

# Listening, Caring, Working for MK 2021 Manifesto

The Liberal Democrats are working for a better future for Milton Keynes. To do this, we have 8 priorities:

- Reduce child poverty
- Tackle unaffordable housing and homelessness
- Help our children and young people
- Fight for better health and social care
- Look after our neighbourhoods
- Improve and innovate our public transport
- Rebuild the local economy and keep a balanced council budget
- Create a carbon neutral Milton Keynes by 2030





## **COVID-19 Foreword**

Since March 2020 Milton Keynes, along with the world, has been experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our thoughts are with all those who have experienced illness and loss throughout the crisis.

The things that needed to be done in 2020, that may have been put on hold due to the pandemic, still need doing in 2021.

The COVID-19 situation is ongoing and ever changing. As such, we will make sure to adapt to the situation when we must.

Our commitment to the people of Milton Keynes is constant. The Liberal Democrats will listen, care and work for you as we journey through this crisis together.



The residents of Milton Keynes deserve a Council that **listens** to them. One that **cares** for them. One that **works** for them.

Since the last elections the Liberal Democrats have been doing this; we've been listening, caring and working to create a bigger and better future for Milton Keynes.

We've led a local free school meals campaign, pushed the Council to support the Black Lives Matter movement and resisted the government's disastrous planning proposals. We've put a spotlight on the tragedy of child poverty and fought for online meetings to continue so that our Council is accessible and inclusive.

However, more needs to be done. If the Liberal Democrats ran the Council, we would further reduce child poverty in our borough, and do everything we can to help people off the streets.

We will support our children and young people who are the future of our city, as well as making sure our older residents have the care they deserve.

We will work to make sure we have enough affordable housing in well looked after communities, and promote innovative public transport.

We'll help rebuild our local economy after the pandemic, and make sure that we earn the title of World's Greenest City.



Of the many questions the COVID-19 pandemic has posed, perhaps the most crucial is do we want things to go back to 'normal'? Or do we want things to be *better*?

If you want a better future for Milton Keynes, vote Liberal Democrat on 6 May.

**Cllr Douglas McCall,**  
Leader of the Liberal Democrats on Milton Keynes Council



## **We delivered on what we promised in 2020**

Since 2016 we've been working in partnership with the Labour-run Council, meaning our manifesto is included in the Council Plan, including the one we prepared for 2020. We've been able to deliver some amazing successes, despite massive cuts from central government and the COVID-19 pandemic.

<b>What we promised in 2020</b>	<b>How we delivered</b>
<b>Promote</b> the take up of free school meals, and support lunch clubs during school holidays, so that no child goes hungry.	<b>Secured</b> £100,000 in the Council's 2021/22 budget to tackle child poverty, £30,000 of which is to go toward setting up community homework plus groups that provide a meal.
<b>Improve</b> our streets by fixing potholes, clearing litter and removing weeds.	<b>Fought</b> for £100,000 in the 2021/22 budget to go towards new bins, including solar powered 'smart' bins. <b>Pressured</b> the Council in 2018 to change their pothole policy, so more potholes could be fixed. In 2017/18 there were 2,833 pothole enquiries. This fell to 1,491 in 2019/20.
<b>Balance</b> the budget for another year and maintain Council reserves in the face of uncertain future central government funding.	<b>Helped</b> the administration balance the budget and maintain reserves, which proved crucial when the pandemic hit.
<b>Reduce</b> flooding of our homes, streets and roads.	<b>Changed</b> the Council's Strategy for 2050 so it references balancing lakes, river maintenance and drainage networks. <b>Secured</b> £15,000 in the Council's 2021/22 budget for training and equipping volunteer flood wardens.
<b>Make</b> sure the growth of our city is planned, so that the local Council has the final say, not developers.	<b>Campaigned</b> against the government's power grab on planning with a motion to Full Council. The government's proposals will disempower local authorities and silence the views of residents. <b>Fought</b> for £65,000 in the Council's 2021/22 budget for additional planning enforcement support. <b>Supported</b> the Council's Strategy for 2050, so that the future of our city is planned.



Since the last elections in May 2019, the Liberal Democrats have been listening to residents, and we've been working for them. Over the past two years the Liberal Democrats have:

**Demanded** that the Child Poverty Commission be created. Through the Commission and dedication from the Council, we want to see a reduction in child poverty in Milton Keynes.

**Accomplished** a change in Council housing policy, so that at least 36% of homes built on Council and Milton Keynes Development Partnership land must be affordable homes.

**Fought** for the Council to bring in a housing need register and continued to support the current council house building programme.

**Achieved** £45,000 in the 2020/21 budget to fund additional children's mental health support in the form of targeted young people's drug and alcohol work.

**Guaranteed** £25,000 in the 2020/21 budget to tackle child hunger. Over summer 2020 more than 8,500 lunch boxes were given to children in need, along with 1,000 food packs for young people.

**Worked** to secure £97,000 in the 2020/21 budget for weeding and clearance across 141 estates.

**Fought** for equality, accessibility and justice. We brought motions calling on the Council to support free school meals, accessibility for pedestrians who use mobility aids or prams, online meetings and the Black Lives Matter movement.

**Lobbied** the Council to provide support and advice to businesses who needed to prepare for the ending of the Brexit transition period.

**Secured** £50,000 in the 2021/22 budget for two temporary work experience roles to provide outreach and support to vulnerable and isolated people, after successive lockdowns have caused feelings of isolation to grow.



## **A record of delivery, a plan for the future**

Over the last few pages there are a list of things that the party have delivered for the people of Milton Keynes. This is a party delivering on commitments to the residents of MK.

The rest of this manifesto will focus on our commitments for the future, to make sure Milton Keynes is a good place to grow up and live for everyone across all of our many communities. **The sections expand on our main 8 priorities:**

- **Reduce child poverty**, because every child deserves a good start in life.
- **Tackle unaffordable housing and homelessness**, because everyone deserves a secure place to call home.
- **Help our children and young people**, so they can thrive through their lives.
- **Fight for better health and social care**, so that our residents have the support they need.
- **Look after our neighbourhoods**, so they are tidy, safe and places that residents of MK can be proud of.
- **Improve and innovate our public transport**, so public transport becomes a real choice for residents.
- **Rebuild the local economy and keep a balanced council budget**, so that we have a stable recovery from COVID-19.
- **Create a carbon neutral Milton Keynes by 2030**, so that we become a truly green city.



## **Reduce child poverty**, because every child deserves a good start in life.

We believe the Council has a duty to be there for their residents, especially vulnerable children. The Child Poverty Commission found that over 22,000 children are in poverty in our city after housing costs are considered. We cannot and will not ignore this; it needs to be the Council's priority. The Liberal Democrats care about the children of Milton Keynes, and we will work for them.

If the Liberal Democrats ran the Council, we would:

**Listen** to the recommendations of the Child Poverty Commission, which was called for by the Liberal Democrats in 2019, so that the children of Milton Keynes can reach their full potential.

**Promote** the take up of free school meals and support lunch provision during the school holidays. We will look into new ways to tackle child hunger, including the use of homework plus groups, where academic support is provided as well as food. We secured £30,000 in the Council's 2021/22 budget for this.

**Lobby** our MPs to fight for permanent changes to the free school meals system, so that no child goes hungry. We brought a motion on this to Council in November 2020 and wrote an open letter to our MPs asking that they do everything they can to enact real change.

**Invest** in early parenting, because the first few years of a child's life are the most important in influencing their life chances.

**Fight** in-work poverty by remaining committed to the real Living Wage and affordable childcare.

**Encourage** lifelong learning for residents who want more qualifications, working to increase job opportunities and tackle unemployment and poverty.

**Support** our amazing community initiatives that are working to tackle poverty and help vulnerable residents, such as MK Storehouse, MK Community Fridge, MK Food Bank and MK Act.



## **Tackle unaffordable housing and homelessness,** because everyone deserves a secure place to call home.

The pandemic has shown just how important home is; it is much more than just a place to live. The Liberal Democrats want everyone in Milton Keynes to be able to have a safe, comfortable and affordable place to call home, but sadly that isn't the case currently.

People are struggling due to high rents. Some face the risk of poverty and homelessness. Others lose any chance of getting onto the housing ladder. The Liberal Democrats have listened to these worries, and will work to resolve them.

If the Liberal Democrats ran the Council, we would:

**Develop** a housing company so the houses being built actually meet the needs of the people of Milton Keynes.

**Support** private renters by working with private landlords to encourage them to provide good and affordable housing.

**Listen** to residents' views about Council housing maintenance matters.

**Make sure** the number of people in temporary accommodation continues to fall, which the Liberal Democrats have continuously pushed the Council on.

**Improve** support for people who are at risk of becoming homeless.

**Work** to ensure support for rough sleepers continues after the pandemic, including day and night accommodation solutions.

**Continue** the 'Housing First' policy that the Liberal Democrats helped create in 2018. It has seen accommodation offered to every person sleeping on the streets, and 176 rough sleepers have now been accepted into housing.



## **Help our children and young people, so they can thrive through their lives.**

Children and young people are the future of Milton Keynes. We want them to flourish in school and higher education. We want them to have support, whether through mental health services, family centres, libraries or charities. We want to give them the tools to thrive.

If the Liberal Democrats ran the Council, we would:

**Oppose** moves towards selective education and continue fighting for a good comprehensive education for all children.

**Support** schools so they have enough places, and work towards having great Special Educational Needs and Disability support in all schools. The Council does not run all schools in Milton Keynes, but we will fight for the best education for all children.

**Support** the development of a new university for Milton Keynes, so that we become a city of choice for students.

**Improve** access for young people to mental health services by supporting initiatives such as the YiS Youth Counselling Service. We secured £45,000 in the 2020/21 budget to fund additional children's mental health support in the form of targeted young people's drug and alcohol work.

**Press** for more support for young people leaving care who need help finding housing. The Liberal Democrats brought a motion on this in January 2021, to make sure the Council investigates the current process. We also secured £70,000 in the Council's 2021/22 budget to help children leaving care with rent deposits and getting on the housing ladder.

**Work** to increase the number of foster parents within Milton Keynes.

**Support** our libraries and children and family centres, which provide valuable help and advice to families throughout the borough.

**Help** our young carers by working with the specialist service Young Carers MK, to make sure they're getting the help and advice they need.



## **Fight for better health and social care**, so that our residents have the support they need.

Health and social care services across the country were already struggling due to central government funding cuts, and then the pandemic hit them hard. We need to make sure lessons are learnt from COVID-19, especially when it comes to care.

Our residents deserve the best health and social care, so if the Liberal Democrats ran the Council, we would:

**Reflect** the lessons learnt from the pandemic in Council policy, particularly how care home residents and staff can be protected from infection whilst still allowing vital contact with family and friends.

**Work** with partners to reduce health inequalities. The Liberal Democrats understand that COVID hit BAME communities particularly hard, and brought a motion pushing the Cabinet to investigate the need for extra support for those communities.

**Maintain** the collaborative way of working between the Council, partners, volunteers and families that was established during the pandemic.

**Campaign** for equal support and treatment between physical and mental health for young and old residents alike. This is particularly crucial given the impact of the pandemic and lockdowns on mental health.

**Support** independent and sheltered living for our elderly residents, ensuring they always have quality support.

**Ensure** Council and NHS services can handle the growing demand for adult social care as our population ages.

**Continue** to fight for better support and care for people with dementia, as the number of early-onset dementia cases rise.

**Support** the expansion of Milton Keynes University Hospital, so that healthcare provision grows along with our city.



## **Look after our neighbourhoods**, so they are tidy, safe and places that residents of MK can be proud of.

Since the last elections, the Liberal Democrats have been fighting for safe communities, where the streets are looked after, and the environment is kept tidy. With people spending more time in their local area due to the pandemic, this is more important than ever.

If the Liberal Democrats ran the Council, we would:

**Improve** our street scene by fixing potholes, clearing litter and removing weeds.

**Work** to ensure Council-owned play areas are kept tidy, clean and safe.

**Support** the Council's new understanding of regeneration as a process of full estate renewal including issues of health, education, jobs, housing, and visual pride in where one lives.

**Work** to resurface our roads where needed, making our roads safer.

**Reduce** flooding of our homes, streets and roads by fighting for better maintenance of our waterways and the provision of balancing lakes in new areas where required. Our drains and sewers need to be cleaned out regularly so they can handle the excessive rainfall caused by climate change. We will make sure to involve community groups who deal with these issues first-hand and provide them with any advice or equipment they may want to help their community.

**Continue** discussions with the Parks Trust to secure our city's long-term commitment to increased biodiversity.

**Listen** to residents after the wheeled bin pilot, which is testing the use of wheeled bins instead of refuse and recycling sacks. The Liberal Democrats called for this pilot to see if it could result in cleaner streets and increased recycling.

**Work** closely with partners, particularly the Police and local schools, to help reduce crime, gang activity and anti-social behaviour. We will continue to support the SaferMK Partnership and the MK Knife Crime and Youth Violence Task Force to make sure our borough is a safe place.



## **Improve and innovate our public transport**, so public transport becomes a real choice for residents.

The Liberal Democrats not only want to improve existing transport in Milton Keynes but create new and innovative modes of transport for our residents to use.

If we truly want our city to be carbon neutral by 2030, we need accessible and progressive public transport options for our residents.

If the Liberal Democrats ran the Council, we would:

**Protect and repair** our unique network of redways, so our residents can safely cycle and walk around Milton Keynes. Our redways were a lifeline for many residents during lockdown – the Liberal Democrats will defend them.

**Work** to ensure innovations in public transport serve the needs of our residents. Some bus routes in Milton Keynes are being replaced with a more flexible and cost-effective Demand Responsive Transport system, and the Liberal Democrats will fight for this system to be as efficient and accessible as possible.

**Upgrade** more of our bus stops to have proper shelter and lights.

**Push** for more electric vehicles to be used in public transport schemes. We'll also increase the number of electric car charging points throughout Milton Keynes, so that more people are encouraged to use electric cars.

**Support** the development of a mass transit transport scheme across Milton Keynes, so that more residents have fast and reliable public transport available to them.

**Support** the building of East West Rail between Oxford and Cambridge and campaign for Milton Keynes to benefit from the infrastructure that comes with it. We will fight for smaller stations to be kept open, and for the line to have electric trains.

**Campaign** for a Milton Keynes Transport Authority, like Transport for London, so that we can have control over the public transport in our borough.



## **Rebuild the local economy and keep a balanced council budget, so that we have a stable recovery from COVID-19.**

Our future depends on our local economy recovering from the impact of COVID-19 and Brexit. We must put in place the infrastructure and support for businesses to thrive again. By doing this, we will attract businesses, investment and jobs.

If the Liberal Democrats ran the Council, we would:

**Help** in the economic recovery from COVID-19 by supporting training in industries of the future, such as STEM and the green economy, and encouraging lifelong learning.

**Provide** residents with advice when it comes to any necessary career changes and retraining following redundancies that occur as a result of the pandemic or Brexit.

**Support** and develop the existing Economic Recovery Plan for Milton Keynes.

**Encourage** the growth of small businesses, potential relocation of head offices to our city, and long-term, inward investment by providing advice and support. We will lobby the government to provide financial support for our high streets.

**Work** with partners to ensure that local organisations and businesses are getting the support they need now the Brexit transition period is over.

**Ensure** the work of scrutiny within the Council is upheld with appropriate financial backing, making sure to continue the transparency of Council finances.

**Work** to balance the budget for another year and maintain Council reserves at appropriate levels, in the face of the pandemic and uncertain future central government funding. We know that reserves should be used on a rainy day, and we will endeavour to replace reserves that had to be used during the pandemic.

**Fight** for fair funding for Councils through the Local Government Association.

**Support** plans such as the Oxford to Cambridge Development Arc, the new Milton Keynes University, Plan:MK and the Strategy for 2050, ensuring Milton Keynes and its residents benefit from industry, infrastructure and transport.



## **Create a carbon neutral Milton Keynes by 2030, so that we become a truly green city.**

The Liberal Democrats care about our city and the planet, and want to make Milton Keynes the greenest city in the UK. To do this, we need to make our city carbon neutral by 2030 and carbon negative by 2050. We will build on our strengths to develop our Green City reputation, and will set an example for other cities across the UK to follow.

If the Liberal Democrats ran the Council, we would:

**Pursue** large scale tree-planting in the borough and ensure that trees are planted in all new estates to support our aim for Milton Keynes to be a city that is 40% green and blue open space.

**Protect** wildlife by creating continuous wildlife corridors across the city, protecting the habitats of our endangered species and making sure wildlife is not reduced due to poor planning and unsuitable landscaping.

**Ensure** that if there are changes to our waste collection or recycling systems in the future, our resident's voices will be heard, and any changes will be to assist residents to help increase recycling. We will investigate new and innovative ways of recycling, so that our Council continues to develop its Green City reputation.

**Lead** on green energy. We remain committed to switching the Council centrally to using recognised green electricity at the next opportunity and will encourage individually managed properties and centres to do the same.

**Review** the Council's zero carbon policies for the next Local Plan to minimise the carbon from new buildings, and maximise carbon reductions elsewhere.

**Reduce** the energy used by our existing homes by offering schemes to help homeowners, and by installing energy efficiency measures in Council homes.

**Deliver** the Council's Sustainability Strategy Action Plan, including the development of an Energy Hub, so that we can become a truly green city.





## Taken from the preamble to the party constitution:

*The Liberal Democrats exist to build and safeguard a **fair, free and open society**, 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.*

### More about the Milton Keynes Liberal Democrats

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