

Stockport Liberal Democrats
Action Plan 2021



The Liberal Democrat vision for Stockport

Introduction

This Action Plan sets out the Liberal Democrat vision for everyone across Stockport.

As we gradually emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, it has never been more important to have a clear, robust plan to move our community forward and be ready for the challenges ahead.

We believe this document is that plan. It represents a considered statement of intent and a determination to tackle the obstacles that stand in the way of progress for Stockport. Our Action Plan outlines in detail the ways in which a new Liberal Democrat administration would seek fundamental change at the Town Hall and deliver a better deal for local people.

The era of cuts to local authority finances by the current Conservative government is ongoing despite their pronouncement that “austerity is over” and, with Brexit still an unresolved issue as the final details of a deal with the UK’s biggest trading partner are still not set, things could well get even tougher before they will get any easier.

The past five years of minority Labour administration have seen increasingly harmful cuts to our frontline services, not least because of a lack of funding from the Conservative Government. But we believe that even in this difficult time we can and should deliver better services for everyone. The Liberal Democrats will demand better and deliver better.

We are here to protect your frontline services, not to cut them. Where cuts have already been made by the Labour administration, we would want to mitigate them wherever possible.

We are ambitious for our town and want to see a transformation to Stockport having an enabling council, one that helps local people and local communities get things done. One that involves residents, businesses and local communities more fully with a focus on action. One that shares your aspirations and does everything it can to deliver them.

OUR 6 KEY POLICIES

- ✓ Tackle the Climate Emergency
- ✓ Fight for our schools and families
- ✓ Protect people and our communities
- ✓ Invest in our District Centres and our local economy
- ✓ Make the council work for you
- ✓ Putting real power in the hands of local people

Tackle the climate emergency

Provide a locally-controlled Climate Emergency Fund

We will deploy this to enable local communities to take real action on climate change in their area, develop our natural capital, and extend the ambition within and speed up the delivery of the Council's Climate Action Strategy

Put the Climate Emergency at the heart of decision making

A cabinet member would have responsibility and be accountable for ensuring the climate emergency is at the heart of decision making. Develop a joint live 5-year rolling action plan to reduce emissions and improve resilience, in consultation with partners and other key organisations and interest groups, reporting progress publically and through our scrutiny committees. We would accelerate the development of Environmental Impact Assessments alongside Equalities Impact Assessments for all decisions.

Carbon and renewables

As a significant procurer of goods and services, we would consider carbon and environmental cost as a factor when making procurement as well as investment decisions. We would move towards only buying 100% renewable electricity for all our buildings, streetlights, signs, signals, and bollards. We would encourage and facilitate wherever possible our schools and partners to do the same for their energy use. As a significant land and property owner we would continue to seek ways to generate renewable energy on our estate. We would investigate the novel use of recyclates, e.g. using waste recovered plastics in road repairs, as currently being trialled in Cumbria.

Better monitoring of air quality and real action on hot spots

This should include live monitoring, better data capture, publish data in terms residents can understand and deliver on our commitment to improve air quality. Improve air quality by expanding the programme of tree planting and increase the biodiversity of grass verges across the borough by planting wild flowers.

Sustainable developments, flood risks and climate resilience

Ensure our planning policies require higher energy efficiency standards than statutory minima and make renewable energy use more cost effective. As lead flood authority and working with the Environment Agency, develop a programme of works to minimise flood risk and its wider impacts and advise on major development applications to future-proof their climate resilience. Advise residents how to protect their properties against extreme weather events, which are becoming more common due to climate change. Properly manage our drainage system.

Deliver on our commitment to make more electric vehicle charging points available

Ensure all new build and redevelopment schemes provide at least one charging point per house; 10% of parking spaces in developments of flats having charging points with passive wiring to allow future connection to all other spaces; and all other developments to have 4% of parking bays to have charging points and be marked out for electric vehicles only. Explore ways of making more charging points available in public parking areas for those who have no off-street parking.

Invest in public transport to make people less reliant on their cars

Work with Transport for Greater Manchester and the Combined Authority to make the case for further investment. Demand TfGM finally honours its commitment to bring Metrolink to Stockport. We are supportive of moves to apply the mayoral powers to re-regulate buses, though this has taken far too long to get started. We would push for Stockport to get its fair share of the improvements our residents will be funding as early as possible. We would seek investment in bus rapid transit corridors, tram/train from Manchester Piccadilly to Stockport Town Centre and to Marple, and other rail improvements including new stations at Stanley Green and Cheadle. Deliver improvements to make walking and cycling safer and more attractive across the borough.

All public car parks across the borough to have cashless and cash payment options

Makes payment collection more efficient and easier for residents too, whilst ensuring accessibility for all. Encourage all private car park operators across the borough to follow suit.

Support community initiatives to strengthen our natural environment

Use wildlife corridors to counter pollution. Encourage community orchards, wildflower meadows and other green infrastructure.

Tackle traffic flow problems, especially for commuters

We would undertake a comprehensive review of traffic hotspots across the borough to get Stockport moving again.

Fight for our schools and families

Improve the lives of all children in care

Keep council tax relief for care leavers up to age 25. Incentivising take-up and exploring the impact of extending council tax relief to foster carers and adopters. By encouraging fostering, delivering more care locally, more help with the transition to independence.

Provide the school places Stockport needs in the right places at the right time

Continue to press government for more local control over local schools and the provision of school places. Actively tackle the shortage of places and the imbalance between schools, making sure parents keep a real choice for their children.

Invest in our schools estate

Make sure all our children attend a school which is safe and fit for purpose, pressing central government for the additional resources needed.

Invest in school readiness, early years and reading for all ages

Every pound spent on early education is an investment in our future and saves future costs. See a step-change in our support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Celebrate all the achievements of our schools, not just their exam successes

We aim to provide focus on an education of the whole person and the active citizen, not just exam success, which is a narrow measure. Successful schools are about so much more than just academic attainment.

Encourage the take-up of free school meals

Actively promote the take-up of free school meals in all our schools, to ensure families get a fair deal and schools save money.

Promote better health for our children

Work with health partners to improve children's health. Provide a wide-ranging Public Health campaign to tackle obesity and aiming for better nutrition, better health, and tackle the big issue with dental health in young children. Help parents to stop smoking. Promote better sexual health, avoid teenage pregnancies, encourage and support inclusive age-appropriate sex and relationships education in all schools.

Support for life-long learning

Work with partners to review the provision of further education and skills and support learning at all stages of life.

Protect people and our communities

Tackle crime by supporting our police and promoting stronger links with local people

Call on the government to give our Police the resources they need to enable them to put more bobbies back out on the beat. With designated contacts, provide better information about crime in each area. Continue to support neighbourhood policing including Home Watch and other crime prevention schemes. Press the GM mayor to ensure that Stockport residents get their fair share of police officers and other resources that they pay for through the mayoral precept.

Fight for good social care provision

Realise the benefits of closer health and social care integration, which will deliver better services for our community with long-term planning, and fighting to keep it as a priority. This would also save the NHS money. Work with health partners to secure further investment in Stockport's Adult Social Care services.

Deliver more community-based healthcare

Continue to work towards area-based co-located teams with health partners to deliver a consequential fall in the number of hospital admissions and reduce A&E waiting times.

Prioritise mental health services and tackling loneliness

Support and expand existing community-based initiatives. Work with partners to improve children's mental health services.

Develop our libraries into focal points of our communities

Build on the good work already happening, giving libraries a clear role in delivering information services and providing training and resources to support IT use to help people get online. Protect them as a point of access or gateway to the council's online services for those without access to the internet, enabling everyone to use the council's online reporting system.

Protect our most vulnerable residents including older people and those with additional needs

People should be able to live in their own homes with dignity and support for as long as they wish.

Invest in our District Centres and our local economy

Build upon the commitment made by the previous Lib Dem administration to deliver a £100m investment programme to repair potholes and improve our roads and pavements

Restore vibrancy to our local high streets by encouraging mixed use, pop-up shops and local markets, and by filling empty shops

Use our influence and control to provide a determined focus on filling empty shops and driving the regeneration of our high streets.

Make our district centres work for everyone

This will include car parking, better signposting, and improved facilities. Parking could be improved by managing the balance between short and long stays through the charging structure. We recognise there are different solutions for different areas and we need to balance and be aware of such things as parking for train use, district centre parking to support shops, visitor parking, commuter parking and those using car parks from outside the area. Ensure there are electric charging points across the borough.

Make the most of our cultural assets and heritage for tourism and the economy

From Bramall Hall to Chadkirk Chapel our borough has a rich cultural heritage which should be cherished and protected for generations to come. Develop a sustainable plan to maximise the benefits of our cultural assets for all residents and visitors to Stockport.

Deliver the right homes in the right places

Fight for the new Stockport Local Plan to deliver the right homes in the right places. Ensure that a “Brownfield and infrastructure first” approach is taken to protect the Green Belt. Engage with the elected Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Combined Authority through the Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation, essential to our efforts to develop more housing in the town centre. Ensure that the council uses all of its powers to tackle the problem of properties that are left empty and in a bad state of repair. Ensure the provision of more affordable housing to buy and to rent. Fair rents enforced where we have powers and a crack down on rogue landlords.

Keeping our streets clean and tackling plastic waste

Improve street cleaning whilst tackling littering and dog fouling. At this time of heightened public awareness, support community efforts for increased recycling, especially plastics. A reduction in single-use plastics is particularly important and we would encourage further initiatives such as Plastic Free Romiley across the borough.

Maintain pressure on government to fund the completion of the A6 Relief Road by building the A6 to M60 missing link and thus reduce the impact of traffic on residential roads.

Protect weekly bin collections and improve Stockport’s recycling rate

Continue the weekly bin collections, including fortnightly collection of residual waste (“black bins”), and act to return the borough to a higher rate of recycling to regain our position as one of the top performing metropolitan boroughs.

Make the council work for you

Make significant improvements to the council's telephone and internet services

Ensure those without internet access are not excluded from accessing council services. Review the operation of the Contact Centre to improve the customer experience. Redesign the council's website to be more user-friendly.

Protect residents' rights to hold councillors to account at public meetings

Ensure that residents are able to ask questions of councillors at public meetings, including guaranteeing public question time at Full Council Meetings.

Minimise council tax increases

We will seek to minimise council tax increases as it is a regressive form of tax which does not consider a person's ability to pay. We recognise, particularly in social care, costs are increasing rapidly. We will therefore use the option of a social care precept, if made available, but we will continue to argue that social care should be properly funded by central government from general taxation instead.

Cut the cost of bureaucracy

We will continue to look for ways to cut the cost of bureaucracy now that we have successfully reduced the number of council committee meetings and have won the argument to scrap the meal provided to councillors ahead of each full council meeting.

Ensure Stockport is a dementia friendly borough in line with Alzheimer's Society guidelines

Find solutions to residents' parking problems

We will halt the ban on new residents' parking schemes and involve local residents in the creation of parking plans that work for them.

Putting real power in the hands of local people

Involve local people in how developers' planning levies are used to benefit every area.

We want to make sure this money is used to benefit the local area and its use is more transparent and more readily understandable by the local community

Reform council procedures to make the council work for every area

Trial new ways of scrutiny to make them more issue-led and relevant to residents, giving a greater share of funds to area committees for their discretionary local spend, including devolving the budgets for highway and pavement repairs.

Put more powers in the hands of local committees

Introduce a presumption that all planning and premises licensing decisions will be taken by local Area Committees and give them control over community grants for their area. Ensure a significant proportion of the Climate Emergency Fund spending is determined at ward level by ward councillors.

Continued support for localism

Provide support to communities to decide for themselves how they want to take their area forward, for example through neighbourhood plans. Transform the current bureaucratic structure so that Stockport becomes an "enabling council".

Ensure decisions are taken closer to the people they effect

Review how decision taking happens at an Area, Council and Combined Authority to ensure that decisions are made at the right level.

Encourage young people to become more involved in local democracy

Explore initiatives that will encourage and allow young people to participate in the Council's decision-making processes.