

Labour

Exeter Labour Party



Exeter Labour Party Manifesto, 2023 Exeter City Council Election

Working together for Exeter

Introduction

As a Labour run council we are committed to delivering for the people of Exeter despite a difficult financial context. We are doing this by finding creative ways to go beyond the statutory services we legally must provide.

This year has been extremely challenging and Exeter is not immune to the cost of living crisis.

Local Government in particular faces a difficult time ahead. We have endured 13 years of cuts from central government. This year's unique inflationary pressures have caused higher staff salaries and energy costs. As a result, we estimate our funding gap will be a staggering £9.67m by 2025, around 18% of our operating budget.

This manifesto sets out how, across the City, Labour is continuing to respond to your needs as residents and, I believe, reflects our unwavering commitment to our shared vision for the City that:-

“By the time they are an adult, a child born in Exeter today will live in a city that is inclusive, healthy and sustainable, a city where the opportunities and benefits of prosperity are shared and all citizens are able to participate fully in the City's economic, social, cultural and civic life.”

As such, our priorities in the coming year will be :

- Being on your side in the cost of living crisis
- Working to tackle the climate crisis
- Helping us to be active and healthy
- Listening to you and investing in Exeter

The key to achieving our priorities and success is working closely with all our partners in the City. We will continue to work collaboratively with others to find solutions to the problems we face.

I am determined that together we can overcome the challenges we face and achieve our vision for an inclusive, healthy and sustainable city.

Cllr Phil Bialyk

Labour Leader, Exeter City Council



Our Priorities

Against a wide range of challenges, we are working to deliver within four key priorities.

These priorities:

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Promoted by Liz Pole on behalf of Exeter Labour Party at 26b Clifton Hill, Exeter EX1 2DJ

On your side in the cost of living crisis

Helping people and communities with targeted support

Key achievements last year

Our team has distributed payments from the various Household Support Fund schemes to 7,489 households, with a total value of £715,673.

We distributed the Council Tax £150 Energy Rebate, both the mandatory and discretionary schemes, to 45,557 households, with a total value of £6,803,310.

This year we have spent £850,000 supporting 112 groups to deliver community activities including:

- Almost £30,000 on community groups running local activities.
- £75,000 supporting community buildings.
- £50,000 on small grants for projects that run across the city.
- £60,000 on capital support for community buildings.
- £10,000 providing warm spaces and free use of community facilities to anyone in need of them over the coldest winter months
- £200,000 to Citizen Advice Exeter to support our residents during the Cost of Living Crisis.

- £180,000 to Exeter Community Initiatives to provide voluntary sector support and advice.

We have supported the Devon Ukrainian Association to continue their fantastic work in supporting Ukrainian guests through the Conversation Café. We have provided financial support of over £43,000 in guest payments to 213 Ukrainian refugees under the Homes for Ukraine scheme and distributed £268,650 to 133 hosts. We also paid £39,492 towards rent, deposits and moving costs to 13 Ukrainian households to move into private rented accommodation.

Last October we saw the official opening and initial lettings of Edwards Court, the Council's extra care housing scheme and the first in the City. The scheme provides 53 homes for affordable rent for council tenants needing daily care. This is the country's first Passivhaus (energy efficient) care facility.

Worked to make Council housing stock in Exeter more energy efficient and save tenants money on their energy bills has been recognised at national level.

We have continued the retrofit programme, with a total of 420 properties completed to date, part funded by a £1.6m of government grant. This scheme is helping residents facing spiralling fuel costs by lowering energy use and also lowering our carbon footprint.

Funding has been secured for a further 245 Council homes to be fully retrofitted over the next two years reducing the fuel costs of even more of our council residents.

We are working with voluntary sector partners and volunteers we have worked tirelessly to help those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Exeter.

This has included:

- The Extended delivery of rough sleeping services following the successful £3m bid to Government.
- Funding the Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme to purchase 25 ex-Council one-bed properties to use as stepping stone homes for people recovering from rough sleeping.
- A successful trial of four new rough sleeping relief pods, enabling over 20 rough sleepers with high needs to come off the streets;
- The launch of two bespoke projects providing emergency accommodation and recovery support for victims of domestic violence and abuse, with more than 30 users in the first 12 months.

What we will do next

- We will continue to provide targeted support to individuals, local communities and organizations.
- We will launch the Exeter Community Lottery to support community groups and organizations.
- We will continue our programme to retrofit Exeter's Council homes.
- Despite the proposed extensive cuts in DCC funding of homeless services, we will ensure ECC sustains its own support and works with others to secure funding to reduce this impact.
- We will continue to build more council housing for social and affordable rent.

Working to tackle the climate crisis

Helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save power and become net zero carbon by 2030

Key achievements last year

In 2021 our Labour-led Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. The urgent need for us all to reduce our carbon output has been at the forefront of our Council's aims. A net zero carbon ambition involves significantly reducing our carbon footprint whilst 'off-setting' any remaining carbon output which cannot be prevented.

We invested in Exeter City Futures to look in detail at the city's carbon emissions and what would be needed to bring them down to net zero by 2030. The Centre for Energy and the Environment at the University was commissioned to establish a baseline greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory for the city. This included analysis of the massive investment and collaborative working the City as whole will need to make to achieve net zero carbon by 2030.

In February we completed the installation of the £3.5 million solar farm and battery storage facility at Marsh Barton, which provides 1.2MW of energy directly to power the recycling facility (MRF) at Exton Road and is used to power our fleet of electric vehicles with "green" energy.

Drawing their power from the solar farm we have started operating the first three electric refuse collection trucks in Exeter. This saves us from using 35,000 litres of diesel a year and 103 tonnes of carbon emissions not going into Exeter's streets.

The project also involved fitting battery storage to existing Council solar PV sites at the Matford Centre and John Lewis Car Park, and a 120kW solar PV array and battery store at the Riverside Leisure Centre.

Exeter is currently the best performing of all Devon's district councils when it comes to producing the least amount of waste per head. This has decreased by a further 3kg per head in 2020/21 to 293kg per person. The Council also has a leading material reclamation facility (MRF) which enables us to recycle a wider range of materials than most councils. We are now rolling out a food waste collection service to recycle food waste through anaerobic digestion.

Over the last year our tree planting has continued across the city including 591 planted in a new woodland project at New Haven Field. We are also working with the Devon

Wildlife Trust to create a wildlife haven in Northbrook Park. This will eventually help to create a green corridor between the Ludwell and Riverside Valley Parks. There has been great community involvement in the project which has involved the planting of another 420 trees on council lands.

The new Net Zero team and the Centre for Energy and the Environment at the University created a Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan to achieve Net Zero by 2030 - some big challenges but Labour is committed to achieving them.

St Sidwell's Point, built to Passivhaus standards, opened and is one of the best facilities of its kind anywhere in Europe. It operates on 70% less energy usage and 50% less water usage than standard pools and leisure centres.

Our Retrofit programme to improve energy efficiency in all of our existing homes is ongoing and has already seen a carbon reduction of over 3 tonnes per property. On average across all retrofitted homes the energy efficiency of these homes has improved dramatically, from just above energy rating D to just below energy rating A.

What we will do next

- Deliver our Council's Net Zero Carbon Reduction Plan and establish the City Council's Net Zero Ambassadors to deliver the Carbon Reduction Action Plan.
- Continue the process of developing the new Local Plan highlighting city shaping, Net Zero ambition, biodiversity, connectivity and active travel.
- Continue the reduction of glyphosate herbicide use across the City.
- Launch the Green Accord to improve environmental performance, reducing carbon emissions and business costs for companies.
- Continue to look for funding opportunities and new partners to deliver reduced emissions in the Council and wherever possible across the city.

Helping us to be active and healthy

Increasing physical activity levels through Exeter Leisure and other programs

Key achievements last year

On April 29th 2022, we opened St Sidwell's Point, the UK's first leisure centre built to super energy efficient Passivhaus standard. This iconic low-energy building is defining standards in the leisure industry and has won a host of awards. It is well used by the community who enjoy its cafe, soft play, three pools, one-hundred station gym, fitness studios and luxury spa.

In a difficult national context for leisure with energy rises and staffing issues, we kept all our six Leisure sites open. Alongside Exeter Leisure, we continued to use a joined up approach with our Live & Move Sport England partnership to increase physical activity levels in the city. We launched a new Live & Move Strategy refocusing our work post-COVID. For example, responding to the particular inactivity gap between British Asian residents in Exeter and their white counterparts, Live and Move have been working with diverse communities through Inclusive Exeter.

We have been promoting Exeter's 13 mile Green Circle. Through Live and Move, the Green Circle is now featured on the free walking app, Go Jauntly, and we've identified five shorter walks within it. Additionally, the Creative Arc, a

unique collaboration between the University of Exeter, Exeter City Council and RAMM, has delivered 'SoundTracks' which brought groups of local Exeter people together in autumn 2022 to explore their interests through nature walks along Exeter's Green Circle. Community members such as mother and baby groups, local history groups, schoolchildren and local ramblers took part.

In October, 123 people participated in our 12 week 'This Girl Can' programme, to encourage women of all ages who were new to exercise to participate in a range of free activities at Wonford Sports Centre.

In December, 236 NHS staff joined our 6 week programme encouraging the NHS workforce into physical activity. We provided a range of physical activities across all of our leisure sites, including swimming, gym session, group exercise classes, track running, health & wellbeing workshops and yoga, with sessions specifically designed to fit around NHS shift patterns to encourage participation.

We delivered Exeter Playing Pitch Strategy, a document which provides an important evidence base for the Exeter

Local Plan and our commitment to improving playing pitches across the city. This document was created in consultation with more than 100 sports clubs.

We continue to deliver a patient exercise and rehabilitation referral scheme in the city in partnership with the NHS. We deliver 21 exercise referral classes and gym sessions every week across Riverside and ISCA. We consistently have over 100 patients enrolled in this scheme. Patients are referred from FORCE Cancer charity, RD&E hospital and GP clinics for

a number of medical issues such as arthritis, diabetes, stroke, cancer, heart issues and dementia.

We are continuing to work with the Wonford community on plans for a Wonford Community Wellbeing hub with the significant investment of £750,000.

What we will do next

- We will develop and launch an introductory 12 week wellbeing programme for residents to improve their health and wellbeing based on the success of our This Girl Can and NHS workforce programmes.
- We will introduce a Green Travel Plan for Exeter City Council staff.
- We will continue to work with local residents of Wonford to develop plans for a new Community Wellbeing Hub.
- We will deliver a refurbishment of paddling pools in parks across the city.
- We will continue to protect and improve our valley parks and Exeter's Green Circle in partnership with Devon Wildlife Trust and other partners.

Listening to you and investing in Exeter

Investing in community priorities and running an effective Council

Key achievements last year

We are investing in Exeter, responding to residents and community needs as well as using council tax payers money effectively.

We have invested £850,000 supporting 112 community groups to deliver activities across the city, including £135,000 for capital spending and continuing support for community buildings. We also fund the Community Builders across the city, who work at neighbourhood level to build confident, more connected communities.

Supporting Exeter's cultural offer continues to be a key strategic priority for Labour. We are proud of our continued support for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), Corn Exchange and attractions like the Underground Passages. The RAMM was recently awarded Gold in the Ethical, Responsible and Sustainable Tourism category at the Visit Devon Tourism Awards.

Over the last year we've seen work begin on site of 21 new Passivhaus homes at Hamlin Gardens (lower energy cost homes). Site clearance and tendering process is completed for the construction of 91 homes at The Gardens, Whipton.

The first construction phase of the scheme, which will create 35 homes for people in housing need in the city is now started.

Edwards Court Extra Care Scheme opened in October in partnership with Devon County Council and has proved popular with residents. It is the first Passivhaus care facility in the UK.

We're committed to redeveloping the city centre. Footfall increased by 22.9% to 24.3 million - almost 20 per cent higher than the pre-pandemic 2019 figure. We have already built St Sidwell's Point, the UK's first super energy efficient leisure centre and the new bus station. We have acquired Exeter's Guildhall shopping centre and we want to maintain and improve its current offer. We believe that ownership by the Labour led City Council provides the best control of the future use of the site.

In response to residents' concerns about balanced communities, we are reviewing the areas that are inside our Article 4 areas which require properties to have planning permission to become a House of Multiple Occupancy.

At the end of last year we held a successful public consultation on the Draft Exeter Plan which highlights how the city will grow in a sustainable way over the next few decades. We held roadshow events in every ward in the city and officers engaged directly with more than 1,000 people at these events.

We are working to make Exeter safer. We have upgraded the CCTV control room, expanding the number of cameras

with high-tech efficient coverage and increasing our 24/7 staffing. We are working with the police in providing them with real-time information and coverage aiding their ability to prevent crime and apprehend perpetrators. We have signed up to the Safety of Women at Night (SWAN) charter, supported Bystander Intervention Training and, through our Community Safety Partnership work are keen to sustain the Safe Space initiated by InExeter.

What we will do next

- We will commence construction of 35 council homes (Phase 1) of The Gardens development in Whipton.
- Over the next three years we have committed more than £6.78m to support the five National Portfolio Organisations delivering Exeter's cultural offer.
- We will undertake a further public consultation on the final draft Exeter Plan to take place later this year.
- We will consult the community on the proposed changes to Article 4, areas which require properties to have planning permission to become a House of Multiple Occupancy, to maintain balanced communities.
- Through our Liveable Exeter programme we will continue to look strategically at local investment in business, housing and connectivity and we will continue to support a thriving city centre and the 'InExeter' local business body.