

Note this does not take account of any potential local government re-organisation.

Warwickshire Needs Change:

Wherever we live in Warwickshire it should be a place where everyone has an equal opportunity to develop and prosper, where people feel safe and cared for and where the barriers of poverty or ignorance have been taken away. This requires high quality public services that are delivered efficiently and especially meet the needs of individuals. Liberal Democrats in across Warwickshire will work to deliver the best outcomes for its residents whilst creating a growing economy that serve all our residents regardless of where they live.

We will focus on ensuring your money and the resources of the Council are delivering for you.

Where we are now?

Warwickshire County Council has been dominated by a Conservatives administration this includes Chairing all the Scrutiny Committees which are supposed to hold the executive to account. No other views are considered. They can ride rough shod over everyone else. The comments we heard from Conservative Councillors over special education and the Fire service changes are routine. It is not good for our local democracy to have one party in control.

In Warwickshire, the number of people aged over 65 is predicted to grow to 145,500 in 2030 from a 2020 baseline of 122,000. As we get older, we can develop health conditions and experience frailty. The need for care support is therefore increasing along with the extra costs. We are also seeing pressures on children and family services. Special Educational Needs (SEND) and education and health plans (EHCP) that growth is predicted to rise to approximately 7,500 children and young people with EHCP plans by 227/28 (SEND & Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029). We are seeing more complex issues within communities in areas such as self-neglect and increasing mental health issues.

We have seen highways, potholes 11,614 repairs in 2023 / 24 and pavements are getting increasingly worse. Surface dressing and quick patching does not fix the worsening base structure of our roads and pavements.

With ever tighter funding from the Labour Government has done us no favours the hit on national insurance for County Commissioned services for Adult Social Care is £6 million the a Dedicated School Grant system (DSG) has to use an override with millions of pounds potentially having to be paid back the system is broken and has placed the County Council in a very difficult position. All of this means that it transfers from the Government to your Council Tax which is another broken system of taxation.

Efficient and Value for Money

Liberal Democrats believe this needs to be done fairly with as much transparency as possible. Our first step would be to include residents and all other partners and authorities in a **Citizens Commission** on the future delivery of your services that you pay for.

Our first Priorities whilst the Commission is established is to seek out and reduce bureaucracy and cut any waste whilst protecting the front-line services from deeper cuts and keeping council tax increases low.

We will

- **Provide services, both internally and externally commissioning** where we see greater value for your money, that delivers the best outcomes for Warwickshire residents. All Consultancy spend will be centralised and services will have to present a business case which will also ask if it is for **Invest to save**. Spend on consultancy has been traditionally circa £4.6 million excluding capital each year. Strengthen our partnership working at all levels especially with voluntary organisation. Make efficiency savings delivered by enhanced working with our full range of partners including, Health and the police stopping the duplication of activities.
 - **Make best use of new technologies** including artificial intelligence to improve customer services and making information readily available to the public being transparent so you can see how well the Council is or is not performing.
 - **Planning & Infrastructure** Ensure we use Planning gain from section 106 and 278 along with CIL for faster investment improving the project management of WCC and giving greater transparency.
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We will strive for healthy and caring communities, we will.

- **Establish a Creative health programme** (<https://ncch.org.uk/creative-health-review>) which is fundamental to a healthy and prosperous society, and its benefits should be available and accessible to all. Creative health should form an integral part of a 21st -century health and social care system – one that is holistic, person-centred, and which focuses on reducing inequalities and supporting people to live well for longer. Creating the conditions for creative health flourish requires a joined-up, whole system approach incorporating health systems, local authorities, schools, and the cultural and VCSE sectors.
- **Making Libraries the front door for our communities** supporting the community Library service, helping to bridge the digital divide and especially in tackling loneliness.
- **Roll out active ageing programmes** targeting trips and falls assessments for everyone over 75, promote healthy ageing and avoid hospital admissions.
- **Work with the voluntary sector** investing and commissioning in local services provided by them also supporting training and skills development.
- **Eating disorders, suicide, self-harm and mental health issues** are increasing. As a caring council we need to provide extra support for our young people by creating safe hubs for young people to go to working with communities and partners including creating a specialist youth support services.

- **Invest in the support needs for drug and substance misuse** and the increasing heavy alcohol use.

A better education for all Putting Children & Families First.

Liberal Democrats have a track record of supporting early years from introducing “Smart Start” was a Liberal Democrat Initiative along with a Child Poverty Strategy both scrapped by the Conservatives. We will develop a stronger family support service and work for an education system tailored for individuals. Our mission will be to unlock the potential of young people and offer opportunities and excellence for all.

We will

Drive up standards of education, both academic and vocational, and further develop the opportunities of outdoor education.

- **Put in place a strong and coherent strategy leading from birth through the early years** and on into primary and secondary education, including planned transition between each phase. This must command the support of teachers, governors, parents, NHS along with community support groups.
- **Create a new pathway for Integrating Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)** and also develops a new pathway that supports children and young people with EHCPs who require education other than school.
- **Invest in family support centres** to making them centres of excellence in providing help, support, and advice involving the library services so as to introduce books and play. These hubs for families will give the help needed using best practice and also Anna Freud <https://www.annafreud.org/> there vision **is a world where all children and young people are able to achieve their full potential** A world in which they and their families get support that is designed with their input, available at the right time, and meets their needs, so that they can develop their emotional and mental health there **mission** is to close the gap in wellbeing and mental health by advancing, translating, delivering and sharing the best science and practice with everyone who impacts the lives of children and families. Rebuild a youth service and intervention services to young people and look to drive down levels of truancy and exclusions from school.
- **Encourage innovative ways for schools to cluster and co-operate** to achieve the widest benefit. Value the work of school governors by increasing their involvement with increased professional support.
- **Work more closely with the Colleges & Universities** to invest in developing skills for young and adults alike to adapt to a changing world.
- **Focus on growing the County’s skill base working** with the Growth Hub & Education Business Partnership and Employment Training Warwickshire. Bringing together all key agencies and organisations to establish a skills and innovation board for Warwickshire that will also support entrepreneurship.

Protect Our Environment

Adapting to our changing climate is a key driver for the Liberal Democrats. On the County Council Liberal Democrats have and will continue to drive this agenda. Increased flooding, heat and our biodiversity decreasing we need to act now.

We will speed up the reduction in the Council’s own emissions as rapidly as possible: Accelerate the decarbonisation of all buildings owned by WCC Investigate and implement solar, wind and hydro energy generation and conservation measures in Council properties Eliminate as far as possible emissions

from transport owned or operated by WCC Ensure that the business case of all projects run by the Council maximise opportunities to generate carbon-free energy and maximise its efficient use.

- **Ensure that the County Councils adaptation plan is being implemented** alongside local growth plans. [.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC](https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC)
We will bring forward early plans from the Director of Strategic Infrastructure & Climate Change on strengthening the policies on adaptation and fast tracking the delivering of infrastructure where developments are planned
- **Establish a green grants programme to support Parish Councils and the ECO school's** in Warwickshire to decarbonise and help by bulk purchase schemes on capital. Help individuals and communities reduce their energy needs with support from Act on Energy, Introduce a Social Energy Development Fund to enable local groups put together the case for community energy projects
- **Encourage and promote the use of alternative means of transport** increase safe cycling routes and improve pedestrian safety. Work with Sustrans to expand the network of cycle routes across the County, prioritising Active Travel for high-frequency journeys. Work with all bus providers to improve the coverage and reliability, whilst reducing the emissions from the buses.
- **Recognise the Ecological Emergency and implement a Biodiversity Action Plan** Deliver "30 by 30" The Warwickshire Wildlife Trusts are calling for at least 30% of our land and sea to be connected and protected for nature's recovery by 2030. Making more space for nature to become abundant once again will give our struggling wildlife the chance to recover and also restore beautiful wild places - places that store carbon and help to tackle the climate crisis. In Warwickshire, we need to double the land we manage for nature to reach the 30% target by 2030.
- **Accelerate the emerging Nature Recovery Strategy**, working in partnership with the Environment Agency, Severn Trent and other relevant bodies to improve the biodiversity of rivers in the County. Use natural flood management and develop drought-resistant streams, ponds and lakes. Ensuring that Biodiversity Net Gain is maximised in all developments that WCC has a financial interest in
- **Work with farmers and farming** organisations to promote low carbon farming practices across the County and also supporting community groups that are increasing biodiversity and protecting nature. Focusing on tree planting, identifying locations and creating new woodlands
- **Develop a public awareness and education plan for biodiversity** in collaboration with WWT and community groups, focussing on what individuals and groups can do

A safer Warwickshire.

- **Road safety is a key priority for Liberal Democrats**, it was the Liberal Democrats that secured previous funding for Safer Routes to Schools. We would re-introduce a new funding stream for safer schools' routes and establish safe zones around schools and specific community areas.
- We will invest into and prioritise the safety of pedestrians and cyclists on our roads. Introducing cycling repair stations alongside route maps and increased training for cyclist using the bike marking scheme with our partners Warwickshire Police. Invest into **road safety casualty reduction** in the capital programme.

- **Deliver an efficient and responsive Fire and Rescue Service** across the County that acts with other services in the community. We will invest into fire safety checks ensuring homes can have smoke detectors. We will stop the debates on the uncertain future of the Fire Service in Warwickshire and call a halt to the potential closing of further fire stations the buildings are local assets and we want to see them used..
- **Trading standards carries out valuable work in trying to protect the public** from poor products and gangs that prey on the vulnerable. They support the Police with Cyber Crime. We will review the service to ensure that public safety is not being undermined by the cuts that have been made over the years. We will also support Safer Neighbourhood policing and Neighbourhood Watch
- **Make greater use of community projects** for offenders convicted of vandalism and criminal damage.