

Rise up!

A wake-up call for Norfolk in the face of
Coronavirus, Brexit, and the Climate Emergency

Introduction

Dear neighbours,

I, like you, have had ups and downs this past year. By far the biggest 'up' has been seeing the strength of our communities coming out in force to look after each other in response to coronavirus.

But getting through the worst of the pandemic is just the beginning. We were already facing two of the biggest challenges in a century: the immediacy and **uncertainty of Brexit**, and the sudden realisation that **the world we live in is vulnerable**, just like we all are.

These challenges need more than goodwill to resolve. They're actually when governments are at their best: when, in the face of adversity, political leaders can command the trust and respect needed to guide society towards a brighter future.

In Norfolk, **we've been let down for decades** by political leadership that lacks vision, and the energy and dynamism needed to make things happen. I felt this when I first stepped into politics just four years ago, and I've found people all over Norfolk who agree that the time for talk is over: it's time for action.

This document contains our plan for how we would do just that if elected into power at County Hall next May. In particular, it sets out our pledges to the **young people** of Norfolk across a wide range of policy areas including the environment, mental health, education, jobs and transport.

You'll find our **industrial strategy** to give **green businesses** in key sectors the **infrastructure** and support they need to grow, and stimulate more **manufacturing** and high-value industry in our county.

You'll also see our plan for **people**: how we would re-wire council services to put individuals at the heart of service delivery, just like many thriving businesses have managed to do in recent years.

We have big ideas for **zero-carbon public transport** that works for everyone, and how to put more **power in the hands of local people** when it comes to the decisions that affect them.

And our plan to make the **whole of Norfolk carbon neutral by 2030** runs through it all like a 'green thread', framing every part of our policy.

I commend it to you and hope for the chance to make it happen.

Yours sincerely,



Steffan Aquarone
Group Leader, Liberal Democrats

Why we're doing this

A fair, free and open society...

As Liberal Democrats, we exist to build and safeguard a **fair, free** and **open** society to enable people to enjoy the best life that Norfolk can offer, in which we seek to balance the fundamental values of liberty, equality and community, and in which no one shall be enslaved by poverty, ignorance or conformity.

We believe that **power exists with people** and that as politicians, our job is to make sure people use that power to achieve what they want in their lives, for themselves, their families, their communities, and in the wider world.

It is not our job to 'empower' people, because doing this implies that they do not already have power and that we are somehow more important than they are.

It is also **not to control** or make decisions on behalf of people, because nothing is more alienating and disempowering than feeling like you don't have control over your own life.

We do not seek to make everyone equal in all ways, but to work to **remove the systems and structures** that mean people are prevented from living out their lives as they choose and enable people to be able to improve their social, physical and mental wellbeing.

Fit for the modern world

We want to make Norfolk a county that represents this, and provides the best rural life has to offer, **taking the lead** in making Norfolk a county fit for the modern world:

- A place where **people of all ages** can afford to live in peace and comfort;
- Where the opportunity to play an active part in society **isn't limited by where you're born**, or how much money your parents have;
- Where our **communities** are at the heart of decision making;
- Where every individual is treated with **dignity** and **respect**;
- Where the values of **compassion** and **kindness** define the services we deliver; and
- Where we are constantly striving to make things better by **doing things** not just talking about them.

The policies in this document spell out our specific commitments to what we will do, with our partners, if elected to run Norfolk County Council – an organisation that spends over £1 billion of your money each year.

They have been designed with our partners and members for the benefit of everyone in Norfolk, and are **costed, fundable and deliverable**.

How we'll do it

What the Council does

Norfolk County Council looks after all sorts of things that affect all our lives.

In some cases these might seem like straightforward, day-to-day things like **Highways maintenance**, which you might struggle to believe is political. But think about the main road into a town: who says what the speed limit should be? How does the County Council balance road repair and road safety? Even the definition of a village is something the politicians in charge of the County Council get to decide.

Other parts of the council's work might affect people at different points in their lives. Only a few of us will be dealing with **Adult Social Services** at any one time, but nearly half of us are likely to need their help, particularly later in life with things like elderly care. But they also deal with the social, physical and mental wellbeing of all adults across Norfolk – and we've been particularly shocked at how badly treated members of Norfolk's **disability community** have been by the current politicians on the council.

Although the County Council only runs a few schools still, **Children's Services** looks after all education and the social, physical and mental wellbeing of children across Norfolk. It has a statutory duty to protect and promote the welfare of children in need in this area and this

is a huge job, where the decisions that are taken by politicians can have a profound and permanent effect on young people's life chances. At any time, as councillors, we are **corporate parents** to nearly 2,000 looked-after children in Norfolk who can't live with their parents for whatever reason.

The way we treat our most vulnerable reflects on who we are as individuals and as a society.

These are by far the largest departments – but the County Council also looks after **cultural services, economic development, environment and planning**, the **Fire Service** (although all of us on the Council, across all parties, had to fight to stop the Fire Service being taken into the control of the Police and Crime Commissioner), **public health** and **business support and development**.

It's in some of these latter areas that we want to do more for the people of Norfolk.

It's why our policies are organised across five pillars, set out over the following pages.

In many cases, the council needs to do more, and build on the work its officers are already doing. In others, it needs a complete re-think. But in every sense, we think Norfolk County Council needs to **take the lead** and set out a bold, long-term vision for the future of our county, that serves the people of Norfolk now and in the long term.

What we'll do

Our five pillars

We believe that people will strive to make the best of the opportunities presented to them, but only if sufficient barriers are removed.

The role of the council is to remove these barriers.

They could be movement barriers caused by lack of public transport, meaning thousands of our young people struggle to access education and employment; training or education barriers; barriers caused by disability, special needs or mental or physical ill-health; or barriers caused by older age.

Our five policy pillars are built on these beliefs and explain specifically (but not exhaustively) what we will do, if elected.

1. Environment

Environment and climate change at the centre of everything the council does

2. Economy

Attract new investment to Norfolk and support all businesses to grow

3. Transport

Efficient affordable public transport benefits everyone

4. People

Enable everyone to fulfill their potential and enjoy the best possible quality of life

5. Strong Communities

Local is best for decision making and service delivery.

1. Environment

“Attract new investment to Norfolk and support all businesses to grow”

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirms that **limiting global warming** to 1.5°C is still possible with ambitious and immediate action. This is necessary to avoid global destruction – and to avoid **losing many parts of Norfolk** to rising sea levels.

We believe our County Council has a moral duty to play its part. But that the current political leadership has failed to **take the lead** on tackling climate change in Norfolk and take the bold, swift and long-term action that is needed to address the climate emergency.

Whilst many Tories scoffed and scorned, we took seriously the message that was brought to us in the Council Chamber by **Extinction Rebellion** in February 2019.

With persistence from the Liberal Democrats, Norfolk County Council has already committed to making itself carbon neutral by 2030.

If elected, we will take the lead on making Norfolk – not just Norfolk County Council - carbon neutral by 2030.

But tackling the climate emergency means much more than this.

As well as committing to putting Environment and climate change at the centre of everything the council does, we have set out some of the actions we would take if elected, starting with those that would have the highest impact.

Insulating homes

Anyone who lives outside of a city or major town in Norfolk is likely to have oil-fired central heating. The biggest impact on greenhouse gas emissions in Norfolk would come from properly insulating these homes – but this requires innovative materials, a dynamic group of companies to supply and install them, and a county-wide campaign to draw on Government funding opportunities around home insulation.

If elected, we will set up an organisation within the council, staffed by full-time officers, with the goal of ensuring insulation upgrades are carried out in 50% of rural Norfolk homes by 2025, and the balance by 2030.

This will require close alignment with our economic development strategy, communicating widely to the public, supporting individual householders if needed in order to access finance, and stimulating innovative research and development of resilient materials and other insulation technology solutions in partnership with our county's outstanding scientific community.

“Attract new investment to Norfolk and support all businesses to grow”

Funding green initiatives

No-one has the monopoly on good ideas, and it is our belief that the best projects emerge organically from within communities when people come together to make things happen. Just look how the people of Norfolk responded to coronavirus.

We want to acknowledge this when it comes to tackling the climate emergency, and make sure that innovations, projects and schemes that come from within Norfolk have the chance to flourish.

If elected, we will create a fund specifically for local green initiatives.

Community energy

Whilst offshore power is an important part of our national energy strategy, local people hardly stand to benefit at all from the vast amount of wind energy generation taking place off Norfolk's shores.

If elected, we will **promote and enable the setting up of community energy schemes**, so that local communities can benefit from the latest in green energy technology, and the power generated on their doorstep.

In addition, we will do our bit as a council by **ensuring all Council electricity consumption is from renewable energy sources.**

Green infrastructure

We need in our county to make many changes to respond to the climate emergency that need people to change their behaviour.

But, as our economic development strategy shows, green growth and green jobs are a huge opportunity – not a problem.

Nevertheless in the early stages many initiatives need incentives in order to accelerate them. Technology can be expensive at first, and behavioural change needs momentum.

If elected, we will help build this momentum by providing incentives to encourage the use of green infrastructure, including electric car charging points;

We will lead by example by changing energy suppliers for all council property to use green energy; and divest the council's pension portfolio from fossil fuels.

“Attract new investment to Norfolk and support all businesses to grow”

Health and wellbeing

Just as green jobs and green growth are an economic opportunity, care for our environment is also a huge opportunity for wellbeing.

Parts of Norwich have unacceptable and unlawful levels of air pollution. This will only partly be addressed by greener buses; we must also take dramatic measures to reduce air pollution across our county.

If elected, we will take dramatic measures to improve air pollution outside schools, and in town and city centres including installing “City Trees” – CO2-filtering structures that use moss to carry out 275 trees’-worth of air filtering - in the worst areas for air quality.

Health and wellbeing are closely linked with environmental sustainability. Specifically, health inequalities can be addressed rapidly through fitness – and mental health has been shown to be radically improved by contact with nature. Providing more green, open spaces in residential areas, and enhancing nature throughout Norfolk’s countryside and urban areas, as well as in our nationally important wildlife areas, can help ensure everyone in our county can access space to exercise and relax.

If elected, we will increase emphasis and funding for environmentally sustainable flood prevention work;

Create more rewilding and biodiversity schemes across the county; and

Purchase more land for planting native trees and increasing tree density in hedgerows.

Participation

As the lead authority in Norfolk, the County Council should take the lead on these, and other important subjects. But change cannot happen through one agency alone.

As Liberal Democrats, we believe in science, and we believe that power lies with people.

If elected, we will set up a Climate Change Partnership group, involving councillors, residents, young citizens, climate science and solutions experts, businesses, Citizens Assembly representatives and other relevant parties to guide our policy development, as well as its implementation.

Protecting and improving our environment needs leadership across all areas of local government, which we will seek to provide. We will also look to build on existing projects and initiatives where they exist, rather than risking repetition.

2. Economy

“Attract new investment to Norfolk and support all businesses to grow”

We believe that thriving business and industrial sectors are key drivers of prosperity, and that the role of the council is to take the lead on stimulating a local economy that works for everyone:

- Creating jobs
- Encouraging direct investment
- Increasing the money it receives from business taxes in order to fund services
- Leading on economic strategy
- Providing training to help businesses scale and grow
- Identifying and encouraging opportunities for innovation, environmental improvement, and diversification, and
- Support for young people in the economic recovery.

A new ambition amongst Norfolk’s political leaders is urgently needed in order to do this.

It is clear from those areas in the UK and internationally that are delivering real economic growth that the lead local authority is showing leadership through a compelling overarching vision, ambitious growth plans, active, hands-on engagement, and partnership – not just signposting to services or facilitating Government programmes.

We believe that Norfolk is full of **untapped potential** and that it is the council's job to work with the LEP and others to bring about a bold **21st century economic strategy** that brings prosperity to all.

Industrial strategy

Our city is a prosperous, culturally rich centre with **nationally recognised** arts, education and cultural institutions, an **award-winning** independent retail sector, and a **global destination** for creative writing. It has specialist industry in agricultural science that is unparalleled in the UK.

However in rural areas we face acute challenges caused by rapidly changing population, **lack of connectivity, rural poverty**, and an **exodus of young people**.

Overall, Norfolk’s core industries face significant change in the coming years with Brexit and the Climate Emergency two of the main drivers that could cause Norfolk to sink or swim. Businesses need certainty in order to thrive, and in an era of change, it is Norfolk County Council’s job to provide direction.

If elected, we will establish industrial zones for technology-enabled agriculture, advanced manufacturing, and environmental tech – to complement the existing Food Hub – in order to stimulate and coordinate sustainable, green growth.

“Attract new investment to Norfolk and support all businesses to grow”

Training and development

When cash is low, the difference between a business' success and failure could come from just a few more £ or % profit. Yet Norfolk lacks some of the management training and coaching facilities to train small and owner-operated businesses in the knowledge needed to achieve this.

In some of our most promising sectors there are insufficient networks and specialist associations to allow business owners to learn from each other, and even a lack of basic training and qualification opportunities in key vocational sectors like hospitality & social care.

Meanwhile many of Norfolk's successes struggle to recruit the management skills they need locally.

In many sectors, increased performance benefits all the businesses in the sector – making it easier to recruit staff, attract customers, and build a lasting reputation for excellence.

If elected, we will provide a tailored management training programme to our key sectors (tourism, medical, research, elderly care, and arts & culture) to help improve growth, performance, resilience, and productivity;

Specifically for SMEs, we will focus on efficiencies that can help put 5 percentage points onto their net profit; and

For established businesses, we will launch a prestigious growth programme for those looking to take the next step along the path of 5x growth, Merger & Acquisition, or stock market flotation.

In addition, our care sector is often overlooked as an example of national excellence. It is sometimes seen to be strange to talk about care as an 'industry' but we believe we should **be proud of our care industry as a leading growth sector, and promote training, best practice and show-casing across the county and beyond.**

Green growth & green jobs

The climate emergency is an enormous opportunity that could bring prosperity to many families across Norfolk.

Handled responsibly, it doesn't need most people to make significant lifestyle sacrifices, and could instead create a new wave of sustainable manufacturing, product development and service industries.

Whether responding to the policy agenda contained in this document, diversifying an existing business to make it greener and more attractive to modern ecologically-conscious customers, or developing brand new products and solutions to solve environmental problems, we believe the conditions are right

“Attract new investment to Norfolk and support all businesses to grow”

for Norfolk to experience a new wave of economic development.

This requires focused leadership – both in terms of researching and prioritising opportunities, and presenting Norfolk to the world.

If elected, we will create a fund to encourage new local sustainable business;

Undertake a research project to identify and manage opportunities for a low-carbon Norfolk economy; and

Launch a charter mark for sustainability in tourism businesses.

Infrastructure investment

The environmental cost of infrastructure projects is just as important as the financial cost. If elected, we will bring in specific measures to go beyond mandatory environmental impact assessments, and ensure every project decision taken by the council is made in respect of a balanced budget for environmental impact, including our ambitious target to reduce the county's net carbon emissions to zero by 2030.

Aside from the environmental benefits, our commitment to public transport investment is a critical infrastructure asset for our economy, as it allows a wider group of people to access

employment and bring their skills to businesses across our county without relying on private car ownership.

Specifically to encourage businesses to draw on all the rich diversity of skills and aptitudes that the people of Norfolk have, **if elected we will create a people credit system that gives more 'points' to any business applicants for funding or support if they include new apprenticeships and/or employment opportunities for adults with a learning disability, as well as other groups.**

The 2020 lockdown has shown us how vital modern digital infrastructure is – arguably more so than roads. Yet too many corners of Norfolk are ‘not spots’ for mobile phone signal, and homes and businesses alike will soon find that the data speeds they need are simply not available through the local improvements that have come about through the County Council giving money solely to BT Openreach to improve their copper-cable broadband.

If elected, we will work with a full range of partners including alt-net service providers, third party infrastructure owners and developers to achieve 100% superfast fibre coverage across Norfolk; and

Seek to make Norfolk the national leader in rural mobile phone connectivity by partnering with the Shared Rural Network collaboration between network operators to deliver 100% indoor mobile phone connectivity across Norfolk.

3. Transport

“Efficient affordable public transport benefits everyone”

In February 2019 the Local Government Association warned that thousands of bus routes were ‘at risk’ of being scrapped because of an ‘unsustainable’ funding gap of £652 million in the free bus pass scheme.

Since the lockdown, public transport passenger numbers have plummeted further and are yet to recover. But even before then, rural public transport had suffered death by a thousand cuts.

Bus services are vital for our communities and are a lifeline for many of our most vulnerable residents. But they shouldn’t just be for people who don’t have a choice – in cities across the country, public transport is the preferred option for many. But the continuous cutting of routes and lack of investment have made public transport unviable for most journeys – whether commuting to nearby towns (not just Norwich), going to the shops or heading for a night out.

Already here in Norfolk, the Park and Ride has proven to be a popular option for motorists trying to avoid traffic gridlock and parking charges in the city.

What if we could re-imagine rural public transport so it met the needs of more people, and could take them in the right direction, at the right time? That’s why, as Liberal Democrats, **if elected we will start a public transport revolution with a major investment in a hub and spoke transport model.**

The long-term solution lies in re-thinking our approach to public transport, and building a sustainable transport approach across the county that combines public transport, rail, walking and cycling.

Our hub and spoke network works by putting park and ride-style car parks in out of town locations across the county.

Then, rather than people driving all the way to the outskirts of the city, they’d only need to drive the first few miles to the nearest hub.

They’d also be able to get clean, comfortable, modern buses to other towns too – not just Norwich.

And this networked approach would make it easier to send small electric shuttle buses around the villages to collect non-drivers and bring them to the same hubs too – and **we’ll expand demand responsive and community car schemes, as part of our ‘hub and spoke’ model.**

Resolving the Western Link

Liberal Democrats have steadfastly criticised the half-baked plan of only building part of the road around the North of Norwich, the NDR. Our views on the last section – the “Western Link” - have concentrated on completing the road to solve the problem of rat-running and congestion encouraged by the gap between

“Efficient affordable public transport benefits everyone”

the current end of the A1270 and the A47, while at the same time respecting the needs of the natural environment in the Wensum valley.

The delays in building the western end of the “Broadland Northway” have caused substantial, and unacceptable, problems for the residents of Costessey, Taverham, other villages and North-Western Norwich. Something must be done to address the transport, environmental, safety, economic, wellbeing and health challenges these communities are suffering. The least-worst solution is the new Western Link, including its preferred route which we support.

The impact of the Western Link on the sensitive Wensum valley, with its unique and critical ecosystems, and its residents, human and others, cannot be ignored. We will seek to minimise this in the road's design, construction, and operation. This must include reducing the impact on wildlife through the provision of animal bridges etc.

Completion of the Link will also improve access to North Norfolk from the A47 and A11, allowing an area that suffers from significant issues of rural poverty and seasonal unemployment to benefit economically, and support its role as a centre for offshore wind-power generation, an essential part of our response to the current climate emergency.

Liberal Democrats also will try to solve the effects of short-sighted cost-cutting on the existing parts of the Broadland Northway by

ensuring proper safety works are undertaken via a ringfenced budget.

We remain supportive of completing the dualling of the A47, which will be funded by government and not take any local council tax away from vital local services, and other road improvement schemes where justified by their return on investment, and their merits.

At the same time, conscious that unnecessary use of private transport should be discouraged, Liberal Democrats are committed to seeking to improve the public transport infrastructure across the County.

4. People

“Enable everyone to fulfill their potential and enjoy the best possible quality of life”

We believe politics exists to serve people.

That might sound obvious, but it’s easy to look at the way public services are currently run and feel like they’re really serving anyone but!

The difficulty comes in working out how to unpick the way things are, in order to achieve genuine change.

As Liberal Democrats **we stand against the concentration of power** whether in the hands of big business or the state. As soon as power is given over to institutions or wealth it starts to serve them, not everyone else.

Few people in politics would say they are in it to make people poorer. Yet throughout history a great many disastrous things have been done by left-leaning governments in the name of trying to make things fairer – just like the inequality of capitalism means many people don’t have what they need to lead good lives, through no fault of their own.

The answer is complex – and we recognise that some problems call for the state to get involved, whilst others are best dealt with through business and innovation. Yet **no answer is ever the right one forever** and, as progressives, we remain permanently critical of the status quo and believe more can always be done.

We believe the best way to do this is to make sure that power stays with people – and this has some big implications for the way county council services are designed.

User-centred design

Modern businesses put their customers at the heart of the way they organise what they do – and we believe Norfolk County Council should do the same.

At the moment so many services are siloed, it takes an army of staff who are paid just to assess and direct people to the right places.

We also believe that people should be trusted to be able to control the services they receive from the council themselves.

If elected we will reorganise how all services are delivered so that every citizen can find and access the services they need throughout their lifetime, as well as having relevant services recommended to them at the right point in their journey. This includes merging Adult Social Care and Children’s Services to provide a more joined up service for those most in need in our county.

Imagine if dealing with the council was as easy as sending a message on Facebook, or buying something on a well-designed website; we believe this is achievable within five years if it is done gradually, one step at a time. In due course, this would include a **My Account facility for every citizen** to access their council services throughout their lives - digital-first but with all the necessary fall backs for those whom online access is not appropriate.

“Enable everyone to fulfill their potential and enjoy the best possible quality of life”

Long-term commitment

Part of our plans to merge Adult Social Care and Children’s Services is to allow us to design more specialised, tailored services with those people who need the most help.

If elected, we will make a long-term commitment to those in Norfolk living with disabilities, starting by **reversing the minimum income guarantee (MIG) cuts, and making sure the level keeps pace with inflation;**

We will also commit to **protecting re-ablement services as part of this; and**

Place greater emphasis on equality assessments when taking council decisions;

And by focusing council services on individuals, as we are committed to doing, **we will give our front-line staff the time and freedom to invest in prevention and focus on building the individual resilience of their clients, not short-term cost-savings.**

Focus on Norfolk

Again it might sound obvious, but we believe the County Council should focus on delivering services for the people of Norfolk, not Suffolk, Essex and beyond. Yet this is part of what Norse, the council-owned facilities management company, does. Norse does

many things well – including running several outstanding care homes in our county. But we believe the County Council should focus on developing services, not building a business.

If elected we will re-focus Norse towards providing services Norfolk needs.

Likewise, the County Council’s housebuilding company Repton has tried to make money by buying land and building houses – but these have always been to maximise profit, including the private profit of developers that Repton has partnered with.

If elected we will use Repton to promote building in parts of the county with the highest need, with the type of housing that is most needed, in particular to build high quality housing for older people, that is well-connected to local services.

Benefit test

People have been forced to sing for their supper for too long – it’s time the council took a benefits test. **If elected, we will measure every policy, service and economic initiative against our commitment to deliver a fairer and more equal county.** If it doesn’t do this, it won’t pass the test, and it won’t happen.

“Enable everyone to fulfill their potential and enjoy the best possible quality of life”

Doing things *with* people

As liberals we believe that power sits with people. But too often, public services are designed behind closed doors without enough of a voice from the people who will be using them. Sometimes this is in spite of the best intentions of the people designing them; other times it's because **those in charge simply don't want to know** what the reality of life is like for many people in our society.

Council consultations have become a running joke – some of the most drastic changes to public services in the past few years have had legally-required consultation but the people most likely to be affected haven't even been able to access them.

If elected, we are committed to ensure services are designed *with* people, not dished out to them, or done for them. Genuine coproduction has been shown through social research to deliver better outcomes, greater satisfaction from service users, and lower costs in the long-term. The evidence is clear – and with our county benefiting from some of the best academic minds in the country in areas of social research, **if elected we will seek to contribute, to the fullest extent possible, with academic partnerships – helping us develop better policy, and bringing county council data and assets to help inform research.**

Working for our Young People

Another group in our society that has lost out disproportionately in the past is our county's young people. If we are to maintain a vibrant economy, and bring in the money through council tax and business rates to fund the services we all deserve, we must make sure our county is a place where young people can prosper, learn, set up businesses, and forge careers.

As part of our commitment to young people in Norfolk, **if elected we will use partnerships to restore a proper Youth Service to Norfolk** that can provide services for, and designed with young people;

Safeguard Special Needs and Disability funding; and

Protect Music Service budgets.

And although the move to academies means the council no longer runs as many schools, we will **extend our support for our small schools by committing resources to help them improve performance.**

Having already worked with many of our young people, and understood their concerns about how services are delivered in Norfolk, we will also **create parity of esteem for mental health services.**

“Enable everyone to fulfill their potential and enjoy the best possible quality of life”

Excellent care for all

Our economic strategy already recognises the importance of the elderly care sector to Norfolk. To further highlight excellence in our county’s care system, if elected **we will create a quality assurance scheme as part of taking a greater leadership role in the care homes sector**, to ensure everyone gets the high quality of care they’re entitled to.

Social care is still too varied depending on where you live. So as part of our ‘hub and spoke’ approach to rural transport, **we will seek to remodel the delivery of social care in rural areas** so that everyone can access services independently for as long as they are fit and willing to do so.

Part of the way we assess social care also needs to recognise its interdependence with the health care and criminal justice systems. **If elected, we will add measures to elderly care assessment that target performance on delayed transfers of care from hospital, and seek to make domestic abuse support easier to access and more supportive.**

a desire to put the wellbeing of the people of Norfolk first, and to cement this, **if elected we will measure all council policies based on their potential health outcomes** – both physical and mental health.

In addition we will **give our Public Health department an increased budget and encourage it to be a challenging, independent voice**, standing up to political power wherever it sits.

As well as encouraging greater scrutiny and participation in council business by the people of Norfolk, we will mandate that every policy decision the council takes is measured on health and environmental outcomes, as well as financial cost.

Wellbeing

Achieving lasting wellbeing for a population depends on getting a lot right, across the board. The policies we stand by are driven by

5. Strong Communities

“Local is best for decision making and service provision”

As Liberal Democrats, we believe that local communities are the natural places where society thrives. In rural areas, they are often the most effective place for social support, as well as for organisation, information sharing and making things happen.

We believe the County Council needs to do more in its commitment to local communities by giving them more power, more funding, and more influence over the way services are delivered.

We believe that services are better provided close to, if not in, the communities where people live and work.

If elected, we will expand and create community hubs in key locations for the public to access all services.

At the time of writing, rumours are circulating that the Government is planning on another attempt at creating unitary authorities - getting rid of District and County Councils and rolling their functions together.

As Liberal Democrats we are concerned about all attempts by Government to centralise power. There are also several practical issues – as well as opportunities – caused by Unitary Authorities.

This is not the first time that Unitaries have been discussed in Norfolk, and it remains to be seen whether Government has time to pass the necessary legislation to affect Norfolk next year. Nevertheless, our main concern is to

ensure that the people of Norfolk are well represented locally, and can access services wherever they live.

The most concerning aspect is the extent to which Unitary authorities pave the way for elected mayors - in this case one for the whole of the East of England - and together take power away from local hands and towards Whitehall.

Any such change in Norfolk could have a profound impact on Parish Councils too and we remain opposed to being grouped together with places as far away as St Albans under an elected mayor for the whole of the East of England.

Parish Councils

In parts of our county, Parish Councils are the very essence of local democracy: speaking truth to power, standing up for their local areas against corporate interests, and lobbying hard to protect local services.

Yet in some areas, Parish and Town Councils have struggled to find people to do the jobs.

Just as we believe power lives with people, we also trust in people. We believe that giving more power to local communities will attract better governance and a greater focus on the issues that matter.

“Local is best for decision making and service provision”

If elected, we will provide a higher rate parish partnership for walking/cycling schemes;

Re-establish members’ Local Place Funds so that all county councillors can commit money to schemes and projects they believe are of benefit; and

Give funding to local communities for projects that continue what started during the response to coronavirus.

Accountability

As part of our commitment to putting the people of Norfolk at the heart of the way the council operates, **we will work to open up the council to allow local people to feel welcome, and to have their say.**

Whenever there is a serious accident on Norfolk’s roads, we will carry out a review of circumstances to determine whether there were any contributory Highways factors;

We will remove charges for DIY household waste; reduce the overall level of spending on extra councillors’ allowances; maintain & protect Fire Service budgets; and

Proactively work to increase the diversity of the County Council’s staff and members.

“All this needs an unprecedented level of energy, commitment, and participation from you – the people of Norfolk”

What's next?

This document has set out our vision for the future of Norfolk.

We believe it offers a viable way forward in the face of coronavirus, Brexit, and the climate emergency.

It is not short of promises, detail, or ambition.

But to make it work, we need to mobilise an **unprecedented level of energy, commitment, and participation** from you – the people of Norfolk.

First of all, we need to get elected so we can make these decisions at Norfolk County Council. We are in a good position to do this, with over 30 target seats that we expect to be able to win. If we come even close, we will be in power – and we are doing what we can behind the scenes to make sure we're fighting in areas where we are the most viable alternative to the Conservatives.

But even **life-long conservative voters have told us they're tired of being taken for granted** by Norfolk Tories. We hope you find plenty in this document to attract you to our party.

Above all, funding our proposals will take an **unprecedented level of growth in Norfolk's economy**. Few councils have managed successfully to commercialise their operations – they're not set up to do it.

But by 2021 central government will have ceased funding local authorities altogether. The only way forward is to grow our local economy, increase our council tax receipts, and have the freedom to invest long-term, in unlocking the capacity each one of us has to contribute to **a just, rich and vibrant society**.

We know Norfolk is teeming with potential, and invite you to **join us** in realising our dream of a better Norfolk.

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Appendix: Finance

Local councils have four main sources of funding:

- Central government grants (the government has been reducing this amount steadily since 2010)
- Business rates
- Council tax
- Fees and charges

The current administration is fixated on only getting government funding to cover its budget problems.

We will change this with a specific focus on achieving significant sustainable economic growth so that the council tax base is grown to allow the Council to properly fund the services the people of Norfolk deserve rather than cutting services each year from an ever-decreasing amount of money.

Government funding is also available for specific projects and it can be at times substantial one-off money. We will ensure we are more active in pursuing these types of funding and being more modern and imaginative than the current

administration. We will also, wherever we can, look to seek to attract local sources of funding to supplement any government funding that is possible.

Whilst rates of borrowing are historically low we will continue the council's policy of borrowing to fund capital projects (improving the council's assets such as such as land and buildings), which will be measured on how much they improve life in Norfolk.