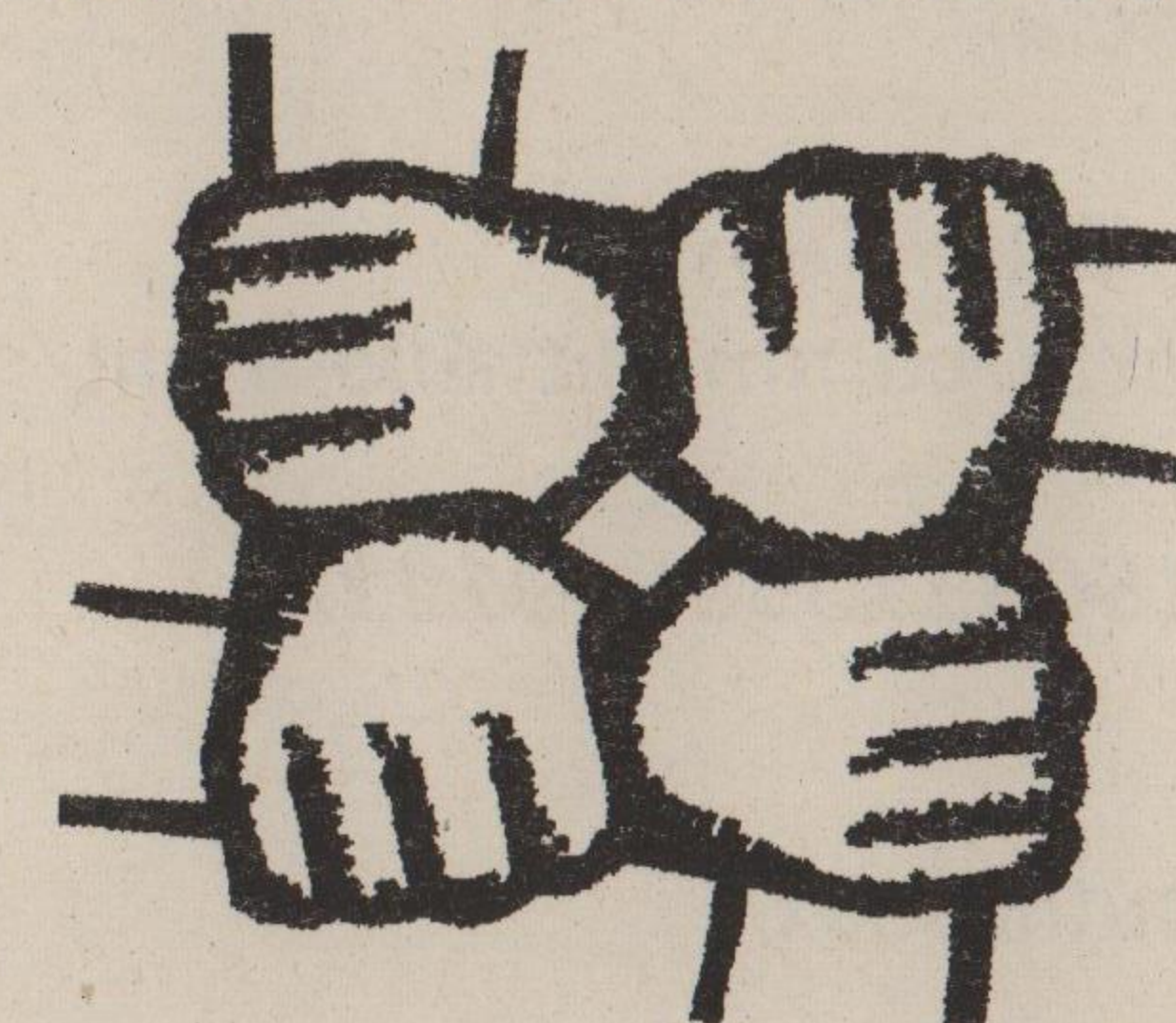
Then there's the Vange Hill Community Group - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/180311358699122/> - who operate on the troubled ¾ estate in Vange on the southern fringes of Basildon. The estate is plagued with problems ranging from broken, cracked and unsafe paths, uncollected rubbish and flytipping through to rogue slum landlords, overcrowded houses of multiple occupation and persistent anti-social behaviour. They're fed up with the years of neglect from Basildon Council, Circle Housing and Swan Housing and have decided to fight back to secure a better deal for the estate and start to build some

represent and to be a pain in the arse to the powers that be!

**Whatever strategy or tactics you decide to adopt, the aim is to bring power and control right down to the grassroots. This is the first step in starting to dismantle a self serving system of governance that no longer serves the wishes of the people in any way, shape or form...**

desperately needed community spirit and solidarity. This initiative, supported by our friends at Basildon & Southend Housing Action - <https://www.facebook.com/basacton/> - has just got off the ground and everyone knows it's going to be a long slog to turn the estate round. However, it's a great example of grassroots community action and one we wholeheartedly back.

*In both cases, it's people deciding to work together to get a result for their community and in the process, starting to wrest a bit of power away from indifferent, self serving local councils and bring it down to the level of the neighbourhood. If real fundamental change is ever going to happen, the process has to start where we live in our neighbourhoods and spread outwards and upwards from there.*



## Working better together

**Working with other groups on an issue is good. Numbers are boosted, skills and experiences are shared and morale improves. We're not ideological purists - so long as a group is moving in the same broad direction of travel as we are, if there's an issue we're mutually concerned about, we'll get on board with them to do something about it.**

Sometimes, this may lead to a permanent alliance - at other times, it will be an ad-hoc arrangement to get a result before going our separate ways, bearing in mind that at some point, we may well meet again in the future. This is why we're happy to work with groups ranging from Southend In Transition Community Allotment and Vange Hill Community Group on grassroots stuff out here in Essex to Focus E15, Class War and Movement For Justice on broader issues such as housing and migrant rights in London.

There's an amazing range of grassroots projects operating out here in Essex. They range from

community gardens and skill share initiatives through to resident run and managed local parks and open spaces. All of them in their own way contribute to the project of building a more just, sane and sustainable world that could eventually replace the decaying, dystopian one we currently have to endure.

One of the ideas that motivated building and holding the Southend Radical Fair that took place on May 6th this year was to facilitate networking between the grassroots projects in the area. Obviously, there's a level of networking that already does take place and a

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