

GROEN **VOORUIT**

Duurzaam, divers en sociaal



ELECTION PROGRAMME 2024-2030

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Dear Grimbergen resident,

It is with some pride that we present our election manifesto. This is what we would like to realise if you, the voter, give us the opportunity to do so. It is impossible to summarise everything in one programme, but we indicate here where our ambitions lie. It's true that it's easy to make promises but a lot harder to keep them. Municipal policy is outlined by a 'majority' consisting of various parties. We are committed to doing everything we can to realise our ambitions, which you can read below.

Whatever the final municipal policy, if you give us the opportunity to participate in it, the following principles are important breaking points for us.

First of all, we want to work on **involvement and participation of all residents**. We are thinking of various advisory councils or theme evenings where residents can think about how their neighbourhood or district can become safer, more sustainable and more pleasant. The establishment of a mobility council and a welfare council or strengthening of the bond with the local economy are examples of this. The quality of life in Grimbergen and its sub-municipalities is our guiding principle. Sustainability is an expensive word, but in concrete terms it means a safe, pleasant living environment with healthy air and therefore lots of greenery. We would like to hear from you where improvement is possible.

Solidarity is a second key concept that we want to use in every policy decision. Is everyone on board? How do we ensure that each of us, even those who are less fortunate, can participate in the transition to a sustainable and healthy society? The budgets that are at the disposal of a local council must take this principle into account.

Finally, we want to take up the challenge of making **diversity** an asset in our small Grimbergen community, which would benefit us all. We see organising meetings and connections in every district or neighbourhood as an important task in the coming policy period.

Would you like to participate? We are ready.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| PART 1: SOCIETY AND SOCIAL POLICY | 4 |
| 1.1 Investing in the inhabitants of tomorrow | 5 |
| 1.2 Active policy for the elderly - proactive and reaching out to combat loneliness | 8 |
| 1.3 Well substantiated health policy - affordable and accessible care | 11 |
| 1.4 A promising Grimbergen, also in terms of labour market opportunities | 13 |
| 1.5 Income and purchasing power - fight against poverty | 15 |
| 1.6 Debt assistance | 17 |
| 1.7 Culture | 18 |
| 1.8 Social cohesion: neighbourhood and association life | 20 |
| 1.9 International solidarity | 22 |
| PART 2: PEOPLE & ENVIRONMENT | 24 |
| 2.1 Towards a new mobility | 24 |
| 2.2 Spatial planning & environment | 29 |
| 2.3 Solutions for affordable housing | 34 |
| 2.4 Climate policy | 36 |
| 2.5 Nature | 39 |
| 2.6 Animal welfare | 42 |
| 2.7 Waste policy | 43 |
| 2.8 Grimbergen situated in the northern edge (Noordrand) | 46 |
| 2.9 Education | 51 |
| 2.10 Local Economy | 54 |
| 2.11 Space for Sports | 56 |
| 2.12 Safety | 59 |
| PART 3: GOOD GOVERNANCE | 61 |
| 3.1 Local democracy, have a say, participation and inclusion | 61 |
| 3.2 Low-threshold and accessible services | 66 |
| 3.3 Sound financial management | 68 |

Het wordt anders!

PART 1: SOCIETY AND SOCIAL POLICY

A promising Grimbergen, there is more to it. Grimbergen is a prosperous municipality. Ensuring that *everyone* feels good should therefore be our ambition. But we are still a long way from that point. A social policy is aimed at everyone and aims to improve the quality of life for all residents in Grimbergen. For the growing group of senior citizens, for young people, for young families and single parents, for people with disabilities, the sick, the homeless, refugees and people in a vulnerable situation. A well-developed social municipal policy facilitates:

- dignified life
- expansion and growth opportunities
- development and recreation
- meeting and social cohesion
- help and support.
- involvement and participation
- safe and pleasant public spaces
- decent healthcare

Social policy is not only concerned with welfare, but also with housing, spatial planning, health, education, employment, integration and culture.

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1.1 Investing in the inhabitants of tomorrow

“We will provide places where our youth can be young without worries: from youth infrastructure and playgrounds to places where young people can simply meet. “

Is Grimbergen also the pearl of Brabant for the youth? The current municipal council has done its best, but it could be better. Good initiatives such as the Piereman playground (and its inclusion activities), SWAP, Bos op Stelten, etc. are a success. There are some fun events here in Grimbergen that are indispensable for young people but that are not always supported by the town council. At the end of the legislature, several construction projects for youth sites were approved: the Charleroyhoeve and the Piereman. These projects must absolutely be continued and can be an example for other youth projects in the municipality.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- The growing shortage of **childcare facilities** must force the municipality to take action. We hope for a substantial expansion by the Flemish government regarding the number of allocated 'income-related' creche places. But we also want to take the initiative to generate new places for regular childcare. We will look for locations close to or even within the buildings of the nursery and primary schools in our town. This can be taken into account when building a new school in Strombeek-Bever.
- The signalling function of the schools in detecting **child poverty** and in addition the outreach support and guidance of vulnerable families provided by the OCMW would certainly be kept and strengthened by us.

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- In Strombeek the **House of the Child** is bursting at the seams. The Toy Library in particular needs more space. We want to continue to focus on this and make similar initiatives possible, such as a 'baby library' where baby items can be rented or exchanged. With longer opening hours, the Huis van het Kind could become a walk-in place for (future) mothers and children, where all kinds of practical and pedagogical questions could be solved.
- **Youth sites**, where a mix of associations would find their place (and spaces could be shared) and would create lively places. Grimbergen lacks places where children and young people can be young without worries: from **youth infrastructure** and playgrounds to places where young people can simply come together. Groen+Vooruit is committed to renovating the youth rooms in the town, which are often in a poor condition today, and making them safe and accessible.
- **Public meeting places, playgrounds and sports fields** are also of great importance for development (and certainly for people who do not have a garden), so we would strive for quality outdoor (play) areas in every sub-municipality. Groen+Vooruit plans to create places where young people can come together, simply in an informal way in the open air. Picnic areas, fire areas, canopies in safe locations, with sufficient social control, could become really valuable places.
- Grimbergen could be livelier, also after 10 pm! We support any initiative to establish a **youth centre**, preferably in every sub-municipality. It is important that there should be a youth centre again in the centre of Grimbergen, preferably on the site of the Charleroyhoeve (as is currently planned). The municipality could encourage the local catering industry to stay open later, especially at weekends. Groen+Vooruit wants a banquet hall in the centre of Grimbergen again: there is a need for one that is easily accessible for young people (and the elderly) and is located between Den Douwe and the premises of the youth centres in terms of scale and affordability. This way committed young people could organise attractive events more easily in the centre of our town.

Het wordt anders!

- **Being young and carefree** also means that you don't have to worry about money, discrimination or health. The youth and sports initiatives in Grimbergen must be **approachable and affordable** (e.g. a youth pass that gives a discount to those who need it) and must continue to be supported with targeted subsidies.
- Every child and every young person should **feel welcome** in Grimbergen, regardless of his or her origin. Youth and sports clubs can play an important role in this by actively involving newcomers. Cultural or religious characteristics should not be an obstacle to participating in municipal youth work as a monitor, leader or trainer.
- Grimbergen must actively combat **transport poverty, menstrual poverty and language poverty** with voluntary language lessons, bike training for children (and their parents), a cycling library and making menstrual products available. Finally, sufficient attention must be paid to the **mental well-being** of our children and young people (see health section). If possible, bring care to the people instead of taking the people to the care: the council must support and promote initiatives such as the OverKop houses.
- Children and young people are our future and are therefore an important part of our population. We must give them **a voice** and involve them as much as possible in the decisions made in the council. First and foremost, any policy measure must pass the **child and youth test**: it must be checked whether the proposed measure is child friendly.
- Groen+Vooruit also sees an important role for the **Youth council**, but in a different format than it exists today. The youth council must become an advisory body that represents the voice of all young people and not just young people in youth associations. Like a kind **parallel town council**, but only for young people, the youth council must actively help determine policies. The composition of the youth council must be representative of the Grimbergen population and is determined by lottery. All +16-year-olds registered in Grimbergen can be a part of the youth council.

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1.2 Active policy for the elderly - proactive and reaching out to combat loneliness.

“We all have the right to take control of our own lives, regardless of our age or care needs. “

Elderly people deserve a place at the centre of our society. Many of them take on an indispensable role every day, with volunteer work, care for children and grandchildren, informal care or other commitments. They are one **enormous wealth for the local society**. And more and more people are getting older thanks to our affluent society.

Senior citizens who need care have the right to a voice and **the autonomy** about how and where their care will be organised. We all have the right to take control of our own lives, regardless of our age or care needs. The council of Grimbergen must therefore set up an **ambitious elderly policy** together with the senior citizens and the seniors' council.

The local context plays an essential role in the lives and well-being of older people just as it does for children. That is why we are focusing on a **people-friendly living environment** including safe pavements, sufficient rest and meeting areas, a car-free environment and play areas for children. Both young people and the elderly have the same interest in this.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- **a strong local care policy:** We are committed to neighbourhood-oriented care by continuing to strengthen and invest in the Residential Care Centre Ter Biest and the Local Services Centre Ter Borre. We are investigating whether there is a demand for another local service centre in our municipality or for a mobile service centre that can go to smaller neighbourhoods.
- **extensive mobility options:** The less mobile centre (MMC) and the adapted transport service (DAV) remain crucial for those who are less mobile, and we therefore continue to support them.
- **a community where old and young create a future together:** We would actively encourage intergenerational projects and create meeting places where different generations can find each other. We invest in indoor 'hangout

Het wordt anders!

places' for young people and the elderly and organise activities that bring generations together.

- **grow old actively:** We would increase the involvement of the Seniors' Council to the level of a co-production. We would actively involve older people in council policy through various forms of participation and regular needs assessments, so that they can have a lasting role in society.
- **innovative and diverse forms of living and central living:** We would encourage alternative forms of housing such as co-housing and small-scale care homes. At the same time, we would optimise existing housing options and support services. Furthermore, it is important that if there are residential options aimed at an older audience, they should be centrally placed to the essential functions and services they need.
- **accessible services and digital inclusion:** We would maintain non-digital services in addition to digital options. We would organise accessible courses to familiarise older people with digital technology and offer support in the library or other meeting places. We would offer help (at home) for the elderly with online applications.
- **an adapted living environment:** We would make public spaces and commercial properties fully accessible to the elderly and people with disabilities. We would provide sufficient benches, public toilets and adapt bus stops. We will make the municipal infrastructure greener with attention to accessibility.
- **combatting loneliness:** We will draw up a Loneliness Action Plan in collaboration with relevant actors to combat all visible and invisible loneliness in our town. We will focus specifically on the elderly, but also single people. We will help neighbourhoods to interact with each other attentively and caringly. A neighbourhood network where the local entrepreneur, postman, police officer, municipal worker or anyone else will play an important role. We will create a 'community of care' in every district or neighbourhood.
- **specific services:** We will re-evaluate the recently made decision to abolish meal distribution for senior citizens and cleaning assistance at home. The social function of these forms of service is extremely valuable.
- **exercise and health:** We would focus on accessible sports and exercise activities for the elderly, with attention to financial accessibility. We will promote a 'rate for 65+' at sports clubs and cultural activities. We will provide

Het wordt anders!

accessible walking routes, exercise benches and sufficient publicly accessible sanitary facilities.

- **recognition and support of informal caregivers:** We will maintain the municipal informal care premium and set up an information point for informal caregivers. We would organise "talk" cafés and information sessions for support.
- **dementia-friendly municipality:** We are working towards a dementia-friendly municipality where people with dementia and their informal caregivers also have an equal place. We will offer training to municipal employees, volunteers and associations about dealing with people with dementia.
- **protection against abuse:** We will put the approach to the abuse of the elderly on the agenda by setting up a reporting centre for senior citizens.
- **healthy food:** We continue to focus on organising information sessions on healthy food for the elderly and in our residential care centres.
- There is increasing demand for **natural burial forms** and natural cemeteries. We will investigate the demand and the possibilities for this in Grimbergen. The law provides that councils can define zones next to traditional cemeteries - in a forest or a park, for example - where ashes of the deceased can be scattered or where decomposable urns can be buried.

Het wordt anders!

1.3 Well substantiated health policy - affordable and accessible care

“We want to ensure care for everyone and bring it closer to the residents by establishing community health centres”.

Under the impetus of the Flemish Government, Flanders was divided into 60 primary-care zones. Through this reform, the government wants to strengthen primary care in Flanders. As also recommended by the World Health Organization, it can be the cornerstone of accessible, effective and quality health and welfare care. Grimbergen forms a primary-care zone together with Londerzeel, Kapelle-op-den-Bos, Meise and Wemmel. Groen+Vooruit advocates an **active cooperation in this primary-care zone**.

In addition to better coordination of care, the council can strongly focus on **disease prevention and health promotion**. Grimbergen signed the Charter of a healthy municipality. It undertakes to develop initiatives that help people live healthier lives.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- Due to the impending shortage of general practitioners in our region, primary care is at risk of being compromised. Creative initiatives are necessary. In Borcht and Strombeek we are talking to general practitioners about setting up a **community health centre**. At a community health centre, the service is free for patients; the centre is paid directly by the health insurance company, via a fixed lump sum. The centre invests heavily in prevention and health promotion. Nurses, nutritionists, physiotherapists and psychologists take over a number of tasks from general practitioners and ensure that more people can receive the correct and appropriate care.
- **sports and recreational activities** must be accessible to all residents. The local authority promotes healthy food through information and awareness campaigns. Soft drinks and sweets are banned from schools. Fitness equipment on various squares in Groot-Grimbergen invites you to exercise more.

Het wordt anders!

- In view of the increasing demand for care at home, it is best to focus on recruitment, training and support for **the informal carers**, who care for family and friends (and not just with a bonus), in this arduous task. We want to see initiatives such as minders for a patient with dementia, short-term stays, talk cafés for informal carers, started up and supported by the municipality.
- We want to further develop initiatives such as 'Te Gek'. **Mental health care** must be removed from the taboo atmosphere and people with psychological vulnerability need adapted activities, with financial and logistical support from the municipality. For young people a cooperation with the **Overkophuis** offers an accessible answer to psychological problems. We are committed to ensuring that the Overkophuis finds its permanent home in Strombeek-Bever.
- The municipality is working on awareness and screening actions for prevention and **early detection** of cancer, and organises campaigns to dissuade smoking (also in schools!). The municipality would work closely with LOGO (the Local Health Consultation).

Het wordt anders!

1.4 A promising Grimbergen, also in terms of labour market opportunities

Finding work is important for many people; for their self-esteem, development opportunities and of course to be able to progress financially. The municipality (OCMW) must actively and qualitatively support residents with a living wage in their journey to work with a broad mix of measures tailored to the person, in collaboration with partners such as VDAB, CVO Semper, Groep Intro, etc. This assignment would only increase if the unemployment benefit were limited in duration, given that it is expected that many will apply for a living wage due to the loss of their benefit.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- We will strengthen the 'employment cell' of the OCMW by guaranteeing a **qualitative activation** for living wage earners who are ready for a path to work. This service offers support with orientation on the labour market, training and in the transition from social employment to the regular labour market in collaboration with partners.
- The community is an **excellent employer** and sets an example with regard to personnel policy in the field of workable work, anti-discrimination policy and integrity. Groen+Vooruit wants the municipality to focus on a modern personnel policy that motivates civil servants and enables them to develop themselves and their talents. After all, motivated civil servants are the driving forces in the preparation and implementation of municipal decisions.
- We would **stop outsourcing/phasing out** of municipal services with employment opportunities for the low-skilled.
- We would facilitate **social employment places** and proactively search for employers with vacancies for low-skilled workers, making maximum use of the measure art 60§7.
- As a municipality, we participate in new initiatives that offer **accessible activation options** (whether or not paid), for example a bicycle library, repair café, community centre, clean-up campaigns, laundry bar, etc. and where appropriate with community work, employment care, social economy and volunteer work.

Het wordt anders!

- We would organise **childcare** for job seekers who are going to apply for a job or are training for work.
- We would make the numerous creative initiatives and training courses in our municipality (e.g. from the MOT, from the CC, from Semper, Basic Education, Vormingplus) **more accessible** for job seekers. They are an important environment for learning social and creative competences.

Het wordt anders!

1.5 Income and purchasing power - fight against poverty.

Combatting poverty is our priority. No one chooses to be poor. Too low an income has consequences for someone's opportunities in terms of work, education, housing, health and social mobility. Unfortunately, there are many Grimbergen residents who have difficulty making ends meet; some are going through a difficult period in their lives and are struggling financially, are chronically or long-term ill or are struggling with their mental health. Pointing the finger at someone is not a solution. Anyone who needs support must be able to turn to the municipality, so that everyone can live in dignity and the living conditions of these people become better and more stable. Benefits are mainly a federal matter, but a local government can take supporting measures.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- We are working on a **poverty test** in all municipal policies. This means that with strategic decisions that have an impact on the daily lives of Grimbergen residents we look at whether we have sufficiently taken into account their affordability for vulnerable Grimbergen residents.
- We will organise social **services close to home**. Given that incomes in Strombeek are lower than in the other sub-municipalities, we opt to maintain the OCMW in Strombeek. We will provide social antennas in other places, such as in De Borcht. We will try to make all our services as accessible as possible, both digitally and physically and with reasonable opening hours.
- The OCMW would via objective criteria give **additional financial support** for necessary expenses such as clothing, heating and healthy food. This is not a luxury. This way we would ensure that maximum resources for additional support can go to the most vulnerable people. We want to apply this system more widely. Where necessary, the municipality must top up the allowances up to the poverty line.

Het wordt anders!

- We will make municipal **costs and membership fees of associations bearable** for vulnerable groups and we will provide financing/location for initiatives such as a bicycle library, baby library, handyman service at home and a tool library.
- We will critically examine increases in contributions from the past legislature and reverse them where they are excessively high. We believe these are anti-social increases, as they must be carried in the same way by everyone, and do not fit with the principle: **the strongest shoulders carry the heaviest burdens**.
- We will support and strengthen the **social grocer**, which is run entirely by volunteers in collaboration with OCMW and CAW.
- We will provide an **automatic rights assignment** where possible through data links, like the one that already exists for the social rate for after-school childcare. This principle, too, is the fruit of our impulse. We know that many people experience barriers to applying for social rates. We will make it administratively simple and avoid different passes, procedures, etc.
- We will pay attention to **hidden poverty** such as poverty among single parents, widows & widowers, unemployed parents, chronically ill, They are often left out for extra allowances or social rates. As a caring municipality, we will look at how everyone finds their way to affordable childcare. The outreach approach in the schools through the project **Kindkracht** remains an important instrument in the fight against child poverty.

Het wordt anders!

1.6 Debt assistance

The debt mediation service of the OCMW is an important service for people with financial problems. The service only intervenes when the debts have piled up to such an extent that the person can no longer pay them and there is a threat of legal action (bailiff or wage impoundment). Unfortunately, Grimbergen has 3% of borrowers with at least one overdue loan out of the total number of borrowers, which is above the average of 2.6% in Flemish Brabant (Source: NBB - CKP | provinces.infigures.be). It takes years before people get out of debt and can lead a normal life again. We therefore advocate a **strong preventive approach**.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- We will inform our residents, especially about energy costs, the importance of advance payments and energy-efficient living.
- We will make social initiatives such as 'Everyone deserves a holiday', ... more known to our vulnerable target groups.
- Together with our local schools, we will look for solutions for unpaid school invoices so that the child's school career is safeguarded.
- We will support vulnerable families in bridging financially difficult periods in collaboration with the Special Social Services Committee.
- We will inform our residents about the right to a healthcare budget for the elderly, the increased reimbursement for medical costs and other legal provisions.

Het wordt anders!

1.7 Culture

Culture is a basic right for every citizen, food for our soul. Let the municipal cultural policy be the director of this.

A Flemish cultural policy is the ideal means of connecting people. Where people meet, life is pleasant, where people work together, soured relationships disappear. Our society has become very diverse in recent years. A municipal cultural policy makes efforts to get everyone on board. For non-native speakers, language often forms a barrier to participating in cultural life. Our cultural expressions are not always obvious to people from other cultures. A municipal cultural policy must also focus on these target groups to involve them in cultural life.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- The **Strombeek Cultural Centre** with its international image is the beacon of culture in our town. The working of the Cultural Centre is under pressure. That is why municipal subsidies will again be indexed annually. In addition to setting up its own programming, the Cultural Centre plays an important role in supporting local associations. We will continuously strive for an appropriate balance.
- A **Masterplan** will be drawn up shortly for the site of the Cultural Centre, the OCMW, the library and the Academy for music, word and dance. This site must become the centre for meeting and experiencing culture in our town.
- As part of the Master Plan, the Cultural Centre must be expanded and renovated, with attention to sustainability. There must also be room for the reintegration of the studio activities in the CC. In this way, the used premises at the Piereman will be returned to the Strombeek youth associations. Space must be found for the Academy in the preserved part of the old OCMW building after the demolition of the current building,

Het wordt anders!

- The **new library** of the future will be in Strombeek-Bever. To bring the library service closer to the population, a branch will be opened again at Charleroyhoeve in Grimbergen.
- The **Museum of Older Techniques** must be given sufficient resources to achieve its main objectives. In addition, further investments will be made in the maintenance of the buildings made available to the MOT.
- The **cultural council** is the bridge between policy and associations. Today associations are under pressure. Grimbergen has a strong association life and various cultural organisations and initiatives. Both the municipality and the cultural council must support the associations (recognition, resources, infrastructure), focus on collaboration and by project work.
- We will invest in **various artistic movements** that are going on in society. Oxygen for what happens at the bottom and in the margins, not directly through organisations or associations. Voluntary initiatives and experiments by young artists must be given more opportunities.

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1.8 Social cohesion: neighbourhood and association life

It is evident that in districts and neighbourhoods, where people know each other, where street parties or neighbourhood events take place, where associations are active, less **loneliness, less crime, less souring and less rubbish** is noticeable in the streets. A municipal council will only benefit 'socially and financially' if the care for a neighbourhood is borne by the community itself. Sufficient free time is not a luxury. Enough free time and the opportunity to spend that time as you wish, makes for a healthy and happy society. However, associations do not find it easy to attract new members and to keep finding supporting volunteers.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- Grimbergen has a strong association life and various cultural organisations and initiatives. Today many of these associations are under pressure. The municipality would support the operation of the associations by a **transparent and substantive subsidy policy**. In addition to the financial support, the **logistical support** must be extended. Municipal premises continue to be made available free of charge once a month. Depending on their operation and their financial capacity, this could even be more than once a month if needed. The range of the municipal lending service will be expanded after consulting the associations.
- In each sub-municipality **appropriate accommodation** must be available where associations can organise small and larger activities. Where the parish no longer takes this on or where parochial halls are in danger of being closed, it must be investigated whether the municipality can take over these halls or an alternative is actively sought. In Grimbergen, after the disappearance of the Feniks Hof hall, a new multifunctional hall must finally be built. In the meantime, the "Den Douwe" hall remains a temporary option. The function room in De Borcht is getting a much-needed makeover.

Het wordt anders!

- The **social work**, which is set up by various associations, would be more strongly anchored. Activities are announced and promoted through municipal channels, such as the municipal website, municipal magazine or an annual calendar. New residents would be actively helped in finding their way to the associations and encouraged to join one.
- In addition to the important work of associations, **community centres** will be founded, where a community worker, together with volunteers, organises connecting activities for young and old. From a listening ear, administrative help to meetings to accessible sports and game moments. In Strombeek there are still many options available with the local Ter Borre service centre.
- Organising **neighbourhood parties and play streets** will be more strongly promoted. After many years, the municipal subsidy for neighbourhood parties will be adjusted to current living standards and increased.
- Work will be done to ensure **public play, meeting and rest areas** in every sub-municipality or district. Benches in the streets, green squares, playgrounds, ... in short, places where young and old can meet each other and relax.
- Volunteer work will get the appreciation it deserves. To provide additional support to associations in their search for volunteers, an annual **volunteer fair** will be organised in which supply and demand are made known.

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1.9 International solidarity

An answer to the global problems surrounding poverty, health, education, gender discrimination and climate is shaped by **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Controlling climate problems and sustainable production and consumption are important levers. People, the environment and the economy must be in balance, otherwise we will overexploit the earth, with people in the Global South being the first to be affected. As a local government, the municipality has an important role to play here. We want to become a Fair Municipality with LEF again: Local, Ecological and Fair.

We **recognize that there are people who have to flee** due to extreme poverty or insecurity and are no longer able to live with dignity locally. We offer them opportunities for integration. We believe that local government can make a difference in raising awareness and supporting poverty in a very targeted way.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- The powers of international solidarity, sustainable development and Fair Municipality are explicitly given to an alderman concerned with the subject. The various advisory councils and municipal staff will be asked to make proposals regarding the development objectives within Grimbergen.
- The municipality maintains open communication about its commitment and initiatives and calls on the population to cooperate with **sustainability goals**. The municipality uses locally sustainably produced products and/or fair-trade products during its activities.
- The municipality will increase the **operating resources** awarded to the **GRIS** (Grimbergen Council for International Cooperation) again to 1 euro per inhabitant. The subsidies are used to support sustainable projects in the Global South.
- The municipality supports **social employment projects** such as the ironing shop, the thrift store, Den Diepen Boomgaard. Also **'short chain'** initiatives, but also other projects involving local and sustainable production (such as Repair Café) will be even more strongly supported.

Het wordt anders!

- The municipality will make resources available to organisations that are making efforts around **diversity and integration**. Initiatives will also be taken to integrate children from other cultures as quickly as possible, through sports clubs, the academy, youth movements or other associations.
- We choose a **language policy** with an inviting character. In the first contact with the municipal services, we are flexible about the use of Dutch, because it is not possible to speak Dutch straight away. We encourage the use of Dutch in all services in further contacts but remain appreciative and respectful of other languages.
- There will be a connecting initiative following the **Wide World Weeks**, in collaboration with the Cultural Centre and the Grimbergen associations.
- The municipality implements a **humane migration policy** so that people who come here are warmly welcomed and also supports initiatives by volunteers and citizens. We offer opportunities for integration. As a municipality, we have the best insight into how people find their place in their neighbourhood and broader environment, such as school, sports club or (volunteer) work.
- We choose one **bottom-up integration policy**. We support initiatives that start from the world of newcomers and residents, such as the Welcome Group for Refugees in Grimbergen, initiatives to support language acquisition or integration of children (integration into sports clubs, academy, youth movement or other associations).
- The municipality pursues a humane welcoming and housing policy, including through the reopening of the **local reception initiatives (LOI)**. This allows refugees to really be included in our community (and not isolated in centres) and ensures a solidarity-based distribution of refugees in our country. If the LOI has to be abandoned, the municipality offers support in finding another home and proactively collaborates with a social welfare centre from another municipality if necessary.
- We will work constructively with the **asylum seeker centre of Fedasil** for people with welfare problems to ensure that this runs smoothly for both local residents and inhabitants of the centre.

Het wordt anders!

PART 2: PEOPLE & ENVIRONMENT

2.1 Towards a new mobility

How do you organise the daily movements of almost 40,000 people in an orderly manner? It seems almost impossible to meet everyone's expectations. After all, 'liveable' has different meanings, depending on who you ask.

- People in residential areas want to be able to walk and cycle safely, enjoy squares and parks and find through car traffic noisy and unhealthy.
- School children want safe cycling routes to school.
- Working parents want to be able to quickly drop their child off at childcare and are looking for the quickest (shortcut) route to work.
- Seniors want to be able to move along the pavements without obstacles and cross safely.
- Residents of the village centres feverishly look for a parking space close to their home after the daily shopping and are annoyed by driving in circles.
- Passers-by from Vilvoorde, Meise and beyond are feverishly searching for the least time-consuming route from their home to the Brussels Ring-road, the city centre or to work.
- Sports enthusiasts have had enough of traffic jams, whether pedalling or using e-scooters, e-bikes or pedelecs, they demand wide and easily accessible cycle paths.

Het wordt anders!

- The local shopkeepers want their businesses to be easily accessed, even by car and there must be enough parking places.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- We want to test the mobility plan of the previous administration against the varying expectations of our residents in the different neighbourhoods. We will listen to all residents to arrive at a **global plan** for Grimbergen. However, with a number of clear principles.
- The objective of the mobility plan, '**avoiding through traffic**' in Strombeek and Grimbergen, would be kept but implementation would be assessed by a mobility council. There will be a **quality of life plan** drawn up per residential area together with local residents, with attention to open space, meeting places and sufficient greenery. We want to focus on safe walking and cycling so we would be **bringing 'peace' to our living environment**.
- A municipal **mobility council** will be established, in which residents and retailers in each sub-municipality are actively involved. Proposals and bottlenecks will be discussed there.
- All our village centres and residential areas will be **zone 30** with a tonnage limitation of < 3.5 tons, with the exception of a number of load-bearing roads. Traffic will be directed to these routes. The **flow on the large traffic axes** will be addressed as a priority, also through agreements with neighbouring municipalities.
- Each **school environment** will be by definition designed to be **road safe**. Children must be able to walk or cycle to school in a safe way. Too much motorised transport in these places increases the feeling of insecurity, unpredictable behaviour of inexperienced children in traffic and the risk of accidents. We are therefore in favour of setting up **school streets**, where car traffic is banned during the start and end of school hours. Naturally, it must also be possible for parents to park nearby or to drop off their children at a kiss and ride zone, after which the children continue their way to school safely and under supervision. The organising of a **cycling and walking pool** will be investigated and stimulated. Pooling is cycling or walking to school with a

Het wordt anders!

small, clearly recognizable group of children, accompanied by one or more adults, from agreed locations.

- The use of the **bicycle** for functional travel is promoted. All possible barriers that discourage bicycle use must be removed. All village centres and meeting places will be equipped with sufficient and safe **bicycle parking's**. Also, safe **bicycle boxes** or bicycle lockers should be provided in neighbourhoods where residents do not have their own garage or storage space. Public **charging infrastructure** for electric bicycles are provided at municipal buildings. In addition to better infrastructure, we are also thinking about **cycling lessons** for children and adults. Our community gets a **bicycle library** where (children's) bicycles can be rented.
- There will be a much-needed catch-up effort for the construction of **new bicycle and pedestrian paths**, starting with the Beigemsesteenweg and the Meerstraat. Existing pedestrian and cycle paths also deserve better maintenance. New cycling infrastructure is being constructed in accordance with the guidelines of the Flemish Government.
- **Cycling streets** will really be designed as a bicycle street with clear and visible regulations and an adapted design of the street scene. The construction of a bicycle street should in no way be a measure to slow down through car traffic as this goes against all mobility logic.
- Work must be done for **indicated, safe** and preferably car-free **connections** between the village centres and leisure locations, such as the Humbeek - music academy - Den Douwe axis. Safe connections to Brussels must also be mapped and indicated. The bicycle and public transport will again become a logical choice for trips to Brussels, Mechelen and Vilvoorde for the many commuters and students in our municipality.
- The quality of the footpaths and crossings will be improved and obstacles for wheelchair users and parents with prams/pushchairs will be removed as a priority. We will invest in **safe crossings** for cyclists and pedestrians. Intersections will be by definition equipped as **conflict-free**.

Het wordt anders!

- Contractors will be obliged to provide a **safe passage** for pedestrians and cyclists when there are works on public roads (think of Fluvius or Proximus). Communication and coordination of activities must be improved.
- More efforts must be made for **shared mobility** and this in every sub-municipality or residential area. For people who no longer opt for their own car, the threshold for car sharing should be greatly reduced. Shared mobility reduces traffic and parking pressure and will become increasingly important in the future. Work is being done to set up bicycle sharing at the Mobi points.
- In village centres there must be sufficient parking spaces available for people with reduced mobility such as the elderly and disabled. **Paid parking for non-residents** in Strombeek is important to combat the phenomenon of unwanted parking. In Strombeek, the scarce parking spaces are too often taken up by vehicles/vans that want to avoid paying parking in the nearby Brussels streets. Parking in Strombeek for residents, who often do not have their own garage, should be free for the first vehicle and affordable for the second vehicle. The same applies to the centre of Grimbergen. Of course, we also need **free short-term parking** to be provided in commercial areas.
- Work will be accelerated to make the **Municipal Square in Strombeek green**. There will be no underground parking. This neighbourhood is already regularly affected by flooding. An underground parking lot would only exacerbate this problem. The high parking pressure in Strombeek requires work on alternatives. Possible options that need to be investigated include an increase in scale (in height) of the car parks in Jetsestraat and Verbeytstraat and the development of peripheral car parks such as the Strombeek-Beverselaan.

Het wordt anders!

- Also, the small-scaled and picturesque centre **of Grimbergen will have less traffic**. The last part of the Prinsenstraat between the town hall and the basilica will be made car-free, possibly only at weekends. The Onze-Lieve-Vrouwstraatje loses its function as an access road and becomes a dead end.

Het wordt anders!

2.2 Spatial planning & environment

Good spatial planning, greenery and nature are essential for a **pleasant and healthy living environment**. The challenges are enormous for a municipality on the edge of a big city. The bottom line is to optimally **protect** the still available **open space** and **use it effectively** for agriculture, for tourism and recreation, for guaranteeing good water management and limiting the risk of flooding and for an effective nature and environmental policy. Protecting open space is only possible if we do everything we can to strengthen and optimise **quality of life** in our residential areas. **The municipality is the director** of this and applies the following principles:

- **Principle 1: Participation of the “alert” citizen**

A good policy for spatial planning and the environment is developed together with the citizens. Objectives and plans are discussed and tested from the start with the citizens involved.

The municipality has a **municipal 'Committee for Spatial Planning' (GECORO)**, for which the preservation of open space must be a central objective. Care must be taken to ensure that the composition of the GECORO is based on the expertise of its members, who should have the general interest and a long-term vision for the spatial planning of the municipality as a starting point.

In its advice, the Gecoro takes into account the developing housing needs and the required traffic flow. The municipal council must appreciate the work of its own committee by taking the balanced advice into account.

- **Principle 2: Strong municipal services.**

In order to respond to the many challenges in these policy areas, optimal and independent operation based on the knowledge and own expertise of the 'space' service is essential and good cooperation is needed with the related services. Where possible also work together with other towns to make best use of the communal knowledge

Het wordt anders!

- **Principle 3: Substantiated policy based on expertise.**

In its policy, the municipality takes into account the evolving vision on spatial planning, opting for a holistic approach that takes into account the consequences of the policy pursued for the **scarce open spaces, for mobility and climate problems**. The municipal housing needs study and the urban development ordinance are touchstones for that policy.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- The municipal **urban development regulation** determines desirable and possible developments at municipal level regarding the design of public space and building regulations on private land. The current regulation is being updated out of concern to optimise its impact on the necessary climate adaptation.
- **Environmental permits** for companies can only be granted if the quality of life for local residents is not compromised. The consequences for mobility, air quality, water management and possible noise pollution are essential touchstones. Compliance with the permits must be strictly monitored. The financial allowances for **environmentally harmful activities** of companies are optimised.
- **Environmental crimes and violations** of the urban development regulation must be **strictly followed-up**. The environmental enforcement officer must implement an active reporting policy in the event of violations of environmental legislation or urban development regulations. Violations must be actively monitored until corrective action is taken.
- The industrial activities at the **canal zone** (crushing yards, sanitation installations...) are in need of a thorough re-evaluation. In particular, current and future installations must comply with the Industrial Emissions Directive VLAREM III. Active efforts are being made to reduce inconvenience to citizens. The established and future industrial activities near Borcht and Verbrande Brug will be correctly but strictly assessed and licensed. Additional conditions should be possible if necessary. Additional night and weekend work in this zone is not permitted.

Het wordt anders!

- As for the **asphalt plant**, the legitimate demand and struggle of the local action committee to stop the emission of toxic, carcinogenic and associated odour nuisance are supported. No use of odour masking substances, but effective removal of toxic fumes from the air. The recently installed after-treatment of emissions with an Active Carbon Filter installation has not yet been sufficiently proven. The permanent measurement of toxic emissions is a legitimate requirement to further monitor, control and enforce emissions. A simple relicensing of the Asphalt Plant on the canal, near Borcht and Verbrande Brug, without guarantees of sustainable control of emissions is therefore not an option.
- The planned industrial estate on the **Waardbeekdreef/Wolvertemsesteenweg** should be developed parallel to the former Total site, the brownfield along the Oostvaardijk. Only companies that have an interest in customer visits are given a place in the Waardbeek. This industrial estate serves as a **sustainable business park** to be developed, with optimal use of space with underground parking garages for both the new area and the existing business zone. The new area to be developed amounts to a maximum of 5 Ha, whereby the site may not go deeper into the fields than the existing buildings. The adjacent industrial estates need to be regularised. There will be a valuable green buffer of at least 7 metres around the company site. When connecting the entire site to the busy Wolvertemsesteenweg, full attention must be paid to road safety.
- The Spatial Implementation Plan (RUP) open space for the **conversion** of 42.5 Ha of the five residential expansion areas in Beigem and Humbeek was approved in 2018 under the impulse of Groen. Most of this area remains available for agriculture. Some areas are eligible for nature development (see below).
- The Flemish instruments decree makes the conversion of residential expansion or residential reserve areas into open space unaffordable for municipalities. The remaining residential expansion areas on the **Priesterlinde** remain as open space. The grove bordering the former open-air swimming pool the Lammekes is protected.

Het wordt anders!

- Work is being done on **greening streets and avenues**. Where repaving is done, hedges and trees are planted. Research is being done to determine in which streets avenue trees can be planted and missing trees can be planted in existing avenues. A **professional pruning policy** is necessary so that trees can prove their maximum usefulness. The “façade” garden initiative will be given an extra boost. The Environment Department is assisted by the necessary experts in this policy. Also, a follow-up must happen to check if the inhabitants have taken into account all the specific rules for green fencing, garden landscaping except for the drive, hedges, ...
- In consultation with local residents some more play **and rest areas** will be built in your own neighbourhood. The construction of a green Municipal Square in Strombeek will be a priority. In some places, a few benches and small play equipment may suffice. Elsewhere - for example the picnic area at the Lintbos, the park in the Borch, the Piereman - there is more room to play. There is also a great need for additional relaxation space for adolescents in the merged municipality.
- Neighbourhoods that take the initiative are given the opportunity to manage municipal roadsides and tree mirrors in a creative way. **Neighbourhood projects** such as the vegetable garden “Diepekanten” are stimulated. A citizens' budget (see Finance chapter) offers perspectives here.
- Publicly accessible services such as schools, childcare, and seniors' housing have a place in the **centre**, not in the countryside.
- All the assets of **Strombeek-Bever** will be optimally played out. A **qualitative core strengthening** with green and pleasant streets and squares that encourage encounters, with a limitation of traffic flows, with an adapted parking policy and with priority given to the active road user. A living network of shops and businesses, accessible to everyone, is the ultimate goal that we want to achieve in dialogue with everyone involved. Where the current mobility plan causes resentment and dissatisfaction, it must be possible to correct this through dialogue without affecting its major principles.

Het wordt anders!

- The RUP Gabarieten Strombeek that is currently being developed must strengthen and guarantee a residential function in the inner area **Treft-Gentsestraat** and the edge of **car park C**. A “mixed function” is not allowed in this inner area. Catering and utilities have their place on the Romeinsesteenweg. Certainly, the western street side of “Treft” at car park C should be designated as a fully-fledged residential zone. After all, there is a risk that the residential character would be affected by the "overflow" of the planned activities on car park C.
- The RUP for the concrete design of the area between the **Acacialaan and Antwerpseleen** must be aligned with the plans of the Flemish government for the junction of the A12 with the RING 0 and the A12 towards Brussels from that junction. When developing the RUP for the area, a large green buffer must be provided that should limit the nuisance of the A12 for the surrounding area. Building will be allowed only on the part of the area that is coloured as a residential zone on the regional plan. Preferably there will be multi-family homes up to 5 floors. We propose to investigate whether the current building, which is architecturally and historically valuable, can be protected and upgraded with the intention of establishing a community centre for the neighbourhood. The buffer area, located under the former football field and bordered by the houses along Acacialaan and Jan Mulsstraat, should be developed as a public park.
- On the **Rodepoort site** there is room for a new GO!-school and a new sports hall. For the rest, this large area is suitable for living and greenery. There we certainly want to create opportunities for social housing, new forms of housing and community land trust.
- The park by **Villa Rijckendael** should absolutely be preserved, given the few **green relaxation areas** in this highly urbanised sub-municipality.
- In **Beigem** we're going for the **complete preservation of the meadow of “de Kerselaer”** as green space. The private parks of Castle ten Berg and Hof van Bentinck Park will be open to the public as a condition for the development of this area. During development, the number of new residential units must be severely limited in order to maximise the park function of both areas.

Het wordt anders!

2.3 Solutions for affordable housing

We will strive for **more affordable rental and houses for sale** in Grimbergen. We are working on upgrading and expanding the range of social housing. This can be done by working together with the newly established Social Housing Company. This collaboration also offers opportunities to stimulate the private rental market to open up to people with a lower income through a Social Rental Office. We want to set up a Community Land Trust for prospective buyers, in which the municipality makes land available for the construction of homes that are then sold to young families without land costs. We also want to encourage co-housing of young and old in existing houses.

In general, we want to actively engage the **properties of the municipality** Grimbergen (building land and buildings) for this. We also have to use building land that we have leased when the lease has expired to promote cheaper housing or either we sell the lease and invest the proceeds in other residential projects (Social Rental Office or Community Land Trust). And we also want to make more use of the 'right of pre-emption' that local authorities, amongst others, have: the Municipality of Grimbergen must be able to purchase land that is put up for sale by a private owner instead of the prospective buyer and at his price and conditions.

The **quality of** rental houses and apartments sometimes leaves much to be desired. It is the task of the municipality to combat slum landlords. We advocate activating the use of the conformity certificate. (www.grimbergen.be/conformiteitsattest-huurwoningen) By labelling rental properties based on their suitability, and also linking benefits to this, we make it more attractive for landlords to upgrade their homes.

We will also provide support to **district-oriented renovations** (see chapter 'climate') so that rental properties are not only in order but also future-proof. A plan must be drawn up to make sustainable renovations feasible on a larger scale. We will combat energy poverty and actively contribute to the energy transition (Climate Plan 2050).

We are working to reduce the administrative burden by **simplifying procedures** to convert existing single-family homes into multiple residential units.

Het wordt anders!

Our **ambition** is to achieve **concrete goals** by the end of 2030:

- We have everything ready (building permit, budget, specifications) for 50 new **social housing** units to be built on Grimbergen's territory. No large buildings, but small-scale projects on various plots of the Municipality.
- We have made sure that rental **contracts** have been signed between the qualified housing company and the private owners of 30 houses (50 homes in total) to rent their homes at social rental rates to Grimbergen families with lower incomes.
- We will link benefits to the landlord for rental properties and apartments with a **certificate of conformity**.
- We have set up a **Community Land Trust** Grimbergen – or we have contractually established a partnership with an already existing CLT for action in Grimbergen. We have also developed a concrete programme: the construction of 15 new homes. We have been able to raise the necessary funds for this project. And we have signed all the necessary contracts (permits, finance and outsourcing of construction sites) to have those new-build homes built in the subsequent legislature.
- We have signed a cooperation contract with the non-profit organisation **Co-housing** vzw to support our Grimbergen elderly organisations in the concrete realisation and promotion of co-housing between young tenants and older owners (and vice versa) in Grimbergen - by the end of 2030 we want a contract to be signed with the owners of 15 homes for cohabitation of young and old.

Het wordt anders!

2.4 Climate policy

Grimbergen must make maximum efforts in the global fight to limit climate change. Every tenth of a degree counts. At the same time, adaptation measures are needed to arm us against ongoing climate change. It is essential for Groen+Vooruit that the climate transition is also a social transition.

The **covenant of mayors** is a commitment launched by Europe to adopt an integrated approach to **tackling and adapting to climate change** and Grimbergen, like 294 of the 300 municipalities in Flanders, committed itself to achieving a number of calculated objectives. An interim evaluation shows that Grimbergen is lagging behind the Flemish average. A **catching up** is desperately needed, everything has to be done to achieve the targets set for 2030.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- There will be a closer collaboration with **local co-operatives** who want to involve citizens in the realisation of renewable energy projects. Experience shows that people become supporters of investments in renewable energy if they are actively involved and enjoy the profits through lower energy prices or participation in the profits.
- Discussions will be started again with Belgocontrol to check whether it is now possible to realise a **windmill project** on both sides of Ring 0 near Car park C. If this is given the green light, we will strive for maximum co-operation with citizen co-operatives so that Grimbergen families can fully benefit from the profits generated by such a project.
- For district-oriented renovations under the direction of 3W+, participation of energy cooperatives should be encouraged to convince more citizens to participate. 3W+ and municipal services should relieve residents in the search for subsidies. In addition, they can actively approach neighbourhoods where large-scale neighbourhood renovation projects would be appropriate.

Het wordt anders!

- A model is being made for **pre-financing** insulation and investments in solar panels and heat pumps by e.g. the use of a rolling fund. Loans can be repaid based on reduced energy expenditure.
- Municipal buildings must become a priority for renovation and provide green energy production where possible. The goal is a yearly primary energy saving of 3%. Through an extension of the ongoing ESCO project (a maintenance and energy performance project) to other carefully selected buildings and a well-thought-out heritage policy, further work is being done to achieve this objective.
- By 2030, the CO₂ emissions of the municipality's own buildings, technical infrastructure and mobility will be reduced by 55% compared to 2015.
- Climate policy is not only about operational energy savings, but also about how to **handle responsibly the materials** that we produce, build and use. **Re-use of existing materials** is the best way to avoid new emissions during production. The municipality can also play a pioneering role in this by explicitly including the circularity aspect in new projects and tender orders. Local initiatives such as the Repair Cafés should be more strongly supported. Also, **spaces will be more efficiently** exploited: school sports halls can be used after hours by sports clubs, youth rooms can be used during the week by other associations, commercial car parks can be used in the evening for local residents, etc.
- Also, **food policy** is an inherent part of climate policy. The municipality must stimulate the **short chain** and can once again play a pioneering role. At its own events it should offer sustainable and local food. Initiatives that promote the direct sale of products from local farmers should be more strongly supported. Den Diepen Boomgaard is an excellent example of this, but the weekly market could also be partly reserved for farmers from Grimbergen and the surrounding areas.
- In addition to the short-term goals of 2030, the municipality must also set up a long-term vision to achieve **climate neutrality by 2050**, as imposed by the European Union.

Het wordt anders!

- With the “let's put up a tree” and “water, the new gold” of the LEKP2.0, the municipalities must deploy the necessary adaptation for climate change. On both sites, Grimbergen is lagging behind the other Flemish municipalities. To cope with longer **drought periods with higher temperatures** and with periods with **a lot of precipitation** more emphasis must be placed on the collection and reuse of rainwater, buffering rainwater and promoting infiltration. Less paving and more removal of paving is the key to the solution, heat islands must be avoided. Water must be given more space, more greenery and trees must be planted.
- In November 2016, a number of Grimbergen **companies** signed a **statement of engagement** to contribute to Grimbergen's climate policy. Companies receive more intensive support, and more effort is made in **partnership and cooperation with companies** and other stakeholders to ensure that they switch to renewable sources and, where possible, make their industrial processes more sustainable.

Het wordt anders!

2.5 Nature

“A green municipality is an attractive municipality”.

Biodiversity is the indicator of the health of our nature. It is necessary for our agriculture and food supply, for our well-being and for our health. A lot of valuable nature has been destroyed in recent decades, including in Grimbergen. Existing nature reserves must be protected and expanded where possible. Connecting nature reserves is also important. Nature is an important ally in climate adaptation and helps to absorb the effects of climate change. A good municipal nature policy therefore contributes to a healthy, sustainable and attractive living environment for all residents, while at the same time protecting biodiversity. The biodiversity charter is a guideline for the nature policy to be pursued.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- The **tree charter** and forest management plans are important policy instruments and should be more strictly enforced. To realise the tree charter, a six-year plan is being developed to plant additional trees based on the proposals formulated in the Grimbergen repaving study. Just as there is a tolerance policy for companies outside the zone, a tolerance policy is necessary for “forests outside the zone”. Every piece of Grimbergs Forest must be protected in consultation with the owners. The Gecoro will be asked to develop a plan to increase the forest area in our municipality from 6% to 10%.
- The collaboration with the **Regional Landscape Brabantse Kouters** will be intensified. Pro Natura remains an important partner for the actual work.
- In our fragmented landscape, private gardens can play an important role as nature connecting areas and ecological stepping stones. The **municipal council stimulates initiatives** for ecological gardening, home composting, the design of natural gardens and the joint purchase of standard fruit trees, hedges and other regional greenery. The Grimbergen *garden ranger team* will have more scope and resources to increase the impact of its operations.

Het wordt anders!

- Further work will be done on **ecological verge management** for valuable verges. Verges along streams will receive extra attention for this. Paving or straightening of streams is out of the question and buffer basins against flooding are given a natural design. The slow road network is well maintained and kept accessible so that users can enjoy it to the fullest.
- Measures are being taken to prevent the entry of fertilisers and pesticides into watercourses. Sufficiently wide natural buffers around the waterways are part of the solution. The water quality is monitored together with the Flemish government, also in the smaller streams. Where necessary, actions are taken to improve the water quality of our waterways.
- Active efforts must be made to strengthen the network of nature connection areas and ecological stepping stones. **Priority areas for nature development** are:
 - The Grimbergen western and eastern Maalbeek valley. The **land development plan (LIP) for the eastern Maalbeek valley** is in its implementation phase. Every effort will be made to put into practice the more than 90 concrete planned actions that will increase the natural, heritage and recreational value of the area.
 - The **LIP Green North Edge** is in the starting blocks. The LIP offers an opportunity to create a valuable green-blue ribbon from the source to the mouth of the Maalbeek Valley: from the source in Zellik to the canal.
 - The **domain Ter Tommen** in the Borch. We also wish to open this very vulnerable and valuable nature reserve several times a year for guided walks during the coming legislature. The wooden path in the area will be restored and a viewing hut will be built for the observation of the numerous faunae.
 - In Grimbergen's **forests** we want to further implement the existing forest management plans. The collaboration with Wemmel and the province is being optimised for the Beverbos management plan.
 - The **Lintbos**: we are looking to expand opportunities on this valuable forest.

Het wordt anders!

- The nature reserve of the area **Kerkeveld** in Humbeek needs further development and the water-logged southern part of the Lange Blok area along the Gillebeek is eligible for nature development. The walking network in this open space area needs to be upgraded.
 - When designing the area in question, we are working on a **Potaardepark** of 3 Ha in Strombeek. The park area between the St Joseph School and the **Rodepoortsite** should be given a function as public green space.
 - Work is being done to increase the biodiversity and natural value of the Grimbergen cemeteries.
- There will be an active policy pursued to give **support to local farmers and horticulturists**. Innovative initiatives such as pick-your-own farms, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Farmers and Neighbours and other initiatives that would benefit the viability of family farming and stimulate the short chain should be actively supported and promoted. It is being investigated how Den Diepen Boomgaard as a social agricultural project will gain additional economic benefits.
 - Grimbergen must pursue an active policy to protect the **available agricultural land area** and use it effectively for food supply. Our municipality must promote this vision in its collaboration with neighbouring municipalities. For companies with declining agricultural activities, the municipality pursues an active policy in the search for buyers. If the takeover for agricultural activities is not successful, the municipality must pursue an active policy to give these locations a nature-educational and social function. Priority is given to e.g. petting zoos, educational centres that teach "city youth" about sustainable food production, organic horticulture, and reintegration projects for people with social or psychological problems, etc. The "depletion" of Grimbergens agricultural land must be countered.

Het wordt anders!

2.6 Animal welfare

Groen+Vooruit advocates that the municipality should increase its efforts for a **good sterilisation policy for stray cats** and that the necessary resources are guaranteed for this purpose. We consider the volunteers of the Kattenkabinet as privileged partners for putting that policy into practice.

For stray, lost and wandering animals, especially poultry, rabbits, rodents, reptiles, birds, fish, equine and small ruminants we choose for **collaboration with the local farm Huppeldepup**.

In an animal welfare policy, we especially want to pay attention to fauna **in nature**. Efforts are being made to provide additional protection for animal species that are particularly rare in Flanders or in Grimbergen by:

- Protecting biotope and breeding grounds. Specifically, to protect the collared redstart, the kingfisher, the tree sparrow, the skylark and the swallow.
- Installing nest boxes
- Installation of amphibian crossings
- Protect valuable nature reserves such as Ter Tommen in de Borcht.
- Ecological roadside management
- Supporting the ecological design of private gardens
- Promotion of bee hotels
- Raise awareness about the damage that stray dogs can cause in nature by disrupting wildlife.

Finally, we will continue the ban **on organising fireworks** to give our loyal four-legged friends (but also the other animals) a peaceful end of the year.

Het wordt anders!

2.7 Waste policy

“Groen+Vooruit stands for a waste policy that is good for the environment and your wallet.”

The challenges are known: preventing waste, increasing recycling and tackling the problems of litter and illegal dumping. Involving the population through participation in litter actions and by raising awareness about the importance of correct sorting and recycling is essential. But the municipality can also make additional efforts.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

The fight against litter and illegal dumping must be stepped up.

- Even more effort must be made to support and motivate the **litter godmothers and godfathers** who do wonderful work. The annual spring cleaning is the ideal time to recruit new volunteers.
- Unfortunately, removing public rubbish bins does not lead to a reduction in litter. Therefore we propose the placing of **new waste bins** with small “access flaps” in strategic places. The placement will be accompanied by an awareness campaign to prevent abuse. If necessary, the community rangers will issue fines.
- The area surrounding glass and other rubbish containers is also often marred by litter. That is why we are committed to installing **underground glass and paper containers**. We will start in Strombeek centre where the need is the greatest.
- We propose a **litter charter** for the associations. They will be held responsible for keeping the environment of the premises and grounds they use clean.
- Also the fight against **dog shit** on the pavement, the dumping of dog shit bags in sewers and in the dog toilets will have to continue. Dog waste pipes will continue to be installed. It is being investigated whether additional bag dispensers should be placed in strategic locations.

Het wordt anders!

- The fight against cigarette butts is also being stepped up. Sensitising smokers not to throw their butts on the street has little effect. The option exists to sanction the throwing away of butts on public property. Pocket ashtrays will be purchased that can be collected free of charge or handed out as a warning for a first violation.
- All **sewage swallowers** will have the message “this is where the sea begins” as part of an awareness campaign to prevent the misuse of sewage swallowers for depositing dog waste bags or other waste. Where there is a double sewer system, we will organise an information and awareness campaign to prevent "dirty water" from being deposited in the sewers that only collect rainwater.
- **Fly-tipping** is a plague. He who won't hear must feel. The hotspots of illegal dumping have been mapped in recent years. The fines for illegal dumping were increased. Thanks to controls on illegal dumping, co-operation with the police and camera surveillance used in the fight against illegal dumping, the chance of being caught increased. However, the results are still insufficient. We wish to optimise the operation of mobile cameras and co-operation with the police in the fight against illegal dumping. Grimbergen GAS officials must give absolute priority to the fight against illegal dumping and litter.

Additional efforts must be made on the prevention and reduction of rubbish

- Rubbish prevention and reduction and waste sorting will continue to be encouraged via **information campaigns** whereby the municipal website, Facebook and the municipal magazine play an important role. Non-Dutch speakers are also involved in this policy through the maximum use of pictograms. The resources that Intradura provides for this purpose will be used optimally.
- The schools play an important role in the **sensitization** of the young Grimbergen residents about the importance of rubbish prevention and recycling. The problem should be discussed regularly in lessons, and schools are encouraged to participate in concrete projects launched by the municipality. However, schools achieve the best results by setting a good example and working on a perfect recycling policy.

Het wordt anders!

- The **free recycling** of old iron, old electronics, glass, paper, hard plastics, styrofoam, cork and plastic caps must be promoted more
- The PMD bag is much cheaper than the bag for residual waste. Awareness can optimise its use.
- There will be new campaigns to motivate garden owners to buy compost bins at subsidised prices. Short training courses ensure optimal use of the bins.
- There will be **thrift store containers** again at both recycling parks. Their use must be stimulated by the Grimbergen recycling park.
- Groen+Vooruit wishes to start up again the **recycling of clothing** and rags as soon as it is contractually possible to resume cooperation with organisations that pursue social objectives in their operations. Recycling of clothing in our own country and local employment through the social economy are given priority in an allocation procedure.
- The possibility of collecting bulky waste from home upon request and subject to payment will be made better known.

Plea for a social household waste policy

People with a low income should be better informed about the availability of cheap bags through the OCMW. The municipal shop, the social grocer and the reception of the town hall should also allow the purchase of single household waste bags. People who use cheap bags need to be made aware of the importance of sorting in order to use the expensive black bag as little as possible.

Het wordt anders!

2.8 Grimbergen situated in the northern edge (Noordrand)

Grimbergen is in the centre of the Noordrand. Strombeek borders the Brussels capital region. Someone who walks from Mutsaard to Strombeek does not notice where he crosses the regional border.

The quality of life on the Noordrand is under enormous pressure. The challenges are enormous. The developments in the northern edge and the north of the Brussels Region have a **direct impact** on the quality of life for the residents of Grimbergen.

A municipal government that stands up for the interests of its population must therefore **follow** these developments **closely**. It must do everything it can to ensure that the choices made for this region by the Federal government, Flanders or the Brussels Region promote and in no way harm the interests of the people of Grimbergen.

The expansion plans for the national airport, NEO 1 and 2, the plans for a “Uplace light” in Vilvoorde and the ambitious plans for the widening of the RING O are daily discussions. It is still unclear what developments we will see in car park C after we have been able to avert the danger of the Ghelamco project. Palace 12 and the Dockx project on the Van Praet Bridge have now been completed and we can expect other projects in the coming years.

All these developments are taking place in a region that is under enormous pressure concerning **air pollution, mobility pressure and population growth**. A region also where two Regions are interconnected and dependent on each other without succeeding in achieving a common approach and planning for the development of this area through consultation and constructive dialogue.

With some self-explanatory **examples** from everyday life, we illustrate the importance of better consultation.

- **The condition of the road surface and cycling safety on the Romeinssteenweg.** Even when urgent asphalt paving works are necessary the governments that have shared responsibility for the road surface cannot reach agreements.

Het wordt anders!

- Discussion between **Flanders and the Brussels Region** regarding **public transport**. Apparently, the STIB decided without consultation for a different route for Tram 3 from Esplanade.
- **The ban on the use of quads in Brussels** leads the owners to come to us to have fun with their noisy and polluting toys.
- The **parking policy introduced in Brussels** has direct consequences for parking pressure in Strombeek.

For Groen+Vooruit a **global vision and an integrated development plan** for the Noordrand and the Brussels Region is vital for our municipality.

With every environmental permit application for projects in this area, the environmental effects must be assessed on the basis of the global development plans in this area.

Better mobility in the Noordrand is the primary concern. The STOP principle and the MODAL shift should be the starting point. These can only be achieved through a consistent policy.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

The traffic infrastructure

- Groen+Vooruit recognises that a number of ideas from the Flemish government, expressed by the operating company, for tackling the mobility junction in the Noordrand are valuable. Finally, a number of important public transport axes are being created and work is being done on a number of necessary bicycle highways. However, these interventions are insufficient to achieve this **modal shift, a structural shift from individual car traffic to the use of public transport and bicycles**.
- Both financially and from a planning perspective, the current plans continue to focus on increasing the capacity for car traffic on the RING O. This will not reduce traffic using our village centres as a short-cut. On the contrary, due to the pulling effect, even more cars will have to enter or leave the RING O at a certain time, resulting in even more cars, even more local traffic, even more fine and ultra-fine dust, even more nitrogen dioxide and even more health problems.

Het wordt anders!

In addition to this fundamental position, Groen+Vooruit has the following **specific requirements** to reduce the nuisance of the existing traffic axes:

- Both along the RING 0 and along the A12, **noise barriers** must be installed on the entire Grimbergen territory to reduce noise pollution in residential areas. Existing green buffers such as these along Antwerpselaan near Strombeek must be preserved and strengthened.
- Plans regarding the **entrance and exit ramps** infrastructure on our territory should be consistent with that of Grimbergen's circulation plan. For example, it is not possible for the entrance ramp on Antwerpselaan to be abolished if there is no alternative on the west side of Strombeek for users of the Ring or the A12;
- If the bridge that connects **Bever** with Strombeek would be demolished, work must be done on a fully-fledged alternative that would connect both residential communities. It is not possible for people from Bever to reach Strombeek by car only via the Romeinsesteenweg;
- During the reconstruction of the **traffic junction between the A12 and the RING 0** at the Douwe Egberts Site, it must be ensured that nuisance for Strombeek does not increase due to a road network that comes closer to or above ground level at that location.

Car park C

The major challenge for this area is to achieve a development that is **acceptable for Grimbergen and Brussels**. After all, Brussels owns this important piece of Grimbergian territory. More than for any other project, a desired development in this area that is supported by everyone can only come about through a respectful dialogue between both parties.

Groen+Vooruit applies the following principles:

- Any planned development on this site must respect the existing Regional Implementation Plan (GRUP).
- Groen+Vooruit insists that the municipality, taking this GRUP into account, draws up a spatial implementation plan (RUP) with which it takes control of this area. This RUP must be drawn up in close consultation with the local residents involved.

Het wordt anders!

- Any development of this area must guarantee the quality of life of **Treft** and even increase it.
- An increase in the **mobility pressure** should be avoided in plans for this area.
- In any case, the site must keep its important **parking function**.
An efficiently designed parking lot with several floors below or above ground can significantly reduce the space taken up for parking, freeing up part of the area for other developments and creating room for a spacious green buffer at the Panoramalaan in Wemmel and Treft in Bever.
- To optimise the park **and ride function** of the parking, it is important that there should be access to public transport modes from STIB and De Lijn.

The International Airport in Zaventem.

- Groen+Vooruit resists **plans for the expansion** of the airport's infrastructure and capacity.
- The number of flight movements must respect the currently applicable maximums for both day and night flights. We ask the **night** to be defined as the period from 11 pm to 7 am and not until 6 am, as is the case now.
- We continue to strive for a **correct distribution** of flight movements over the entire area in Flemish Brabant and Brussels. This way benefits and costs are distributed correctly and the quality of life of the entire region is guaranteed.
- Naturally, Groen+Vooruit supports efforts at a higher level to achieve:
 - a general ban on night flights in Europe, with an exception made for emergency flights for health or humanitarian reasons.

Het wordt anders!

a shift from aeroplanes to less polluting modes of transport by making public transport cheaper on the one hand and air travel more expensive on the other. The lack of a kerosene tax, which indirectly subsidises air traffic, and the lack of major investments in rail connections throughout Europe are jeopardising this shift.

Planned logistics business parks in the region.

- Groen+Vooruit supports the **resistance** against the planned logistics **business park in Westrode**. By wanting to make Flanders the logistics hub for this part of Western Europe, the Flemish government is undermining the quality of life in Grimbergen, Flemish Brabant and the entire Region.

Het wordt anders!

2.9 Education

Our education is the ideal place to make a fair start possible for everyone. Good education lays the foundation for later life. At school you learn what you need to be able to do and know to enter life as a critical citizen. However, opportunities in education are still determined too much by the place where a child grows up. We strive for education that offers fair opportunities to every child.

For Groen+Vooruit, offering municipal primary education is one of the core tasks of the municipality. In this way, we can respond to the local needs and challenges of each sub-municipality. **Pre-school and primary education in your own municipality** are a right for every child. Education in your own neighbourhood motivates parents to integrate and participate in neighbourhood life. For a municipality in the Flemish Rand it is an excellent means of language integration. If children go to a Dutch-speaking school in their own neighbourhood, this is in any case an extra motivation for the parents to learn Dutch.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- The number of inhabitants in Strombeek-Bever has continued to rise in recent years. Almost half of the children born in Grimbergen come from Strombeek. An **additional primary school in Strombeek** is therefore essential to meet current and future demands. The newly planned GO! school must be future proof with the possibility of expanding capacity. A single structure is already insufficient to compensate for the shortage of places. For this reason, building a small neighbourhood school in Villapark Rijckendael does not demonstrate a long-term vision. The choice of an alternative location is urgent. The Rodepoort site seems to be the perfect location. This site offers the necessary expansion options and use can be made of the existing/planned sports infrastructure. A choice for this site is also logical in terms of mobility and public transport.

Het wordt anders!

- More **consultation and co-operation** between the municipality and education. Joint projects around citizenship, democracy, mobility, waste, etc. are being developed more strongly and the sharing of infrastructure is being more strongly encouraged. In short, education becomes more socially and spatially connected to its own environment, the schools are integrated into the fabric of the municipality.
- For a municipality in the Flemish Rand it is an excellent means of achieving this **language integration**. If children go to a Dutch-speaking school in their own neighbourhood, this is in any case an extra motivation for the parents to learn Dutch. Language Parents (cf. reading parents) will be appointed to support non-Dutch speakers in contact with the schools (parent contacts, after-school activities, etc.)
- **Co-operation and synergy across the school networks** is needed. In addition to municipal education, private education and community education are also offered in Grimbergen. As in the past, the municipal council must continue to direct capacity expansions. For example, in the recent past, €7.7 million in resources was distributed equitably among education providers. Future resources from the Flemish government must also be distributed in the same way.
- A **healthy and pleasant learning environment** is important for the pupils. The municipal council must take measures for the entire school infrastructure which will help to achieve the climate objectives. Important aspects are a well-insulated outer shell, an energy-efficient heating system and the installation of solar panels.
- **Safe school environments** are a priority. Work is being done on school streets. Each school is encouraged to consider more solutions to prevent motorised traffic around the school as much as possible and to involve parents in this.

Het wordt anders!

- Concentration schools should be avoided. Initiatives are being taken to keep a **healthy mix of cultures** in our schools or get them back. A possible line of thought is organising method education that creates more space to allow children to work independently in a guided manner, so that everyone's learning level, learning speed and interest are taken more into account.
- Grimbergen schools should focus even more on **parental involvement** and parent participation. These are actions that give parents a good feeling about the school so that they are convinced that they can play a role in education. Thanks to parents' work, parents are committed not only to their child but to the entire organisation. They create a school together with the management and teachers.
- The current majority has noticeably increased the price of **after-school care**. We would reduce the social rate for childcare again. We would increase the quality of childcare, first of all by increasing the number of supervisors in childcare compared to the number of children.

Het wordt anders!

2.10 Local Economy

An active economy is local, sustainable and embedded in a social-ecological society. An economy 'tailored to people and planet'. The economy can no longer build on the old model of mass production, mono-cropping, growth and consumption, without including the ecological footprint in our consumption and without reducing that footprint year after year.

Part of the answer to these challenges is strong support for the local economy as the beating heart of Grimbergen! Small-scale, local initiatives are desperately needed and offer essential added value to prosperity in our municipality. Everyone benefits: the companies, the businesses, their employees and their customers.

In addition, we must also apply the global effort towards a more circular economy at a local level, starting with our own municipal services, and support this among residents and local traders.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- The SME economy and local self-employed people must be cherished and deserve extra support. When outsourcing **priority** must be given to local companies by including the local element in the selection criteria.
- **No** to more extra large-scale shopping centres in the spacious area around Grimbergen that damage the local economic network by taking customers away from the Grimbergen medium-sized businesses.
- Small self-employed businesses must be given more consideration and input when there are going to be road works, by working together to make up a **'Minder Hinder' plan**.
- The municipality will take the initiative to establish a **"Made in Grimbergen" sales point** for local products, such as food, gift items, etc. that are produced in Grimbergen. A suitable commercial property will be made available by the municipality, the operation is based on volunteers who are supported by the municipality.

Het wordt anders!

- Shopping in your own municipality should be encouraged. The concept of municipal vouchers for local traders is being reviewed so that their use can be optimised and expanded. The **local gift voucher** is not only awarded by the municipality but can be purchased by residents via the municipality's website or at the town hall.
- The short **chain** from (organic) farmer and (organic) gardener to consumer will be more strongly supported. Local agriculture is promoted, for example by giving priority at the market and offering them at the social grocery.
- **Heavy & polluting industry** will be critically monitored or at least assigned to zones and areas equipped for this purpose (inside or outside Grimbergen).
- **Adjust taxes to the big footprint of large companies** (e.g. asphalt plant, companies along the canal, etc.), which could then reduce taxes for local traders. This is already happening in Grimbergen but can be further refined and expanded.

Het wordt anders!

2.11 Space for Sports

A progressive sports policy for Grimbergen is aimed at: **promoting inclusion, strengthening community spirit and encouraging health prevention.**

We take into account the specificities of the different sports clubs and also the most recent advice from the sports council. We will realise an inclusive sports policy through a range of initiatives that respond to the demography and diversity of the residents of Grimbergen. What's learnt in the cradle lasts till the tomb. We want to actively support every sports club that has or wants to expand a kids and youth programme. In addition, Grimbergen must also intelligently develop sports and recreation for the elderly. After all, exercise has been proven to promote health and avoid loneliness. Sport, in the end, connects. It builds team spirit and community, attracts volunteers and encourages responsibility.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

Inclusivity as a starting point

Accessibility is central to a progressive sports policy, in which everyone should be able to participate, regardless of background or disability. This includes:

- **Physical** accessibility: Sports infrastructure must be adapted to people with disabilities.
- **Financial** accessibility: Providing subsidies or discounts plays sports more accessible to people with a low income or young people.
- **Inclusive** sports providers: The sports service will actively help develop sports associations' awareness of gender equality, inclusion of the LGBTQ community and migrants.

Het wordt anders!

Connection and community building through sport

Sport can bring communities together and strengthen social cohesion. We focus on local involvement:

- **Neighbourhood-oriented sports initiatives:** Organise accessible sports activities such as more informal neighbourhood football pitches, walking groups and fitness classes in parks.
- **Sport as an integration instrument:** Sport helps newcomers and refugees to integrate.
- **Volunteer network:** Involve residents in the organisation of sporting events to strengthen responsibility and community spirit.

Health and prevention are central.

Sports policy should stimulate health prevention by promoting exercise for all age groups:

- **Accessible exercise programs:** Walking and cycling groups and swimming programmes are ways to promote exercise. They link health to sports.
- **Collaboration with healthcare authorities:** Work together with general practitioners and physiotherapists to develop exercise programmes for people with an increased health risk, such as the elderly or chronically ill.

Greenery and space for sport and exercise

The physical environment must invite sport and exercise:

- **Utilising public space:** Grimbergen will develop sports-friendly environments with jogging tracks, cycle paths, skate parks and walking routes through parks (yet to be constructed).
- **Pop-up sporting events:** Grimbergen organises sporting events and exercise markets, which residents can participate in for free to discover and taste new sports and what is on offer.

Het wordt anders!

Sustainability and sport

A sustainable sports policy not only contributes to a healthy living environment, but also to climate goals:

- **Sustainable sports facilities:** We invest in sustainable sports facilities, such as energy-efficient sports halls with solar panels and environmentally friendly building materials.
- **Cycling incentive:** Promote cycling to sports facilities by creating safe cycle paths and providing sufficient bicycle parking spaces at sports facilities.

Young people and sport as a priority

Young people should be encouraged to stay active by after-school sports programmes and sports activities as a means of combatting social problems:

- **After-school sports programmes:** Offer after-school sports activities in collaboration with schools, so that young people stay active and have a healthy alternative to screen time.
- **Sport as a means of preventing social problems:** Sport can guide young people at an increased risk of crime or dropping out of school. By participating in sports, young people learn important skills such as discipline, co-operation and self-confidence.

Innovation and collaboration

Innovation and partnerships are essential to keep sports policy relevant and effective:

- **Collaboration with sports clubs and companies:** Encourage sports clubs to work together with each other, local companies and institutions for sponsorship, partnerships and support of social projects.

Het wordt anders!

2.12 Safety

People have the right to feel safe and secure in their street, their neighbourhood, their municipality. 1 out of 12 residents usually feel safe in Grimbergen according to the VRT survey (<https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/regio/vlaams-brabant/grimbergen/>), in Flanders the average is 1 out of 14. In 2023, the police registered 53 crimes per 1000 inhabitants, which is below the average of 64 per 1000 inhabitants in Flanders, which does not mean that we should not strive for fewer crimes.

As a local government, we work together with the justice department and the police to develop the integrated local security policy even more. Combatting property and violent crimes is a classic part of this. Other important objectives are road safety, environmental safety, environmental enforcement and social safety (including combatting domestic violence). We opt for an integrated safety policy that covers the entire safety chain: prevention, enforcement and aftercare.

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- **Enforcement** of legislation and sanctions

The police play a key role in safety policy and take decisive action against nuisance and crime. Groen+Vooruit does not argue for even more rules, but for more and stricter controls on the application of existing rules. This applies, among other things, to illegal dumping, to illegal parking on sidewalks and cycle paths, to speeding, to damaging public domain, to leaving dog poo behind.

- **Guidance and dialogue**

Groen+Vooruit advocates that local violations should be followed by a conversation and, where desirable, by guidance and education of offenders. Removing people from anonymity and pointing out their responsibility significantly increases the dissuasive effect of a fine.

- **Prevention**

Prevention is better than cure. Our police are strongly committed to raising awareness and information. Groen+Vooruit would like to see this happen and advocates a continuation of this policy. Groen+Vooruit welcomes the establishment of a mediation cell within the police force. Conflicts are best addressed as soon as possible. Awareness and information can be extended to

Het wordt anders!

other domains, such as in traffic (through additional signalling, indication of the driving speed, road markings). Groen+Vooruit advocates proximity to the police and we continue to endorse the police support centre in Strombeek. A merger with another police zone is necessary to continue to guarantee the proper functioning of the police.

- **Social control and participation**

According to Groen+Vooruit, the local government can work together with residents on prevention and welfare promotion in the neighbourhood. Social services and cultural work are co-players here. Groen+Vooruit focuses on dialogue to solve issues close to the people. It is also about the qualitative design of public places and good neighbourhood work. The neighbourhood police officer may be the closest point of contact for neighbourhood conflicts or minor nuisances. In addition, the neighbourhood agent also has an eye for things that go wrong and can act quickly and preferably preventively. The neighbourhood police officer is complementary to the Neighbourhood Information Network (BIN), which focuses mainly on burglary.

- **Aftercare**

Aftercare is the most important final link in the safety chain. Communicate in a simple way which different services are ready to provide information and support. Ensure good guidance from the local police to victim support services.

Het wordt anders!

PART 3: GOOD GOVERNANCE

3.1 Local democracy, have a say, participation and inclusion.

Local policy and governance are for and with the residents. Numerous citizen initiatives demonstrate the involvement of citizens in their neighbourhood. As a critical voice, but often also with the will to build a pleasant neighbourhood and municipality together with fellow citizens and local government. Groen+Vooruit starts from the basic principle that the municipality can and must strengthen local democracy, and therefore the citizens must have a say and participate. We believe that citizens have the right to participate in policies that directly impact them, without losing sight of the general interest. In addition, policy that is drawn up in consultation is more widely supported. It is better and richer, because many more perspectives are discussed. It strengthens the social fabric. A government that only addresses citizens as customers mainly receives complaints, a government that fully involves citizens makes our democracy a permanent exercise in citizenship and strengthens the community.

Groen+Vooruit extends this vision to its own list, with many involved residents on the list without a party card from either party. Our + stands for our independents on the list.

This is an **and-and story**. On the one hand, it is about improving the **traditional political** bodies, including from **advisory boards** so that they truly work democratically and transparently. In addition, Groen+Vooruit stands for an approach to express opinions and **citizen input** to be valued more strongly and also converted into policy. In the vision of Groen+Vooruit, residents should be maximally involved in policy and deserve valuable local initiatives by and for residents, an appropriate support. The challenge is to succeed in capturing all voices in these processes, not just the residents who know how and where they can make their input, and to do so in a balanced way.

Het wordt anders!

With Groen+Vooruit things will be different:

- **Participation in advance** for large projects/important issues, not only about the full stops and comma's of a large project after it has been decided what it will happen. The final decision must also include the approval of a communication plan for informing citizens.
- Getting to school safely or to work by car, changes in road infrastructure in front of your door have an immediate impact, which is why we opt for a municipal **Mobility Council**, where residents of the various sub-municipalities are actively involved.
- Develop a policy for active participation of **non-native speakers**.

-> Citizens' budget.

Groen+Vooruit wants to work on the introduction of a citizens' budget. A citizens' budget is a process of democratic decision-making, in which the residents of Grimbergen decide for themselves how part of the municipal budget is spent. The residents themselves propose projects on which they then deliberate. The way in which this is done is important; Groen+Vooruit wants to focus strongly on: **participation, involvement and debate** to reach a decision.

There are good reasons to work on a citizens' budget:

- Transparency creates trust.
- A strengthening of social cohesion and a sense of community
- New and valuable suggestions and ideas that come from the citizens themselves.
- Greater support for the decisions taken and greater political involvement of residents. Participation promotes acceptance of decisions.
- Greater identification with the (sub)municipality.

Het wordt anders!

Groen+Vooruit wants to ensure a diverse mix of participants. Otherwise, it is mainly middle-class, highly educated people who participate. Targeted communication, specific activities and collaboration with local associations can help to be as inclusive as possible. Groen+Vooruit also wants everyone to participate in the citizens' budget! Because of the diversity of and in the various sub-municipalities, Groen+Vooruit would like **a citizens' budget per sub-municipality**. Each sub-municipality has its own citizens' budget. This increases involvement even more.

-> **Welfare council.**

For no policy domain is **'input from below'** as important as for social policy. The residents themselves are best placed to address social needs and requirements and to advise policy. Groen+Vooruit therefore advocates the (re)installation of a Welfare Council, as an official advisory body for the Welfare policy area and its competent alderman.

This Welfare Council has two important functions:

- **Formulate proposals and give advice** to the municipal council about possible initiatives. The municipal council cannot simply ignore advice but must respond within a reasonable period of time. A negative answer must always be motivated.
- Assess proposals from the municipal council regarding social policy and, if necessary, recommend adjustments. The municipal council is expected to put its policy intentions in terms of social policy on the agenda at least annually, and to submit an annual report on the policy pursued to the welfare council.

The Welfare Council is best composed of all actors involved in Welfare, such as representatives of neighbourhood associations, the youth and seniors' council, residents from the various sub-municipalities, experts on poverty, etc.

->**Citizen initiatives.**

Letting people get something done **together** is one of the most powerful forms of participation. The municipality must keep its ears and eyes open for initiatives that residents take on themselves, in their own neighbourhood and environment, and provide the necessary logistical, personnel or financial support. No favouritism, but with a clear framework so that it is clear who can call on that support.

Het wordt anders!

- Groen+Vooruit wants to keep the **party and neighbourhood voucher** reserved for neighbourhood parties. It must be examined whether this is still sufficient to really facilitate a neighbourhood party. In addition, there is a need to expand and improve the municipal lending service.
- Groen+Vooruit appreciates it when people take initiative and take matters into their own hands. For example, maintaining lawns and public green areas by citizens is a good thing. Groen+Vooruit wants to go even further and with new, **small-scale projects** resolutely opt for the co-operation of the local neighbourhood. For example, the municipality can organise a consultation and participation moment with the neighbourhood for the construction of public green areas and playgrounds. Together we can determine how the available budget is best spent and how residents can contribute to successful implementation, for example volunteers who take on some of the maintenance. It is crucial that the proposal to take over facilities or tasks comes from the residents themselves and not from the municipal council's saving logic.
- Groen+Vooruit wants to actively promote the neighbourhood involvement of residents and citizens with different languages and cultural backgrounds. We would approach **key figures** who can mobilise their networks within the different communities. We want to motivate and support all communities of Grimbergen residents with diverse cultural backgrounds in developing their vision of a better neighbourhood. Contacts and communication between neighbours must be encouraged and also facilitated by linking figures. By supporting non-native speakers in the development of their vision on neighbourhood development and concrete projects, we also want to give them the energy to expand their talents through training or mutual aid. Participation thus becomes a positive driving force in the development of social inclusion.

Het wordt anders!

-> **A town council that works.**

Groen+Vooruit is against the tendency to erode the municipal council into a sterile debate between majority and opposition. The municipal council is the heart of local democracy and must also be (re)valued.

- The residents deserve **good political governance**. The municipal council sessions in Grimbergen are not an adequate illustration of this, even though this has improved in the last two years. For important and complex issues that are politically sensitive, Groen+Vooruit wants to make a real debate possible across party lines about the content of the case. This cannot be laid down in regulations or procedures, but we need this new policy culture.
- Groen+Vooruit wants to encourage **citizens** to ask a question or file a proposal to the municipal council to be placed on its agenda. This is now also possible, but the current arrangement must be adjusted so that it becomes more accessible to actually do this. We want to reinforce this form of participation by, for example, making it known on the municipality's website.
- Before the council meeting there should be a more informative half **hour of questions** for citizens.
- Invest in **strong councillors and representatives** and in strong advisory boards. Groen+Vooruit does not participate in seat politics, the various tasks and mandates are divided on the basis of responsibility and commitment. If necessary, our representatives follow additional training to maintain or increase their expertise.
- Invest in **integrity**: We would tighten the code of ethics for politicians and civil servants and ensure a well-functioning ethics committee to monitor compliance and provide an internal reporting point for whistleblowers.

Het wordt anders!

3.2 Low-threshold and accessible services

Municipalities are often the **nearest government**. Both literally, when it comes to people's living environment, and figuratively, when it comes to approachability and implementation of policy that directly affects the lives of residents and entrepreneurs. Groen+Vooruit wants public services to be provided reliably and accessible to everyone. By doing so, we make a difference in the daily lives of our people.

Groen+Vooruit stands for:

- In addition to the important digitalisation of services, Groen+Vooruit wants to continue to focus on: **customer friendliness and solution orientation** at the counters and in all other places where citizens come into contact with municipal staff. This is why we argue for more **user-friendly opening hours** of the municipal services, even without an appointment. Groen+Vooruit also asks that anyone who does not yet speak Dutch fluently can be helped in another language at agreed times during their first contacts.
- **Digitalisation** of services offers opportunities, but also has pitfalls. Groen+Vooruit wants to help bridge the digital divide by encouraging and **supporting** all those who need to learn to use digital materials and applications.
- Groen+Vooruit wants government infrastructure such as public buildings and spaces to be of high quality, future-proof and **accessible**. We still see many opportunities here in Grimbergen to become more sustainable.
- Accessibility must also be guaranteed for and take into account people with disabilities. All infrastructure of the municipality must be made at least easily accessible for wheelchair users and blind or visually impaired people. From council buildings to sport halls, from every curb to zebra crossings.
- Groen+Vooruit wants the municipality to focus on a **modern personnel policy** that motivates and enables civil servants to develop themselves and their talents. After all, motivated civil servants are the driving forces in the preparation and implementation of council decisions.

Het wordt anders!

- Groen+Vooruit wants municipal employees to be given sufficient space, time and resources within their position, as part of their position, to support citizen initiatives, participation processes and information moments.
- Groen+Vooruit wants to keep public services under its own management as much as possible, because this offers the best guarantees for tailor-made solutions for our residents. If certain tasks are outsourced, a watertight framework is needed to continue to monitor the **quality** of the services offered.
- Groen+Vooruit demands a clear time frame in which citizens receive answers to questions asked, as well as a well-functioning complaint handling system.

Het wordt anders!

3.3 Sound financial management

The Grimbergen municipal council has a debt burden of EUR 1014 per inhabitant. This amount is below the Flemish average of EUR 1,258 and Groen+Vooruit wishes to keep it that way. After all, we want to avoid future generations being presented with the bill for increasing debts.

Groen+Vooruit advocates:

- effective financial policy;
- transparent financial policy;
- fair financial policy;

-> An effective financial policy.

- An effective financial policy means that the municipality's debt remains under control. An increase in this debt burden is only acceptable for important new investment projects that lead to an increase in the value of municipal properties, an increase in the quality of the existing infrastructure or return on investment prospects through increased energy efficiency.
- To prevent projects that are in the pipeline from having to be cancelled and resulting in large damages and expensive legal proceedings, thorough consultation procedures must precede important new investments to ensure that they have support amongst the population.
- In tender procedures, the municipal council must strive for an optimal price-quality ratio. However, when distributing points in tender procedures, the municipal council can also take into account criteria of social justice and climate efficiency because these are important policy objectives. After all, the market survey should not only be an instrument to negotiate the lowest price. It must also contribute to recruiting the appropriate quality, achieving sustainability and fair-trade criteria, and realising a circular and short chain, sharing economy and (if possible local) social employment;

Het wordt anders!

In purchase specifications the cost over the entire lifespan must be taken into account and not just the purchase cost. In this way, the advantage of sustainable alternatives is better utilised.

- A correct expenditure policy requires periodic market testing of long-term contracts, careful consideration of purchase or rental, of own management or outsourcing, of forms of joint purchasing, the repair and re-use of material and the sharing of heavy equipment with neighbouring municipalities.

-> A transparent financial policy.

- More transparency in policy contributes to higher effectiveness. The council of aldermen, the municipal council, the heads of services within the administration and the interested citizen must have a clear view of the income and expenditure of the municipality, the management of reserves and debts, the correct application of regulations by the municipal council and risk management. Every financial reporting must therefore be comprehensible for the target groups involved.

-> A fair and sustainable financial policy.

The additional personal income tax and surcharges on property tax are the most important source of income for the municipality. In addition, there are many municipal taxes and fees and various subsidies that supplement the municipal treasury.

Groen+Vooruit wants to evolve existing taxes, fees and subsidies based on principles of social justice and sustainability.

- Groen+Vooruit is therefore not in favour of increasing taxes on labour (the additional personal tax). If an increase in income is necessary and unavoidable, Groen+Vooruit wants to do this in Grimbergen by increasing the wealth tax (real estate tax surcharges).
- Groen+Vooruit opposes tax increases by increasing municipal fees and rates, such as the tax for the preparation of administrative documents and urban development operations, concessions for cemeteries and bills for before- and after-school care. These extra charges are anti-social. After all, those who barely have any money pay the same as those who are “rolling in money”.

Het wordt anders!

- For us it is logical that those who burden society or the environment are in turn burdened by society. We want to retain the tax on the distribution of printed and neon light advertising, as well as the tax on vacant and dilapidated buildings, the tax on undeveloped plots and second homes. We also plead for tax on mobile phone masts and on high-voltage current;
- Groen+Vooruit also advocates optimising the tax for polluting companies.
- Groen+Vooruit wants to pay explicit attention to the effects on poverty and social exclusion in its financial policy. We therefore want to introduce a local poverty test for decisions that have a direct or indirect impact on the individual living situation of residents. This means that the municipality consults with experts and representatives of people in vulnerable situations to assess the impact of the measures on them and, where necessary, adjust them or look for alternatives.

Het wordt anders!



Het wordt anders!