

# For a Community-Powered Council

## Exeter City Council Manifesto 2026

### Exeter Liberal Democrats

#### Our Values

The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a fair, free and open society, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.



#### What you will get



Liberal Democrat candidates are empowered to speak up for the areas they represent and are bound together by a common philosophy rather than strict party discipline. Electing more Lib Dem councillors will ensure you are properly represented by someone who answers primarily to the people in their ward and who will champion and empower the local community.

Liberal Democrat councillors pride themselves on working hard all year round for the communities they represent. Too often, other parties just turn up at election time asking for your vote. We strive to keep in touch with the people we represent all year round with Focus newsletters and regular online content.

#### Our Vision for Exeter



We seek to create environmentally-sound and forward-looking councils. Councils that embrace collaboration, open and free ideas to deliver high-quality, value for money services in partnership with local communities.

Exeter Liberal Democrats want to reorder the City Council's priorities to ensure good quality basic services, investment in all our communities and decision-making that properly involves local people. A Lib Dem-led council will mean all councillors can deliver improvements for and with their local communities.

We work cooperatively on the council to get the best deal for the whole of Exeter. Our growing group stands in contrast to the tired, fractious and uncompromising current Labour administration. These are expected to be the last City Council elections before the government decide on a new Unitary Authority for Devon. We stand ready for whatever may come in the next few years.

Exeter is facing numerous crises: from housing to the environment, dis-empowerment to the cost of living. An inclusive, evidence-based and cost-effective set of solutions is required to prevent these crises from becoming catastrophes.

# Empowering Exeter's Communities

**"Liberal Democrats believe that the council should fully involve its citizens in decision-making about the future of their city."**

A community-powered council is one that seeks out, involves and values individual's and community representative's voices in decision-making. After all, these are the people who best know their area and should have control over it. As a grassroots democratic party, Lib Dems seek to implement this community politics. We seek to establish active community groups and forums to bring people together to solve issues and, where possible, devolve power from central government to local government and community groups.

A recent report from the Electoral Reform Society highlighted how one-party dominated councils are a cause for concern with regards to corruption, value for money and in responding to residents' needs. We hold the Labour-dominated City Council to account on behalf of residents, who they are supposed to represent. We improve governance, ensure better value for money and are a strong voice for residents.

## Funding Thriving Communities

A Lib Dem-led council would increase the community ward project budget, not cut it. This funding enables our local communities to thrive.

Lib Dems want to ensure the benefits of a growing city are shared with every community. We would ensure money from developer levies gets redistributed to rejuvenate Exeter's neighbourhoods, particularly the most deprived areas.



Exeter Lib Dems are passionate advocates for community politics.

## Facilitating the Growth of Neighbourhood Planning

We support, encourage and enable local communities to develop Neighbourhood Plans. For instance, Liberal Democrats were instrumental in the creation of the St James Neighbourhood Plan.

We promote a grassroots approach to setting our city's agenda, rather than centralising power in the hands of a few. This is because Lib Dems firmly believe communities should have a real say in determining what their area is like.

## Local Government Reform

It is expected Exeter City Council and Devon County Council are scrapped in the next two years, and our local services be provided by a new Unitary Authority.

Liberal Democrats firmly believe power should rest as close to the people as practicable. Exeter must gain town council status as soon as possible so that local communities have a voice and the funds to support future local initiatives, like other communities within the new Unitary Authority's boundaries.

## Transparency and Accountability

Well-run councils thrive through proper scrutiny. We believe the council should be more open to scrutiny by the public, media and councillors. Lib Dems oppose Labour's unaccountable decision-making via unelected Boards and private companies. This has caused wasteful spending against Exeter's interests. We will invite the public to take part in scrutiny panels within local communities for specific issues. They will have the power to make recommendations and propose improvements.

We'd request our MPs, police, NHS, Stagecoach and South West Water attend public meetings where they can be questioned about Exeter issues. More Lib Dem Cllrs will ensure the council takes scrutiny seriously, offers value for money and is held to account.

# Services that Deliver for Exeter

Facing a cost of living crisis, the last thing the people of Exeter need are unnecessary council tax hikes caused by Labour's reckless spending. Labour have squandered millions from a rising council tax base and Community Infrastructure Levy.

Exeter Lib Dems believe in investing local taxes on services across Exeter, not sinking them into reckless vanity projects. We must rethink the way forward for the city centre by working openly with partners. Lib Dems want a community-based approach to capital spending to ensure each part of Exeter gets its fair share of investment.

## Funding Basic Services

Labour's reckless spending of tens of millions of taxpayers' money on St Sidwell's Point and Exeter City Living has fuelled cuts to crucial basic services, including environmental health, community grants and Citizen's Advice Bureau support. The council needs to get the basics right first and foremost.

A Lib Dem-led council would ensure proper funding for front-line services to ensure our city is clean, thriving and safe.

Focusing on getting the basics right would free up resources to deliver more effective safety, environmental and affordable housing schemes.



Labour's city centre vanity schemes have cost £50m+ and decimated council finances.

## Exeter's Council Tax

Exeter ranks in the worst third of the country for how expensive its council tax is. Thanks to Labour misspending, this is set to worsen: rising by the absolute maximum allowed without holding a referendum.

In contrast, Lib Dem-led Teignbridge and East Devon have lead the way by scrapping council tax for the poorest households.

The council must work more effectively with local communities, partners and other councils to ensure taxpayers' money is spent as wisely as possible.

## Properly-Resourced Scrutiny

Labour's lofty visions mean it's more important than ever to hold the council to account. A scrutiny officer will help improve efficiency, effectiveness and governance - making the council more accountable to Exeter's residents. More Lib Dem Cllrs fight for greater scrutiny, transparency and accountability to stop more public money getting wasted.

## Leisure Services that work for all

To undertake a review of Leisure Services with the aim of financial stability in the medium-term and cost neutrality in the long-term. Exeter Lib Dems also support exploring ways to improve leisure services participation, such as via a women's only session.

## Citizens Advice Exeter

Labour's reckless spending means they have made deep cuts to our basic services. For example, street cleansing, community grants, and Citizens Advice Exeter.

Citizens Advice Exeter provide vital front-line services. A key thing they do is help people navigate government forms so they can claim the assistance they're entitled to. This crucial work pays for itself multiple times over.

However, Labour-run Exeter City Council have completely axed all £200k direct funding for Citizens Advice Exeter. Labour didn't even care to consult anyone on the impacts of their vicious cuts.

We have campaigned to reinstate at least £50k funding for the centre - supported by all parties except Labour.

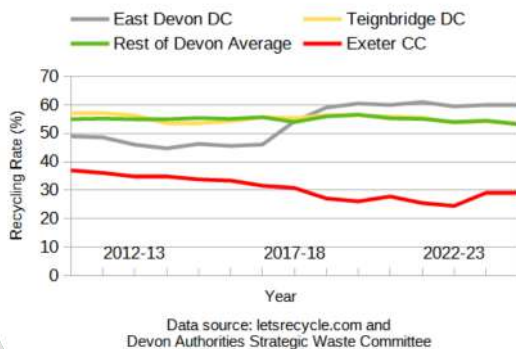


Will Aczel and Cllr Michael Mitchell met with Citizens Advice Exeter to discuss the budget crisis impacted on them by Labour.

# Improving Our Environment

With the world facing a Climate and Ecological Emergency, the time to act is now. Emissions are cumulative so any action now will pay dividends down the line. Local-level action builds resilience, drives local economies and enables healthier living.

Recycling Rates in Devon since 2010



## Action on Recycling

We are pleased our policy to expand food waste recycling to the whole of Exeter is now in action. The next step is kerbside glass collections. Our fully costed budget proposals to introduce this were voted down by Labour en bloc without debate.

The backdrop for this news is Exeter Labour's decade of decline where their recycling rate has slumped to an abysmal 29%, less than half of Lib Dem-run East Devon's rate. Labour shamelessly prioritise wasteful vanity projects at the expense of delivering basic services.

Nine of the top ten councils for recycling are Lib Dem-led. A vote for the Lib Dems is a vote for action on recycling and our environment.

## Better Transport Options

Lib Dems work with local residents, Devon County Council, the cycling community and other groups in developing a safe city-wide cycle network and planning framework that incorporates the transport hierarchy.

We further work with Devon County Council, bus and rail providers for more reliable, frequent, accessible, informative and green services.



## Growing your own

Lib Dems believe allotments play a key role for a happy, healthy and sustainable city.



Our pressure has led Labour to soften their price hike for allotments and extend the consultation. The council should go further by properly consulting, engaging and investing to work towards a sense of ownership for tenants.

## Parks and Green Spaces

The Lib Dems encourage and support greater involvement with Devon Wildlife Trust, residents and community groups to ensure we all have a say in how our parks are maintained and improved. We are working to invest in and rejuvenate our green spaces, ensuring sites have clear community facilities and designated zones.



## More Green Corridors

Connecting up our communities through vibrant nature corridors – achieved through front garden planting, street trees, window boxes, allotments, gorilla gardening. For example, from Sidwell Street, through St James and up to the University

It helps create a vibrant green space that will help bring communities together, reduce anti-social behaviour, enhance both physical and mental health and increase biodiversity.

## Addressing the Climate & Ecological Emergency in Exeter

Our plan is to introduce carbon budgeting to the council, audited annually, to target emissions reductions for the council and the whole of Exeter. The lungs and lives of nature and our children are at stake.

We will properly include local people in decision-making, such as through a Citizens' Assembly. It is crucial that local people are empowered in bringing about a happier, healthier community to ensure improvements are fair, effective and worthwhile.



We will collaborate with partners to deliver solutions that help save the environment. Many of these can also save money, such as recycling, active transport, and retrofits.

# Affordable Housing for Exeter

Poor long-term planning by Labour has led to housing shortages, skyrocketing prices and problematic decision-making. Priced out of the city or priced out of any home altogether, more affordable homes are required. We hold the council to account over the transparency, scope, greenness and value for money of plans or lack thereof.

## More Social Housing

Following the lead of Lib Dem-led Teignbridge District Council, Exeter Lib Dems would build more affordable and environmentally-friendly council homes, prioritising Brownfield sites. We would also seek to protect and improve our current housing stock and ensure the council works closely with other social housing providers.



## Tackling the Homelessness Crisis

Liberal Democrats seek to set up an Exeter Homelessness Task Force that works with local community partners and others. This brings together mental health services, housing associations and charities. The task force would oversee an action plan to deal with rising rough sleeping and seek to ensure that we find a home for all those who need one.

## Balanced and Sustainable Communities

So far, we've secured a full-time planning enforcement officer, a wider Article 4 HMO directive and PBSA no longer receives a levy discount.

But 'co-living' blocks do. These rooms are cramped and unaffordable. They do not provide the long-term housing solution young people in Exeter desperately need. Developer levies should instead incentivise building decent, affordable and environmentally-sound homes. This will help people save on running costs too.



The Gorge - the only co-living block in Exeter to date. It still has many empty rooms.

Smaller HMOs also need licensing, with additional income from this paying for Enforcement Officers to ensure fairness.

## A Housing Charter Mark

Exeter Lib Dems have long-called for the council to establish a self-financing licensing scheme for the private rented sector that sets assurance standards and provides advice and support systems for both tenants and landlords.

We want to raise standards within the rented sector.



## Insulation and Renewables

We support larger-scale action to fit homes with insulation and renewable energy. This not only saves bills but the environment too.

## Transparency and Accountability

We want the council to work with communities and city partners openly and transparently to help deliver the improvements in our housing stock and build more affordable homes.

Decision-making must be representative and open to public scrutiny to reflect our interests and offer value for money. The wasted millions on Exeter City Living demonstrate what happens when decisions are made exclusively and vision trumps delivery.



CLlr Adrian Fullam in front of stalled Newman Road housing sites

# Safer Streets for Exeter

No one should have to think twice about walking on our streets, yet this is the reality and unfortunately experienced by many on a daily basis. A joined up approach is required across all levels of government and collaboration with community actors, raising awareness, sharing and implementing ideas.

## Supporting Community Engagement

We support ensuring community involvement in decision-making, opening up funded partnerships to real debate and discussion, to agree upon solutions to improve safety in Exeter.

A Lib Dem-led council would support and work with survivors and family members where appropriate to help us act sooner rather than later to prevent more tragedies.



## Collaborating with Partners

A Lib Dem-led council would work with local residents, community groups, night-time economy partners, charities, the University of Exeter and Devon County Council to:

- raise awareness of the issues around safety;
- improve street lighting;
- broaden the scope of CCTV cameras across the city;
- improve the existing safety partnership to cover more areas of the city
- more widely establish checks on pub and club doors to prevent spiking and injecting;
- ensure more reliable and night-time bus services; and
- ensure comprehensive mental health support is available for all.



## Community Patrol Service

No one in Exeter should have to live in fear of crime or have to tolerate the effects of crime and anti-social behaviour.

Labour abolished the community patrol service and have reduced environmental health services enhanced by the last Liberal Democrat-led council in Exeter.