



City of Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats 2020 Vision

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 - Preamble to the Liberal Democrat Constitution.

Wolverhampton is a wonderful place with strong vibrant communities but it could be better. The City of Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats have a vision for Wolverhampton, a Wolverhampton which is more dynamic, more prosperous where all our citizens can reach their potential.

Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats have a vision of

- ✓ **A local and democratically accountable Wolverhampton**
- ✓ **A prosperous Wolverhampton**
- ✓ **A well connected Wolverhampton**
- ✓ **A well educated Wolverhampton**
- ✓ **A healthy Wolverhampton**
- ✓ **A safe Wolverhampton**
- ✓ **A clean and green Wolverhampton**
- ✓ **A well housed Wolverhampton**
- ✓ **A Wolverhampton that delivers high quality and accessible local services**
- ✓ **A Wolverhampton rich in Culture, Arts, Sports and Leisure**



A local and democratically accountable Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton's City status dates only from 2000 but our area has a rich history. There was an epic battle between the Anglo Saxons and the Vikings that altered the history of England. Our founding came in 985 when King Aethelred made a grant to Lady Wulfrun which led to the name change from Heantun (High Town) to Wulfrunhampton. In more recent times our role in the Industrial Revolution saw Wolverhampton become a pioneer in the automotive industries and then aerospace.

Wolverhampton Council area only came into being in its current form in 1966 with the incorporation of the bulk of the Urban District Councils of Bilston, Tettenhall and Wednesfield as well as parts of Coseley, Sedgley and Willenhall. These areas are still, rightly, fiercely proud of their history but sadly have lost virtually all of their independence.

Wolverhampton is in the Black Country Local Economic Partnership and works closely with the other councils in the West Midlands metropolitan area on issues such as public transport and the greater economy.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see a review of governance across the West Midlands combining with our neighbours on issues such as the greater economy, the environment and transport whilst devolving other issues such as delivery of local services to the lowest possible level to reconnect with our citizens.

The Liberal Democrats are calling for the abolition of the current Local Neighbourhood Partnerships and replacing them with a network of democratically elected and accountable Urban Community Councils (Parish Councils) with real power, real decision-making and the ability to raise income through a precept. These Urban Community Councils will, as far as possible, cover the area of the old Urban District Councils and would see the rebirth of Bilston, Coseley, Heath Town, Sedgley, Tettenhall, Willenhall and Wednesfield amongst others.

The Liberal Democrats are calling for the abolition of the current council structure and the creation of a West Midlands Council with a co-terminus Local Economic Partnership, Transport, Health, Fire and Police Authorities.

The Liberal Democrats feel that the Council and many of its partners do not communicate well with the citizens and call for an improved communication plan and also a review of how the Council handles consultations.



A prosperous Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton was badly hit by the recessions in the 1980s and 1990s and never recovered before being hit in the recent economic downturn. For Wolverhampton to be successful we need to rebuild our economy, increase the number of jobs and invest in the regeneration of the City Centre and our traditional district centres.

The Liberal Democrats accept that the way citizens engage with the economy has changed. Shopping has changed both with the increase of online shopping and use of retail parks rather than the traditional City Centre shopping. Employment has also changed with a reduction in the size of the public sector and growth of the service industry. Manufacturing has also been important to Wolverhampton and remains so particularly with the development of i54 and the aerospace and automotive industries.

The Liberal Democrats are keen to improve both the employability of our citizens by investing in education and lifelong learning and also to improve the employment offer by investing in business and thinking innovatively about how to encourage new business into Wolverhampton. Examples could involve being creative with Business Rates reductions or holidays, reduced rents where the Council own the properties, encouraging incubation units and investing in free wifi for the City Centre.

The Liberal Democrats would revitalise the City Centre by de-emphasising retail and recasting the City Centre as a place for leisure, business and an increased level of residential accommodation. The markets also need to be rejuvenated by being moved, improved and becoming a thriving colourful diverse market better reflecting Wolverhampton. We would also review parking charges for the City Centre including free parking for a limited length of time.

The gateways to Wolverhampton City Centre desperately need improving and cleaning up especially Broad Street, Darlington Street, Snow Hill and Worcester Street. Units on these streets should be compulsory purchased and let to appropriate businesses or provide additional green spaces within the City. The sex shops should be moved off Broad Street and placed elsewhere with the creation of a sex-tolerance quarter.

The Liberal Democrats would like the City Centre within the Ring Road to be pedestrianised with the exception being for public transport and taxis. To ensure the City Centre is still easy to access, adequate and inexpensive car parking must be available. The Liberal Democrats would like to see a proper transport interchange with the creation of a new tram

stop to serve the bus and railway stations, a rebuild of Wolverhampton railway station, all buses to serve the bus station or Pipers Row and improved cycle parking provision. This interchange would help regenerate the area and will link in well with the canal.

The Liberal Democrats would revitalise the district centres by improving their retail and leisure offer and encouraging smaller more independent businesses through innovative use of business rates and possibly with the Council taking ownership of empty properties and renting them to business directly. Such innovations could include a variable business rate to discourage an overprovision of socially damaging businesses and to encourage small independent shops and entrepreneurs.

To compete effectively with other parts of the region, Wolverhampton needs a more proactive professional business and development approach to attract new industry and to maximise the number of grants and subsidies available from central government, the European Union and other sources.



A well connected Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton is well positioned right in the heart of the country, has relatively good connections to the rest of the UK through the railway and motorway networks and benefits from a good tram and bus network regionally. Wolverhampton's economy can grow if our transport links, nationally, regionally and locally are improved. This should be part of an integrated regional transport policy in which road, rail, public transport, freight transport, canals and cycle ways are considered as an interconnected whole.

In order to improve our transport links the Liberal Democrats would like to see improved governance across the West Midlands combining with our neighbours on issues like the greater economy, the environment and transport and are calling for the abolition of the current council structure and the creation of a West Midlands Council with a co-terminus Local Economic Partnership and Transport Authority.

The Liberal Democrats call for the restoration of the Wolverhampton to Walsall via Willenhall train service as well as a new route to the north of Wolverhampton to link with the i54 development with a new parkway railway station. Crane Street Junction should also be straightened to further reduce journey times.

The Liberal Democrats are also in favour of extending and improving the Midland Metro Tram network, particularly to New Cross Hospital, Bentley Bridge (Sainsbury's stop), Wednesfield and potentially farther to complete the proposed "5 W's" extension to Willenhall and Walsall and Wednesbury. The Liberal Democrats would also look at the feasibility of extending the tram network to the north and west of the City Centre.

The Liberal Democrats would like a review of bus services across the area to identify areas of need and also to ensure New Cross Hospital, Bentley Bridge and the City Centre are easily accessible from all areas of the City. The Liberal Democrats call on the bus companies to move as quickly as possible to more environmentally friendly buses.

The Liberal Democrats would also like to provide all children up to school leaving age with a free bus pass to ease their travel around the City. The Liberal Democrats would also provide free bus passes for pregnant women and nursing mothers.

The Liberal Democrats would also like to see an improved Park and Ride scheme for all the district centres and a specific Park and Ride scheme over the Christmas period.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see the extensive canal network fully utilised for leisure, freight and passengers as well as being central to regeneration.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see an improved cycle network across Wolverhampton and beyond.

The Liberal Democrats would like the City Centre to be pedestrianised with the exception being for public transport and taxis.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see a proper transport interchange with the creation of new tram stop to serve the bus and railway stations, a rebuild of Wolverhampton railway station, all buses to serve the bus station or Pipers Row and improved cycle parking provision. This interchange would help regenerate the area and will link in well with the canal.

The Liberal Democrats are also calling for the introduction of “Twenty’s Plenty” speed restrictions in residential areas and a review of the road network in particular to remove traffic from inside the Ring Road.



A well educated Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton has seen an improvement in educational attainment levels over the recent years, partly due to an above average level of spending compared to OFSTED's standard. The level of educational attainment still lags behind comparable cities and neighbours. Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats are calling for an enquiry into this lagging behind.

It is important that good teachers are enabled to use their skills most effectively in the classroom and are not over-burdened with management tasks for which they might not have the expertise and which deprive their pupils of the primary role of teaching. Head teachers should be in charge of educational matters, the business and financial management of schools and colleges should be undertaken by professional managers.

The Liberal Democrats are keen to improve both the education and lifelong learning and retraining opportunities for our citizens from pre-school through to University and beyond as well as an alternative vocational pathway and improving apprenticeships in the City.

The Liberal Democrats believe the key to improving educational attainment is by investing the most in early-years education and increasing the amount of pre-school activities across the whole city.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see the introduction of free healthy school meals – breakfast and lunch – provided to all pupils.

The Liberal Democrats would also like to provide all children up to school leaving age with a free bus pass to ease their travel around the City.

Most of the schools across the City have benefited, or will benefit from the Building Schools for the Future programme and the University has continuously invested in bringing their buildings up to the highest standard. Wolverhampton College has not had the same level of investment and Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats call for an additional spend to help ensure all our educational facilities are of the highest possible standard.



A healthy Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton has fallen behind the rest of the UK on a number of health indicators. Life expectancy in Wolverhampton is lower than the national average (76.5 years for men compared to 78 years and 81 years for women compared to 82 years nationally) and there is also a large disparity across Wolverhampton with the average man in Tettenhall Wightwick Ward living six years longer than those in East Park Ward, a distance of only a few miles. Men in only five of the twenty wards live as long as the average man in England.

Wolverhampton has a higher than national rate of mortality due to cardiovascular disease especially amongst men, more than double the national alcohol death rate and a higher than average rate of obesity especially amongst the youngest children – this may be partially caused by the low level of breast-feeding within Wolverhampton.

The Liberal Democrats believe that health and wellbeing should be considered holistically and would like to see a Health Authority coterminous and working closely with the Council in delivering real health benefits – physical, mental and emotional – to the citizens of Wolverhampton. Social Care and mental health services should be delivered alongside health and not treated as separate services.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see a network of polyclinics across Wolverhampton in each of our district centres, bringing together a range of health services and professionals including onsite pharmacies. These Polyclinics should be open late in the evening and weekends and should offer a comprehensive range of services provided by fully qualified health professionals.

The Liberal Democrats would like all residents to have regular health and wellbeing check-ups (similar to a regular dentist appointment) with health professionals, this would help reduce emergency appointments and tackle 'hidden' illnesses. This would also empower citizens and help them have a real input to the health services they receive. This service should also be provided to any citizens without a permanent address.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see Wolverhampton become a Breastfeeding Friendly City with improved provision for mothers and children that are breastfeeding.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see facilities improved for our disabled and infirm residents including the introduction of Changing Places

Toilet facilities within the City Centre and the district centres. This would provide toilet and changing facilities with appropriate equipment for their use by disabled and infirm people and their carers.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see the introduction of free healthy school meals – breakfast and lunch – provided to all pupils.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see the continued development of fitness and leisure equipment available to residents as a way of combating illness and improve wellbeing.

Wolverhampton has approximately 26,000 carers and the Liberal Democrats would like to see a rapid expansion and improvement in help for carers, including respite care, as this is often an overlooked area.



A safe Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton has seen a reduction in crime over recent years. However, Wolverhampton could still be safer as was shown by the attacks and vandalism in the City centre in 2011.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see a review of governance across the West Midlands combining with our neighbours to tackle crime; we however do not believe the creation of the Police and Crime Commissioner was the answer. The control of the Police should not be politicised.

Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats are calling for a network of Urban Community Councils (Parish Councils) across the West Midlands. The Liberal Democrats are also calling for the abolition of the current council structure and the creation of a West Midlands Council with a co-terminus Police Authority.

The Liberal Democrats believe the local policing priorities should be set at the Urban Community Council level with the Police working with the Councils to identify problems and implement solutions.

The Liberal Democrats believe prevention is always the best approach to tackling crime and believe the Police should work with local communities, schools, voluntary and local government organisations.

The Liberal Democrats also believe visible policing is very important as part of a reassurance role and would like to see an increase in the number of Police and PCSOs on patrol. Wolverhampton Liberal Democrats would abolish the role of Council Street Warden and use the money to directly fund additional PCSOs.

The Liberal Democrats would also like to see a more liberal approach to policing with deprioritisation of drug possession and the creation of a sex-tolerance quarter in the City Centre which would provide a safer place for sex-workers and their clients as well removing sex-workers from the streets.



A clean and green Wolverhampton

Wolverhampton is fortunate to have some wonderful parks, countryside to the north and the west, a canal network and an abundance of trees. This helps to make a natural environment nice to live in, work in and enjoy.

Wolverhampton's built environment, however, does not live up to the beauty of the natural environment which is marred by some of the existing buildings in the City, the level of car usage, waste and recycling and litter.

We look to the Council to guide, advise and facilitate citizens of Wolverhampton in becoming more environmentally aware and protective of the community we share. We look to the Council to lead and to drive forward opportunities for citizens to share in environmental benefits especially where this crosses over into education and health.

Wolverhampton has many eyesores, dilapidated and abandoned buildings and buildings that are not as self-sufficient in energy usage and production as they could be. The Liberal Democrats call for all new buildings to be built to the highest possible environmental standards with many being as close as possible to being self-sufficient in energy usage through micro-generation, solar and other energy production systems. The Council should work with the social housing providers, private landlords, homeowners, business and other stakeholders to ensure buildings across the City are brought up to a 'decent' standard be this through specific grants and incentives as well as creating consortium deals such as the Big Energy Switch and the Green Deal. The Council should also help to make all buildings across the city as close to self-sufficient in energy usage through micro-generation, solar and other energy production.

The Liberal Democrats are calling for increased usage of public transport, cycling and walking. The Liberal Democrats are also calling for better rail transport including the restoration of the Wolverhampton to Walsall via Willenhall train service as well a new route to the north of Wolverhampton to link with the i54 development and creating a new parkway railway station. The Liberal Democrats are also in favour of extending and improving the Midland Metro Tram network, particularly to New Cross Hospital, Bentley Bridge (Sainsbury's stop), Wednesfield and potentially further to complete the proposed "5 W's" extension to Willenhall and Walsall and Wednesbury. The Liberal Democrats would then also look at the feasibility of extending the tram network to the north and west of the City Centre.

The Liberal Democrats would like a review of bus services across the area to identify areas of need and also to ensure New Cross Hospital, Bentley Bridge and the City Centre are easily accessible from all areas of the City. The Liberal Democrats call on the bus companies to move as quickly as possible to more environmentally friendly buses. The Liberal Democrats would also like to see an improved Park and Ride scheme for all the district centres and a specific Park and Ride scheme over the Christmas period.

The Liberal Democrats would also encourage an increase of electric vehicles being used across Wolverhampton by enabling providers to install more public access charging points. We would like to see the Council have a fleet of electric vehicles as and when the vehicles in the current fleet are replaced. Increased uptake of electric vehicles will be most effective environmentally when the Liberal Democrat energy policy is implemented, This policy recognises the urgent need to replace a carbon-based electricity supply with the abundantly available renewable sources of solar, wind, tide, wave and hydro power.

Wolverhampton has seen a massive increase in recycling over the last few years, mainly due to the improvements of roadside recycling collections as a direct result of Liberal Democrat campaigns. There is scope to further improve recycling and reduce residual waste across the City. More types of items must be recycled, recycling collection from high-rise flats, schools and businesses must be improved and there should be a move to fortnightly residual bin collections and the encouragement of residents to reduce waste, reuse and recycle more.

The Liberal Democrats would also like to see an increase in allotment provision via the creation of specific new sites and making, at a reasonable cost, an allotment plot available to any school that wishes to have one for both educational and nutritional purposes.

The Liberal Democrats would also like to see the creation of a City Centre Park to improve the environment. This could be based on the present Sainsbury's car park when they relocate. This City Centre Park would then link to form a Green Pathway to both East Park and West Park. Together with greater use of the City Centre for leisure and recreation, we would see the City Centre become a more attractive and lively place.

The Liberal Democrats are concerned at the level of litter and cigarette butts on pavements and particularly note the problem at bus stops. We would therefore install a litter bin with a cigarette-top at every bus stop within the City.



A well housed Wolverhampton

The Liberal Democrats are keen to see that all our citizens are properly housed but there is a lack of affordable and social housing across the City and the current mix is wrong. It is estimated that up to a third of the social housing in the City is not classed as 'decent'.

The Liberal Democrats call for a rapid increase in homebuilding especially on brownfield sites and in the City Centre. All future homes should be built to the highest possible environmental standards with many homes being close to self-sufficiency in energy usage through micro-generation, solar and other energy production systems.

Wolverhampton's social housing stock is mainly managed by Wolverhampton Homes, an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO). This means that the Council has no say in the day-to-day delivery of social housing yet it still has overall responsibility. The Liberal Democrats believe that the social housing stock should be fully returned to Council control with improved tenant governance participation.

The Council should also create a list of all private landlords and their properties with a long term view of setting up a body to assist with bringing these properties up to the same standards as those covered by the multi occupancy legislation as a minimum standard.

The Council should work with the social housing provider, private landlords and homeowners to ensure properties across the City are brought up to a 'decent' standard be this through providing information, specific grants and incentives as well as creating consortium deals such as the Big Energy Switch and the Green Deal. The Council should also help to make all properties across the city as close to self-sufficient in energy usage as possible through higher insulation standard, micro-generation, solar and other energy production.

The increase in homebuilding and bringing properties up to a 'decent' standard will also help increase employment across the City.



A Wolverhampton that delivers high quality and accessible local services

Wolverhampton Council and its partners have a poor record of delivering high quality and accessible local services. The locations of services such as leisure centres, youth clubs, parent and child provision, service for older people and libraries do not seem to have been properly planned and are not necessarily where the need for these services exists. The Liberal Democrats would like to see both an overhaul of service provision and location of services.

Wolverhampton Council has created 14 Local Neighbourhood Partnerships many of which seem to have fairly arbitrary boundaries often bearing no relation either to existing ward boundaries or the historic districts of Wolverhampton. The Liberal Democrats are calling for the LNPs to be abolished and replaced with a network of Urban Community Councils (Parish Councils) with real power, real decision-making and the ability to raise income through a precept. These Urban Community Councils will as far as possible cover the area of the old Urban District Councils and would see the rebirth of Bilston, Heath Town, Sedgley, Tettenhall, Willenhall and Wednesfield amongst others.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see each Urban Community Council have a Community Hub (which may actually constitute several buildings) where the main services from both the Council and its partners can be delivered. These services would include libraries, leisure, youth facilities and space for other community groups to meet as well as providing a One-Stop Shop for other services such as benefits, the social housing provider and even policing and health services. It is essential these Community Hubs are located centrally in each Urban Community Council and on a public transport route.



A Wolverhampton rich in Culture, Arts, Sports and Leisure

Wolverhampton is a vibrant City with an excellent mix of culture, arts, sports and leisure for citizens to enjoy, however, this is not always delivered in a well-thought out way.

The Liberal Democrats would revitalise the City Centre by de-emphasising retail and would recasting the City Centre as a place for leisure and increase the level of residential accommodation. The markets also need to be rejuvenated by being moved, improved and becoming a thriving, colourful and diverse market better to reflect Wolverhampton. We would also review parking charges for the City Centre including offering free parking for a limited length of time.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see each Urban Community Council have a Community Hub where citizens can access libraries, leisure, youth facilities as well as providing a space for community groups to meet. It is essential these Community Hubs are located centrally in each Urban Community Council area and on a public transport route.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see our culture and arts venues working more closely together but also becoming financially independent of the Council. The subsidy that the venues currently receive should be removed in its current form and redirected to deliver better advertising for the various venues and to invest more in the Box Office ticketing to facilitate bookings for all the venues both in the City Centre and at the Community Hubs.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see a co-ordinated approach to sports and leisure by providing activities for pre-school children and their parents all the way to groups for our older citizens. There should be easily accessible play, sports and leisure facilities including outdoor gyms, safe play for the youngest and more challenging recreation for older children available to all residents by walking or by public transport. Where the Council owns leisure facilities there should be greater concessions on the leisure pass and free access for the younger and older citizens. The Liberal Democrats also believe it would benefit the City to affiliate to Sport for Life and utilise the resources and expert advice available to maximise the value of the facilities that exist.

The Liberal Democrats welcome the proposed new youth facilities in the City Centre and also call for the creation of a City Centre Park to improve the environment and also the leisure offer.

The Liberal Democrats also call for a new Tourist Information Centre, the establishment of a museum in the City Centre celebrating Wolverhampton's rich history and improving and developing the 'History Trails' around Wolverhampton celebrating our history from the epic battles between the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings to our role in the Industrial Revolution and beyond.

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