

Liberal Democrats



**POSITIVE CHANGE
FOR BIRMINGHAM**



OUR PLAN FOR A
**BRIGHTER
FUTURE**





Left to right:
Group Leader, Cllr Roger Harmer
Party Leader, Rt Hon. Sir Ed Davey
Deputy Group Leader, Cllr Deborah Harries

It is time for change in Birmingham.

Birmingham Labour has let us all down badly with their catastrophic mismanagement of our great City. Labour has 'bankrupted' the Council, left our streets in a mess and hiked our council tax time and time again.

And this really matters. During Labour's time in office, Birmingham has fallen behind, compared with the UK's other major cities. We are now ranked the most deprived local authority area in England, by income deprivation, and have the constituencies with the highest levels of child poverty in the country.

The Positive Liberal Democrat Alternative.

We need a Council that listens to you, acts on your priorities and delivers the basic services efficiently so that we have resources to tackle the deep-seated issues in the City such as high child poverty, low education attainment, high unemployment, low life expectancy and poor housing.

By doing this we can restore our reputation as a well-functioning Council, rebuild pride in our City and take advantage of the opportunities from major projects like the Sports Quarter and HS2 as well as our stellar cultural offer. With good leadership and management, our future can be bright.

It's time for change – but the change offered by the extremes on the left and right would spell disaster for our City, just as we aim to recover from the chaos Labour has left us. We deserve better than that, with a responsive Council that works for you. **Voting Liberal Democrat on May 7 will help build a brighter future for Birmingham.**

Roger Harmer

Deborah Harries

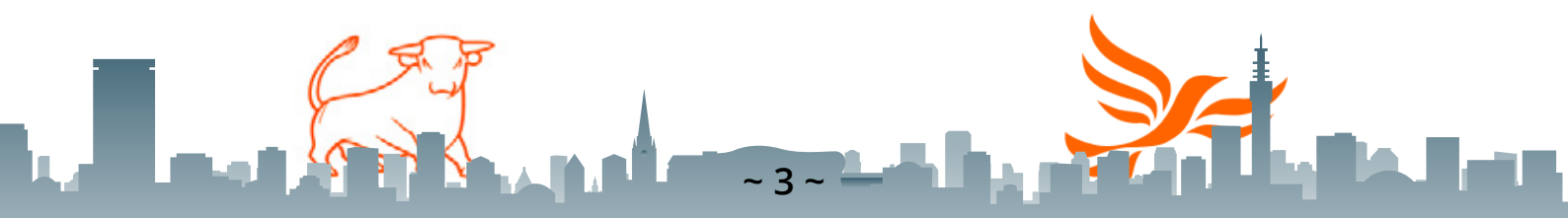
Cleaning up Birmingham

Mismanagement by Birmingham Labour for 14 years has left the City strewn with litter.

We will ensure flytipping is dealt with more promptly across the City and that the whole Council, whether housing, highways or parks, works together to get this done.

We will also bring in more mobile anti-flytipping cameras to catch and prosecute those dumping waste on our streets.

We will resolve the bin strike, modernise the waste service and, over time, bring recycling in Birmingham up to the levels of other cities and then beyond.



Safer Streets and Parks

Birmingham has a major problem with speeding and other forms of dangerous driving, such as red light running.

We will change this by improving enforcement to levels where potential offenders see the chances of being caught as too high to risk.



We will make good on our long-standing campaign to introduce a network of average speed and moving traffic enforcement cameras, so that the minority of bad drivers no longer get away with making the roads dangerous for us all.



Communities Setting Priorities



Birmingham City Council is too remote, centralised and not resident-focused.

We need Council services to be tailored to the particular needs of the different communities across Birmingham.

We also need all Council services, like housing, highways and parks, to work together to deliver the change residents want.

To achieve this, **we will** set up cross-functional neighbourhood teams and develop a structure of area committees that meet with, and respond to, the priorities set by local communities.



How we'll deliver a Better Birmingham

Cleaning up Birmingham

- ✓ One free bulky waste collection per household per year.
- ✓ Reintroduction of special street collections.
- ✓ Dedicated graffiti task force.

Safer Streets and Parks

- ✓ Network of moving traffic enforcement cameras.
- ✓ Expand the network of average speed cameras.
- ✓ Prioritise first time repairs of potholes on main roads.

Communities Setting Priorities

- ✓ Listen to residents and deliver services to meet community needs.
- ✓ Increased 'Community Chest' to for small scale ward projects.
- ✓ Greater community use of Council assets, e.g. libraries, heritage sites.

A common issue across these priorities is ensuring far more effective enforcement, so that there is fairness, with the rules applying to everyone, not just those who choose to follow them.



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Our Positive Record as an Active Opposition

The Liberal Democrats have consistently demonstrated their commitment to the City's key issues during the 2022-2026 Council term, using notices of motion and amendments to drive debate and frequently securing cross-party support.



2026 Birmingham Lib Dem Councillors

Most recently, this includes our **successful amendment to the 2026/7 budget** that will ensure:

- £25m more for road resurfacing.
- Doubling ward “community chest” budgets.
- Extra funds for:
 - Street cleansing;
 - Extended library opening hours;
 - Better road safety;
 - Investment in youth services.



Since the last local elections in 2022, our motions and amendments in full Council meetings have included:

2022

- Calling for improved birth registration and bereavement services, especially to tackle delays that had built up during the pandemic.
- Tackling hate crimes against minority groups.
- Pressing for more action on moving traffic offences such as red light running.
- Confirming our support for Ukraine against Russian aggression.

2023

- Calling for better support for Care Leavers in the City.
- Calling for greater action on road safety.
- Improving the reliability and range of bus routes and reducing fares.
- Arguing that the financial crisis must be used to transform our failing Council.
- Calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Israel / Palestine conflict.

2024

- Protecting our environment via the Climate and Ecology Bill.
- Pushing for the roll out of the delayed Moving Traffic Enforcement cameras.
- Calling for an upgrade of Heartlands Accident & Emergency facilities and retention of urgent treatment services
- Tackling the Child Poverty Crisis in Birmingham.

2025

- Increase action on the Supported Exempt Accommodation crisis in the City.
- Ensuring the Council is more accountable to local communities, reinstating regular ward meetings with better engagement with the Police and Mayor.
- More effective action to tackle the road safety crisis in Birmingham.





Cleaning Up Birmingham

Brummies deserve a clean city to live in and enjoy. The last time the Liberal Democrats were in power, as part of the "Progressive Partnership" (2004-12), this was achieved, with the city winning the 2007 crown of the 'cleanest place in Britain' and becoming overall winner of the Cleaner Britain Awards run by the British Cleaning Council. This is hard to imagine now following 14 years of misrule by Birmingham Labour.

Waste Collection

Most notably, Birmingham Labour has failed disastrously to settle the bin strike, which has now lasted for well over a year. The first priority of a new administration must be to resolve it. The key is for the two sides to talk and come to a common understanding of what the dispute is about, only then can a fair negotiated settlement be agreed. Then we can restart recycling and green waste collections.

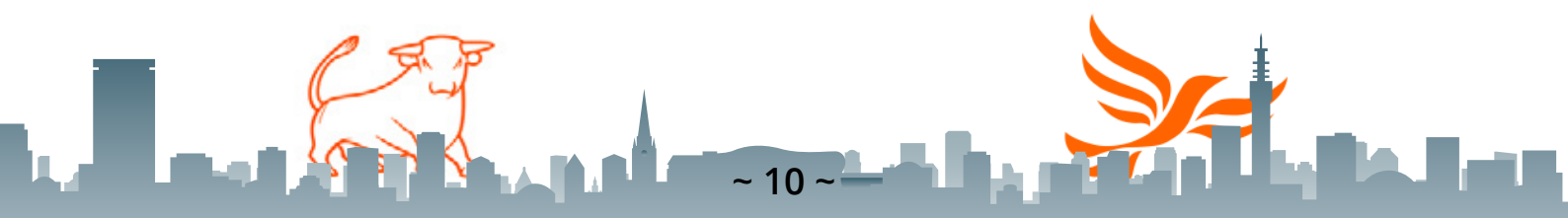
Longer term, repeated bin strikes in Birmingham highlight the costs of keeping such a large service in-house. We will thoroughly road-test the option of contracting it out in three blocks, based on the depot areas. This will have the advantage of taking the refuse service out of equal pay issues. Had the Council done this, as we suggested in our 2018 manifesto, the city could have saved hundreds of millions of pounds that have had to come from higher Council tax bills and service cuts.

Waste services have been a long-running failure of the Labour Council. While the current bin strike has made things worse, there are deeper seated problems that need addressing.

Recycling rates are at an all-time low at 15%, the lowest in the country. Flytipping is at high levels across the City and the service fails to respond to the needs of local communities. As a basic first step, the Council should be aiming to quickly reach the current UK local authority average recycling rate of 45% and then move on towards best-in-class rates currently around 60%.

We will set an ultimate goal of ending the need for incineration of waste. This will require innovative work with partners to evaluate and develop new initiatives, such as high-volume recycling of disposable nappies.

The service needs radical improvement, in order to make significant progress along this road. Some changes are now being trialled, such as the introduction of food waste collection, though they have been significantly delayed by the strike.



But we must be realistic about where we currently are. Therefore, we will maintain weekly collections until services have shown themselves to be completely reliable for a significant level of time. A move to fortnightly residual waste collections is simply not acceptable with the current high level of missed collections.

The strike has highlighted deep-seated inefficiencies in the service, with very low levels of productivity and high levels of missed collections. We will target bringing the service up to the average, modernised levels of productivity of other Councils. This must include, for example, a requirement to clean up spillage properly.

Improved efficiencies should allow the service to be significantly enhanced within current budgetary amounts. We would also seek to drive further efficiencies from the service, with initiatives such as double shifting at depots and a planned programme of electrification of the fleet.

The improvements would include:

- one free bulky waste collection per household per year, initially prioritised towards vulnerable residents, such as older people and those with disabilities as the service is phased in.

Improve the Mobile Household Waste Service and the reintroduction of special street collections, where prioritised by local ward forums.

Street Cleansing

We will reform the street cleansing service for residents, into local teams, responsible for the cleanliness of the area of the City they cover. This would include both scheduled and proactive street cleaning, to respond to local residents and pressures, The scheduled services would be able to be delivered, allowing for normal levels of holiday and sickness. This is good practice that has not been operated in recent years.

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As part of our wider modernisation of the Council's enforcement processes, we would increase the proportion of flytipping prosecutions, with the support of more enforcement cameras. We would improve levels of prosecutions for littering, which is currently over-focused on those who discard cigarette butts in the city centre, rather than being based on local needs and particular issues, such as littering outside take-away shops or areas suffering from rubbish being thrown out of cars.

We will also put greater effort into ensuring businesses (including landlords) have proper waste contracts (commercial licences) to reduce the volume of commercial flytipping.

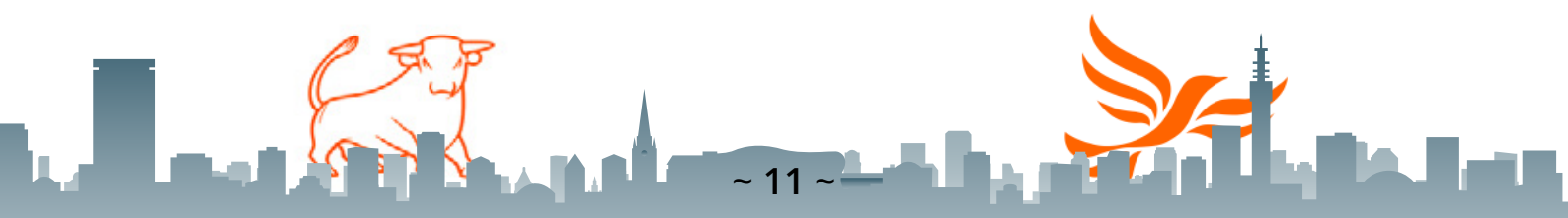
We will target the removal of graffiti tags within a short timescale to discourage taggers. We will set up a dedicated graffiti task force to target prolific taggers.

Where there is support from local residents, we will trial set times each week or month when vehicles should not be parked on each side of residential roads to enable it to be swept properly.

Enhanced enforcement, will respond to the priorities of wards and area committees, and there will be more effective contract management of all external suppliers, such as litter enforcement.

We would continue to work with community groups, making it easier for volunteers to access equipment, such as bags, gloves and litter-pickers, and value this 'army' of volunteer residents. A part of this we will engage with external organisations such as Fix My Street, that enable residents to report environmental issues to the Council, to get better feedback for the Council and to analyse trends.

Our joined-up approach to local, neighbourhood service delivery aims to break down the current demarcations between streets, parks and housing land being cleaned, moving to an approach where if there is waste on Council land it is cleared irrespective of which department owns it.



Safer Streets and Parks

Speeding, dangerous driving and obstructive parking remains a major problem in Birmingham. We need to change the culture to one where the rules of the road are followed. This will require a concerted effort with a much higher level of enforcement for a period until the message gets through.

There is also an opportunity to tighten up the rules on pavement parking. We are in favour of this being used, where there is local support and sufficient enforcement capacity. As part of this process, options to increase on-road parking capacity, for example the use of chevron parking, should be considered.

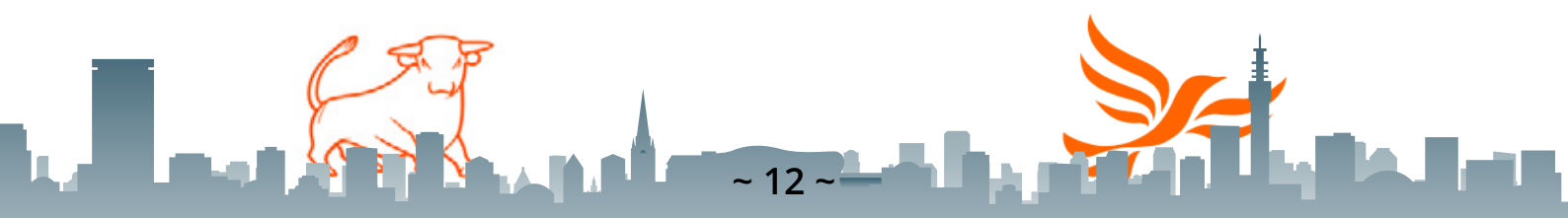
This will have to be developed and delivered in partnership with West Midlands Police, the West Midlands Combined Authority, Better Streets for Birmingham and local communities. Operation Snap has given a positive indication of what can be done but needs strengthening and developing. There needs to be a concerted campaign which includes:

- **Moving Traffic Enforcement Cameras:**
 - Creating a significant network of moving traffic enforcement cameras, to tackle common issues such as red-light running, going the wrong way down one-way streets, and stopping on yellow boxes. This includes some that are mobile, to respond to specific localised issues. Schemes should be developed with ward members and community groups.
- **Average Speed Cameras:**
 - Work with the police to significantly expand the network of average speed cameras.
- **Parking enforcement:**
 - Radically improve Council-delivered parking enforcement, including out of hours capacity in areas requiring it, enabling local communities to prioritise those areas that cause the biggest disruption, and working closely with neighbourhood police teams.
- **Proactive Engagement with the DVLA:**
 - Improve enforcement of cars without tax, MOT and insurance, working with the DVLA and Police.

Many of these issues are tackled by different bodies (the Police and Council on Parking enforcement for example). Residents should be able to report a matter and see it addressed without having to work out which body is responsible for the specific issue affecting them.

There simply isn't enough room on our roads for everyone to get around by car. However our public transport and cycling infrastructure is not good enough for too many journeys. A shift from cars to active travel is our ambition but this must be done by improving the public transport, cycling and pedestrian infrastructure, rather than by penalising drivers who often have little choice for the specific journey they are making. Progress on this has been far too slow in recent years.

Currently the volume of cars on our roads is increasing (witness the Clean Air Zone data showing more cars visiting the city centre) and cars are getting bigger, yet our roads are not, so there needs to be more work with residents and communities to develop local parking solutions, such as resident parking schemes, and local budgets to deliver. With the increase in car size we will investigate the option of offering lower car parking charges to smaller electric cars.



We would look to work with the Combined Authority to prioritise improvements to public transport that would most improve residents' ability to get around the city. This will vary from area to area, e.g. better bus networks, tram extensions.



Our priorities will include:

Speed Reduction:

- We should move to residential roads being 20mph, where there is local support and enforcement capability, along with other local speed reductions tools, such as road-narrowing and signage;

Filling Potholes:

- There is a major problem with pothole repairs, with temporary patches that fail before they are permanently repaired. We will prioritise first time permanent repairs of potholes on main roads as a first step to improving the highways network. We have already secured an additional £25m for highways resurfacing for 2026/27 with our Budget amendment, but while this is being done, it is vital that all potholes on main roads are permanently repaired quickly;

Active Travel:

- We will develop a plan to deliver a network of cycle and walking routes making best use of off-road e.g. central reservations, service roads, parks and green spaces and canal tow paths. We need an integrated network, rather than one-off (isolated) schemes;
- We will support the extension of the School Streets scheme;

Air Quality:

- To improve air quality and the speed / frequency and cost of rail services we will work with government and rail partners to develop a plan to electrify all heavy rail services in the City, prioritising the Chiltern line.
- We will also seek to incentivise the move to electric private hire cabs by allowing them to use bus lanes;
- We will target a reduction of wood and waste burning;
- We will ensure that the responsibility for delivering cleaner air sits with one Cabinet Member.





Communities Setting Priorities

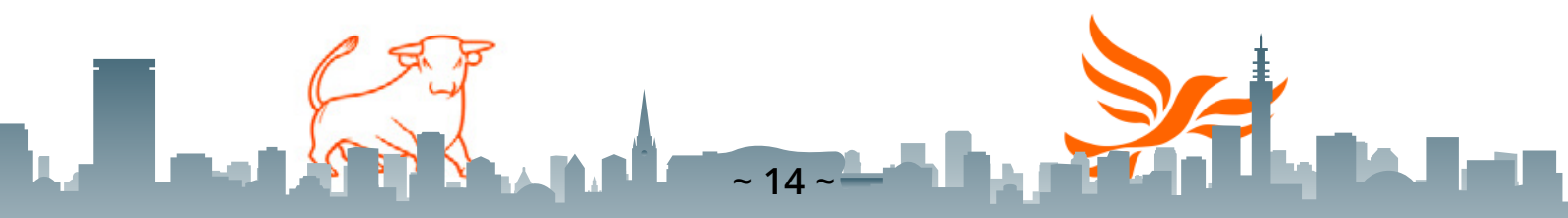
A Liberal Democrat-run Birmingham will prioritise a radical improvement of the relationship between the Council and its residents, so that local communities are listened to, responded to and treated with respect. The Council will act on what it hears and will proactively tailor services to meet the needs of its residents and communities.

Currently Birmingham City Council is overwhelmingly run as a centralised organisation. This makes it remote from communities, is inefficient, and leads to bad decision making. Time after time, the failure to properly engage with citizens leads to the Council getting things wrong and leaves communities feeling distant from the body that should be serving them.

We want residents and communities actively engaged with the Council's decision making, affecting not just what services are delivered across the City but also how they are tailored to the needs of our different communities.

While in an ideal world one might look at a formal restructuring of the Council, such as breaking it into three or four local authorities, or creating a second tier of town / parish Councils, this is impractical as it would tie up far too much time and energy needed to get basic services running properly. Instead, local structures such as ward forums or area committees will need to be developed, in discussion with local communities and their elected members, with meaningful powers and a budget devolved to them.

We recognise this is culturally challenging for the Council and will take time to embed, and we might need to introduce it in stages, but we will persist. To encourage this shift in service delivery, we will look to use corporate KPIs and staff PDRs to set this change of direction.



Elements of achieving this will include:

- Local community chest to allow small scale projects. Our successful budget amendment has increased this to £20K for single-member wards and £40K for two-member wards. We will aim to increase this over time.
- Prioritise community use and engagement with the running of remaining Council facilities and assets in communities such as libraries, leisure centres, museums and heritage sites.
- Encouraging local 'joining up' of Council and other public services, involving for example ward Councillors, neighbourhood police teams and local housing management teams in local tasking meetings.
- Services such as street cleansing and waste services, to set details of their service delivery locally.
- Use of Local Strategic Partnerships or Area Committees of groups of wards with geographical / community logic (with the size and structure subject to future consultation).
- Encouraging more Council departments to be organised around communities rather than specialisms – as housing management has recently been.

Other aspects of the devolution agenda include:

Local Structures:

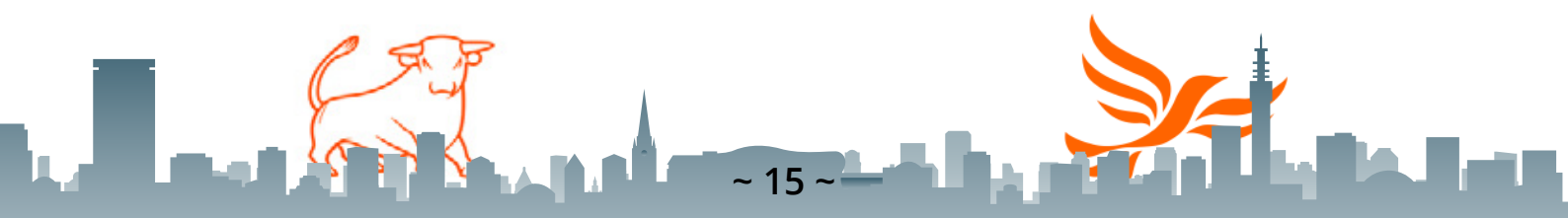
Some communities may want to develop local plans and town Councils. In these cases, the Council will actively facilitate and help them to implement those plans, rather than find reasons not to help as has happened in the past.

Council in the Community:

The Council will seek to maximise the opportunities for communities to access Council assets and services locally, including via community hub libraries (11) which will be open six days a week; by maximising the opening hours for local museums and heritage sites (9), and for leisure sites to provide community space and support.

Community Asset Transfer (CAT):

Where the Council does need to dispose of a site, it should be a priority objective to actively explore retaining it for community use, running the process flexibly, proactively engaging with community partners to facilitate this. The Council should view the community/social value as a major benefit of the process to sit alongside the income from the disposal.



Cross-cutting Issues

Tackling the Housing Crisis

Housebuilding & Homelessness

While the housing crisis has many aspects, a key common cause is the shortage of housing, especially socially rented housing. This has been driven by a woefully low rate of house building for the past 20 years and tackling this is vital.

The financial failures of the Labour led Council mean it is not currently able to build housing for social rent and must rely on housing association partners to do this. This will take time to develop and means that in the short term the homelessness crisis in Birmingham is likely to get worse before it gets better.

The Council must therefore work urgently with partners to speed up the process of building social housing, which we would prioritise over so-called 'affordable housing', which is often not affordable to those in housing need. This will take time and so for the foreseeable future we will have to deal with high levels of homelessness and demand for Temporary Accommodation (TA).

Temporary Accommodation (TA)

For the more than 20,000 people in TA in Birmingham, of whom over 10,000 are children, their stay can be lengthy - on average three-and-a-half-years - so to reduce the harm this causes, we will try to ensure that people stay in the same place as close as possible to their networks and that support is given to local schools and community organisations to help with the needs of these residents.

Proactive Management of Supported Exempt Accommodation (SEA)

The SEA saga is a national scandal and both the last and current government are culpable for failing to get to grips with it anywhere near promptly enough. It has harmed the residents in this accommodation and the communities where it is based.

Meaningful regulation of the sector is currently set to be introduced in spring 2027. We have actively lobbied Government to bring this forward and make it as effective as possible and will continue to do so until it is introduced. When that finally happens, the Council must be ready to implement it as quickly and robustly as possible. We must be in the blocks ready for the starter's gun rather than spending a year discussing how to implement it.

In the short term, we will work with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) teams to focus on the neighbourhoods that are suffering most. We will support the SEA team, which can respond to complaints, and instruct the CSP to prioritise areas that are facing particular problems from clusters of SEA. Where funding is available, we will encourage the purchase of SEA homes by the Council focused on communities suffering the worst problems.

No More HMOs

Well run HMOs have a valid role to play given the shortage of housing. However, they should only be one part of the answer and not allowed to dominate communities. Because of the crisis shortage of family housing, we will resist further conversion of family homes to HMOs and only allowing new HMOs where a very specific local case can be made.



Council Housing Stock/Decent Homes

The neglect of Council housing is one of the most serious of the many failures of the current Labour administration. When they took office in 2012, from the Progressive Partnership, decency levels were at 99% of the housing stock. Within 10 years a lack of investment had seen this fall to somewhere in the 30%'s. Under the direction of the housing regulator the Council finally started putting right this gross neglect. This progress must continue at pace and include enhanced insulation standards, so that our homes are in good condition, are warm and cheap to heat and contribute to our climate goals.

This is such a big programme, we should ensure opportunities for training for local residents in building skills, and where communities and particular estates are improved, look for opportunities to bring in wider community improvements such as pocket parks and play areas.

Housing management has been poor under Labour, we support the recent restructuring to make area teams that know their patch and their tenants/residents as one element of our localisation agenda, and these teams must engage with other local partners to maximise the benefit of this. Where there is a problem with ASB, we must acknowledge it and explore ways to get tough on it. This should include the (re) installation of CCTV in all our tower blocks.

Child Poverty

Birmingham has a huge problem with child poverty. We have some of the highest levels of child poverty in the country, with Birmingham Ladywood being the constituency with the highest level in the country at 62%, with Hodge Hill & Solihull North constituency (55%), Perry Barr (52%) Yardley (51%) and Hall Green & Moseley (50%) all in the top dozen constituencies nationally (30% in England).

Levels of Child Poverty are significantly affected by the policies of national government. We campaigned for and welcome the removal of the two-child benefit cap, to lift children across the country out of poverty. However relative levels of child poverty are an indicator of the success or failure of each City and the high levels in Birmingham demonstrate how Birmingham Labour has failed in the past 14 years. We must change this.

Child poverty is complex and cannot be solved with a silver bullet, or by one organisation, it needs a mix of measures and close co-operation with partner organisations including the NHS, DWP and the third sector.

Key areas we should prioritise:

- Ensure libraries are open full time and our museums and heritage sites are affordable for all our young people, as places of learning and 'sanctuary';
- Improve support to children in Temporary Accommodation
- Lobby to extend free school meals for children in poverty;
- Extend the Children's Trust/Corporate Parenting programme;
- Ensure progress of the housing decency programme;
- Establish/support a city aid bank for child essentials;
- Co-produce with community organisations to re-establish and enhance youth services and provision
- Improve the Council's youth service offer – we have already secured extra funding for this via our budget amendment.

We also must ensure the Council listens closely to the voices of young people from across our many communities, especially when designing services and deciding priorities.



Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Tackling ASB is a key issue at the heart of this manifesto. It sits in the safer streets section, the cleaner Birmingham section and the housing section. The failure to get to grips with a variety of forms of ASB is a major concern for residents across Birmingham and while it can never be eliminated, we must reduce it significantly.

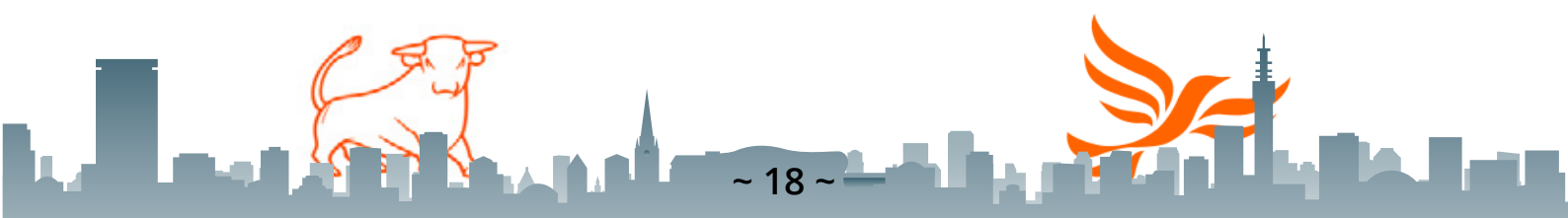
Our localisation agenda is also key to tackling it. Local partnerships between police, Councillors, community groups, community safety officers, and where appropriate housing will be key to dealing with specific problems in communities.

Improving drug rehabilitation services, is also a key element of this work, ensuring those with issues of addiction can get high quality help when they need it.

Climate Change

The Council has a long-standing commitment to move to net zero by 2030. Whilst that is clearly not now realistic, we need to recognise the major threat that climate change poses to the city and do everything we can to reduce carbon emissions and enable residents to adapt to climate change, including nature recovery.

To ensure this happens the Council must develop a route to net zero strategy that is underpinned by a costed implementation plan. Currently the work delivered on this agenda is more a list of good things done, rather than delivery of a prioritised plan, and measured outcomes.



Reduce Carbon Emissions:

- Convert the rest of our street lights to LED lighting, which will significantly reduce electricity use and maintenance costs. So far only 44% of our 116,420 street lights have been converted so there is much more to do.
- Aim to electrify all transport across the city. This doesn't just reduce carbon emissions but also improves air quality and is also usually cheaper on a whole life basis. This includes, not just electrifying our own fleet but pressing partners to do the same, including the electrification of all the railway lines in the city;
- Maximise solar generation, including all available Council roof space and canopies in car parks. Where financially viable, this should be enhanced by battery storage. Our successful budget amendment provides funding for this work.
- Maximise the impact of the work to retrofit our Council housing stock, ideally in tandem with the decency work.
- Increase recycling rates to radically reduce reliance on incineration, with a long-term goal of ending waste incineration in Birmingham
- Support the update of battery electric cars by residents by increasing use of on-street vehicle charging for those in terraced houses.

Adapting to Climate Change:

- Optimise green space in the city to reduce water run-off in storms, such as planting more trees (also tackling the urban heat island effect) and using sustainable urban drainage to reduce surface water flooding. Work with Severn Trent and the Environment Agency to develop a scheme to protect homes from localised surface water flooding;
- Proactive enforcement of the rules of driveway paving, with porous materials and retaining a proportion of garden, to limit greying the green in our city;
- Regular checking/clearing of gullies (street drains) in locations vulnerable to surface water flooding.
- Protect and improve our green and blue spaces, to encourage rich wildlife and biodiversity.

Business & Jobs

There are tremendous opportunities in the coming decade with, for example, the arrival of HS2 and the development of the Sports Quarter in East Birmingham. We need to ensure that as many of these benefits come to residents of the city, in terms of jobs, apprenticeships and SME suppliers.

We also need to put as much effort into the regeneration of our local centres as has been put into the city centre. The Council must engage more proactively with the business community, to understand their needs and work with them for the benefit of the city.

The Council must take a lead in training and employing young people. The failure by the Council to fully utilise its apprenticeship levy in recent years is scandalous and must not be repeated. Over the three years to 2026 of the £9m available, only one third was used and the rest had to be returned. With the Council's own employee age profile so biased to the over 50s, there is a major opportunity for the Council to take a lead in this area, which makes this waste all the more shocking.

We will investigate the feasibility of adding a Balsall Heath Station (with Park and Ride) to the Camp Hill Line, to link one of the areas with the highest unemployment levels with the new jobs hub at Kings Norton.

We will also deepen relationships with the arts and cultural sector in the city. This has tremendous, untapped potential to educate and inspire future generations and bring in much higher numbers of tourists to enjoy our great and varied cultural heritage.



Health

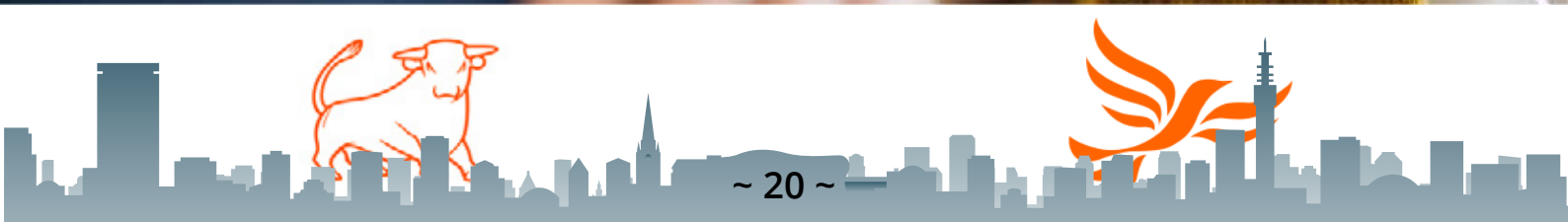
Birmingham has a major problem of health inequalities, with life expectancy varying by ten years between its poorest and wealthiest neighbourhoods. We know that health is not an isolated area of policy, but that it requires cross-functional improvements – good quality housing, clean air, access to public services and tackling poverty are all vital to aid in good health outcomes.

We need to promote and enable healthy lifestyles, for example improving our parks and canal networks as resources that people can enjoy safely. This includes flytipping and litter are dealt with promptly and community safety issues are addressed in partnership with the police. By their nature these are issues that should be decided at a local level but with central support, rather than decided centrally. An affordable example of what could be done is to provide more benches as part of this, to encourage walking but with opportunity to rest. Sexual Health clinics should also be properly resourced and accessible.

The Council should prioritise engagement with the health service and focus on preventative services that are delivered locally. Whilst direct mental health services are provided by the NHS, mental health affects us all and should be considered in all aspects of health and the other areas mentioned in this manifesto (such as housing and deprivation) that affect mental health.

The Party's national policy is to restore the Public Health Grant, which we support fully. Public Health and its more preventative and engaging approach is vital to help improve health outcomes and lessen health inequalities. We would ensure as much local engagement with the NHS and third sector to deliver and improve public health programmes.

We will target the achievement of prompt burials for residents who wish to have them for their relatives. This will include developing a business case for a non-invasive post-mortem scanner based in Birmingham and serving neighbouring authorities such as Solihull and Warwickshire. We will also freeze the cost of burials for the next four years of the Council term.



A Functioning Council

An efficient proactive Council saves money, freeing it up to tackle the wicked issues. That must be our goal, ending the days when all the Council's resources are focused on getting itself functioning properly again.

It is obvious from the current Government intervention that the culture and governance of the Council is poor, and that this is behind many of the failures of the Council in recent years.

The Commissioners have started the process to turn this around, but there is a long way to go to transform both the Council's culture and services. This process needs to be driven on by the political leadership of the Council, and a Liberal Democrat-run Council will have this front and centre of its day-to-day management.

In particular, we will:

- Ensure the assets that the Council manages, including libraries and community buildings, museums and heritage properties, parks, cemeteries and green spaces are properly assessed, maintained and managed with appropriate budget for maintenance;
- Move the Council's culture towards a joined-up, single 'one Council' organisation, rather than the long-standing siloed way of working;
- Ensure Budget discipline is maintained, so that the Council runs in balance, with a medium-term approach, without having to take emergency action each year;
- Ensure debt (owed to the Council) is promptly chased giving reasonable time to pay but taking enforcement action where necessary. The Council has failed badly to do this in recent years allowing debt to balloon to over £650m, We passed an amendment to the 2026/7 budget calling on the Council to set up a Task Force to ensure this is brought under effective control. This must be done.
- Ensure that services are modernised to bring forward a whole series of initiatives, including new technology and AI (developed to tackle mechanistic tasks in planning, adult social care etc.), so all services are running as well as those in the best comparator Councils.
- Be as focused on the delivery of strategies as the production of them. This includes ensuring rules are enforced rather than just written, and focused on outcomes and behaviour change rather than just activity and output;
- To prioritise better meaningful relationships with partner agencies, such as police, the health service, neighbouring local authorities, businesses and our arts organisations for genuine service delivery improvement.
- Councillors allowances should be set by the Independent Remuneration Panel and their recommendations accepted.
- Improve scrutiny, giving it equality of respect with the executive with a focus on pre decision scrutiny to support better executive decision making. The role of charring scrutiny committees should be shared between all major political groups on the Council whether in administration or opposition.

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