

AMBITIOUS FOR B&NES: A POSITIVE VISION WITH THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS

Full Manifesto 2023



Bath and North East Somerset
Liberal Democrats





We are proud of our record over the past four years running Bath & North East Somerset council.

Despite the difficulties of the Covid pandemic, we delivered on our promises for transport, housing, health & social care, and children & young people, whilst making the council more open and accessible, balancing the books, and keeping the Climate and Ecological Emergencies front-and-centre in all our decision making.

However, we are more ambitious for B&NES than ever.

We have a talented and diverse set of candidates for 2023 who are ready to serve their communities and lead the region to greater success and prosperity over the next four years.





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LISTENING AND PUTTING RESIDENTS FIRST

OUR RECORD OF ACTION

Over the past four years the Liberal Democrats have made great strides at ensuring a listening Council which puts residents first.

- Our Liberal Democrat **councillors are visible figures in their communities** and have stayed in touch regularly with newsletters and knocking on doors. They ensure people know who they are and how they can talk to them, so that we can listen to the broadest range of views from residents.
- Our councillors across the authority and the MP for Bath conducted **doorstep, paper-based and online surveys** throughout B&NES asking residents for their views and their priorities. We listened to these views and the results have guided our work.
- Residents told us that frontline neighbourhood services were important – cleaning streets, fixing roads, collecting recycling – so we have invested an **additional £3m in frontline services**.
- We moved **public Council meetings from daytimes to evenings** so residents who work during the day can attend and hold the Council to account.
- We threw open our doors by investing in **webcasting Council meetings** on YouTube during the pandemic and have continued this so that residents do not face any barriers in being able to see how our Council works.
- We have started the process of area working and **involving communities in the long-term place-making plans** for the distinct parts of our area: Bathavon, Chew Valley, Somer Valley, Keynsham and Bath.
- We have **transformed Parish Liaison Meetings**, where representatives of town and parish councils engage with B&NES, from a top-down meeting to one where the towns and parishes themselves set the agenda to speak up for their communities.
- We have started using representative **Citizens Juries** to involve local communities in making better decisions on complex issues.
- Because local people know their areas best, we have engaged local communities in **co-design for new schemes like Liveable Neighbourhoods**. Better decisions are being made because residents influence and have a real say in these schemes, rather than being top-down from the Council.
- We reintroduced the **Ward Empowerment Fund** that gave ward councillors a budget to consult with their communities and allocate small grants to projects that local people care about.
- We have really **listened to residents** during consultations and adapted our plans on issues like city centre security, Midsomer Norton parking charges and transport schemes.
- We established a new **Journey to Net Zero Transport Stakeholder Forum**.



OUR PROMISE OF MORE

To ensure our councillors and leaders are accessible and delivering for local people, we will:

- As Liberal Democrat councillors, **be visible to residents and in touch all year round**. This might include ward surgeries, regular newsletters, online meetings, surveys and meeting with residents' associations and town and parish councils.
- Continue to make Council meetings more accessible by live streaming on YouTube and **moving meetings between different locations** in B&NES.
- Make Council leaders even more accessible to residents' representatives by **meeting regularly with FOBRA** (the Federation of Bath Residents' Associations), ensuring **parish and town councils** drive the agenda in **regular opportunities to meet with Council leaders**, and facilitating the creation of more residents' associations where they are wanted.
- Maintain the **Ward Empowerment Fund** so ward councillors can support local initiatives that are important to residents.
- Ensure that the **2023 election campaign ward priorities** are delivered as a main priority during the term of the 2023/7 administration.

To ensure B&NES Council reaches out to local people, enabling and really listening to them, we will:

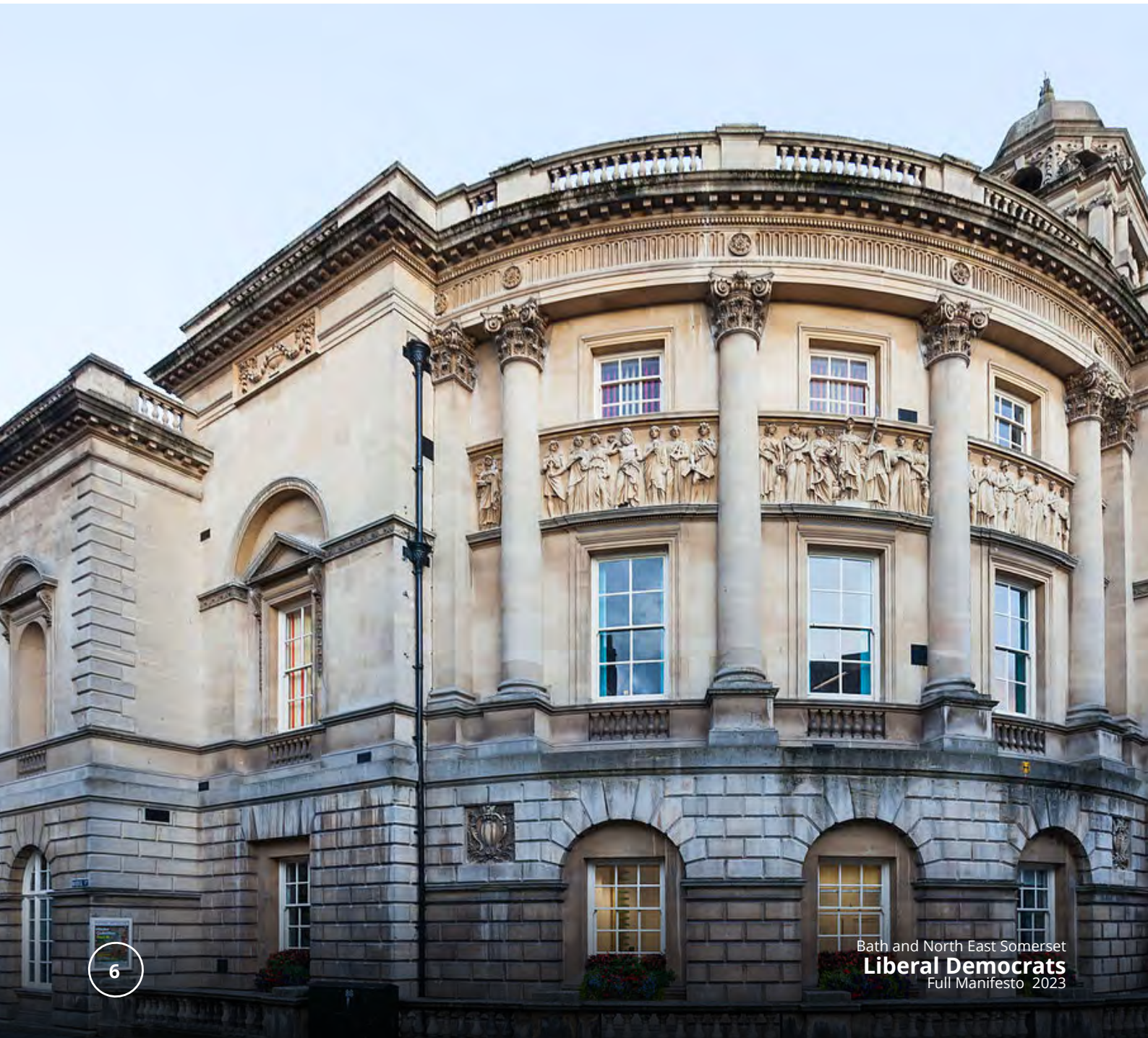
- Continue to strengthen a **Council culture that puts residents first** and actively listens to them. The Council will get out into the community and actively seek residents' priorities on the streets, rather than just asking residents to come to the Council. We will listen to residents' priorities and use these to set Council targets for delivery.
- Ensure **Council investments and savings reflect the priorities of residents**, rather than artificial service directorates.
- **Be clear with people**, when we ask for their views, saying what we are asking for, why, and what will happen as a result.
- Identify **community and interest groups** across B&NES and reach out to them when we are **consulting** on issues that affect them.
- Continue to use **Citizens Juries** that are representative of their communities to help the Council make better decisions.
- Continue to ensure the Council **workforce is not concentrated in one part of B&NES**: The Bath Guildhall will be the heart of local democracy with the majority of the workforce based in North East Somerset between Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Clutton.

To ensure our distinct areas and diverse populations in B&NES are given a real voice, we will:

- Apply to the government to be a **pilot site** for rolling out **voting for 16 and 17** year olds.
- Consult on proposals to reduce the democratic deficit and **strengthen resident representation in the city of Bath**.



- Strengthen our work with our **disenfranchised and disadvantaged communities** to ensure the Council works for them, including engaging with community groups that represent ethnicities, genders, faith, younger and older people, students, disabilities, sexual orientation and other disenfranchised groups.
- Recognise that our **distinct areas** – the Chew Valley, Somer Valley, Keynsham and Bath – **face different issues** that may require different solutions. We will engage residents, town and parish councils and residents' associations in discussions about the future of their area, and create opportunities to listen to their views on transport, planning and other issues that matter to them. We will extend area working so local communities and councillors can work with named planning, highways and neighbourhood services officers that know their areas well.
- As we embrace technology to provide a quicker and more effective service for residents, ensure that **traditional methods of communicating** with the Council (like phone and mail) are still available for those who need them.
- Give ward councillors the power to **call planning applications to committee**.





LEADING THE UK IN CLIMATE AND NATURE ACTION

Climate scientists have been warning since the 1970s of the risks of man-made climate change, and calling on all of us to adjust our behaviours to stop causing irreparable harm to the environment.

B&NES declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and an Ecological Emergency in 2020 to provide the focus for local action. The Lib Dem administration elected in 2019 moved rapidly to place these Emergencies at the centre of everything the Council does, ensuring that all decisions are taken with full consideration of climate needs, and with a view to rapid and accelerating progress in reducing carbon emissions. The creation in 2021 of a new Deputy Leader position within the Cabinet with specific responsibility for Climate and Sustainable Travel has doubled down on that commitment. B&NES is now recognised as a national leader in climate action.

In working to achieve Net Zero by 2030, we will act locally, collaborate regionally and lobby nationally to put in place the necessary legal and regulatory structures to enable effective action. We will provide leadership, encouragement and support to local businesses and people in their neighbourhoods, their households and their individual lives, and will be guided at all times to deliver socially just change. We will work to reduce our local area's carbon footprint, to increase our area's sustainability, and to prepare our area for the changes to come.

Action will also bring great opportunities. At the same time as addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergencies, we can boost local jobs, reduce living costs and make our local area an even more attractive place to live and work.

OUR RECORD OF ACTION

We:

- Actively **opposed Bristol Airport's plans to expand** their operations to handle 12m passengers a year working with neighbouring councils and partners to lobby MPs, Ministers and the Secretary of State; in support of this we gave compelling evidence at the planning appeal and led a cross-party motion reiterating our implacable opposition to further growth in numbers, which would blight our communities and compromise the health and wellbeing of future generations.
- **Doubled** the installed **renewable generation** capacity in B&NES since 2019.
- Were the **first Council in England to introduce a net-zero policy** for all new housing developments.
- Brought in an **ambitious programme of Solar PV installations** across the Council estate, including on care homes, the new Keynsham Recycling Centre and Bath Quays South.
- Built an active partnership with the **Community Energy Sector** and community groups to promote and co-ordinate initiatives to help meet our shared climate and carbon goals.
- Drove forward with a **new Local Plan Partial Update** designed to make renewable energy – particularly wind and solar - development easier, facilitate energy efficiency retrofit of existing housing stock and set market leading, stringent standards for new build within the district.



- Launched a popular and well-regarded, high participation **Climate and Bio-Diversity Festival** that has helped galvanise shared endeavour and propagate information and guidance for groups, businesses and individuals engaged in Climate Action.
- Introduced **the first paying Clean Air Zone outside London**, with clear benefits to air quality and health.
- Converted **27 of the Council's vehicle fleet to electric**, with more on order.
- Achieved **record-breaking recycling rates** with significant progress in broadening the range of materials recycled, re-purposed and re-used.
- Are on track to **plant 100,000 trees** as part of an integrated campaign to enhance bio-diversity and carbon sequestration across B&NES.
- Provided **clear leadership and communications** to bring together all parts of our communities, inform them of our climate goals and progress, and show them how they too can contribute to the ambition. We have stepped up the communication of our work in this field, and worked closely to support parishes with the climate emergency aspirations.
- Declared an **Ecological Emergency** in the summer of 2020, and have published a related action plan.
- Adjusted the planning system to make it **easier to establish solar PV and wind energy projects** in appropriate locations that are sympathetic to our landscape.
- Have **protected nature and enhanced connections with residents** through local partnerships: Bathscape, Somer Valley Reconnected, Waterspace project (protecting nature from Avonmouth to Dundas), and a new venture at Chew Valley Reconnected.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE

We will continue to lead the UK in Renewables and Low Carbon Developments by:

- **Maximising renewable energy generation** on the Council estate.
- **Promoting the growth of local community energy partners**, and help individual householders to embrace renewables through education and supported group purchase schemes.
- Exploring innovative solutions including **geothermal energy, hydrogen and battery storage**. We will encourage WECA (the West of England Combined Authority) to look afresh at tidal energy.
- **Lobbying National Grid** locally to ensure an upgraded local grid fit to support the needs of a modern low carbon economy.
- Planning to reach **150MW of installed renewable energy** capacity across the district by 2025 – equivalent to the needs of **48,000 households**.
- Continuing to drive up our **record-breaking recycling rates**, including introducing soft plastics recycling, first at our Recycling Centres and then at the kerbside as soon as technology and regional processing capacity permit, and continue to **crack down hard on fly-tipping and littering**.



- **Keeping Midland Road Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC) open** until a like-for-like HWRC has opened in Bath. We will keep full HWRCs open in Keynsham and Midsomer Norton whilst developing recycling bring sites across Bath.
- Facilitating the **development of new reuse schemes** and the reduction of waste to incineration or landfill. We will convert our fleet of waste and recycling vehicles to electric, biomethane or hydrogen as soon as contracts and operations allow.
- Pressing ever harder for **zero carbon new build across B&NES**. Our own social housing and developments will be carried out to the highest standards of energy efficiency and we will introduce variable Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rates to incentivise and accelerate this move.
- Pushing the planning system hard, working with local groups and professional experts, to facilitate **effective retrofitting and energy efficiency measures** across Bath and North East Somerset's entire housing stock, including all listed buildings.
- Prioritising policy work on adapting our services to be **ready for the effects of climate heating and environmental change**.
- Building on our success of planting 100,000 trees by committing **to double tree coverage by 2050** in line with the Forest of Avon Plan, and support the creation of a brand new community woodland for B&NES as part of the Great Avon Wood initiative.
- Aiming to make planning policy **more supportive of energy efficient retrofit** (especially in our heritage buildings), biodiversity and regenerative food growing in the vicinity of our towns and city.
- Redoubling our efforts to **oppose further expansion at Bristol Airport**, lobbying government and working with partners to increase pressure on the operator to abandon their damaging and ill-conceived plans, while maintaining intense campaigning to minimise future blight on our communities.

We will capitalise on the Council's profile, standing and reach to:

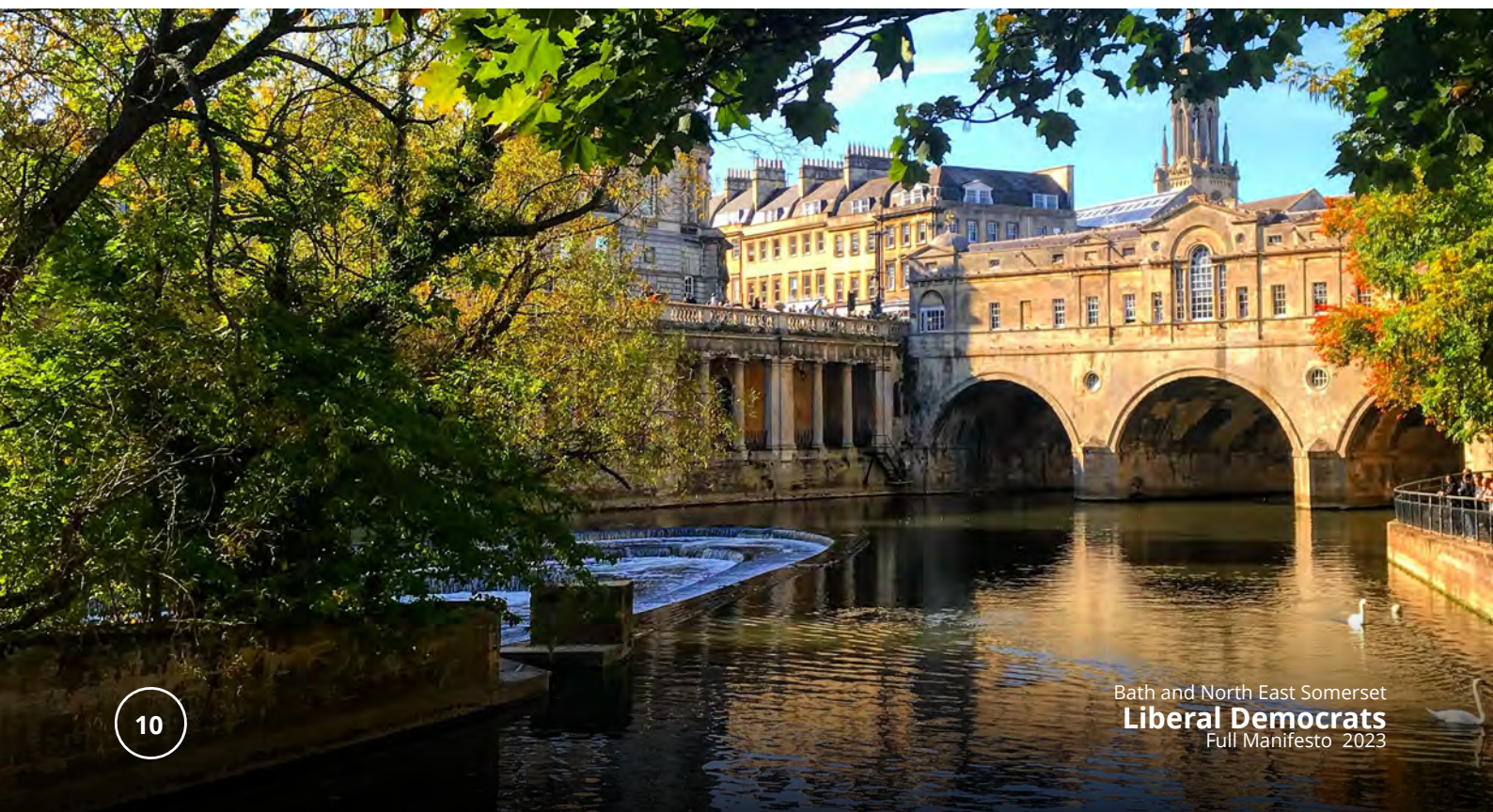
- **Promote carbon literacy and climate action awareness** at every level across our communities, through businesses, local and social groups, families and individuals, to create shared understanding, capacity and commitment to address the climate challenges we all face.
- **Provide information and education** to encourage people to change their behaviours, travel more sustainably and make their homes and places of work more energy efficient.
- Develop **compelling communications strategies** to reach every household, group and business in the district to inform them what is going on and engage them in how they can play their part.
- Monitor progress on **key metrics of our progress** towards our 2030 goal and **communicate** these **bi-annually, clearly and transparently** to all.
- Work with the West of England Combined Authority to ensure residents of B&NES can obtain **practical support with energy efficient retrofit**.



- Support the creation of a vibrant **Climate Emergency Centre** that provides information, guidance, signposting, support, encouragement and inspiration to the whole community as it looks to a low carbon future.
- Actively support the growth of **powerful green economic regeneration**, including green skills development and employment opportunities.
- Foster a democratic economic model, using public procurement to **promote local businesses**, and commit support to a **new genuinely co-operative banking model**, designed to serve the needs of local businesses and families.
- Develop and deploy **insightful consultation and participatory democratic models** to empower all those who live and work in B&NES to play a meaningful part in contributing towards and guiding our climate action.
- Encourage all **pension and investment funds** that operate in B&NES or serve predominantly local residents **to divest immediately from fossil-fuel** investments.
- Champion **local food resilience**, encouraging and optimising responsible local production and active land management practices to foster carbon sequestration.
- Maintain and develop **green corridors within urban environments**, **protect the Green Belt** from gratuitous or unwarranted development, and maintain other green and wildlife buffer zones between urban developments.

As a major owner of river-banks and surroundings, and acknowledging our overarching responsibilities for environmental health, planning, and transport, we will:

- Maintain our commitment to **protect the natural environment** and habitats of our area as well as provide safe access to recreational spaces.
- Work in partnership with the Environment Agency, The Canal and River Trust, other agencies, organisations, and land owners, to make the **rivers** in our area **cleaner, safer for wildlife habitat, and protected from abuse**.
- Seek to lead and co-ordinate **action on river water quality** where possible.





TRANSPORT: ENABLING TRAVEL CHOICES

The Lib Dems want to make it easier for residents to choose different forms of transport as we progress along our Journey to Net Zero.

We want to enable travel choices, to make it easier for those of us who can, to leave our cars at home more of the time, making access easier for those who have no choice but to use a car.

We recognise that we face a Climate and Ecological Emergency, and that, as individuals, we need to be able to respond in different ways.

We also recognise that choosing more active ways to travel has huge health benefits, both through increased exercise, and through reduced air pollution and carbon emissions; and that having access to safe, practical, sustainable travel choices can work out cheaper than running a car, helping to keep the cost of living down and reducing the frequency and severity of road accidents / collisions.

We recognise that individuals travel at different times of day for different reasons, and that many would choose alternatives to the car if safe, practical, affordable choices were available for their purposes.

We believe that the Council should be working with residents to remove as many barriers to those choices as it can.

We want to see reduced time and money lost by residents and businesses to congestion, and better enjoyment of our environment, whether in our rural towns, our countryside, or our unique World Heritage City.

Until such time as reliable and frequent bus / rail services are available and affordable for all, we will seek to enable more active ways to travel between our communities, as we build on our achievements of the past four years.

OUR RECORD OF ACTION

We have not been afraid to take bold actions to support improving public health and tackling the Climate Emergency.

We:

- Delivered the first charging **Clean Air Zone (CAZ)** outside London. In 2021, NO₂ levels were down 21% on 2019.
- Achieved **compliance rates** of 90% for HGVs, coaches, and taxis, 100% for scheduled buses, and 80% for vans entering the CAZ area and we expect to have supported 1,500 vehicles to be upgraded to CAZ compliance by 2023.
- Are delivering **the first Liveable Neighbourhood** trial schemes across B&NES to reduce through-traffic in residential areas, with **12 more in advanced stages** of design.
- Introduced Residents Parking Zone (RPZ) charges based on **vehicle engine emissions**, and **several new RPZs**.
- Campaigned to **prevent Cleveland Bridge being used as a rat-run** for through traffic HGVs, and introduced new measures to tackle overweight vehicles.



- Installed **cycle lanes on two strategic routes** Upper Bristol Road and Beckford Road.
- Worked with the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) and the Department for Transport to deliver an innovative **e-scooter trial** that has resulted in carbon reductions from transport.
- Introduced a successful **City Centre Security project** to ensure the safety of visitors to the city centre.
- Agreed renewed **Park & Ride** contracts despite adverse economic circumstances, building in **future flexibility** to improve the service when conditions permit.
- Are in the process of removing **Park & Ride** sites from the Green Belt so they can be adapted to become **interchanges between a range of different modes of transport**.
- Reprioritised scarce road space for **bike hangar storage** and for **resident parking** rather than for visitor parking.
- Introduced new **20 mph zones** to main through routes to improve air quality, reduce risk of accidents and make roads safer for pedestrians to thirteen new locations including London Road, Bathwick Hill, Widcombe Hill, Prior Park and Ralph Allen Drive.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: CHOOSING WALKING, WHEELING OR CYCLING

We will:

- Continue to develop our programme of **Liveable Neighbourhoods** which aims to improve local environments making them safer for walking, cycling and wheeling and to cut rat-running and speeding, through **co-design of meaningful improvements** with residents.
- Prioritise **pavement building, maintenance, and improvement**, including continuous raised road crossings where relevant, so that walking and wheelchair and mobility aid use feel safer choices for all.
- Prioritise infrastructure to **enable pedestrians** and **particularly residents with impaired mobility** to **cross safely** to access bus stops, shops, work, school and other activities.
- Increase **traffic enforcement** for the protection of pedestrians, including through school streets programmes.
- Enable independent travel choices for our **young people**, by linking all our schools to **safe walking and cycling routes**, by working with our schools on sustainable travel plans, by lobbying for bus transport to school where needed, and by **piloting school streets** to ensure safe conditions outside school entrances.
- Enable **community co-design of safe cycling infrastructure** links for commuters around our cities and towns, and on routes to larger workplaces and places of education.
- Continue the roll out of our **planned programme of on-road cycle routes**, including to the new Bath Quays bridge and Scholars' Way connecting communities with places of education in the south of the city.



- Improve our **network of walking and cycling infrastructure** away from main roads for both tourists and local residents to enjoy: for example, Bath Riverline (a linear park beside the river from Newbridge to Batheaston); a cycle and walking track from Midsomer Norton to Bristol; extensions to the network of green lanes around Midsomer Norton and Radstock; links to Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire, and other neighbouring areas.
- Prioritise **cycle lane and road margin maintenance and improvement**, so cycling feels a safer choice for all.
- Create a **maintenance and gritting budget for cycle tracks, road margins and pavements** so that cycling and walking feel safer choices for all.
- Provide **cycle hangars** for secure, dry cycle storage on road, where homes lack the space.
- Ensure there is **safe provision for pedestrians and cyclists** when we plan roadworks.
- Create **walking and cycling maps and apps** for the district, to help people find suitable routes for every occasion.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: CHOOSING RAIL TRAVEL

We will:

- Support WECA's plans to **extend and improve local Metrowest rail services**, and its plans for **mass transit**, and campaign for a **station for Saltford**, whilst supporting our neighbouring authorities' plans for reopening of Portishead and Corsham stations.
- Push for continued **rail electrification to Bath** and beyond.
- Push for a **mass transit or rail route to Somer Valley**.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: CHOOSING BUS TRAVEL

We will:

- Continue to campaign for First Bus, WECA and central government **to deliver fast, affordable, direct, reliable bus services**, with integrated ticketing, that go where people need them and for the restoration of socially important services recently removed by WECA and First.
- Turn our **Park & Rides into solar-powered Transport Hubs**, to enable a range of travel choices at each site, whilst extending the hours of bus operation and destinations served, when income permits.
- Support innovative complementary transport connections, such as **demand-responsive transport**, in places lacking bus connections such as Chew Valley.
- Help to develop more **Community transport options**.
- Campaign for **bus franchising** from WECA to support a **co-ordinated, imaginative, long-term approach to public transport** in our area, for a sustainable funding deal to provide certainty and stability to the industry, action to address the driver shortage, and the ability to bring bus services **back under public control**.



- Trial running **Park & Ride services into the evening** to assess demand and cost effectiveness.
- Campaign for WECA to **maintain and develop bus services** for disadvantaged and isolated **rural communities**.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: CHOOSING TO DRIVE

We will:

- Establish more **car club infrastructure, and support car sharing**, thus enabling a person's choice not to own a second car (or a first in some cases) in both rural and urban areas.
- Work with National Grid to enable more people to choose an electric vehicle by **increasing charging infrastructure**, building on our initial 69 devices, and develop ambitious plans to increase both urban and rural charging facilities, including on-street provision and e-charging hubs.
- Maintain **easy access for blue badge holders and disabled residents**.
- Improve **signage at distance from the city** to encourage all destination car traffic to use **Park & Rides**.
- Continue to **implement RPZs** where requested by residents, and **review RPZ policy** to examine **possible models for outer zones**, recognising the different character and needs of areas further out from the city centre.
- Press hard to **"detrunk" the A36 & A37** and change the primary route designation between M4 and South Coast to stop freight traffic using Bath as a cut through.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: SUPPORTING CHOICES

We will:

- Work with WECA to **enable fast, safe bus, walking and cycling routes** along the A37, A367 and A4 Bristol to Bath (through the City Region Sustainable Transport Fund), as well as sustainable modes of travel **to** these corridors – and, in consultation with Wiltshire and WECA, bring forward the development of a new A4 / A365 corridor, accessing Bath from the east.
- Publish, in close consultation with residents, a **10-year future planned cycling route map for our district**, as well as a **vehicle circulation plan** for the city.
- Further investigate a **Workplace Parking Levy scheme**, to raise funds for improved sustainable transport links. The cost to larger employers will reflect the cost to the community in congestion and air pollution arising from the use of their parking spaces.
- Extend **20mph speed limits** and support interventions to increase road safety both around the city and in towns and villages, alongside increased civil enforcement of traffic contraventions.
- Support the business community to enable more **last mile e-cargo-bike delivery**, whilst supporting residents with their purchase and rental of e-bikes and e-cargo bikes, and the provision of **secure, dry cycle storage**.
- Examine the case for extension of **emissions-based car parking charges**.



- Work with WECA to ensure new homes, workplaces and communities are built with **easy access to sustainable transport links** and **practical alternatives to the car**.
- Be open to embracing **new transport technologies** as they emerge.
- Introduce a local target for B&NES of 36g/m³ of NO₂ (lower than the national legal limit of 40), to ensure momentum on air quality is maintained, and to **use air quality as a measure of success** for our wider transport policy.
- Use the Council's new moving traffic powers, to enable **more effective enforcement** for the benefit of all road and pavement users.
- Act to limit **HGVs on our city streets, rural roads, towns and villages** including investigating a Clean Air Zone for the A37 and stopping the A37/A4 link road that would make the A37 a main route for HGVs.
- Introduce a public engagement programme focusing on the health benefits of using alternative modes to the car, and **encouraging individuals to aim to reduce their car use by 25%**.





CLEANER AND SAFER STREETS

OUR RECORD OF ACTION

The Liberal Democrats have spent the past four years reversing Tory cuts and improving the cleanliness and safety of our streets and roads.

- The last budget set by the Tory Council was the culmination of years of cuts to street cleaning that saw Bath hit the headlines as a dirty city. In our first summer the Lib Dems piped **£100,000 of emergency funds** into reversing the worst of the cuts: **cleaning up Bath city centre** and **restoring leaf clearing** across B&NES that autumn following years of complaints about unsafe streets.
- We then invested a **further £100,000 a year** to reverse the cuts that saw most of the residential streets in the district get very little cleaning service from B&NES Council, because all our streets deserve to be clean, not just the shopping areas.
- We went on to **double A and B road litter picking** in North East Somerset from once to twice per year, with action four times per year on the most littered A Roads like the A4, A37 and A36.
- We then introduced a **major package of investment into cleaner streets**, including a mobile team to cut back vegetation and clean signs, free graffiti cleaning on private homes for the first time and stopping the use of chemicals on street weeds by investing an **extra £100,000 in manual clearing instead**.
- Over the past year we have run **36 Clean and Green Weeks** across B&NES, with additional crews to run weeks of street cleaning action in local communities, responding to resident and councillor priorities.
- We invested in **larger waste and recycling collection crews**, along with in-cab technology, to reduce missed collections and give crews the time they need to pick up any recycling they drop.
- We adopted a **zero tolerance approach to fly tipping and littering**, employing extra enforcement officers to investigate all cases and issue fines or prosecute where there is evidence. This included covert CCTV cameras to catch litter louts, and staff to enforce dog fouling by-laws. We also **sacked the Tory private litter army** that did no more than chase easy targets in Bath city centre to turn a profit. The result was that fines issued tripled and fly tipping tonnages dropped by two thirds.
- We **audited pavement repair needs** across the district for the first time and invested more in repairing pavements.
- We listened to residents who complained that many of our gullies/drains across the district were missed when cleaning tankers visited. We invested in an **extra tanker to increase gulley cleaning by 50% each year**.
- We have **invested heavily in safer streets**, including tripling the number of road lines that are repainted each year, refilling grit bins more frequently, protected our rural gritter routes from cut backs and we are building a second salt store in Keynsham to double our winter gritting supplies to protect against increasingly harsh winters.
- We have also started to **reverse cuts to road repairs**, investing an **extra £2.2m this year** to fix more roads and pavements, arresting the decline in the state of our roads. We continued this level of investment into the coming year.



- We **improved road safety** across the district by introducing **20mph zones and safer crossing points**. We have started to introduce Liveable Neighbourhoods to create communities that are safer to walk around.
- We **re-opened Bath's Police** station so residents can feel safer on our streets.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE

Over the next four years we will go even further to ensure our streets are clean, regularising our investments in street cleaning and going even further.

We will:

- Bring in a rolling programme to **double A and B road litter picking** so roads are **picked 4 times over the autumn and spring**, with **picks every fortnight** on the busiest A roads in North East Somerset, expanding the number of roads picked, and including the gateway roads into Bath (Bristol Roads, London Road, Wellsway and Lansdown Road).
- Bring in a **comprehensive street cleaning programme** where every residential street is inspected for litter every fortnight with litter picking as needed, coinciding with recycling collection days.
- Continuing our **war on litter and fly-tipping**, ensuring every offence is enforced where there is the evidence to do so and developing new techniques for enforcement of littering and fly-tipping.
- Deliver a solution for **weed removal that does not use chemicals** but ensures weeds are well-controlled.
- Roll out more **public recycling bins**, alongside an expansion in the number of litter bins.
- **Hold producers responsible** for the litter their businesses create.
- Introduce **common waste and recycling collections in the city centre** to reduce the number of collection vehicles and minimise the time commercial bins are left on the street.
- **Replace household recycling boxes** with ones with more effective lids, to reduce the amount of litter created in the kerbside recycling process.
- As a World Heritage City, continue to press the government for **greater powers to control gull numbers** to reduce gull droppings and attacks by gulls on rubbish bags.

In our effort to make even more improvements to fix our roads and make them safer we will:

- Strengthen controls over speeding cars on our roads by **continuing to roll out 20mph zones** where communities ask for them. We will also ask the government to **make councils responsible for the enforcement of speeding**, and allow councils to use fine incomes to invest in substantial levels of enforcement to bring speeds down to a safe level in our communities.
- Provide a greater level of investment in **fixing our broken roads** that gradually improves our network of roads, rather than allowing them to degrade over time. We will **increase our investment in road repairs each year** until we reach this steady state.



- Give higher priority to **fixing and improving broken pavements and urban footpaths**, and **improving wheelchair accessibility**, whilst ensuring enough street lighting in urban areas so our streets feel safe at night.
- Call on the Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner to **invest in more visible police patrols** on our streets.
- Work towards **even more regular refreshing of lines on our streets**, by maintaining our increased level of investment in line painting.
- Expand our **roll-out of Liveable Neighbourhoods**, working with residents to make their communities safer to walk around.
- As new **LED street lighting** is introduced make sure that it is both a colour that is nature-friendly (i.e. towards the redder end of the white spectrum) and directional so that it points down towards street.





MORE LOCAL THINGS TO DO

The Lib Dems have invested in parks, play areas and things to do and are improving green open spaces and routes along waterways for communities across Bath and North East Somerset.

Under our leadership the Council is managing more land for nature, cutting the use of chemical herbicides and planting thousands of trees and wildflowers.

Despite the challenge of the pandemic, we have also invested in new leisure facilities that are fit for the future and will help to get more people active.

OUR RECORD OF ACTION

We:

- **Invested in play areas and playgrounds across B&NES** including a new inclusive play area at Alexandra Park with specialist equipment for children with disabilities, and refurbished equipment at many other sites across B&NES.
- **Delivered major capital projects to improve local parks** including the £3.4m renovation of historic Sydney Gardens which included a new children's play area, refurbished tennis courts and community facilities. A major project is also underway to improve Keynsham Memorial Park for local people and visitors.
- **Are delivering strategic projects to improve and better connect open spaces** including the Bath Riverline project which will create a new linear park along the river, and also a new walking and cycling trail around Chew Valley Lake.
- **Made changes to ensure that more Council land is managed for nature**, reducing mowing in some green spaces to protect wildlife habitats and biodiversity, and supporting communities to plant bulbs and wildflowers. We also banned the use of weedkillers containing glyphosate in the treatment of street weeds and parks, except to control invasive species.
- **Planted thousands of new native trees in open spaces and parks working with** community groups of volunteers. We also held popular discounted tree sales, making thousands of trees available for residents to plant in their own gardens.
- **Protected Bathampton Meadows from development**, transferring the land to the National Trust who will protect, enhance and manage the land as a green corridor for future generations to enjoy.
- **Led projects to re-imagine green space leisure sites and bring popular sites back into use** so that they are fit for the future. We invested in re-opening Cleveland Pools, Britain's oldest lido, and in plans to improve indoor and outdoor facilities at Odd Down. We also restored a golf course, with the addition of foot-golf and a café, at the Approach golf course.
- Worked with the Friends of **Lyncombe Fields Community Interest Company** to return Lyncombe Fields to the management of the land for the public good, conserving and enhancing its biodiversity and maintaining its wild nature whilst safeguarding public access.
- Delivered the long-awaited **skate park in Alice Park** providing a facility for young people on the east of the city.



OUR PROMISE OF MORE

We will:

- **Continue to invest in local play and community spaces in B&NES** – finding new ways to involve children and young people in the improvement of local parks and playgrounds, and working with local schools to involve school children in making improvements for nature.
- **Work with town and parish councils to improve youth provision in every part of North East Somerset**, finding the right solutions for each community, including a mobile youth club for our villages
- **Extend green infrastructure projects to create new walking and cycle ways**, exploring extensions to the Bath Riverline Project to Saltford – creating a new accessible river side path along the river; and an extension to the Midsomer Norton Greenway with the goal of creating an off-road Midsomer Norton to Bristol cycle and walking route.
- **Champion safety and access issues along the River Avon** and its tributaries. We will work with partners to enable access to the water for leisure use and maintain pressure for year-on-year improvements in water quality.
- **Establish a new ecology centre** for Bath and North East Somerset to enable and encourage learning about the natural environment across all age groups.
- **Support community food growing** by identifying new spaces for community allotments in partnership with local growers.
- **Strengthen planning policies for nature**, increasing biodiversity gains from new development – beyond the statutory minimum of 10% (B&NES has an ambition to go to 15% in the next Local Plan ahead of government mandate). We will also explore how planning policy can be strengthened to discourage the paving of front gardens in order to reduce water run-off.
- **Continue to green our urban centres**, increasing the number of street trees in high priority areas such as pollution hot spots and community spaces that need shade including schools and playgrounds.
- **Create new health and well-being opportunities in parks**. Recognising the importance of exercise for public health and wellbeing, we will work with partners to provide more opportunities for people to exercise and get active in parks and open spaces. We will install more free-to-use exercise equipment and provide more free community fitness sessions.
- **Extend the residents' Discovery Card to offer discounts to local leisure facilities** including Cleveland Pools, and work to increase the uptake of discovery cards by local residents making sure ease of application is not a barrier.





CHAMPIONING OUR ECONOMY, HERITAGE AND CULTURE

The Economy of Bath is the beating heart of the region, supported by Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock, as well as our rural economy.

As Liberal Democrats we are intrinsically pro-European and Internationalist, and this will underly our vision for B&NES and its economy. We have a unique economic advantage in our heritage assets, our cultural offerings, our countryside and our two universities. Our ambition is to build on these whilst supporting local entrepreneurs and employers to develop new businesses to drive a diverse, sustainable and green economy.

Providing residents and businesses with the right infrastructure will also be key to delivering our ambition to make BANES a destination of choice for entrepreneurs and new business start-ups, especially new businesses arising from our two Universities.

We will work with Bristol and South Gloucestershire, via the West of England Combined Authority (WECA), and the Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure Bath, with North East Somerset, boosts its position within the region, and maximises its international reputation.

Footfall statistics show that Bath is recovering faster than other cities in the West of England and we will ensure that our visitor economy is fully supported. Maintaining clean and vibrant streets, prioritised for people, will enhance our offering to visitors from far and wide, boosting our retail offering and showing off our heritage assets to their fullest.

We are seeking to green the economy, by shortening and localising supply chains, by greening tourism, by supporting existing businesses to become more energy efficient, and by developing new businesses in fields connected to green tech, green construction or transport, or the circular economy.

Building on Bath's status as the only entire city in the UK to be designated a World Heritage Site, we will appoint an "Architect in Residence" to help enhance the architectural excellence of the city through emphasising cohesive, dynamic design.

OUR RECORD OF ACTION

We:

- **Delivered Bath Quays South** – the first significant office development in Bath for 20 years, providing space for business to grow and rental income for the Council.
- **Advanced the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone** – getting planning to conclusion to enable the next stage of this exciting development in the Somer Valley – bringing new local jobs and helping people live and work locally.
- **Moved ahead with Twerton, Southdown and Weston High Street regeneration projects** –breathing new life into areas which have suffered from the national decline of the high street,. working with local people and businesses on projects to improve the public realm
- **Improved Bath City Centre** – working with Bath BID (Business Improvement District) to provide new street furniture, planters and parklets to make Bath a more pleasant place to live, work and visit.
- **Achieved Bath's 2nd UNESCO world heritage designation** (as one of eleven **Great Spa Towns of Europe**) – the only location in the UK to achieve this.



- **Redeveloped Keynsham High Street and Temple Street**– a substantial multi million pound investment in the centre of Keynsham resulting in a High Street with higher footfall than before Covid and providing better facilities for pedestrians and cyclists and significant improvements to the public space.
- **Transformed Midsomer Norton Town Hall**– working with the Town Council to redevelop the Town Hall, reinstate the Victorian Market Hall and provide much needed community space.
- **Introduced a new Cabinet role of Economic Growth Development and Regeneration** – to promote B&NES as a great place to start and run a business, and to develop strong links between the Council and our business community.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: CULTURAL ECONOMY

We will:

- Continue to work with key partners, cultural venues, universities, organisers, deliverers and facilitators to ensure the region’s cultural offerings are recognised as a key economic driver.
- Nurture and promote Bath as a Festival City, renowned both nationally and internationally for its dynamic and inclusive cultural offering.
- Continue to support events to enhance civic pride, and provide economic boosts for our cities and towns.
- Look to **better utilise off peak months to boost visitors**, seek to extend visitor stays, and maximise opportunities from project such as the Riverline.
- **Aid the recovery of the creative workforce** in our region by continuing to promote local cultural activities. We recognise that Bath and North East Somerset is blessed with some incredible creative talent. We also recognise that access to cultural activities and events offers key health and wellbeing benefits for our residents in Bath and North East Somerset.
- Continue delivering on our exciting vision for our **internationally important Fashion Museum** based around the development of a Fashion Quarter, having identified a new home for it in the heart of the city, and a new mission as a home of sustainable fashion.
- Continue to **maintain and enhance our library service**, including supporting community libraries.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: RETAIL ECONOMY

We will:

- Continue to deliver the **High Street Renewal Programme** to deliver for our high streets, especially in Twerton and Southdown. We will look to support these activities with new measures to boost footfall in Keynsham, Radstock and Midsomer Norton.
- Continue to recognise the importance of a vibrant high street economy for residents and visitors through taking a **highly proactive and successful approach to filling Council owned retail units** *[at the time of writing only 5 properties were empty, all needing building works before reletting]*, and will encourage the private sector to do likewise.



- Continue to address the cleanliness of our streets. Having ended the era of Tory cuts, we will continue to **increase investment in street cleaning** over the next 4 years.
- Seek **to improve Wi-Fi connectivity in our towns and city**, to promote productivity and support payment systems in all businesses.
- Continue to deliver revitalisation of our existing retail centres with bold and imaginative designs, such as the new plans for the **Milsom Street Quarter** bringing together a world beating fashion museum with the world of design as part of a new district for Bath promoting makers and designers.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: VISITOR ECONOMY

We will:

- Continue to support the visitor economy, by looking for new opportunities **to create and support destinations around Bath and North East Somerset**.
- Look **to encourage 'Green Tourism'**, developing rural greenways and getting visitors to stay for longer and to travel around by sustainable means.
- **Deliver safer cycle routes to visitor destinations** outside the city centre, such as the American Museum, and Fairfield House. We will also seek **to extend the cycle path around Chew Valley Lake**, if the ecological issues permit.
- **Secure Weston Island as an Arts/Cultural destination** for the city, and seek to open up access to the island for the local communities and economies of Twerton and Newbridge. As well as art space, this would include leisure and retail offerings.
- Seek to **strengthen the planning system** to better protect local communities. Whilst we support the opportunities afforded by Airbnb for residents to maximise income from their spare rooms, we will continue to oppose the loss of entire homes from the housing market and the creation of 'party houses' and will use the opportunity to licence whole-house B&Bs should central government allow this.
- Work with the eleven municipal members of the **Great Spa Towns of Europe Association** to develop sustainable tourism offers.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: CREATIVE / DIGITAL ECONOMY

The most important, growing sector is the digital economy. We are working with both our Universities to look at ways of retaining new business start-ups within the city. This includes establishing a creative zone around the Locksbrook Industrial Estate, and building on the start-up support already in place in the city of Bath.

Whilst we recognize the importance of nurturing new business talent in our towns and city, our planning policies need to provide truly affordable homes for people to live in and affordable office/creative spaces for our entrepreneurs. We will continue to work with the different business sectors and developers to ensure the right sort of business space is available in our towns and the city of Bath.

Our ambition to secure new business start-ups from whatever sector in our region will help to support our existing Business-to-Business creative economy.



OUR PROMISE OF MORE: INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

We will:

- Work with all stakeholders **to ensure the heritage buildings in Bath can receive full fibre connectivity, and a fully upgraded 5G network.** We recognize that underpinning our economic vision for Bath and North East Somerset, is modern infrastructure. Whilst our transport policies will seek to reduce congestion, businesses both old and new need modern fibre and mobile connectivity.
- Work with the private sector to ensure developments in Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock are able to offer the latest infrastructure to prospective business customers, and those who work from home.
- Continue to work with the National Grid to ensure our electrical grid is upgraded as soon as possible to support a vibrant localised renewable energy sector and EV charging in our homes and businesses, as well as business fleets. We will **help the transition to electric vehicles for all.**
- Develop **charging hubs to support EVs and eCar clubs.**
- Look for opportunities to work with others to **develop Green Hydrogen infrastructure** in our region.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: FOOD ECONOMY

We will:

- Look to **support innovation regeneration and localisation in food production and farming.** We recognise that the Climate Emergency and geo-politics are providing challenges to food equality, food quality, and our ability to feed ourselves.
- Look to **support innovation, regeneration and localisation in food production and farming** by utilizing available funding, e.g. the Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Seek to support local food production within and on the outskirts of our towns and city, **by trialling demonstration and prototyping zones** where the policy environment is supportive of novel approaches, such as agroecological market gardens, cooperative allotments, Community Supported Agriculture and Land Trusts seeking to grow and process food or other plant-based products such as natural fibre sustainably.
- Build on the heritage of market gardens which surrounded Bath until the 1950s, whilst supporting local entrepreneurs, co-operative producers and the wider economy. This might include, for instance, helping to facilitate a regional food hub and sector training.
- Work with key partners to explore how we might create a similar, positive policy environment for low impact agricultural dwellings and other buildings to support the long term viability of **urban agriculture.**

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: WELLBEING ECONOMY

Bath is a UNESCO Spa City. For 2,000 years or more people have settled in or visited Bath because of its natural and 'healing' thermal waters. The Romans created the first built spaces dedicated to wellness, and the Georgians set out a visionary 'therapeutic landscape', with parks and promenades where people could 'take the cure'.



We will:

- Support the development of Bath and its surrounding areas, as a **modern expression of a Wellbeing City**, to benefit residents, whilst also attracting investment, employers and visitors. We share the vision of Bath as a healthy and sustainable city.
- Look to support the creation of **more water features in the city**, and innovative ideas for bringing the green, natural world into the built environment. We will work with our stakeholders to create **activity spaces, relaxation spaces and play spaces**, in order to promote good physical and mental health for all.
- Seek to expand and promote the **Wellbeing Economy**, as an opportunity for our towns and villages in North East Somerset.
- Support **Bath BID** and the **ReBalance Bath Festival of Wellbeing**, first one to be held in 2023 with the second in 2024 already being planned.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: ARCHITECT IN RESIDENCE

We will seek to appoint an Architect in Residence who will:

- Make contributions to creative building design outcomes, responding to 'place' in B&NES with a focus on the World Heritage City of Bath.
- Advise on desired excellence in design, or respond to specific design challenges of individual or grouped sites or locations.
- Help architects (national, regional or local) to improve the output from their practice, by facilitating better and more relevant local design (eg avoiding pastiche).
- Research relevant techniques, explore the use of better design workshops, and give public or targeted lectures, essentially helping owners, developers, builders, architects and other relevant professionals to understand better the requirements of our city in design terms.
- Have the opportunity to influence design at the very early concept stage of development, before ideas, sketches and proposals get set in people's minds, and become much harder to change.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: SOMER VALLEY ENTERPRISE ZONE

We have been listening carefully to the many local people about the Somer Valley Enterprise Zone (SVEZ). Bringing new jobs to the area is an opportunity to reduce car journeys through Farrington Gurney as more Somer Valley residents can work at the SVEZ rather than commute to Bristol. However, we recognise it is important that we do not replace cars with HGVs and that we do not undermine the Midsomer Norton high street. The SVEZ should focus on start-ups, creative and high-tech industries with the office space to support them. The following principles will be applied:

- It should not be an industrial estate that would create a flow of HGVs and it should not be a retail park that threatens the High Street in Midsomer Norton.
- It should create good quality jobs for residents that will reduce cars through Farrington Gurney as fewer people commute to Bristol.
- It can have a food outlet that serves the businesses on site but this must not be a drive-thru outlet that will add litter to our roads.



- A cycle path between Farrington Gurney and Midsomer Norton must be in place before businesses move in, along with promised road improvements, and a firm plan in place to extend the cycle track north to Bristol .
- The SVEZ must be served by buses right from the start.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: GENERAL ECONOMY

We will:

- **Implement the B&NES Economic Strategy** – promoting green economic growth across our district with fairness and sustainability as key outcomes.
- Work to make B&NES a new centre for **health and science & technology** business.
- Look to support our local higher educational establishments, not just as big employers, but as drivers of the local economy whilst minimising their impact on congestion and air quality. Very often, it is hard to predict what areas of the economy might take off. Right now we have a thriving digital economy, but we must be ready for the new. It is therefore important to maintain **a positive and flexible policy environment**, to nurture graduate talent as the employers of the future.
- Seek to **develop civic agreements with both universities** which are fit for the challenges of the 21st century, including seeking commitments to reduce car journeys and support the Student Community Partnership.
- Build on our current work with employers to sponsor affordable housing for employees by widening this to explore **affordable housing for apprentices**. It is vital that we **support opportunities for young people** to take up apprenticeships in our local businesses and providing suitable accommodation is part of that.
- Continue to promote the work of our Employment Hubs and Skills Pods, as well as iStart, to ensure that our residents have the skills that our small businesses need to expand and grow.
- Support local families, particularly in our rural communities, who want to stay in their homes by allowing the **extension volume for the smallest workers' cottages to increase** from the current 33%.
- Continue to **ensure the Council's procurement process favours local businesses**, and ensure that the Council pays SME invoices in a timely and reliable manner to **support the cashflow of small businesses**.
- Continue to develop plans for the **Cattle Market car park and Cornmarket** bringing housing and employment to these long neglected sites
- Continue the development of **Bath Quays North** delivery of an exciting mix of office, science and health technology lab space, and housing.
- Develop the **Riverside Quarter** with new uses for the Guildhall and Colonnades bringing new life to this often overlooked part of our World Heritage City.
- Continue to work closely with WECA on the corridor improvements (A367, A37 and A4) that will help to boost revenue opportunities for our residents, recognising that much of our region looks to Bristol as an economic driver.
- Look to deliver on the recommendations of the "Bath with NES: Ambitious Together Report, 2021".



- Work with the Town Council in **Midsomer Norton** to implement the £2.2 million High Street Renewal Programme.
- Work with the Town Council to bring new life, community space and new business to **Radstock** through the **Town Centre Regeneration plan** – a significant project to improve the centre of Radstock.
- Support businesses in rural areas that provide a lifeline for many, and encourage visitors to support our rural economy.





DELIVERING THE RIGHT HOUSES IN THE RIGHT PLACES

There is a housing crisis in our area. This situation must change.

This crisis means that:

- local people are priced out;
- extended families are split up;
- unethical landlords can get away with terrible quality housing;
- our homes are less effective.

Bath and North East Somerset housing is expensive. When compared to income, it is amongst the most expensive in the UK. Consequently, fewer first time buyers are able to get a foothold on the housing ladder. More people are stuck renting with no prospect of ever buying.

Bath and North East Somerset housing has a legacy of old, environmentally inefficient stock, so poorer households, pensioners and the elderly, and families with a disabled member, are all at risk of fuel poverty, possibly unable to heat their homes. The Liberal Democrats will make it easier for those living in older properties to retrofit their homes for greater energy efficiency, and to fit renewable energy technologies, through the planning system, as well as through provision of advice and pointers to sources of funding

Speculative building, triggered by our two successful universities, has put pressure on housing in Bath and the surrounding villages. The Green Belt limits the options available to build our way out of our problems.

Experience shows that building houses in our villages means the homes are too expensive for local families and creates additional and longer car journeys. Some villages have now reached capacity and cannot support any more housing without compromising their unique identity, while other villages are crying out for more housing to bring in people who can support the shops, bus routes, post offices and pubs.

To tackle the housing problems in B&NES we need a council that understands these local needs and can then deliver appropriate solutions.

We need to build a future, now, that we can all afford to live in.

We will achieve our aims by:

- Building and enabling more social housing and truly affordable housing
- Continuing to improve the quality of rented housing
- Making our housing the greenest in the UK
- Ensuring that new buildings meet the needs of the whole community
- Ensuring new building is supported by the community and with necessary infrastructure including convenient and affordable alternatives to the private car
- Learning from previous successes and failures.



OUR RECORD OF ACTION

We:

- **Delivered the first general needs council houses for a generation** – first units at 117 Newbridge Hill; 24 supported housing units and the Council's first Shared Ownership programme.
- Are already establishing a **pipeline of nearly 200 additional general-needs council houses** to be delivered in the short-to-medium term. Phase one of this saw the Council approve capital funding of over £12m for c.50 units.
- Submitted a planning application for **8 units at Argyle Works** in Bath – could have been student accommodation. This application was commended by the Planning Committee during its consideration.
- Initiated the planning process for the first **North East Somerset Council Houses** in Keynsham.
- Achieved a **c.40% improvement in the building's energy efficiency** at the supported housing scheme in Grosvenor House.
- Updated planning rules so all new council housing will be to **highest environmental standards**.
- **Expanded** the number of units available for **emergency/temporary accommodation** – including in Theobald House in Bath.
- Included a significant line in the 2022/23 Capital Budget for **new council houses**. These are funded by borrowing but the costs are covered through associated housing income.
- **Strengthened planning policy for HMOs** requiring planning permission if the size is increased from small to large.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: BUILDING AND ENABLING MORE SOCIAL HOUSING AND TRULY AFFORDABLE HOUSING

We will:

- Aim for **100s of council house units by 2027**, with an aspiration of **over 1,000 units by 2030**. To achieve this, we will reopen the Council's Housing Revenue Account.
- **Stop developers dodging affordable home quotas** and strengthen enforcement.
- Lobby government to change planning rules so that, when **developers overpay for land**, the **Council is not forced to drop affordable housing quotas** because of the consequent lack of "viability" of development.
- Make all so-called '**viability agreements**' public.
- Introduce local rules to ensure the **best use of new build properties**.
- Campaign to **increase council tax for second-home owners**.
- Support new housing concepts and innovation such as **micro/eco-housing projects**.



- Commit to preserving the individuality and distinctive nature of our villages by **not forcing allocations on villages** but working with them to identify which villages want housing growth to address local need (except where land prices mean that housing built would be genuinely affordable to local residents).
- Support communities who wish to grow to **keep local amenities viable**.
- Direct house building to locations where the land will be cheap enough that **homes will be more affordable**, ideally on **brownfield sites**.
- Use the Local Plan to push back against **inappropriate hotel developments** that use land which could be used for affordable housing.
- Ensure developments come with the **right infrastructure** to support them.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: CONTINUING TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF RENTED HOUSING

We will support renters by:

- Improving the visibility of **appropriate information about rogue landlords**.
- Working with **renting agencies** across B&NES to make **information more visible**.
- Ensuring that the **Additional Licencing scheme** for small Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) is operating correctly throughout B&NES.
- Ensuring that potential renters know what to expect.
- Engaging with landlords of all sizes and types to ensure that **every home is high quality and energy efficient**.
- Ensuring that the **energy efficiency information** about a property is **easily available** to potential renters.

We will support landlords by:

- **Rigorously pursuing prosecutions** against those landlords who fail to meet standards.
- Making more effective use of the **Rogue Landlord Register**.
- Working with organisations so that **landlords** know their **duties and obligations**.
- Helping **landlords** to know the **applicable laws and restrictions**.
- Helping **landlords** understand the local plan and the **needs of local communities**.
- Making building **renovation opportunities** visible to the local community.
- Ensuring that **no one type of property dominates** a community.
- Ensuring that **infrastructure and parking requirements** are realistically considered and enforced.
- Making information about the benefits of **highly effective, "green" home improvements** easily available.



We will support students and young people by:

- Ensuring that there is **housing available for students and young people**, with a **focus on on-campus accommodation** whilst ensuring HMOs are safe and of good quality.
- Working with the Student Community Partnership and the Universities.
- Working with young people's organisations and local employers.
- Ensuring that **young people** understand their **duties and responsibilities** to our communities.
- Helping renters understand their **housing rights** and making it easy to report any housing problems.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: MAKING OUR HOUSING THE GREENEST IN THE UK

B&NES has a large stock of highly desirable older housing. But much of the housing stock is unsuited to the needs of future residents.

We will:

- Set out the needs of future residents as a timeline.
- Document how the efficiency of a home relates to both carbon footprint and cost of living.
- Direct all house-building to areas of highest density employment to reduce the length of journeys needed, except where local communities identify housing need or where there are opportunities for genuinely affordable homes. We will do this by a) working with willing village communities to identify and set out the number, location, type and size of housing they have identified a need for and b) ending the distinction between RA1 and RA2 villages and adopting "20-minute neighbourhood" inspired policies that allow housing allocation only to villages that themselves identify a housing need or where the development site would be within a 20-minute round walk of a primary school, shop, community meeting place, and has a direct bus service to a large urban centre that can be reached in 20 minutes by a combination of walking and bus.
- Set out a plan to reduce the carbon footprint of the whole housing stock by **supporting home energy improvements through retrofitting**. We will work with the community and property owners to try to enact the plan. We will strive to achieve a near-term community-wide **improvement in carbon footprint of 20%**.
- Investigate sources for **continuous sustained investment** in housing.
- Tighten local house building regulations to **improve the energy efficiency** of new homes.
- Resist economic sites in the Somer Valley being used for schemes which allocate 100% of available space to housing where **jobs could be created through development** of other uses that would also **reduce commuting**.
- Ensure that new developments are built with **sustainable infrastructure** in mind, including **internet connectivity** to enable home working and reduce the reliance on the car.



- Ensure that future developments provide **electric vehicle charging facilities** where parking is provided.
- Aim for **car-free housing developments in the city centre** that are close to sustainable transport links.
- **Resist overflow housing from Bristol** and assist with flood defences to allow Bristol to build more housing.
- **Preserve the Green Belt**, allow for “green buffers” between urban developments, and develop “**green corridors**” that link green and open spaces forming a green urban network.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE: LEARNING FROM PREVIOUS SUCCESS AND FAILURE

We will:

- Ensure that the **Local Plan is current**.
- Ensure that the **Local Plan reflects the needs of B&NES communities** and that there is a strong emphasise on consultation at every stage.
- Ensure that the **Local Plan is well known and well understood**.
- Stop developers **dodging affordable home quotas**.
- Where developers try to adjust their plans after permission is granted, strongly presume that **original plans should be adhered to** as closely as possible unless there are very strong justifications.
- Ensure that homes are built at the **best density for the location**.
- Address the **needs of boaters in our area**, develop appropriate policies in the Local Plan, and, working with neighbouring authorities, aim to provide suitable facilities for boaters in one or more sustainable locations.
- Ensure that **green spaces, food growing opportunities and trees** are planned into all proposals.
- Ensure that the **character and history** of every location is reflected in any new developments.





SUPPORTING VULNERABLE ADULTS

OUR RECORD OF ACTION

We:

- **Worked with partners throughout the pandemic** to maintain health and care provision, re-designing services to ensure that vulnerable people receive the support they need.
- Initiated a **transformation programme for Adult Social Care** that aims to streamline and modernise the way that services are provided. This has included bringing people back from out-of-area placements, enabling better contact with friends and family.
- Took measures to **address skills shortages in the Social Care sector** by increasing pay, developing recruitment campaigns and setting up a joint domiciliary care service with the Royal United Hospital (RUH) that has bought more carers into the area.
- Introduced a **Fair Charging Framework for Adult Social Care** that removed inconsistencies in charging and also helped with our preparation for the governments Social Care reforms (which have been put on hold until 2025).
- Brought the **Community Resource Centre services back in house** and initiated a comprehensive investment and modernisation programme to raise standards.
- Brought the **Community Equipment Service back in house**, rapidly improving the service provided.
- Took the **decision not to extend the community health and care contract** after Virgin Care was unexpectedly acquired by a private equity company and started the process to **transfer these services back in house in March '24**.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE

We will:

- Participate as an active partner in the **new Integrated Care arrangements**, ensuring that we work with local partners to reduce inequalities and deliver accessible, effective and integrated care services that meet the needs of our local residents.
- Build on the decision to end the Virgin Care/HCRG contract in 2024 by **bringing Social Care staff back in-house** to provide continuity and stability for staff and service users and development opportunities for staff.
- Help to **re-build and extend community services**, many of which were disrupted by the pandemic, to ensure residents have access to comprehensive local support networks to support their health and well being and to prevent crises from occurring.
- Ensure that all areas of the Council play an active part in **supporting disabled and older people to live independent lives** through inclusive employment policies, transport provision and by developing age/disability accessible public spaces.



- Work with partners to ensure B&NES becomes an **Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly Community**, reducing the risk of isolation for our older residents.
- Develop services that enable the majority of people with additional health and care needs to remain **supported safely in their own home**, if that is their choice.
- Work with partners to improve access to a broad range of **local mental health services**, including community based support services as well as specialist care for those with high levels of need.
- Extend **access to Advocacy services**, beyond statutory provision to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to participate meaningfully in significant decisions that affect their lives.
- Work with our Housing colleagues to develop more **local accommodation for people with complex needs**, enabling them to stay in or return to B&NES if they have been placed out of area.
- Continue to enhance both Children's and Adults services, especially the difficult **transition period between Children's Services and Adult care** for those with ongoing health and care needs.
- Continue our policy of making sure **no person is forced to sleep rough** and every rough sleeper is offered accommodation.
- Continue to develop our **temporary homes offering** as part of our B&NES Homes programme for families and individuals made who are homeless.





DELIVERING FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

As Liberal Democrats we believe in equality of opportunity for all, and that must start with our children. Children can gain that equality of opportunity only if they are free from poverty, have access to good education, and feel safe and secure. We will strive, in partnership with other agencies and voluntary organisations, to make sure every child in B&NES benefits from these basic conditions for success. This will underpin all aspects of our policy supporting children and young people.

Through working with the community, Youth Service providers, parks and leisure teams, the wider Council, and other partners we will make sure there are activities, and places for young people to be, across the area. All children should be able to enjoy their childhood with a range of experiences that encourage them to be who they are, and to imagine who they could be.

EDUCATION

We believe all children have the right to a good education and will make sure children have access to appropriate schools within Bath & North East Somerset. With so many schools becoming Academies across B&NES we have lost many traditional Local Authority levers that would normally allow us improve education.

Despite that, we will:

- As representatives of the community, use our powers to **hold the system to account** and influence the delivery of high-quality education to all pupils in the area.
- Seek a positive programme to **bridge attainment gaps** where they still exist. Part of this will involve new ways of engaging and supporting parents as well as their children.
- **Review catchment areas** and the Council's provision of home-to-school transport rules as well as **safe routes to schools**. The current systems work well for many students but not all. In North East Somerset, for example, there is less choice and typically longer travel to school trips.
- Work with the Schools Commissioner for the South West to **encourage Academy Trusts** that work effectively with the Local Authority around **school standards** and how disadvantaged children can be supported close to home.
- Support every school in the area achieves **at least a "Good" OFSTED rating**.
- Continue to work with our universities and colleges on **increasing the scope of education opportunities** and also on mitigating the impact that growth in these institutions has on our communities. We recognise that these institutions and the students who attend them are a key part of our local community and culture and we will continue to be part of and to support the **Student Community Partnership**.

VULNERABLE CHILDREN

When we say "every child" we mean "every child", but some children start from a situation that makes them more vulnerable. Deprived areas still exist in B&NES. Health difficulties, and even social, family and peer pressures all need to be considered.

The area has a wealth of good Voluntary Sector providers that the Council supports.



We will:

- Seek a **closer coordinated total children's area sector model** to meet those diverse needs.
- Recognising that social care, health care and education care often overlap, and that B&NES has well-developed arrangements for each, we will develop an **"i-Thrive" model** that meets the needs of the child as opposed to them having to fit into our systems.
- Seek to reduce reliance on providers outside the area for SEND, SEMH and Children in Care facilities through **new local capital funded provision**. Local provision is less disruptive for the child, makes it easier for families to visit, affords closer ability for the Council to check and deliver standards, and reduces the considerable additional cost burden that out-of-area provision brings.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

B&NES Social Care has, for a long time, been rated as "good" by OFSTED but we cannot be complacent.

We will:

- Make a priority commitment to **becoming "Outstanding"** within the next administration.
- Deliver on our commitment to **bring Adult Social Care back from private sector provision** into B&NES direct control. This will allow better staff recruitment, retention, commitment, coordination and flexibility.
- Develop a plan based upon early intervention including **greater investment into our "Connecting Families" provision**, built on taking positive steps to stop children coming into care.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Whether it relates to schools, colleges, universities, training providers, care providers or the voluntary sector we need to be an outward looking authority.

We will:

- Deliver a sector challenge from our area to the **new Integrated Care Board (ICB)** to meet the needs of children in our area.

INVESTMENT

Investing more into services that help support children and families prevents even more needing to be spent at a later stage of individuals lives. Investing £1 early on can save £9 as the child reaches adolescence and young adulthood.

B&NES needs a stronger Vocational Skills option for young people as this is a recognised gap in education provision within the area.

We will:

- Work with Bath College and other partners to investigate funding for redevelopment of the campus, including an **advanced Vocational Skills centre**. Schools will be encouraged to make this happen for young people who struggle with school life.



- Set up a **Family Liaison, virtual facility and Early Years Support** function.
- Research and fund a **new SEND provision** in the area.
- Examine the option of **stopping vastly expensive out-of-area placements** by local investment.
- Commit to improvements in systems and process to **reduce spend on agency staff**.
- Achieve **“Outstanding” OFSTED ratings** for our services.
- Introduce an **“i-Thrive system”** to help ensure young people’s general through to specific needs are being delivered effectively.
- Strongly support schools that wish to **keep the local authority funding model**.
- Commit to **investing in early years support** along a “Surestart” model.





A FIRM FINANCIAL FOUNDATION

Strong finances provide the foundation for a well-run council. Without a solid financial plan it is impossible to carry through with many of our other manifesto commitments.

OUR RECORD OF ACTION

We have:

- **Balanced the books** each year since we took office in 2019.
- **Rebuilt reserves** that had been depleted.
- Introduced **better project management** and planning for major capital schemes.
- Published **regular data** on how the Council is performing.
- Reformed the Council's Property Service to **reduce the number of empty properties** and associated rent losses.
- **Scrapped wasteful projects** such as Bath Library closure and Private Litter enforcement.
- Brought **Adult Social Care services back in house**.
- Kept our **council tax increases to the minimum** possible.
- **Maximised help for businesses** through the pandemic.
- Introduced higher council tax for **long term empty properties**.
- Prioritised local businesses in **local tenders**.
- Published **detailed budget performance reports**.
- Passed an **emergency budget** to protect the Council's finances at the start of the **pandemic** in 2020.
- Revamped the Council's **approach to its empty properties** to ensure these are brought back into use rapidly.
- Published a **five year plan** for the Council's finances.

OUR PROMISE OF MORE

We will:

- Maintain our effective management of the Council's finances and **balance the books each year**.
- Regularly **report our financial performance** in public.
- **Maximise income on our investments** to generate cash for Council services.
- **Never make risky investments** on the money markets.



- **Prioritise investment in environmentally sound funds** and avoid carbon generating investments.
- Prioritise a **major review of Children's Services** to ensure continuing excellent care and value for money (for example, by bringing service back in-area).
- Gather as much **funding from outside the Council** to reduce the costs to local taxpayers.
- Lobby for **additional powers to raise funds locally** from central government.
- Maintain very high rates of **compliance in payment of council tax and business rates**.
- Encourage **external scrutiny** of our finances.
- **Reduce or limit** the extent to which the Council uses **external consultants** and contractors by bringing services in-house under local democratic control.
- **Review the council tax reduction scheme** to make sure it works equitably.





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