



# **Gloucestershire Deserves Better**

**Gloucestershire Liberal  
Democrats**

*County Council Manifesto  
2021*

## **Foreword from Councillor Paul Hodgkinson - Group Leader of the Liberal Democrats**

Gloucestershire is a wonderful place to live and work, and I'm delighted to have made it my home nearly 35 years ago.

Its incredible communities, natural landscapes and bustling local economies mean it consistently punches above its weight. Despite this, 16 years of uninterrupted Conservative rule at the County Council has held us back.

The Conservative record includes:

- Our streets in a mess and a backlog of road repairs still amounting to over £80 million;
- Gloucestershire's most vulnerable children being left at risk and the County Council being placed in Special Measures by Government inspectors;
- A record of failure in walking and cycling, leading to the loss of over £9 million worth of Government investment in green infrastructure;
- Hundreds of millions of pounds being burnt on a waste incinerator built in the county, burning waste from neighbouring councils in your backyard;
- Failing to protect our loved ones in the county's care homes during the pandemic, with the tragic loss of more than 400 care home residents and total deaths well in excess of 1,000 across the county.

### **Gloucestershire deserves so much better than this.**

In opposition, Liberal Democrat councillors have worked tirelessly to oppose those policies that would have been most damaging, and to bring in measures that will make a difference to people's lives. Just recently, we managed to secure more than £800,000 to keep our residents safe, £530,000 to help communities recover from Covid-19 measures and £200,000 to help our county's children achieve their potential.

All this we achieved in opposition. If you elect us to take control of the Council's finances we could do so much more.

Our experienced team would prioritise:

- Fixing the pothole riddled roads and investing in green transport;

- Getting Gloucestershire's economy back on its feet after the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Taking a lead in tackling the climate emergency and striving to make Gloucestershire carbon neutral by 2040;
- Protecting the health of our residents and supporting our carers;
- Fixing children's services, protecting the vulnerable ones in our care and
- Putting communities back at the heart of decision making.

You can find out more about these priorities and how we intend to deliver them in our manifesto below.

**Gloucestershire deserves so much better than the record of failure over the last 16 years.** A transfer of *just six seats* will enable us to take back control and build back better.



**Councillor Paul Hodgkinson**  
**Leader of the Liberal Democrats on Gloucestershire County Council**

p.s. to find out more about [your local](#) candidates, visit [www.GlosLibDems.org.uk](http://www.GlosLibDems.org.uk)



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# “Six to Fix”

Our priorities if you elect us to represent you on Gloucestershire County Council:

- 1. Highways, walking, cycling and public transport:** We will fix the roads, give walking and cycling the investment they deserve and get people back onto public transport safely.
- 2. Gloucestershire’s economy:** We will get Gloucestershire back on its feet after the impact of Covid-19. We will invest in our communities and work with our partners to build back better, bringing more sustainable jobs and high-tech industries to Gloucestershire.
- 3. Health and social care:** We will fight for two fully functioning A&Es in Gloucestershire and to enhance the County’s community hospitals, as well as protecting care home residents and staff.
- 4. Tackling the climate emergency:** We will lead in tackling the climate emergency in Gloucestershire and take responsibility for our impact on the environment.
- 5. Children and families:** We will fix our broken children’s social services and ensure that every child has the best opportunity to achieve their full potential.
- 6. Our communities:** We will put communities at the heart of decision-making once more.



## Highways and active travel

**We will fix the roads, give walking and cycling the investment they deserve and get people back on public transport safely.**

### **Gloucestershire deserves:**

- A culture of civic pride where second-rate repairs are not tolerated;
- Our fair share of the national funding to fix the roads;
- A Green Transport Commissioner to be a trailblazer for walking, cycling and public transport in Gloucestershire;
- A joined-up and safe walking and cycling network across the county;
- A reliable and attractive public transport service and
- Infrastructure to support the electric car revolution.

We are all embarrassed by the state of Gloucestershire's roads. Visiting neighbouring counties, their roads never appear as pothole-riddled and dangerous as Gloucestershire's.

Indeed, in our county we still have an estimated £80 million black hole of highways repairs that are needed. Meanwhile, road verges and footways have been allowed to run wild, covering signs and proving dangerous for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists.

Despite being a large rural council, with nearly 1 per cent of the UK's population, Gloucestershire residents have never received our fair share of

highways' money. If elected to office, we would:

- Campaign to get more money to fix the county's dangerous roads;
- Give you greater power over highway priorities, increasing the money ringfenced for priorities identified by communities, parish councillors and residents and
- Create a fund to improve the appearance of the highways – dealing with out-of-control vegetation and replacing faded and dangerously obscured signage.

### **Road Safety**

Gloucestershire consistently sees around 1,000 road casualties every year, with dozens of fatalities occurring on our county's roads. In power we would prioritise road safety for all road users.

We would take decisive action on residential speed limits. Working with local communities and residents, we are committed to making 20 mph the standard speed limit in areas where pedestrians, cyclists and children frequently share the road.

In the last year we successfully campaigned for £200,000 to establish six School Street schemes – which protect children from traffic outside schools during drop off and pick up times – one in every district in the county. We would roll these schemes out to any suitable school that wanted one, in consultation with the local communities and residents.

We would also unlock the slow process of making road safety improvements and Traffic Regulation Orders, that too often get bogged down in legal red tape, enabling communities to implement safety schemes at pace.

### **Supporting our climate ambitions**

Highways and transport also have a huge role to play in delivering our ambitions to tackle the Climate Emergency. They are responsible for more than a third of the county's total emissions. The Liberal Democrats have a plan to help residents and businesses stay connected while living greener lives.

### ***Walking and cycling***

On day one, the Liberal Democrats will create the post of ***Green Transport Commissioner***:

- Much like city-regions, we will recruit a commissioner to be a trailblazer for public transport, walking and cycling in Gloucestershire.

We will create a truly ***joined-up and safe walking and cycling network*** across the county:

- Working with the districts, communities and local partners we will give walking and cycling the investment it desperately needs – delivering high quality segregated schemes that are safe and cater for every experience level.
- In the recent budget, the Conservatives allocated well below the national average of the highways budget to walking and cycling.
- We would immediately increase this to 5 per cent, striving towards 10 per cent by 2025.

### ***Public transport***

- Restrictions associated with Covid-19 have taken a heavy toll on public transport, however, once restrictions ease, encouraging people back onto buses and trains and out of their private vehicles will be essential in our fight against climate change and air pollution.
- We will support bus companies by investing in the wider roll-out of real time information systems and smartphone apps so you can rely on the county's network.
- We will encourage local operators to invest in their fleet, making the service safer and more attractive.
- We will support rural routes to ensure those living in the countryside are not left disconnected and isolated.
- We will work up a business case to look at light rail services across the county, including between Cheltenham and Gloucester, and support the ambitions of Cotswold District Council to rebuild the rail connection between Cirencester and Kemble.

### ***The electric revolution:***

- As the country phases out petrol and diesel engines over the next decade, before a ban on new fossil-fuelled car sales in 2030, we will ensure that our county is ready for the explosion in electric car sales, with investment in rapid car chargers throughout the county.

- We will lead from the front, eradicating petrol and diesel cars from the County Council's car fleet.
- We will work with car-sharing companies to pilot the roll-out of short-term rental electric cars.

***Climate change adaption:***

- We are already seeing the impact of climate change in Gloucestershire, with hotter summers than ever and regular record-breaking floods.
- We will ensure that Gloucestershire's residents are kept safe from such weather events, including larger investments in drainage schemes to protect people's homes from flooding.

***“WE HAVE A PLAN TO HELP RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES STAY CONNECTED WHILE LIVING GREENER LIVES.”***

**Improving accessibility**

There are many other areas where the County Council, as the Highways Authority, can make all of our lives easier:

Disabled access:

- Having commissioned a study into mobility in 2020/21, we will work with local partners to ensure all recommendations are implemented on our highways.

Parking:

- Parking reviews across much of the county are long overdue. In power we will review existing permits to ensure they are put in place to improve access for residents, rather than to generate income.

Public rights of way:

- We will protect public rights of way, improve the way the County Council deals with rights of way applications and clear the backlog that currently exists.

Highway trees

- We will invest in tidying up footways that have been damaged by tree roots and grind out the stumps that this administration has left to litter our streets, replacing them with more suitable tree planting.



# Recovering Gloucestershire's economy

**We will get Gloucestershire back on its feet after the impact of Covid-19. We will invest in our communities and work with our partners to build back better, bringing more sustainable jobs and high-tech industries to Gloucestershire.**

## **Gloucestershire deserves:**

- A county-wide Green Industrial Strategy that will deliver sustainable growth and support our climate commitments;
- Support for the huge investment in Cyber, to ensure all districts share in the benefits;
- Super-fast broadband in every business and home across the county;
- Long-discussed highway schemes to finally be delivered to unlock investment, while also offsetting construction and usage emissions and
- Support to enable the tourist industry to bounce back.

Businesses, local employers and hospitality industries have all been devastated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

We know that, as we start to emerge from the other side of the lockdown restrictions, this next council has an enormous role to play in ensuring our county's economy bounces back with highly-skilled jobs and low environmental-cost businesses.

***“WE WILL DEVELOP A GREEN INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY TO DELIVER SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND SUPPORT OUR CLIMATE EMERGENCY COMMITMENTS.”***

And there are many reasons to be optimistic – from seizing the opportunities of tackling the climate emergency, massive investment in the cyber-community being built in Cheltenham and taking advantage of the new ways of working, which for many has enabled them to improve their work-life balance.

We know that such economic benefits cannot be delivered in isolation – so we will work with GFirst Local Enterprise Partnership, industry bosses and district council leaders to develop a ***Green Industrial Strategy*** for Gloucestershire, that will deliver growth that is sustainable and supports our Climate Emergency commitments.

Many schemes will come out of the Green Industrial Strategy. However, having placed the green economy front and centre, some of the measures we would implement would include:

- Working with Cheltenham Borough Council to maximise the benefits from the exciting **Cyber developments** – but also working with neighbouring districts to spread the benefits across Gloucestershire.
- Ensuring the long-discussed **highway improvements** are finally delivered to unlock economic development throughout the county – including along the M5, West Cheltenham and the A417 Missing Link – while also ensuring our highways partners offset the construction and long-term usage emissions.
- Making sure that **super-fast broadband is available in every home and business** – not just to the local telephone exchange – to support businesses and employees that continue to work from home.
- Coordinating with our schools and colleges to ensure our young people are **gaining the skills** to work in the developing green economy.
- Taking advantage of the need to **retrofit public buildings** to support the green building trade.
- Helping the **tourist industry** bounce-back in a sustainable manner, working with district tourist bodies to promote Gloucestershire as a green destination to visit and building long-term resilience to protect

the hospitality sector from future times of uncertainty.

- Supporting district councils as they **develop the county's high streets** to keep pace with people's changing buying habits.

### **Developing equally**

As we build back better, only the Liberal Democrats will ensure that growth benefits all of our residents equally, by investing in our communities and the frontline services that affect you – including in education, community hubs, youth services, public transport, footways and cycleways and renewable energy.

### **Looking after your money**

To deliver these ambitions, it is critical that the County Council remains financially viable – all this, while Government support for local councils continues to dwindle.

As such, we would develop a commercial model to generate additional revenue to support frontline service. Such models have been used by district council colleagues in Cheltenham, with the Liberal Democrat run Borough Council recently winning the “Best Commercial Council” award.

You know that a vote for the Liberal Democrats is a vote for proven commercial success and financial prudence.



# Tackling the climate emergency

**We will lead in tackling the climate emergency and take responsibility for our impact on the environment.**

**Gloucestershire deserves:**

- A council that take decisive action to tackle the climate emergency and that strives to be carbon neutral by 2040;
- Promises on tree planting to be delivered;
- Investment in green travel to enable residents to leave the car at home and
- A council that will enable communities and local partners to become greener.

Back in May 2019, it was the Gloucestershire Liberal Democrats who pushed the County Council to declare a climate emergency. This included a timetable for action, including an ambitious commitment to an 80 per cent reduction in the county's emissions by 2030.

Yet two years on, little has been achieved:

- Despite ambitious words about planting more trees in the county, only a tiny fraction of the promised trees have been planted, leaving our county more than 2 million trees behind target already.
- With historic underinvestment, and poor bids for Government grants, Gloucestershire missed the opportunity to capture the boom in active

travel seen in the Spring of 2020.

- Even prior to the pandemic, public transport numbers had stalled, and the present Conservative County Council has no plans to bring passenger numbers back up once Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

Not forgetting that it was also this Conservative administration that chose to build a waste incinerator in our county, having previously promised it never would. At a cost of over £650 million, this facility will emit more than 1 million tonnes of carbon dioxide over its lifetime.

In tackling the climate emergency, we know that if you start slowly you will fail fast. In power we will take decisive action to become a national leader in tackling the climate emergency. In doing so, we will invest in our county to ensure we hit the 80 per cent reduction in emissions by 2030, and strive to become **carbon neutral by 2040**, or as soon as possible thereafter – *ten years earlier than the Conservative Government plans to*.

This is an extremely challenging target and will need a wholesale re-evaluation of the council's role and responsibilities, but we also know it is necessary to protect our environment for future generations.

***“WE WILL STRIVE TO MAKE GLOUCESTERSHIRE CARBON NEUTRAL BY 2040 – TEN YEARS EARLIER THAN THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT.”***

Some of the measures that we will take include:

- Working on the County Council's own estate:
  - o We will maximise green energy production on County Council land and accelerate plans for district heat sources.
  - o We will lead by example, significantly reducing staff car travel, incentivising travel by public transport or active travel instead and eradicating petrol and diesel cars from our own fleet.
  - o We will aim to make the County Council's buildings and services *carbon negative* by 2030 (absorbing more carbon than they emit).
  - o We will review all farmland owned by the County Council and work with tenants to transition to a sustainable farming model,

harnessing expertise from sustainable farming pioneers operating within Gloucestershire.

- Enabling partners and our communities:
  - Working with highways colleagues and the newly installed **Green Transport Commissioner**, we will invest heavily in measures to drive down transport emissions, including a fully segregated cycling network.
  - In collaboration with the Gloucestershire Local Nature Partnership, we will invest council resources to realise the ambitious target of 35 million trees planted by 2030.
  - Working with landowners and residents we will encourage rewilding schemes across the county.
  - We will facilitate **community energy schemes**, as seen in other counties in the South West such as Cornwall and Somerset.
  - Working with districts we will ensure all councils have ambitious climate targets – helping those lagging behind.
  
- Providing leadership in the county
  - We will create a cabinet role purely dedicated to tackling the climate emergency and to providing leadership for businesses and communities.
  - We will install a **waste reduction officer**, to work with supermarkets, businesses and communities to eradicate waste within Gloucestershire.
  - We will also fund high quality data collection on air quality and work with districts to tackle hotspots.
  - We will highlight those sectors that are slow to decarbonise and work with them to improve the pace of change.

We will also explore the possibility of developing a Severn Wildbelt, a wildlife corridor to help protect our environment, improve biodiversity, and connect existing wildlife and conservation projects in our county.

### **Leading the charge to clean Gloucestershire's rivers**

Over this last four years Gloucestershire Liberal Democrats have been responsible for leading the attempt to clean up Gloucestershire's rivers from waste pumped out by water companies and pollutants flowing from farmland.

We have now established a County Council Task Group to work with government organisations, local campaigners and the polluters themselves. In power we will challenge them to change their behaviour and create safe bathing spots in some of our county's rivers.



# Health and social care

## Gloucestershire deserves:

- A council that fights for the retention of two A&Es in Gloucestershire;
- High quality mental and physical care to be delivered as locally as possible;
- To learn the lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic and
- For paid and unpaid carers to be appreciated and better supported.

## Health

**We will fight for two fully functioning A&Es in Gloucestershire and to protect the county's community hospitals, so that residents can receive the best care closer to home.**

Gloucestershire has the great fortune of having two Accident and Emergency centres to serve the East and West of the county, yet the constant threat to close Cheltenham's A&E is harming the health outcomes for every resident in the county – including those for whom Gloucester is the closer hospital.

We have all seen the queues of ambulances trying to access Gloucestershire Royal's A&E while Cheltenham's hospital has been closed to all but minor injuries. Not only is this bad for patients in those ambulances, but it also

removes this vital first response from the roads – a service in high demand across the county.

In power, we would:

- Fight for Cheltenham’s A&E to be protected for good, giving long-term assurances to the communities that rely on that hospital and ensuring there is sufficient resilience in the county to avoid either A&E from becoming overwhelmed.
- Fight for quality care to be delivered as locally as possible. This includes protecting and enhancing our county’s community hospitals – Cirencester, Dilke, Lydney, North Cotswolds, Stroud, Tewkesbury and The Vale.
- Improve our county’s mental health support, so individuals can receive help in a timely manner and not be sent out of county for the necessary care.

### **Learning from the mistakes of Covid-19**

Despite the Conservatives promising to throw a “protective ring” around our care homes, more than 400 of our residents tragically died after contracting Covid-19 in a care setting.

In office we will hold an inquiry into this administration’s handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as running exercises to test our resilience to future outbreaks. We commit to sharing these results with the public in order to be transparent in areas where this council needs to improve.

### **Adult social care**

**We will address the failure of the Conservatives to prioritise care for all our vulnerable citizens, protect care home residents and care for our carers.**

The pandemic has affected all of us to differing degrees, but none more so than care home staff and residents.

For care home residents, life fluctuated from too little protection, to overbearing restrictions that were damaging for other aspects of their health. From early on, the Liberal Democrats were pushing for testing to be made available for staff and residents and also for visitors, enabling them to see loved ones in safety.

We would learn the lessons from this pandemic and develop clearer plans on how to deal with any future outbreaks, while protecting the most vulnerable in our communities from both the virus and isolation.

A further lesson from the last year has been the importance of our carers and care staff. Long an under-appreciated role in our society, we need to do more to show our gratitude. That's why, in office, the Liberal Democrats will undertake a review of pay and conditions for all care staff contracted by GCC to ensure those caring for our loved ones are similarly taken care of.

We will also ensure our county's unpaid carers are identified and help offered. With more than 60,000 informal carers in Gloucestershire, we will campaign nationally for an uplift in the carers allowance, and work with local groups to identify support measures the Council can implement immediately.

### **Supporting Independent Living**

For many of our elderly residents, the best place for them remains their own home. We will take advantage of the latest technology to support independent living, while also ensuring caring companies operating in Gloucestershire are delivering the best service possible for our residents.



## Children and families

**We will fix the children's social services which Conservative neglect drove into special measures.**

**Gloucestershire deserves:**

- A children's service that protects Gloucestershire's vulnerable children;
- Support for families and children in their formative years and
- An outstanding education system that enables every child to achieve their full potential.

Gloucestershire Liberal Democrats demand the best for the county's vulnerable children, yet for the last ten years children's social services in Gloucestershire have been in special measures for having failed the vulnerable children in their care.

Being a good or outstanding social worker is hard; but without strong political leadership and support it is an impossible job. For the last 16 years this Conservative administration has **starved the system of the tens of millions of pounds** it desperately needed and wilfully turned a blind eye to the early warning signs of a system that was leaving vulnerable children in unacceptable situations of risk.

We have a plan and the ambition to turn this around and make Gloucestershire's children's services Outstanding.

Our plan involves:

- Investing in capital projects to house and support more vulnerable children within Gloucestershire, rather than sending them out of county into distant and expensive care.
- Reviewing services that are contracted out to private businesses, with a view to bringing services for vulnerable children and young people back in house. This provides better value for money, ensures continuity of care and improves results for these children.
- Changing the “it will do” culture, and striving to become an Outstanding authority.
- Investing more into our staff so they feel valued and supported and proud to work in Gloucestershire.
- Working with neighbouring authorities to develop a regional pay structure to entice social workers to Gloucestershire and the South-West, and prevent a constant one-upmanship which leads to spiralling pay and an unstable workforce.
- Better integration with local communities and community groups to deliver a range of services in Gloucestershire.

Since being labelled a “failing service” the Conservatives have never acknowledged their own part in this, instead choosing to blame council staff who were sacked. **Your vote can change all of that.**

**We will reintegrate the County Council into the communities we serve**

Supporting vulnerable families before intervention is needed is just as critical as helping those in need now. Early help and advice help families stay together and provide better value for the taxpayer. Yet this has been an area the penny-wise-pound-foolish Conservative leadership has completely withdrawn from.

The Liberal Democrats would spend the money to bring the Council back into the community, and reintroduce those universal services that will help families needing support. In doing so, we would:

- Establish new ways of helping parents in the first 1,000 days of their children’s lives, ensuring they have the best possible start in their formative years and are well prepared for the start of formal education.
- Coordinate universal services across the county, bringing County

Council owned sites back to life as hubs for families and young people alike.

- Install trusted adults in the community, for children, young people and families to turn to in times of need.

***“THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS WOULD SPEND THE MONEY TO BRING THE COUNCIL BACK INTO THE COMMUNITY, AND REINTRODUCE THOSE UNIVERSAL SERVICES THAT WILL HELP FAMILIES.”***

## **Education**

Conservative cuts to education budgets have hit Gloucestershire hard, with a shortfall of over £15 million for our county’s schools every year as a result of measures introduced in 2015. These cuts have meant that schools and colleges have cut back on pastoral care, on staff numbers and even some subject choices.

The Liberal Democrats don’t think that’s fair on Gloucestershire’s children and believe that it is harming their long-term educational outcomes. That’s why, if elected, we’ll use our platform to fight for more money for our schools so that every child has access to an outstanding education.

In addition to this, we will:

- Invest in our county’s school buildings, including funding to help older schools adapt to become carbon neutral, lowering our county’s emissions and saving the schools money;
- Work to narrow the gap in educational outcomes between the most socially advantaged and disadvantaged pupils;
- Integrate youth services and school counsellors into our schools to provide pastoral care to all students in need of support;
- Review school provision planning to ensure that there will be sufficient school places near where new houses are being built, not simply where it’s most convenient for the County Council;
- Protect and invest in all of our existing Special Schools and ensure that SEND provision is available as close to home as possible;
- Make small rural schools with relatively high costs per child more sustainable by increasing federation and support among non-academy schools.

Even in opposition, we have a track record of helping our children in education, this year we secured an extra £200,000 to help children's development in their first 1,000 days and for those children at risk of exclusion.

**If elected as the majority party, we could do so much more.**



# Communities

**We will put communities at the heart of decision-making once more.**

**Gloucestershire deserves:**

- A council that is integrated into the community it is meant to serve;
- A review of the routine loss of public assets;
- Collaboration between the seven councils to deliver a better service for our residents and save money to be spent on front-line services.

This Conservative administration has overseen the piecemeal withdrawal of services from local communities, to the point where the County Council barely interacts with the majority of those residents that it is meant to serve.

Yet, if the Covid-19 pandemic has taught us anything, it is the value and importance of working with communities to deliver the best community solutions.

As we look to rebuild from the pandemic, the Liberal Democrats would maintain and enhance those relationships, working closely with communities, parishes and district councils to coordinate community services, that are both cheaper and more effective in the long run than reacting to problems further down the line.

The services we would look to coordinate are wide ranging, but could

involve such things as:

- Working with parish and district councils to introduce community hubs – or a base where the public and professionals can interact – and supporting those that are already providing a service to the local community and enhancing their offer.
- Working with the NHS and local partners to introduce and enhance “social prescriptions” – with community “link” workers taking a more rounded approach to people’s physical and mental health – in GP surgeries, schools or local libraries.
- Collaborating with local community groups to support and grow community transport and befriending schemes, so they can help a greater number of residents.

Similarly, the Conservatives have long had a policy of selling off all public buildings and land to cover their costs. Gloucestershire Liberal Democrats oppose the routine loss of these public assets and, in power, would reconsider how these properties or public land could best benefit our communities and residents.

This could include developing their use for:

- Community or affordable housing, in collaboration with our district councils and local partners;
- Green energy generation or
- Community hubs and spaces for service provision.

***“GLOUCESTERSHIRE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS OPPOSE THE ROUTINE LOSS OF PUBLIC ASSETS AND WOULD RECONSIDER HOW THEY COULD BEST BENEFIT OUR COMMUNITIES.”***

Gloucestershire Liberal Democrats would similarly want to work more collaboratively with our district, parish and town councils to devolve functions to and deliver locally driven services for our communities.

We would also ensure that the County Council invests more time into working with district colleagues to plan the necessary infrastructure to support housing developments. Too often, plans for school places or green

infrastructure are left to the last minute and shoehorned into place.

### **County Council Services**

There are huge opportunities to invest wisely to save money across the county. The seven councils all spend considerable sums on IT and customer care, which could instead be spent on frontline services. We would immediately start the conversation with our district partners to share IT and customer services, so that all Gloucestershire residents have just one point of contact for all their council queries.

In power, we would continue to protect our County Council managed Fire Service, to ensure it provides a range of services to benefit our communities, while also being supplied with cutting-edge technology to protect residents and officers in the case of a serious incident.

We will also enhance our trading standards teams that have been starved of funding, to help businesses navigate the new trading relationship with the EU while also ensuring residents remain protected from criminal scams and dangerous black-market goods.

All this, we will do while ensuring that the county council budget is responsibly managed and the County Council remains financially secure.

## Conclusion

This manifesto is more than just hopes and ideals, it is a roadmap to getting Gloucestershire back on its feet after the Covid-19 pandemic and 16 years of Conservative withdrawal from the community.

As we recover from the global pandemic, these elections find us at a critical turning point. Under the Liberal Democrats the County Council would: truly tackle the climate emergency rather than fiddling at the edges; fix the roads and create a county-wide green transport network; protect our most vulnerable in society and create an outstanding education system that gives every child the chance to be the best they can be.

Gloucestershire has extraordinary potential and the County Council can do so much more to ensure it maximises that, while ensuring that no-one is left behind as we grow sustainably.

**Gloucestershire deserves so much better than the broken promises of the last 16 years. Your vote on 6 May can change all of that.**

