



Labour Manifesto

Exeter City Council 2022-23

Our city, our future

By the time they are an adult, a child born in Exeter today will live in a city that is inclusive, healthy and sustainable, a city where the opportunities and benefits of prosperity are shared and all citizens are able to participate fully in the city's economic, social, cultural and civic life.

Introduction

In presenting this manifesto I want to highlight another year of achievement for the city and to set out why we can expect more success in the year ahead.

It has been a year of recovery for Exeter as we cautiously start to move on from the pandemic. We are seeing the rewards of the work we did with our partners across the city last year, in supporting and coordinating the response to the pandemic crisis. This has given us the best possible chance of a sustainable recovery.

City centre footfall has almost returned to pre-pandemic levels. Exeter continues to have one of the lowest shop vacancy rates in the country. Businesses in the city are expressing high levels of confidence in the future – and for good reason.

Of course, the pandemic has impacted on our finances, just as it has done for everyone else.

Our Medium-Term Financial Plan identified a need to deliver a combination of reduction in budget and income generation to address a £7.65m budget shortfall by the end of March 2025.

Our *One Exeter* work programme has been designed to deliver the predicted budget savings and income generation required and this work is now well underway. As well as addressing the budget challenges, it also captures previously identified organisational development work to improve efficiencies and future proof us against future technological developments and enhanced ways of working.

This will allow us to focus fully on our key priorities:

- A Net Zero Carbon City
- Our Communities and Homes
- A Healthy and Active City
- A Thriving Local Economy and a Well-run Council

Cllr Phil Bialyk

Labour Leader, Exeter City Council

Our Priorities

Against a wide range of challenges, we have been working to deliver within four key priorities.

These priorities:

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A Net Zero Carbon City

In 2021 our Labour-led Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. The urgent need for us all to reduce our carbon output has been at the forefront of our city's aims. A Net Zero ambition involves significantly reducing our carbon footprint whilst 'off-setting' any carbon output wherever we can.

Our ambition to achieve a **Net Zero Carbon City by 2030** remains our priority and will be at the forefront of everything we do next.

Key achievements last year

A new Net Zero team has been established within the Council with Net Zero Ambassadors to support this work. We are working with the Centre for Energy and the Environment at the University of Exeter to create a Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan to meet our Net Zero 2030 commitment.

A new Local Plan is being produced which sets the expectations for the city's future development highlighting important issues around shaping the city, Net Zero, biodiversity, connectivity and active travel.



Our own Council Housing plans to build 500 new homes to Passivhaus or equivalent energy rating standards will reduce each household's carbon emissions by an average of 3.5 tonnes per year. Our Retrofit programme to improve energy efficiency in all of our existing homes has already seen a carbon reduction of over 3 tonnes per property. By the end of 2022 we will have completed 400 homes, reducing our city's carbon emissions by around 12,000 tonnes.

Low carbon energy efficient developments: St Sidwell's Point, built to Passivhaus standards, is one of the best facilities of its kind anywhere in Europe. The low-energy use building is defining standards in the leisure and building industry and will operate on 70% less energy usage and 50% less water usage than standard pools and leisure centres. Together with the new Bus Station which opened last July this £50m redevelopment is the biggest single investment the Council has made in a generation.

Energy efficiency Improvements: We have secured consortium bid funding of £2m to provide energy efficiency improvements for around 200 owner-occupied and privately rented properties.

Our food waste collection service first stage has been rolled out to 1,300 properties in Alphington. Coffee-pod recycling from home is offered to all residents.

Our tree planting continues city-wide, with more than 680 trees planted across our wards over the last year.

We have significantly reduced our use of glyphosate weedkiller through the reduction in the number of annual sprays and community-led opt-out alternatives.

A grant of £661,500 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund has allowed us to upgrade the Council's building management system, which will lead to further reductions in our carbon footprint.

What we will do next

- Invest time and resources into Exeter City Futures, a community interest company working towards Exeter becoming a net zero carbon city by 2030.
- Continue to work with key stakeholders in the city including Devon County Council, Exeter University, Exeter College, RD&E Hospital and Exeter residents to achieve a Net Zero City by 2030.
- Launch a new Public Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy for Exeter.

- Consult with residents and stakeholders on the new Local Plan Draft highlighting city shaping, Net Zero ambition, biodiversity, connectivity and active travel.
- Increase the number of homes benefitting from our council retrofit programme with a further 400 homes to be completed by Spring 2023 reducing carbon output by up to 70%.
- Build 21 new Passivhaus standard council homes at Hamlin Gardens and 92 homes at The Gardens Whipton.
- Continue to roll-out kerb-side food waste collection across the city
- Plant 2-for-1 replacement trees for each one lost through ash-dieback disease.
- Continue with the reduction of glyphosate herbicide use.
- Commence work on the £3.5million Water Lane and Smart Grid and Storage Project, providing a renewable energy supply to the Council's Operations Depot at Exton Road.
- Roll out of the electrification of the Council's operational fleet – starting with three new electric refuse collection vehicles.
- Launch a new campaign in partnership with Great Western Railways to encourage visits to Exeter by train.



Our Communities and Homes

As residents and stakeholders in Exeter, we will build on the strong foundation of Labour values, fabulous Exeter communities and our work so far as a Labour-led council to keep Exeter a great place to live, work and visit.

We are immensely proud of the amount of important and inspirational work that takes place led by community groups and organisations in the city. The Voluntary & Community Sector is a key part of the city's fabric and it delivers extraordinary value for the funds allocated from the Council and other sources. Their value is also in the social capital brought to communities demonstrated through the fantastic things that people achieve in and for their communities.

Inclusivity is key to bringing everyone together to take pride in Exeter a great place to live and thrive.

Alongside our strong community of city residents, we continue to tackle the housing crisis which has an impact on everyone in the city. We are proud of being a council which has maintained and developed our number of social housing homes, insists on affordable housing as part of any new commercial housing developments and works tirelessly to address homelessness within the city.

Key achievements last year

Exeter is the No.1 city in the UK for increase in housing stock. This is reflected in the Council exceeding the housing delivery test with a score of 155 per cent. We are proud of this position and are committed to the expansion of our

social and affordable housing whilst working alongside other partners in Exeter in addressing homelessness and emergency housing needs.



We have invested £6m in building our first ever council owned Extra Care Housing scheme to be managed in partnership with Devon County Council. This Passivhaus development contains 53 one and two-bedroom flats providing extra care within the home for council residents.

20 new Passivhaus council homes for families have been built at Bovemoors Lane and Thornpark Rise.

The business plan for 500 new council homes to be built in the next 5 years has been approved and is underway.

Our own development company Exeter City Living continues to set new standards for housing in Exeter including the commencement of delivery at Clifton Hill and Vaughan Road.

We have continued to provide support and advice for the homeless and everyone with housing needs in an increasingly demanding housing crisis.

We have provided 16 new units of accommodation under the Rough Sleeper Accommodation programme.

A trailblazing pilot housing and support project has been established with Colab for vulnerable women fleeing domestic violence and abuse.

200 owner occupied and privately rented properties benefitted from a £2m bid secured to provide energy efficiency improvements.

26 studio flats for young people in the city centre *Sidwells Lofts* built in partnership with YMCA Exeter.

We have introduced a Council Housing and Development Advisory Board consisting of councillors, housing experts and tenants who provide effective governance to the housing service. We have also enhanced an engagement group giving voice to council Tenants and Leaseholders, introduced a new Residents Involvement Strategy and a new Neighbourhood Strategy to empower residents and neighbourhoods to work with the council on creating and maintaining great neighbourhoods.

Working with Exeter City Community Trust we have secured over £500,000 government funding for supporting homeless people into housing.

Developing our Liveable Exeter programme for new sustainable neighbourhoods and communities within Exeter.

Exeter was announced as the second cleanest City in the country in a national survey, reflecting the hard work of our street cleaning teams and neighbourhood communities.

Under the *Safer Streets* initiative, £0.5m was awarded by the Home Office to improve CCTV coverage, establish community and student watch schemes, enhance the business crime partnership radio network, improve lighting and public place enhancements.

We worked with Exeter University to secure funding to improve the Safety of Women at Night (SWAN Project).

More than 260 litter-picker kits were loaned to residents in 2021 who have joined us in keeping neighbourhoods clean and attractive.

Artwork created by local schoolchildren, supported by our Live and Move project, has been displayed on development hoardings and on the new cycle bridge in Whipton.

Exeter City Council award in the region of £1m each year to support communities across the city. This includes around £300,000 in community grants.

We continued the delivery of strategic contracts to support community infrastructure and wellbeing including:

- **Citizens Advice** - giving free, independent, confidential and impartial advice, information and advocacy to help people resolve the problems they face. In the past 12 months 9,000 residents in the city have been supported.
- **Wellbeing Exeter** - a partnership of public, voluntary and community sector organisations have come together to support the 40% of patients who visit their GP with socially based rather than medical problems. A team of community builders support residents to develop new initiatives enabling communities to improve and promote their own health and wellbeing.
- **Exeter Connect** - This community service provides support and advice to both new and more established community groups in the city, helping community groups in Exeter to develop and grow.

What we will do next

- We will continue our plans to increase council housing stock built to high energy-efficient standards benefiting our tenants with lower fuel bills and sustainable homes.
- We will continue the retrofitting of our existing 4,000 council homes reducing carbon emissions and fuel costs.
- We will create a business case for our own new Residential Property Company to build and acquire rented homes with the security of an ethical landlord and secure tenancies not seen in the private sector.
- Working with key partners and stakeholders in the city, we will develop a strategic approach to tackling homelessness and complex-issue housing needs.
- A revised Community Grants programme will ensure there is still a focus on supporting local community initiatives, supporting community buildings with overheads and refurbishment to help our amazing community-led resources be resilient into the future.
- We will review and improve the provision and infrastructure of the Corn Exchange.
- We will be consulting on the draft of the new Local Plan, involving communities in planning for the future of Exeter growth and neighbourhoods.
- We will work with community networks and trustees in Pinhoe and Whipton to explore the development of new Community Wellbeing Hubs.
- Through a new Community Asset Transfer Policy we will continue to address how the Council can support community organisations to take on and manage buildings and resources to benefit their local communities.



A Healthy and Active City

One in four people in England do less than 30 minutes of physical activity a week, while one in six deaths is linked to inactivity. In Exeter some people are already more physically active than the national average. Exeter is overall a healthy place to live but some areas in the city have poor health outcomes.

The health inequalities gap between the most and least well-off areas has increased. We know that active and healthy lifestyles bring wider benefits to individuals and communities by reducing health inequality, tackling congestion, improving community connectivity and reducing social isolation.

Our integrated approach to leisure, health and wellbeing, in partnership with *Live and Move*, the Sport England Local Delivery Pilot, has supported the Council's key priorities of promoting active and healthy lives and communities, while working to reduce health inequalities across the city.

Key achievements last year

We have created *Exeter Leisure* bringing all of our leisure facilities under one umbrella membership. We have ended the outsourcing of managing our leisure provision and have successfully brought all leisure employees under the employment of the council. This gives us greater control over what we want for our city. Exeter Leisure has had 4,500 new members since April 2021. Our new Exeter Leisure app has had 21,000 downloads.

St Sidwell's Point is the UK's first leisure centre built to super energy Passivhaus standard. This development is the

biggest investment the Council has made in a generation but one which will effectively pay for itself due to the 70% reduction in fuel costs. This iconic low-energy building is defining standards in the leisure industry. St Sidwell's Point has three pools, a one-hundred station gym, fitness studios, luxury spa, rooftop terrace and stunning views across Exeter.

The Riverside pool reopened in July 2021 after a massive rebuilding project following the discovery of inherited design and building faults uncovered after the fire in 2018.



Since re-opening more than 800,000 visits have been made to the centre.

Barley Valley Park – one of six Valley Parks in Exeter managed by Devon Wildlife Trust on behalf of Exeter City Council – will undergo a series of improvements this spring to improve access for local people and other visitors

£140,000 has been committed to football pitch improvements in Pinhoe.

We have continued joint funding with Devon County Council for Wellbeing Exeter offering ‘social prescribing’ for young people and adults in Exeter through a team of Community Connectors and Community Builders.

What we will do next

- We are developing a transformational low traffic neighbourhood in Newtown, improving access for walking and cycling, and improving connectivity to St Sidwells Point and the city centre
- We will develop and launch an introductory 12 week wellbeing programme for residents to improve their health and wellbeing and take up their first leisure membership with Exeter Leisure.
- The Isca Centre gym will provide a rehab facility for GP and social prescribing referrals.
- We will deliver a Playing Pitch Strategy and invest in local pitch improvement and playing fields.
- We will continue to work with local residents of Wonford to develop a detailed design and business plan for a new Community Wellbeing Hub. £750,000 is committed toward the next stage of work which will see the redevelopment of the existing sports centre.
- We will work in partnership with Devon County Council to engage with residents and communities to deliver a 10-year Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan to improve walking and cycling networks across Exeter.

- Working with local communities, we will identify and improve shorter walks connecting neighbourhoods to the 13-mile Exeter Green Circle.
- We will deliver a refurbishment of paddling pools in parks across the city.
- We will work with the University of Exeter through the Exeter *Creative Arc* to deliver support for the *Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM)*.
- The newly formed *Harbour Board* will be working to develop the Exeter waterway as a vibrant and attractive asset for both residents and visitors to the City.
- We will introduce a Green Travel pilot scheme for local companies.
- We will continue to protect our valley parks in partnership with Devon Wildlife Trust and work on ‘rewilding’ the city to improve appearance and bio-diversity.
- We will continue with the Exeter and Cranbrook Live and Move programme, encouraging and enabling more active happy lives.



A Thriving Local Economy and a Well-run Council

The pandemic has impacted on our already stretched finances. Our Medium-Term Financial Plan identified a need to deliver a combination of reduction in budget and increased income generation to address a £7.65m budget shortfall by the end of March 2025. Ongoing government cuts to local government finances combined with additional discretionary services that we aim to deliver for the people of Exeter results in high level management of our budgets and infrastructure.

Our local and locally-placed businesses have also felt the strain of coping with loss of custom and income over the last two years of the pandemic.

By keeping ourselves buoyant and healthy we are, in turn, better placed to administer support to our local businesses and to enjoy the vibrancy and economic stability that we all enjoy in Exeter.

What we have done so far

Our *One Exeter* work programme has been designed to deliver the predicted budget reduction and income generation required within the council and this work is now well underway.

Between 2019 and 2021, despite all the problems caused by the pandemic, the number of businesses in Exeter increased by more than 4%.

As well as addressing the budget challenges *One Exeter* also captures previously identified organisational development work to ensure a council infrastructure fit for the future enabling greater efficiencies of customer service and operation.

We have introduced the *Eastgate Market* and supported community led business projects in Paris Street and Sidwell Street.



Footfall in the city is back to 82% of pre-pandemic levels with Exeter in the Top Ten Cities for footfall and for high street spending in the UK (data from centreforcities.org)

Car parking in the city is currently at 83% of pre-pandemic levels.

We have spent £233,000 on supporting the reopening of the High Street, through the Welcome Back Fund through enhanced street cleaning, graffiti removal and Covid-secure measures installed across the city.

Our Council teams have administered and distributed 8,486 grants to local businesses totalling £49,816,601.60 - that's

nearly £50 million pounds of vital support distributed directly to those who need it most.

Our *Exeter Works* hub opened in the city centre in April 2021, supporting individuals into work after being affected by the pandemic. More than 200 people have since been supported by the new service.

Our new Bus Station has made a positive visual impact on the area attracting new business and visitors to the city.

The Council is a Kickstart Gateway Organisation – we have supported 90 young people into a Kickstart placement, some within the Council.

What we will do next

- The new St Sidwell's Point leisure centre will play a vital role in our recovery, by supporting the city centre and acting as a catalyst for the redevelopment of the wider area.
- We will continue our work within our own corporation to update our infrastructures and future-proof our operation.
- We will continue to support local micro-businesses and commercial ventures.

- Working with our partners we will continue to drive forward the Skills Agenda for Exeter and support careers in the construction industry through our Building Greater Exeter partnership.
- Through our Liveable Exeter programme we will continue to look strategically at local investment in business, housing and connectivity.
- We will continue to support a thriving city centre and the 'InExeter' local business body.

