

Liberal Democrat 2023 Manifesto for Teignbridge District Council



“A Manifesto for a Community Powered Council”

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A Manifesto for a Community Powered Council

Lib Dems have a **strong record of success** delivering on our 2019 manifesto priorities. This we were able to do despite a pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis.

However, there is much more to achieve, and we need to focus in particular on changing the culture of the Council and having a Council Strategy that genuinely involves our communities and reflects their wishes.

Please support us to carry on working hard on those issues below that you have identified as being important to you, whilst helping us to involve communities in defining and refining any new priorities and continue to deliver good public services.

- Support the finances and **well-being of local people, communities and businesses**
- Lead on **tackling climate change and protecting our precious environment**
- **Continue to deliver genuinely affordable homes** for you and your children.
- Continue to build **good working relationships with Town and Parish Councils**, businesses, and community groups.
- **Transform community involvement in decision making** - Work with local people and communities before and during any Council projects, ensuring that people have genuine ongoing involvement.
- **We will always remember that it is your money** that we are spending, and always act with **financial responsibility**.

Together as an actively engaged community we can ensure our area is connected, protected and green.

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Supporting local people, communities and businesses

Lib Dems regularly carry out resident surveys in our communities.

You have told us that one of your top concerns is the **cost of living**.

We have a proud record of getting grants and assistance out to vulnerable residents and businesses, one of the best roll out speeds in the SW.

We have helped coordinate local responses to those in need throughout covid and now.

We have provided 100% Council Tax support to those on the lowest incomes, the only Council in Devon to do so.

We will continue to prioritise the needs of our most vulnerable residents and businesses, reallocating resources as necessary to ensure we do all that we can as a Council to provide support.

We will work to ensure that all local agencies including Councils, are providing the best response to local mental health and well-being issues.

We will coordinate a response to fuel poverty with other local agencies to compile individual action plans for all those residents identified as being in fuel poverty.

We will continue to build strong relationships with and support the **charity and voluntary sector** to jointly deliver our priorities.

We know a number of groups of people in our community have been disadvantaged by national legislation and policy eg. WASPI women (Women Against State Pension Inequality)

We will continue to lobby and highlight the injustices of the current Conservative government policies whenever they occur.

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Continue to Deliver Good Public Services

We know that you value the **public services** the Council provides and you speak up when they are threatened by government spending cut backs.

We have kept **bin collections** going throughout covid and in spite of staff shortages

We have kept **public toilets** open

We have improved our main **play parks and our leisure centres**

We will continue to prioritise the waste collection and recycling services and seek to look for more opportunities for recycling by working with our communities.

We will work with local communities to ensure everyone has easy access to nearby safe and well-maintained public spaces, parks, and areas where nature thrives.

We will give special attention to the **needs of rural areas**, improving and widening transport choices, broadband and mobile communication where we can and applying for grants where necessary.

Community Safety

We have been pleased to see that Newton Abbot Police Station has reopened its front desk, enabling people to report **crime** and have contact with the Police locally.

Crime is reduced when all people feel valued and respected, when they can aspire and realise their ambitions. An inclusive community which provides community facilities for all ages, allowing understanding across generations will not only have lower crime but feel safer. We have supported the Community Safety Partnership develop a programme to tackle violence against women and girls.

We will increase use of community payback schemes to tackle the scourge of low level criminal damage such as graffiti.

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Supporting Culture and Leisure

We will create and support a **Cultural Strategy** that engages and celebrates the diverse range of organisations and individuals working across arts, music and culture in the District.

We will continue to prioritise the provision of high-quality community facilities, supporting youth services, clubs, sporting and cultural opportunities of all kinds and mental health support.

We will trial innovative new ways to engage and involve residents in decision making, such as “Citizens Assemblies”, “Planning for All”, “Forum Theatre” and “Future Search”

We have already greatly improved and modernised our **Leisure Centres** and secured the future of our **swimming pools**, including ensuring the reopening of The Lido in Teignmouth.

Whilst other Councils have had to close swimming pools and **Leisure Centres** due to rising costs we have **decarbonised** ours and introduced renewable energy through successful grant applications.

We will continue to ensure the future economic viability of our Leisure Centres and swimming pools,

We will coordinate efforts to ensure all swimming pools in the District are able to thrive and enabled to use renewable energy to reduce costs.

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Supporting Rural Areas

Those living in our **rural areas** have been particularly badly hit by the cost-of-living crisis and failure of government to invest in public transport. Communities have suffered due to the lack of genuinely affordable housing options for local people to stay in their village.

We have successfully applied to the Shared Prosperity Fund and other grant sources to take forward initiatives to help **rural businesses, communications and public transport**.

We will continue to look for opportunities to fund improvements in broadband and mobile communications and public transport.

We will support where we can the retention of **valued village amenities such as shops, pubs and village halls**.

We will enable, in consultation with communities, the building of up to **5 Council homes in every village**, where this is possible and where there is need.

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Supporting Local Business and developing our economy

Recent pressures such as covid, inflation and supply chain and staff recruitment issues in our **local economy and businesses** have led to a decline in economic activity and uncertainty. It is crucial that the Council plays its part in encouraging stability and a thriving and resilient economy.

We will support our local businesses through the development of a Small and Medium Business Strategy, to provide a thriving and sustainable local economy with ample local jobs.

We will continue to develop our working relationships with traders associations, Chambers of Commerce and local businesses to ensure we can understand and support them in their functions.

We will continue to bridge the gap between businesses and the education sector locally, brokering relationships and helping to develop training packages to keep much needed skills in the District.

The pandemic has increased pressure on some high street businesses, some of which were already struggling. **Supporting high streets and local markets following the pandemic** needs to be a core aim.

There are positive signs of a move towards localised shopping and resilient independent stores which give cause for optimism for the future of our high streets. However, on average retail only accounts for a third of high street properties, and **our local response to supporting our high streets needs to recognise changing patterns of use and support resilience and diversification.**

We will **continue to support our town centres** and high streets to respond proactively to external trends, seek to provide for wide community needs, and support local sustainable economic growth.

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We will ensure that current levels of convenient town centre car parking are maintained in our main towns, prioritising disabled parking, whilst also improving access and safety for public transport, cycling and walking.

We will commit to exploring **support for Town Centre Manager roles** in partnership with Town Councils.

Tourism is a crucial component of our District's economy. Several towns have introduced **a tourist levy**, a charge per tourist per night to support their local community. These are more common across Europe and elsewhere and are usually a minimal charge. Most schemes are voluntary ie. an accommodation provider can choose whether to participate.

We will examine the feasibility of **introducing a voluntary tourist levy** to raise funds to support our communities, **where tourism puts pressure on local facilities or where additional investment would support tourism and cultural offers.**

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Tackling Climate Change and Protecting our Environment

You have told us that you want us to **lead the way in tackling climate change** and take **protection of our precious environment** seriously.

In 2019 the Lib Dems led the way to the Council Declaring a **Climate Emergency**, appointed a Climate Change Officer and have already implemented many of our priority **carbon reduction projects**. We secured national funding to **decarbonise our main HQ and Leisure Centres, cutting our gas consumption by 80%**. We have included **ambitious climate change policies in our Local Plan**.

In Summer 2021 we led the way nationally being one of the first Council's to declare an **Ecological Emergency**, and one of the first Councils' in 2022 to make a **Declaration of Oceans and Coastal Recovery**

We have done much, but there is still much more to do, and we must help businesses and residents to follow our lead, helping them to save energy costs at the same time.

We will set Up a Climate Change Delivery Board , with Council , business and community reps.

We will ensure that all staff at the Council receive regular carbon literacy training and support other organisations and businesses to provide the same.

We will introduce retrofit programmes to improve the energy efficiency and reduce the carbon footprint of existing homes in the District.

We will increase EV chargers in our car parks to a minimum of 20% of car park spaces,

We will support the provision of solar car ports **over Teignbridge Council car parks**.

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We will set up a Carbon Offset scheme for use as part of the planning system but also for businesses and residents to play their part in contributing to carbon reduction projects in our District.

We will prioritise spending on active, sustainable and “accessibility for all” travel options whilst continuing to maintain current levels of convenient town centre car parking in our main settlements.

We will support our own and community renewable energy projects in our District

We will support businesses to reduce energy use, install renewable energy and reduce their costs

We will enable our residents and businesses to invest in Climate Bonds to increase finance for climate change and fast track more projects.

Effective **planning** with our communities enables sympathetic and environment friendly development and changes of use, whilst stopping inappropriate change. Our new Local Plan will be key to ensuring that we achieve well designed, climate and environment friendly development. However a backlog in the consideration of planning applications is threatening the sensitive implementation of development.

We believe that parish and town councils engage well in the planning process and bring unique local knowledge. We have already introduced the right for parish and town councils to call planning applications to committee.

We will support more planning training be made available to Town and Parish Council's to enable them to continue to make a worthwhile contribution to good decision making.

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We will address the factors that are leading to delays in the consideration of planning applications as a priority.

We will implement the recommendations of the recent review of **planning enforcement** in Teignbridge.

We will continue to pursue an **improvement to planning enforcement** to ensure that development adheres to our Local Plan policies and strive to restore public confidence in planning enforcement.

Recently the government has announced that top down housing targets will no longer be mandatory, but the law still remains the same, leading to uncertainty for Councils.

We will continue to lobby to ensure the proposed changes to **abolish housing targets** are enacted, whilst also abiding by the current requirements, and we will continue to lobby for a fairer national planning system that serves communities interests above those of developers.

Trees are not only **valued parts of our local environment** but hugely important carbon stores and ecological assets

We will campaign nationally for **mature and veteran trees to have the same protection as listed buildings** and ensure that as far as we are able we protect all mature trees in our landscape.

We will plant a tree for every resident of the District over the next 4 years, ensuring that plans are put in place with local communities and individuals to care for these trees as they grow.

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Where we know that a mature tree owned by the Council is diseased and needs removal we will ensure **early planting of appropriate replacement mature trees**, before removal is required.

We will ensure all Council owned green spaces **maximise opportunities to improve biodiversity** whilst ensuring public access is maintained where appropriate.

We have supported our community partners **Action on Climate in Teignbridge** to set up the ground breaking **Wildlife Wardens** scheme which is enabling more nature and biodiversity recovery projects over the District than ever before.

We will continue to **prioritise nature and biodiversity recovery** on our own land and support and enable others to do the same.

We will support where appropriate rewilding projects and prioritise natural flood risk management schemes.

We will coordinate support for communities and individuals that wish to volunteer to enhance nature and biodiversity in their local area.

We will produce a **Strategy for Oceans and Coastal Recovery** including the promotion of our sustainable coastal economy, alongside water quality and nature priorities.

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Genuinely Affordable Homes for You and Your Children

We have a record of **success on the ground, delivering the first Council homes** this century in Teignbridge. They are at social rent (cheaper than affordable rent), low carbon and cheap to heat.

We have developed the **Teignbridge 100** programme of similar housing projects focused on local needs.

We will continue to expand our programme of local needs housing provision, **prioritising genuinely affordable homes** for rent, shared ownership and to purchase.

We will provide **Council homes that are low carbon, cheap to heat and of quality design**, predominantly on sites where larger developers have little interest, prioritising brownfield sites.

We will enable provision of quality specialist accommodation, both temporary and permanent, for those threatened with homelessness, care leavers and other groups that find it difficult to secure appropriate accommodation.

We will enable, in consultation with communities, the building of **5 Council homes in every village**, where this is possible and where there is demand.

Housing has a key role to play in health and wellbeing. The poor condition of housing, including poor energy efficiency can negatively affect the physical and mental health of our residents and affect their ability to lead an independent life.

We will prioritise the improvement of housing conditions across all tenures, through appropriate and robust enforcement, support and advice to landlords and the provision of grants and loans.