

Liberal Democrats



Derby City Council Election Manifesto 2016

Working For Derby

Working With You

Our Pledges For Derby

More affordable homes with real community facilities

We will work to build the affordable homes that Derby needs – built as real communities with the facilities people need in their day-to-day lives.

New swimming pool facilities for Derby and a replacement for the Assembly Rooms

Labour's neglect has seen plans for Moorways' replacement ignored and the Assembly Rooms site left idle for too long while they dither. We will prioritise the replacement of both with the right new facilities for Derby.

Fair and effective funding for the whole of Derby

We will work with communities across the whole of Derby to deliver their priorities for their local areas, treating all communities across Derby fairly.

Restore the £200,000 funding to the Citizens' Advice Bureau

Voluntary groups and service providers provide crucial services to Derby people – and save the council money. We will restore funding to protect services.

Fix Labour's mishandling of Special Educational Needs

Labour have failed to provide for the needs of our most vulnerable children and are leaving the council in severe risk of breaching legal obligations. We will ensure that special educational needs are fairly met for all children.

Work to help local residents recycle more waste more easily after Labour's cuts

Labour's cuts have seen recycling fall by 40%, wasting the council money and harming the environment. We will work to help local residents recycle in the best way for them.

Get transport in Derby working better

We will work to ensure Derby's transport system works for all local residents. We will work with the bus companies to protect vital services for local communities, improve cycling facilities to boost cycling and reduce congestion and conduct reviews of critical junctions and signage to improve traffic flow.

A Record of Action for Derby

Derby Liberal Democrats can achieve the most for Derby by being elected to lead Derby City Council. And when Liberal Democrats were leading Derby City Council, we achieved much for Derby.

We secured the Velodrome as a world-class facility for Derby, supporting facilities for the whole city to use. We completed the inner ring road and made sure it had good walking and cycling facilities. We delivered the new bus station to provide a comfortable, modern facility for bus users. We increased recycling levels far above what Labour have let them fall to, saving the council money and helping the environment. We increased provision of residential accommodation for severely autistic children, stopping them having to be sent miles away from family in Derby and saving the council money. We built the acclaimed skate park in Bass' Recreation ground, consulting with young people to find what they actually wanted.

But every Liberal Democrat councillor elected helps achieve more for Derby. Even in opposition, Liberal Democrat councillors have been able to achieve much. We've fought for local residents and got new paths, lower speed limits on residential roads and better bus services to help make our communities better to live in. We've supported campaigners the council was ignoring, from Castle Nursery School parents to children with special educational needs being let down by Labour.

And local Liberal Democrat teams don't just turn up once a year to ask for your vote. We stay in touch with regular newsletters, surveys and surgeries, and participate fully in Neighbourhood Forums.

Every vote for a Liberal Democrat councillor gives us more opportunities to deliver these changes to make Derby a better city to live and work in. To be not the council's representatives to you but your representatives to the council. To work harder, to listen more, to make Derby the best it can be with you.

Better Housing for Derby

While Derby might have less problems with housing than some parts of the country, there are still problems that need addressing. Developers trying to force through unsuitable developments in the wrong places and without community facilities. Neighbouring councils authorising large developments right on the edge of Derby without services, knowing that Derby will have to provide. Labour abusing the rules to take money residents have spent for community facilities in their area and giving it to other areas instead.

People working hard in Derby shouldn't be having to depend on temporary accommodation and even homeless shelters – but some are. And research shows that children forced to keep moving between short-term homes do worse in school and carry that disadvantage through their lives.

A decent home isn't just a roof over someone's head. It's an opportunity to get a job, for security and peace of mind. It's an opportunity to settle in a community. And it should be available to all households who need it.

We will:

- Prioritise building more decent affordable homes for Derby
- Work with developers to get the right homes built for Derby in the right places, building communities people genuinely want to live in.
- Work with the Derbyshire Fire Service to make fire protection available in homes and where the elderly and vulnerable need it.
- Ensure that new developments have the appropriate community facilities to let them become more than just dormitories.
- Provide advice and ideas to help residents in new housing to develop community 'feel' more quickly.
- Campaign to allow the council to borrow to invest in new council house construction, building homes for Derby and keeping the rent supporting the next generation of affordable housing.
- Complete the improvement of Derby's social housing with measures such as increased insulation to reduce energy bills and give tenants more say in their communal areas. Publish information from these schemes to help homeowners to make the same improvements to their homes.
- Work with other councils across the country to allow increased taxes on empty homes, encouraging landowners to make homes available and not just sit idle.

Sport and Leisure for All

Derby deserves sports and leisure facilities that are available and affordable for all, so everyone can enjoy activities and achieve their full potential. Labour's neglect has caused Derby to lose critical facilities with no imminent replacement available.

The Derby Arena is the result of Lib Dem hard work to deliver the council's Sports Strategy despite Labour's reluctance. It is a wonderful addition to Derby's sports and leisure facilities but the vision for community-based sports facilities to accompany it is still to be delivered. And even now after years of planning and operation, Derby Live are failing to book the events it was designed for, leaving this world-class venue to go to waste.

When Labour took over in Derby, they inherited a plan to replace Moorways Pool. Now, in spite of clear public support to keep it open, not only is Moorways closing but Queen Street Pool is in clear need of refurbishment and may also have to close in the foreseeable future. Labour's inaction risks an end to publicly-accessible swimming in Derby.

We will -

- Reactivate the Sports Strategy and urgently prioritise the replacement of Moorways at a site that can best serve all Derby residents
- Work with local clubs and national bodies to make the running of Derby's sports and leisure facilities more efficient and cost effective for all.
- Launch a public consultation on what community sport and leisure facilities Derby residents actually want to get the best value for local people.

Promoting the Best of Derby

With its rich heritage and facilities, Derby has much to offer visitors. The gateway to the Derwent Valley Mills UNESCO World Heritage Site, Derby Cathedral, museums and art galleries, Festé and Format arts festivals, a wide range of CAMRA real ale pubs, the Guildhall Theatre and Derby Arena.

Derby could be getting so much more value from this though. Too few know of Derby's riches and what we have isn't being used effectively. Derby Arena could have been fully booked for events from its opening, like similar venues elsewhere, but still isn't. Other venues also run far below capacity. Visitors can so easily miss Derby's best assets simply because they don't know they exist. In addition, much of Derby's centre is tired, run down and blighted by sites in need of redevelopment.

And Labour's mismanagement has seen no progress on the Assembly Rooms in the two years now since the fire, with at least another five years on their plans before a new venue might become available. The refurbishment or replacement of this key facility to Derby needs to be taken far more seriously than Labour are doing.

We will –

- Work to identify the best site for a new large and event performance venue for Derby, filling the hole left by the loss of the Assembly Rooms as a priority.
- Investigate the use of specialist commercial management for all of Derby's performance venues to see them attract more and better events and raise more income, by maximising their opportunity to link with national touring shows.
- Improve the city centre environment with more natural elements such as trees and plants, improved maps and signage with Internet links to make it easier for visitors to get around and a more pleasant place to visit. This can be funded by partnering with local businesses.
- Developing a long-term plan for the empty sites and run down areas of Derby City centre such as Duckworth Square to bring them back to full use for all of the community, including using compulsory purchase powers were necessary.
- Ensure Derby city centre retains accessible public toilets
- Work with the Civic Society and building owners to ensure information on Derby's heritage is available to visitors in a pleasant and well-maintained environment.
- Allow Derby's parks to be used for commercial events such as concerts to raise money for their upkeep and improvement
- As more retail moves online, support the change of Derby centre into a mixed retail and leisure destination.

A Fair Deal for Derby

Cuts to local council funding from national government are a fact of life that Derby City Council must deal with like other councils all across the country.

Almost half of the funding for Derby's services comes from Westminster and is controlled tightly, with cuts continuing. Changes can only be successful when made rationally with clear facts to back them up, and in cooperation with other Local Authorities. However, Derby's current Labour leadership fails to work widely with other councils. Instead they focus on emotion and endlessly blaming others.

As soon as Labour took office they covered Derby in posters blaming national government for cuts while cutting far more services than they needed. They wasted money and didn't spend based on evidence but on pet projects and in favoured areas with no measurable objectives.

And now Labour are even taking money and decisions away from local communities who know what they need, by stopping Neighbourhood Forums. Instead of Labour's disregard of local people, we will enable the people of Derby to take an active part in running and supporting their local communities. We believe that communities are strengthened by working together to improve communities, rather than being run solely from the Council House.

Derby Liberal Democrats support –

- Fair and effective funding for the whole of Derby, investing money more equally across Derby and on what's really needed - not pet projects in favoured areas
- Listening to the communities to get the best ideas on how to use the funds that are available
- Working more effectively with national government and the Local Government Association to get the best funding possible for Derby based on an up-to-date formula that properly reflects Derby's needs
- Consulting with local communities to find out what they want before wasting money on changes they don't want
- Empowering communities to deliver changes to benefit their areas
- Enabling charities and community organisations to help meet communities' needs.
- Creative ways of delivering council services, including looking at providing job experience opportunities and utilising volunteers in certain areas.

Making Life in Derby Better

Traffic and travel

- Areas of Derby's traffic flow system are no longer keeping up with usage patterns. Lib Dem pressure has already seen the council agreeing to more public involvement in improving Derby's road signs. We support a comprehensive review of Derby's traffic flow, junction priorities and traffic lights to let traffic flow better, reducing congestion and pollution.
- Public transport should be easy, accessible and affordable for people to move into and around our city. We will work with Derby's public transport and taxi companies and bus user groups to improve service and facilities for all users, and to grow bus usage to help reduce traffic and improve our environment.
- Cycling is increasingly popular in Derby. It helps reduce traffic congestion and keeps residents fit. To further support cycling we will work with cycling groups to provide improved cycling facilities and safer cycling routes both into the centre and in communities, and ensure cycle training for pupils in schools city-wide, not just in a few areas.
- Make our residential areas safe and pleasant places to live and grow up in by introducing 20mph zones in residential areas where local residents support the change
- Support local residents in areas troubled by problem parking by making it easier for them to apply for residents' parking schemes and better support for removing abandoned vehicles.
- Be fair to our local people by allowing residents in areas with residents only parking to use 1 day parking scratchcards when they need to, not just visitors
- Enable residents to purchase parking permits online and print at home to save time and money, as we now can with postage stamps.
- Review the roads maintenance policy to catch repairs when they are simple and cheaper, before long and costly works are needed.
- Under Labour's leadership, Derby has been identified as having some of the worst air quality in the country, harming Derby residents and placing the council at risk of fines. We will consult on ways to reduce pollution, cut traffic congestion, increase sustainable transport and improve the air quality across Derby.

Waste and recycling

Under Labour recycling rates have dropped dramatically, leading to a substantial increase in the cost of disposing of waste, and flytipping has continued to blight communities. Recent large increases in the charges for bulky item collection, and the slow providing of this service will lead to further dumping in local streets and open spaces. We will:

- Improve information so people are properly aware of what they can and can't recycle, to cut costs and minimise waste going to landfill. We would aim to recycle more than half of domestic waste.
- Allow communities to share the proceeds of increased recycling rates in their areas
- Ensure full recycling facilities are available to all residents by reversing the cuts to recycling in inner city areas.
- Provide means for households to recycle or compost their garden waste. This may be by cancelling Labour's Brown Bin Tax
- Seek one or more small local sites in the centre or west of Derby for municipal recycling, offering communities facilities like the existing Raynesway site.

Communities

- We offered Labour simple, common-sense changes to restore important funding cut from community and voluntary support groups such as Citizens' Advice and Law Centre, but they wouldn't even consider it. We will implement those changes to provide extra funding to safeguard these important groups for Derby.
- Give communities more control over their local area by enabling groups like Friends of Parks and community pride organisations city-wide to make their areas the best they can be. This would reverse Labour's actions which tied them up in petty regulation.
- Support the 'greening' of local community centres with plants and trees to improve the local environment, working with local groups and the historic Derby Arboretum to provide this in a cost-effective manner.
- Support the work of local voluntary and community groups, improving relationships between the council and these groups. Encourage residents to participate in their local communities and support the groups working on their behalf.
- Reverse changes to planning committee rules that have made it much harder for communities and individuals to have a say in decisions that affect them.
- Lobby for changes to Planning regulations to reverse the recent increase in the level of permitted development.
- We support the blue light services working together. This helps improve services and saves money. We welcome the sharing of buildings between the emergency services.
- We believe that Police and Crime Commissioners should not be allowed to take over Fire Authorities and will oppose measures to do so.
- Investigate co-ordination between the emergency services, the local Territorial Army, RoSPA, Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance to allow them to train and work as community responders as part of their service, and investigate formal training and qualifications to help reinforce the links. Investigate how this can be linked in to schools and organised youth groups as part of their PSHE and community service work.
- Encourage local businesses to work with schools as governors and mentors to help schools prepare pupils to play a positive part in society. This would support employers by allowing them to benefit from the governor training their employees will get.
- Support the integration of council social care services with the local NHS to improve service for local residents.
- Allow local libraries to be used as community hubs for groups to meet in, both securing libraries from Labour's threatened cuts programmes and providing valuable new community facilities.

Supporting People's Needs

Jobs and training

- Work with Derby's many large employers to keep them providing many high quality jobs for local people
- Support the small businesses Derby needs to grow even further
- Help people gain the skills they need for new jobs or career changes through better availability of adult education
- Review council-supported work training providers to ensure they are offering a high-quality, value-for-money service
- Improve language learning opportunities to help all Derby communities build better relationships

Education and Children's Services

- Work with the schools, unions and staff to find a better solution to the current dispute caused by Labour's 25% pay cuts for teaching assistants
- End Labour's diverting of money disproportionately to schools in some areas while starving others of the resources they need to serve their pupils, and ensure that changes are properly analysed for impact before being imposed on schools
- Oppose the Conservative government's forced academisation of all schools that will give local people less choice and divert resources away from schools towards managers and lawyers.
- A shortage of council foster carers is leading to ever higher costs to support children in the private sector. Liberal Democrats believe there are many caring people in Derby who would make excellent foster parents and will work across communities and with volunteers to help identify such people.
- Derby's school age population is forecast to rise with Derby's growth. Yet Labour insist that Derby's already overstretched services are adequate. We will ensure that an accurate forecast of needs across all areas is compiled so that appropriate provision can be put in place.

Special Educational Needs

- Labour's mismanagement of Special Educational Needs in Derby has left them failing to meet legal obligations and even being ordered to pay compensation for their failures. This is completely unacceptable treatment of the most vulnerable children in our city, impacting on children in every school. Labour's neglect of these most vulnerable children needs to stop, and the correct procedures followed to ensure all children have the correct provision for their needs.
- Liberal Democrats when running Derby City Council increased specialist provision for Special Educational Needs students, giving better services in Derby and saving the council money. Yet Labour ignored plans to continue this and save even more money. Special Educational Needs provision is now at capacity again and children are being denied the services to which they are entitled. This is unacceptable.
- Labour's dithering about the building of a new special school and refusal to engage with the government has led to them losing £1.2m worth of land. This was completely unnecessary and shows Labour's lack of care for these children.
- We will put measures in place to ensure education health and care plans are in place for all children who require them and that they are being fulfilled.

Adult Social Care

- Labour has abandoned voluntary sector early intervention services. We believe this is disastrous and will cause people's health to deteriorate. We want to see a well-supported thriving voluntary sector in Derby supporting people's needs.
- Make sure the extra 2% on Council Tax for social care is carefully spent to deliver the best services, rather than being squandered.

Changes to Local Government

Moves to a new local devolution settlement are continuing, though settlements are not going smoothly. In light of our three neighbouring councils voting against the North Midlands Devolution Deal, we would open talks with them to negotiate a way forward. Change of some sort appears certain, and Derby should be at the heart of proposals to achieve the best deal for all Derby residents.

Our current preference is to have a unitary authority to cover the southern half of Derbyshire, able to plan strategically for services and development without the artificial straitjacket around our city.

Derby Liberal Democrats support powers being devolved to regions to allow more local control over how we are governed. These structures must be properly set up though, or we risk Derby people not getting their full weight and influence.

We support a locally- centred authority that has the powers to make a real difference to the people of Derby's lives, not to just become a talking shop. This could potentially incorporate other authorities including South Derbyshire, Amber Valley and Erewash to form a cohesive area which reflected established community links.

We believe that local communities are best served by a team of elected people working together. Recent changes introducing elected mayors and Police and Crime Commissioners have instead concentrated power in the hands of individuals, often resulting in more self-promotion than actual delivery. We support maintaining existing cabinet-based models for authorities, rather than concentrating powers in the hands of individuals as some areas have done.

Within existing structures, there is an increasing trend for local authorities to use shared back-office services and shared working where that can be shown to decrease costs without reducing service provision to local residents. Derby Liberal Democrats will investigate ways to increase shared work practices.

Our preference is to continue with council elections by thirds until Single Transferable Vote elections are allowed for local elections, as it is in Scotland, to give voters better control over the true mix of their councils, but for decisions on this matter to be a free vote for all councillors.

