

NEWPORT

NEEDS

CHANGE

a smarter, greener city

NEWPORT LIBERAL DEMOCRATS
OUR VISION FOR NEWPORT 2022



OUR VISION

We've heard it across the city, knocking on door after door. Residents want something different. People from all parties, people who vote every year, people who never vote. We are all feeling it - a frustration, a sadness, even anger, at where our city is right now.

Our city deserves better. We need new ideas in the Council, new thinking, a different way forward. That's what we are offering in the election - throughout, you will see us talk about giving **you** power. You will see this thread going throughout our manifesto. A clear thread of values based on **trusting communities, empowering people**, and using the power of the council to **break down barriers** for anyone who wants to make things better.

A vote for your local Lib Dem team will mean something this year. It will mean change, and a new start. As our city tries to recover from the pandemic, and from years of stagnation, we need to try a fresh direction.

OUR HEADLINE POLICIES

1

Second waste recycling centre and free bulk waste collection for people on low incomes.

2

End rough sleeping in Newport by 2027.

3

New local HMO policy and refreshed planning guidance.

4

Relentless focus on city centre improvements and action to create an entrepreneurial spirit.

5

CCTV in hotspots, support and funding for Neighbourhood Watch, and letting residents lead.

6

Make our council more accountable, representative and ensure it reflects resident's votes.

You can see more detail inside...

ECONOMY

We need a prosperous city that thrives on enterprise and investment, that gets out of the way of business and creativity - but steps in when help is needed to unlock barriers.

Newport should be a powerhouse of creativity, where independent businesses and start-ups are supported, where our city centre thrives and where people are proud of their home city.

The Labour Council get it wrong too often. They think that big projects are enough to turn our local economy around on their own. It's the same with other parties. They promise single gimmicks like free parking, or they say a new market upgrade will fix the city. That's not enough. We need to have a way to harness the amazing ideas the people and entrepreneurs of our city have.

So what does this look like for Newport?

A THRIVING CITY CENTRE

The key is footfall, getting people back into the centre. More people means more business, more business means more shops.

Give people a reason to go there. Use the Council's discretion over business rates to attract varied shops and venues. Encourage local independent traders. It should be a hub for start-ups - creating more jobs.

Provide more services, both council services, and others, such as an NHS drop in centre and bases for various voluntary sector organisations. Encourage footfall!

Give it more culture. Newport City Centre was more vibrant when we had the "empty shops initiative" prior to Friars Walk being built. Then the centre had lots of arts and voluntary activity. People are calling out for a Chapter-like arts centre similar to Cardiff. Let's give the art sector a decent sized unused shop and recreate some of that buzz.

Newport has a great history and culture, but has largely failed to celebrate it. The Chartist mural was destroyed under cover of darkness. The Newport ship sits in storage. The castle is locked up. And remember TJs? Make more use of our assets to get people to visit the centre.

Other cities have demonstrated that good quality housing can be integrated into a city centre, creating crucial footfall - make it happen in Newport.

Students are a key element in a city centre, but the University of South Wales has failed to commit fully to the city. The city centre campus should be a vibrant hub, adding to the attractiveness of the centre.

We need zero tolerance for anti-social behaviour in the city centre, combined with support to get people off the streets and strong enforcement action against gangs that create a feeling of fear.

Getting the right mix

Liberal Democrats believe that sometimes you need government to step in and fix things. But you also need governments that will step away and let experts and local people take ownership. Our city centre needs a combination of both.

No city or town centre can thrive without the **right mix** of things - and we need a council that will take a strategic view of this - intervening when needed, but not micromanaging businesses and entrepreneurs.

We want to focus on individual issues in the city, investing in them enough to get them working well, and then letting people take over with their ideas and imagination.

So many things go into making a city centre thrive. Having people coordinate these, harnessing all the abilities of our city, is invaluable. What it **doesn't need** is a single city centre manager, making decisions on individual aspects of our city. In short: we need to create the right **culture** to bring Newport back to thrive. And without every element of the mix, our city and community is weaker.



A FESTIVAL CITY

Newport has so many diverse communities, and they make us all richer culturally but we can do so much more. We will commit to making us a festival city with events to get people across the city to celebrate and stimulate the local economy.

Some of these ideas include:

Host an annual Pride event in the city, aiming to mirror the success seen across other cities across the UK. Newport has a large LGBT+ community and we will celebrate across the city.

We will hold regular cultural celebrations, hosting Eid and Diwali celebrations and others, led by local communities, and have celebrations alongside these communities, like we do at Christmas.

We will promote the nighttime economy across the city, supporting nightclubs, pubs and restaurants - not just in the city centre, but also promoting and working with new businesses.

We will work with traders to put on exciting events as often as we can, across the city, to make people feel good about shopping in and being part of our great city.

Imagine. A city that celebrates together, that tries new things. A city where you can find unique, independent shops that are quirky and different. Where most weekends there is something bright and colourful, for all ages to do. Where businesses are opening and trying new things with help from the council, where there's cafes and restaurants that are new and exciting. Where we come together and share what is positive about difference. That's always been a liberal view - and we think it could be amazing for Newport too.

IMAGINE . . .



Preston Getting it Right

The power of a council in the funds it uses to buy services, products and employ people is massive. The idea, trialled in Preston (by a Labour Council, to be fair), is that local authorities commit to buying local services only. It has a massive impact on the high street, and local businesses.

We would use whatever flexibility we have to prioritise local businesses, unless there was no alternative. Whilst small organisations sometimes struggle to use local firms, the purchasing power of Newport Council is phenomenal. It can afford to pay small amounts extra, and it gets it back in increased prosperity for the city.

We would also make sure we locate vital services in the city centre. It isn't just **who** we spend money with that's important, it's **where**. Where Welsh Government procurement policy doesn't allow this, we will lobby for change.

CARE, HEALTH, SUPPORT

We need a health, care and support sector that frees people up to do their jobs - without bureaucracy, red tape and bean-counting that stops people doing amazing work to change and save lives.

During the pandemic, we saw health, care and support services going the extra mile - and we saw local authorities across Wales trying new flexible ways of working. Some of this meant local authorities backing off and trusting service providers to get on with the job.

When we have services delivered to help people - whether it is social care, health services funded by local government, or support and housing - all too often they are commissioned on 'time and task', or controlling, cost-based contracts.

We believe you can't create services for people in the same way you buy widgets or wheelie bins.

We want to lead a revolution in how we buy services for people in Newport. We want to bring the liberal principles of trusting people, and freeing people up to thrive and experiment, to commissioning.

But what does this look like?



A REVOLUTION IN SERVICES

We will prioritise the third sector in any commissioning for care, health or support services - we want to remove profit from services for people.

We will push liberal ideas such as letting people pay for their own care out of a local authority budget, increasing personal choice.

We will prioritise services that are owned and led by people themselves, such as cooperatives.

We will change monitoring of contracts so we don't count every minute of time, but instead trust service providers to get it right - they're the experts. There are still checks and balances, but it gets rid of costly contracts that count every penny. This will free amazing organisations up to do what they do best: **help people.**

EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

It is easiest to solve problems when you catch them early on. We will increase funding for intervention so we prevent problems from getting worse.

As well as funding more early intervention services, it is about where our services can be found. We want to see more services in local communities, in easy reach. This means drop-ins in the city centre, in community centres, in GP surgeries, and much more.

We need to have support workers on the main council hotline - who can get people to the right services if they need it, rather than waiting for hours on the end of a line.

We will end the gatekeeping of the council website - there will be clear contact routes, which aren't always easy to find. Our council teams need to be accessible.

Investing to save
through early
intervention works.
And making the
council more
accessible is
essential.

We want services that are there for you when you want them, who listen to you when you need to be listened to - but who don't keep you trapped in bureaucratic nightmares. We've spoken to residents over the past five years who struggle to know where to go for help, and how to access it. You don't need the latest buzzword. You need services that are ready to act, and ready to ask what you need. That's the Newport we imagine.

IMAGINE...

Asking and Acting

One of the good things the Welsh Labour Government did was pass the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act in Wales. The Lib Dems wanted it to go further at the time, but it still meant big and positive changes for the system for women at risk of abuse.

One of the things they did was create something called the “Ask and Act” duty, where people in public services are trained to look out for the signs of abuse towards women, and ask them if they are ok - and then to act on any hint of danger or risk.

We want to make sure Newport puts this front-and-centre in all of its customer facing services. Whether it's in social services, or in waste management, our commitment is that all Newport employees will know what to spot, when to ask, and how to act.

But we also want to see this approach extend to other areas. LGBT+ safety, anti-racism, people who are struggling financially, mental health, any groups that may be at risk of a crisis should always be asked how they are, and have those concerns acted on - before they become a crisis.

HOUSING

We need a city that is relentlessly focused on getting housing right. We need it to be one of the central missions of the next council, after the city centre. We need more housing, but better managed.

Housing is bigger than local authorities. But local authorities can make a big difference all the same. They have a lot of power and resources to make changes to people's lives.

Despite that, the housing crisis continues. We have seen a failure with this Council to tackle the growth in houses of multiple occupation in areas across the city. It is never the well-off areas with lots of green space and parking that see multiple HMOs created. It is areas where services are struggling, where people are over-crowded and where parking is a major problem.

We also see empty homes too often left to rot, and new developers left to renege on promises of affordable housing, or to offer insulting levels of affordable housing. When we look at the huge profits that private developers make, it is only right that the local community benefits with houses it can afford.

We can't promise the earth, but we can promise a change.

CHALLENGING THE PLANNING MYTHS

Our planning officers locally seem scared by myths of planning - the first is that guidance is set by Welsh Government. Not true. The legislation is set by them, but the local rules are created by the council. We would scrap the current guidance and create new guidance that makes planning more transparent and prevents over-development in Newport.

We would make sure the council's Planning Committee is given independence and freedom to overturn decisions they disagree with. All too often, officers warn against appeal by the Welsh Government - when these are still very rare. It is used too often and ends of making the committee terrified and toothless when turning down poor proposals.

INCREASING HOUSING SUPPLY



Successful cities have good planning. We want to raise the standard of planning in Newport.

We would work with housing associations in a partnership to compulsory purchase as many empty homes as we can in the city, and use them to provide quality homes for families and young people in need. We would do this on a "back to back" basis, to limit the financial risk to the council.

We would be tough with private housing developers and make sure affordable means affordable - and hold a strict line when they too often try to renege on their agreements. "Reduced profits" are not a reason to reduce affordable housing or community commitments.

We will work to implement a Newport approach of a private rented leasing scheme to local social housing - where private landlords are guaranteed rent for a long period, in exchange for letting to social housing tenants in need.

We will look at empty shops and look at how we can turn some of them into housing - providing more footfall for economic recovery, and tackling the housing crisis at the same time.

ENDING ROUGH SLEEPING BY 2027

We want to end rough sleeping in Newport within five years. We saw that this can happen quickly, during the pandemic. We will provide whatever support we need to, to keep this relentless focus on rough sleeping going.

We will continue the current investment in homelessness services, and work to increase the supply of Housing First properties - and the support that goes around it - to end rough sleeping.

Housing First success

Housing First (giving people who are homeless a social house as soon as possible, without any conditions), has had a huge impact on homelessness, particularly rough sleeping. If we are elected and have a say in the running of Newport, we will make Housing First our biggest priority in homelessness - building on the work of the current council. But also extending it much more widely beyond homelessness and into mental health or other areas.

It isn't needed for everyone, but for people who have been homeless for years, or people facing lots of challenges, it works.

It can be the last lifeline for people, it can give them the freedom to live their own lives again. It also puts the power back in the hands of people themselves - we provide a home, which they rent, and they then have the space and time to turn their lives around. We believe this is another example of liberal values - trusting people, valuing people, and giving them the space and freedom they need to thrive.

Imagine that if you stumble, and you are struggling, your council is there to help. We want a city where if you are homeless, you are treated with dignity. Where if you are homeless, you aren't expected to wait for years for a forever home, you are supported to look after yourself and keep yourself safe and happy, in accommodation that is just the same as anyone else's. Homelessness is not a disease - it is a political choice by a Westminster Government that doesn't see the need for change.

IMAGINE

A mark of a caring city is how we treat those who have lost their homes, or who are struggling to keep theirs.



CRIME AND POLICING

We need a city that is going to tackle crime and disorder, which is blighting residents' lives. We want to empower residents and give them the ability to report directly to police and demand support.

Crime and disorder is one of the biggest issues residents tell us about. There is a genuine sense of hopelessness about how crime and anti-social behaviour can be dealt with. For many residents we've spoken to, there's a feeling that nothing can be done. We don't believe this for a second. But we **do** believe that it will take radical ideas alongside community spirit, and with practical support from the council, to turn our city around.

As liberals, we believe that power should be given, wherever possible, to people on the ground. As neighbours who form communities, we can share information and keep each other safe, whilst also holding the police to account.

This is one area where the council should step up - our residents need to feel safe and protected, and they need to know they are being listened to.

POWER IN RESIDENTS' HANDS

We will support Neighbourhood Watch groups in every ward, making council officers, as well as partner organisations, available to residents across Newport, to share ideas and intelligence to tackle trouble areas. Residents will be given authority to lead and chair these groups, to guide their neighbourhood response together.

We will invest in CCTV in hotspots, and ensure that council officers and police are monitoring those areas regularly, and demonstrating a zero tolerance approach to all crime and disorder.

We will challenge Gwent Police to show a zero tolerance approach towards e-scooters and other dangerous devices that are making resident lives a misery - and have caused serious injury to some.

TACKLING DRUGS

Crime and drugs policy is not in the power of Newport Council. But something needs to be done, and it needs a wide partnership between all councils in Wales, Welsh Government, and Westminster. We will push, wherever we can, for a change in drugs policy, with whatever influence we have as a council. It is time to stop allowing drug lords to profit from our refusal to look seriously at drugs in our cities.

We will look at what local options we have to take drugs off our streets, and into safe, protected facilities so they are out of residents' eyes - and away from areas plagued by crime.

ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE

We need a city where everyone is close to green spaces, where we take air pollution seriously, and where we give residents the power to take on unclaimed land and turn it into something positive for their community.

We want a green space revolution in our city. During the pandemic, people who could afford to travel, or who had gardens, had a vastly different experience than people without. Newport Council even closed our local parks in the first few months of the pandemic.

This inequality can kill - with evidence showing access to green spaces can have a positive impact on health and wellbeing.

In the city centre, there are opportunities to try new ways of bringing greenery back. Living walls filled with plants throughout the city could make our shopping centre a unique and distinctive place to shop. They can help keep the air clean and address pollution - and they look amazing too. We also need investment in play areas and outdoor keep fit infrastructure.

We also need to take urgent action on litter, fly-tipping and rubbish. Our Council can be very proud of its record on recycling and on climate change - credit where it is due. But its record on rubbish and fly-tipping is a disgrace. Communities across the city are suffering and struggling, and they need a way to tackle it.

TACKLING THE WASTE AND RUBBISH CRISIS

We would invest some of the £100,000+ that the Labour Party spend on clearing fly-tipping in the city, in a no-charge bulky waste collection for those on low incomes. With the cost of living increase, we want to make it as easy as possible for all families to dispose of their waste.

We need new approaches to recycling and refuse collection on streets with no front gardens. We would invest urgently in a second household waste centre, using brownfield sites already identified by the council. This would be in the east of the city, and would help reduce excess waste. The Council's own report says this will pay for itself very quickly in savings.

We need to address potential loopholes that some community organisations are finding - they fall between the definition of a business and a private household, so some have been told by the council they can't have their waste collected.

We support increased enforcement and prohibitive fines for fly-tipping - along with CCTV. If with a second waste centre, and with free bulky waste collection, people are still refusing to keep their areas clean, then we need to administer heavy fines - which we'll reinvest in cleaning the city.

MAKING OUR CITY GREENER WITH CLEANER AIR

We will create a Clean Air Taskforce as soon as we can, to look at what urgent action needs to be taken in areas like Caerleon, where we have some of the lowest air quality in Wales. With 20mph limits coming in soon, we will actively monitor whether this improves, and take action if it does not.

We will ensure the council takes every opportunity to make our city greener - with re-wilding, encouraging shared community gardens, or supporting residents to take on unclaimed land. Again, using the resources of the council to empower residents to make a difference.

A TRANSPORT CHOICE

*We want a city that has modern, reliable transport.
At the heart of any city, is a vibrant and easy to
use transport system.*

We need an integrated public transport system, and one that is fit for the 21st Century. Residents across Newport questioned the money spent on temporary gimmicks like free bus travel, when the fundamentals of a decent transport system weren't in place. Put simply: small numbers of people using a free bus service, are still small numbers of people.

It matches what we see from Labour locally - big gimmicks, white elephants, flagship projects, but no strategic plan, and nothing to tie it together.

We are also concerned that decision makers aren't that accessible to residents, and people who experience public transport and roads aren't listened to fully.

That's why we want a change in approach.

A CHANGE FOR NEWPORT TRANSPORT

Newport Transport needs a shake-up. We would undertake a review of how the business works, and make sure it is fit for purpose.

We would set up an urgent task group to look at how the organisation could be run differently, whether as a cooperative, or with elected positions on the board from staff and residents. If current legislation doesn't allow, we will lobby Welsh Government vigorously to make these powers available in their new legislation.

We will work with Transport for Wales and bus operators to address bus route gaps and get a better early and late night service.

ACTION ON OUR STREETS

Parking in Newport is a disaster. Some of this can't be helped, with many houses now having two or three cars. But in some areas, it can be - changing some streets to one-way and "nose-in" parking could be a solution in some areas. Either way, we would commit to a review of every street's parking situation and where possible, implement a plan.

We would review parking enforcement - there are shocking examples of residents being blocked in and not being able to get action. And after an initial flurry of ticketing, has anyone seen a parking officer recently? We will increase the numbers of traffic wardens locally, and pay for this through ticket charges for dangerous parking.

We would implement a residents' "Right to Request", where residents can suggest changes to their roads - such as the One Way system requested in Maesglas. There would need to be a full response from the department with reasons why these changes couldn't be made, under this new rule.

We need a new approach to how we view our streets. We will introduce new Newport guidance that seeks to get a better balance of parking, pedestrian and cycling need. We will also explore options about how to increase the sustainability of our streets, reducing potholes and other damage.

Cumbria Council: plastic tarmac

Cumbria Council in England was the first UK council to pilot the use of tarmac made from recycled plastic, including extremely hard-to-recycle materials like plastic bags. We want to pilot this approach in Newport, and could develop this to be a Wales-leading way of working. We spend huge amounts every year on potholes, and recycling plastic is a big challenge - so we could try addressing both issues with a new idea.

It is already being tried within Neath Port Talbot, and we'd like to adopt a wider-scale pilot like with Cumbria. Evidence shows that it is more durable and better for the environment - and it is cheaper!



Cities with easy to use, accessible transport services at their heart perform better. They are more successful.

LEARNING AND THRIVING

Labour's record on education is hard to be proud of.

The legacy of their time in the council is one of failure. They failed to stand up to their own party when they carved up our Caerleon Campus, and they've presided over a drop in student numbers - who are vital in terms of making Newport a space to invest in for high-quality employers.

Education of our children, our young people and adults throughout their life is one of the best ways of improving health, happiness, wealth - and is one significant factor in attracting inward investment. If you have highly qualified people in a city, the employers will invest.

We don't want to follow examples from other Labour councils, of putting out adverts boasting about low pay. We want to compete because we are a great place to live and work, with highly qualified, enthusiastic people.

EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

We want to ensure that young people who struggled due to lockdown, are given more opportunities to engage with learning going forward. We want to identify young people who felt their grades and education suffered, and consider targeted funding to re-take exams or other qualifications if needed.

We will work closely with the university to increase student numbers into our city, and we will be robust in challenging any more to reduce them further.

We will offer financial advice services for young care leavers in receipt of the Universal Basic Income pilot - so they can make the choices they want for their future with our local support.

We will actively progress the 21 Century Schools Programme'- making sure places are spaces where pupils thrive and are encouraged to learn.

We will end the use of private providers for children's social care across the city.



LIFELONG LEARNING

We will continue the support given to adult learners, and will ensure that barriers to older adults accessing learning and work are removed.

We will look at employment policies within Newport Council to increase the number of people without qualifications we employ - and offer training internally to increase their skills.

We will continue to build relationships with businesses so that apprenticeships are offered in many different sectors, and we will work with our schools so they are seen as valued choices.

We will work to secure funding from Welsh Government for a local skills wallet, that people locally can use at any stage in their life.

We will look at how to make the school buildings across Newport open to the community after hours, making them centres of our communities.

In our vision for Newport, we imagine a city thriving with students of all ages. We believe that the liberal values of education for all, at every stage of life, can transform the world. Our council should be there for everyone. That's whether you are an older person wanting to learn, or a young person who wants to gain skills, or someone who wants a second chance at education. And we imagine all this happening in buildings that are modern, attractive, and accessible.

IMAGINE ...

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

People across the city have suffered during Covid, but those who are part of 'minority groups' have suffered most. We want to make sure as a city, we address the particular challenges that our system causes people throughout Newport - and work to make life better for all.

A DIVERSE AND THRIVING CITY

We would continue our support for the City and Nation of Sanctuary.

We would conduct a Post-Covid review across the city, particularly for people with disabilities, who are still not getting the help they need.

We will establish an Anti-Racism Taskforce in Newport, to work to understand how to tackle systemic racism in all its forms.

We would extend and build on Labour's Fairness Commission in the city, to give it real powers, and appoint an Independent Chair who will challenge us.

DEMOCRACY AND SCRUTINY

For a party that wasted thousands on a City of Democracy festival, the Labour Party are very quiet on how to make our council work more democratically. Sometimes this can feel lower in importance to voters, but councils that are accountable, that embrace scrutiny and are accessible, make better decisions.

Our council has consistently shied away from scrutiny and challenge. We want our council to work better, and to be accountable to voters throughout the five years - not just at election time. Better scrutiny leads to better decisions.

For the city of the Chartists, who led a revolution of liberal values such as the secret ballot, and direct action, the lack of transparency is shameful.

We will open up the council, removing Labour's controls on questions and making those in positions more accountable.

TRANSPARENT, ACCOUNTABLE, FAIR

**Only under Labour
would the most
open part of a
council meeting be
thirty minutes with
an unelected police
officer.**

We would move to a proportional voting system in Newport, using powers that are available to the council - to make every single vote count equally. In 2017, Labour got 62% of the seats, with 36% of the vote. It means two thirds of us are represented by a party we didn't vote for.

Residents have said they don't feel listened to by the council, and that sometimes petitions are ignored. We would create a Petitions Promise, that any petition signed by 1000 Newport residents would guarantee a debate in a committee or full Council.

We would increase the powers available to the Scrutiny Chairs of council committees - so they can require answers from Cabinet Members, and hold them accountable to decisions.

We would end the requirement to submit questions to the Council Leader in advance - we should be able to challenge people openly, and in full Council.

We would end the nonsensical situation where only a small part of the budget can be voted on in full Council, and instead allow opposition parties and politicians to propose alternative budgets.

We would pilot new ways of engaging with people locally - to end the democratic deficit in our city. Two ideas include holding some meetings in public places outside the council, and also allow members of the public to ask questions on relevant issues to them.

VOTE LIB DEM ON 5TH MAY

These are our ideas for our city.

We've talked a lot about liberal values. That's because for too long Newport has had councillors for Labour whose instinct is to control things - to make big investments in things that attract attention, rather than to free people up. It can lead to arrogance, and a fear of accountability, and that leads to poor decision-making.

We also believe that the opposition in the city has been reliant too long on the Conservatives. They are tired and offer little in the way of fresh thinking.

We have a Prime Minister that lies to avoid responsibility for his parties, and a Chancellor that has one tax rule for him and the rich, and another for the rest of us.

That's why this year, we are standing in more wards than we have campaigned in since 2008. Newport Liberal Democrats are instinctive community campaigners and we are passionate in our belief that Newport can do far better. The more candidates that can be elected, we can push through these priorities for you.

So this May 5th, consider supporting your local Lib Dem candidate.

Because Newport needs change.

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Democrats**
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Rhyddfrydol Cymru**

