

**Liberal Democrats
2021 Manifesto
Rugby Borough Council**



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Rugby Borough Council

Covid-19 has changed everything.

A New Future for Rugby

➤ **Fairer**

➤ **Caring**

➤ **Greener**

Listening - Caring - Effective Councillors

Introduction

Covid has changed everything. Since early 2020 Rugby, like the rest of the UK, has been fighting the Covid pandemic and continues to do so. We would like to place on record our gratitude to all the key workers, NHS and care staff, along with all local authority staff at every level, who have been involved in this fight. We also record our thanks to all the community groups and volunteers who have helped to support individuals and communities in this fight.

It is now acknowledged that the Conservative Government acted very late in supporting care staff, especially those working in care homes, with disastrous effects. It is also becoming clear that the Government wasted money on poor procurement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This is recorded in the report published by the National Audit Office [<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/supplying-the-nhs-and-adult-social-care-sector>]. If local authorities had acted in this way, the Government would have been highly critical – and with good reason. Education has suffered due to the lack of clear decision making by Government, leaving schools and students floundering.

We note that the Chancellor has only given local authorities a one-year financial support settlement. By his actions he is forcing local authorities to pass the burden on to residents when they find they have to increase Council tax.

As Rugby Borough Council emerges from the pandemic with a new Executive Director and reorganisation of its internal structure, we believe that the Councillor's Cabinet system also needs to be reviewed to introduce a new fresh Committee system that will involve Councillors and communities in all decision making.

We know that Covid has changed everything and that we need a new future for Rugby and Warwickshire. The Liberal Democrats have established a set of clear priorities that are constant across Councils and will be our ambition to improve the quality of life and the places in which we live.

These are:

Fairer

Opportunities for all.

Caring

For all our residents.

Greener

There is no Planet B.

The Liberal Democrats' ambition is to build a fairer and caring Rugby and Warwickshire with a strong green economy. We want an economy that is sustainable and will build resilient communities with reduced health inequalities across every part of Rugby. To achieve this, a new approach will be required.

We will build on the lessons learnt from Covid and continue using the new flexible working arrangements. We will support Council staff and ensure they have the right tools to support our ambitions. We will change how the Council

operates. We will progress with innovation and reward those ideas that make Rugby Borough Council a leader. Our staff and resources will be slimmer but fitter for the challenges ahead, all focussed on delivering the Liberal Democrats' ambitions.

We will work with Warwickshire County Council and partners in the development of a new media communication channels. This will open decision making by the use of new technology and partnering with others. The media communications channel will link all Districts and Boroughs; it will be interactive and allow for voting on particular policies; it will enable discussions between senior staff and Councillors to be held. Covid has promoted greater engagement among the public using the available virtual meeting facilities. Our ambition is to take this to the next level.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Rugby Town Centre needs to be regenerated and made fit for the future whilst retaining its high-quality architecture, a legacy from our prosperous Victorian past. Covid has escalated changing shopping habits that reflect how we live and shop, how we access services differently from the past. We will work with the consultants currently appointed by Rugby Borough Council to make your views known and we will press for a rethink of from where the taxis and buses should operate to help reduce town centre traffic. We have long called for a viable bus and coach interchange to improve access to the town centre. We believe that independent traders need support, and we will seek to have a Trader's Champion appointed who can work directly with the Council, with Rugby First and with other partners to act as a co-ordinator. We will work to generate a new civic pride in Rugby, fit for the future. This could include making the most of civic buildings like the police station, the old magistrates' court, the Grade 2 listed Retreat and The Lawns to improve their community function. We continue to work with groups such as Hope4. We will press for a review of the future use of the Benn Hall.

Rugby Borough Council has an Adopted Local Plan up to 2030 for future housing and employment sites. What we want to see is the "very late in the day" Local Transport Plan currently out to consultation making the right choices in supporting much needed appropriate local transport infrastructure. We support local businesses growing into new premises but do not believe we need any more giant sheds as this blots our landscape and the traffic to these sites will further congest our local roads. We consider that brownfield and other previously used land should be used for development first rather than good quality productive arable land.

We will encourage rural diversification to reflect a better environment for the future and the local economy.

Our ambition is to get closer and more engaged with all of our communities.

Our policy ambitions are as follows:

Fairer

- ❖ **Reduce Health Inequalities.** We will increase investment in our communities to reduce health inequalities and promote the "Rugby Place Forum". This is a forum where health organisations, the local authority and others plan and develop a local health strategy. On the Council we will drive resources in a more focused way. We will tackle increasing inequalities especially with child and family poverty, mental health, Alzheimer's and autism.
- ❖ **The Planning Process.** We will open up the planning process to ensure that our planning policies support our climate emergency policies, such as net zero carbon housing and an increase in the supply of affordable housing, including council housing.
- ❖ **Affordable Housing Strategy.** We will adopt an affordable housing strategy despite the empty promises made three years ago by central government following the Grenfell Fire Tragedy. We will borrow to replace the multi storey flats at Biart Place and Rounds Gardens with new low-rise dwellings for those most in housing need. We

will support new flexible tenures, like rent plus, that allows a person to rent now at affordable rent levels and buy later when they can afford a mortgage. We support the development of community led self-build schemes. We will use 'Right to Buy' receipts to purchase properties and to regenerate some of the older parts of our town by upgrading properties there, which will also improve the local environment.

- ❖ **Tenants/Residents Champion.** We will work with our housing tenants and older residents and appoint a Tenants/Resident's Champion to support tenants and residents when dealing with the Council. We will bring forward new and fresh tenants and resident agreements that are clear and transparent including detail about what is expected from both sides.
- ❖ **Private Rented Sector.** Private rented housing is a large part of the housing stock in Rugby. This includes Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO). We will strengthen and deliver a new Private Rented Sector Charter and require Rugby Borough Council to use its enforcement powers to ensure there is good quality accommodation for rent.
- ❖ **Stronger Places.** Listening to and working with residents, getting closer to our communities is what Liberal Democrats do. We will invest in our local community, establishing quality shopping parades, installing environmental street furniture, improve our play areas and invest in upgrading and opening changing rooms for greater community use.
- ❖ **Develop a Town Council for Rugby.** In light of local government reform proposed by central government we will continue to investigate the establishment of a Rugby Town Council with its own charter.
- ❖ **Strengthen the Voluntary and Community Sector.** We will reinforce Councillors grants, ensuring they are focused on local community action and that they are fully spent each year. By working together we can make a stronger and more vibrant Warwickshire.
- ❖ **Create a Cultural Area.** With our arts, cultural and heritage organisations we will create a cultural area to capitalize on what we already have in Rugby. We will lobby nationally for extra funding to support creative industries within this area. We will support and co-sponsor a new poetry festival celebrating Rupert Brooke and work with Rugby Theatre on youth and community programmes.
- ❖ **Foodbanks & Welfare.** We will accelerate our work with partners to establish a new local food strategy. We will work with the food bank to take on the challenge of food poverty. We will establish a Portfolio Holder with responsibility for tackling welfare and food poverty by working with partners.
- ❖ **Fairer.** We will work jointly with Warwickshire County Council to support a local network of community one stop shops. They will have computer access and help points linked to a welfare and local food suppliers. Their purpose will be to support those who are in need. Here is an example <http://www.communityfirstoxon.org/Tool kit>
- ❖ **Rural.** We will implement the recommendation in our policy paper "A Rural Future: Time To Act" which sets out a clear plan to increase the availability of affordable housing in rural communities. We will invest in infrastructure in rural areas; developing community hubs that co-locate services with medical centres, post offices and pubs; improving rural transport. We will improve superfast broadband using new technology to increase coverage. ([Liberal Democrat Policy Paper, A Rural Future: Time to Act](#))

Caring

Starting a Caring Revolution. Liberal Democrats are already campaigning nationally for a caring revolution. We see local government as key in helping to deliver such a revolution, <https://www.libdems.org.uk/carers-bill>. Liberal Democrats will ensure carers, along with social care staff and those involved in supporting vulnerable people of all

ages, have the support and resources they need. We have to make sure that the outcomes from all our existing strategies are making a real difference. We will build on the good work of the NHS, the health partnership and Rugby Place to develop a joined-up plan with the necessary resources to deal with mental health at all ages and homelessness. As Liberal Democrats, we will champion a more caring society that rewards the role carers play and faces up to caring's long-term challenges.

- ❖ **Homelessness.** This has increased during the pandemic and is causing extreme hardship. We will work with Hope4 and other Warwickshire Councils to deliver a service that helps rather than hinders. We will invite Shelter to work with us to develop new ways of tackling this issue. Everyone deserves to have a roof over their head.
- ❖ **Tackling the Toxic Trio.** Domestic abuse, mental ill-health and alcohol and drug abuse have all increased during Covid. We will establish a **dedicated task force to join up resources and strategies.**
- ❖ **Mental health.** We will work with partners within the community to tackle depression and anxiety and make Rugby an "Autism & Dementia Friendly Town".
- ❖ **Loneliness.** Using the wealth of knowledge and the community activities that have grown during Covid we will expand the support network that already exists. We will put local people in charge with funds to deliver local solutions and we will break down the barriers that at present prevent this work.
- ❖ **Create Compassionate Communities.** We will encourage the development of a "compassionate community" by the establishment of autistic and dementia friendly policies as presented by the National Autistic Society <https://socialworkwithadults.blog.gov.uk/tag/national-autistic-society/>
- ❖ **Rugby Borough Council has over 3,000 Council Homes.** We will work with all tenants to understand their needs and establish a new deal with regular listening events along with local support services.
- ❖ **Safeguarding.** We will create a single lead Councillor position working alongside the Council Officer who has responsibility for mental health and safeguarding especially for children and families. The purpose of this position is to ensure that all residents are treated fairly and to ensure all staff have the relevant training to enable them to support all residents.
- ❖ **A New Youth and Sports Officer.** We will establish a new Youth and Sports Officer position, targeted at bringing youth work back. We also propose to support and develop more peer-to-peer work and create more opportunities for children with a disability.
- ❖ **Rugby to adopt "Purple Flag" Status.** We will start a campaign for Rugby to adopt Purple Flag status. This allows members of the public to quickly identify town centres that offer an entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable night out <https://nbcc.police.uk/guidance/purple-flag->
- ❖ **Seek to make Rugby a Fairtrade & Greener Transition Town.**

Greener

- ❖ **There is no Planet B.** Our 2019 Liberal Democrat Manifesto pledges to make it clear that if we are to save this planet actions need to be accelerated <https://www.climateemergency.uk/blog/lib-dem-manifesto-2019/>
- ❖ **Climate Change.** Make Rugby Borough Council zero carbon by 2030 using a plan agreed with our partners and communities. We will publish a base line and then an annual report on what actions have been taken to reduce operational emissions in order to meet our target; this will also include information on Rugby Borough Council housing stock.
- ❖ **Fleet Vehicles.** We will change Rugby Borough Council's fleet of vehicles from diesel to electric or hydrogen.

- ❖ **Rugby Council owns over 3,000 Council Homes.** Although the Council does not directly control energy use in these homes, it can make a significant difference in various ways. We will within six months carry out a full energy audit and bring forward an action plan that delivers energy saving schemes. For example, heat source pumps, solar panels and extra heat insulation. Make zero carbon by 2027.
- ❖ **Create a new “Community/Street Environment Service”.** We will give the Community/Street Environment Service the resources it needs to “Keep Rugby Tidy” and ensure it has all the powers it needs to enforce against fly tipping, illegal parking and graffiti.
- ❖ **A Greener Town Centre.** This can be achieved by creating high quality areas with safe walking and cycle storage, using solar powered street furniture and retaining and improving our town centre pocket parks.
- ❖ **Taxi Policy.** This will be updated to require all taxis to be electric or ultra-low emission. Charging points will be made available for taxis.
- ❖ **Create New Country Parks.** Create at least two new country parks and increase tree planting and biodiversity in the borough.
- ❖ **We will Improve Biodiversity.,** Plant extra wildflowers and reinvigorate our green spaces, parks and paths that are key to helping us keep healthy with improving our quality of life.
- ❖ **We will Establish a Volunteer Charter.,** Working with local volunteer groups that are helping to keep our borough green and improve the environment for all to enjoy.
- ❖ **We will Create a Toolkit for Communities.** This will include supplying litter picking equipment, along with other items that communities can use to help reduce waste and increase recycling. There will be an annual prize for the community that runs the best campaign. We will do this in conjunction with the national “Keep Britain Tidy” campaign.
- ❖ **Diversify.** We will work closely with our Warwickshire colleges and with local business and industry to support social entrepreneurs; creating office space in Rugby town and enabling free car parking for those that book and use offices in the town.
- ❖ **Support and Help for Energy Efficiency.** We will develop community energy schemes and ensure bus shelters and street furniture support a reduction in energy by installing solar panels or green roofs for pollinators,
- ❖ **Electric Cars & Charging Points.** Working with the private sector we will establish a network of charging points across the borough; looking towards innovation to enable this in terraced streets. We will sponsor a car share club.
- ❖ **Air Quality.** As we have seen following the impact of Covid we can move away from the use of vehicles. We can make a difference with improved walking and cycling schemes working to deliver clean air zones and committing to World Health Organisation air quality standards.
- ❖ **Identify Opportunities for Future Sustainable Transport Initiatives.** This can be done by preparing bids jointly with Warwickshire County Council for electric buses and by improving a network of cycle paths.
- ❖ **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.** We will increase our recycling and composting rates by holding competitions and education programmes.
- ❖ **Hold an Annual Green Festival.** We will hold an annual green festival that will celebrate the achievements of local groups and allow companies to showcase the latest innovations that assist a transition to a greener local economy and what residents can do to help.

Join us in working for ‘A Better Rugby’.

Contact us using:

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