

A COUNCIL THAT WORKS FOR SHEFFIELD

*Sheffield is ready for change.
So are we.*

Manifesto 2026



Councillor Martin Smith

Leader of Sheffield Liberal Democrats



Sheffield is ready for change. And so are we.

This city has so much going for it: proud communities, a rich history, brilliant people. But too many residents feel that the council isn't on their side. Roads patched and patched again until the patches themselves fail. Outer neighbourhoods left wondering whether anyone at the Town Hall knows they exist. A Local Plan drawn up with the same top-down arrogance that made the tree scandal so damaging. Communities consulted in name only, then told what was happening to them regardless. And all of it paid for by a council tax bill that keeps rising while the services people rely on keep shrinking.

When money is tight, residents deserve a council that spends carefully and shows its working. Too often, Sheffield Labour have done the opposite, prioritising its own agenda over people's daily lives, and hoping no one notices.

We have been making that case in the Town Hall for years. But opposition isn't enough. In the committees we chair, in the budgets we have shaped, in the policies we have managed to push through we have shown what a different approach looks like. Practical. Accountable. Focused on what residents actually experience.

This manifesto sets out eight priorities for Sheffield, all rooted in three simple principles: getting the basics right, taking genuine pride in every part of this city, and making sure opportunity is available to everyone - not just those who happen to live in the right postcode.

Sheffield deserves a council that works with its communities, not against them. One that fixes the roads, listens before it decides, and makes every pound count. We are ready to be that council.

Councillor Martin Smith
Leader, Sheffield Liberal Democrats



6 TO FIX

THE LIBERAL DEMOCRAT PLAN

FOR A BETTER SHEFFIELD FOR ALL OF OUR COMMUNITIES

1 A plan to fix our roads

Let's stop with the patch work. If a road fails multiple times then it needs a long term fix.

2 Protect our green fields

New homes on previously used land first, not on fields and green spaces.

3 Health in our communities

Put new health services where people need them.

4 Clean up our streets

Tough enforcement against anti-social behaviour, illegal vape shops and organised retail crime.

5 Back Sheffield's future

More apprenticeships, more local jobs, working with businesses to keep talent in the city.

6 A fair deal for renters

Stronger enforcement on rogue landlords, clearer rights and real support if your landlord lets you down.

Safe and Proud City

People tell us they feel less safe than they used to — not just because of burglaries or off-road bikes, but because of the slow drift of neglect. Litter that stays. Graffiti that spreads. High streets where enforcement has given up. When a neighbourhood stops feeling cared for, people stop feeling valued.

We cannot promise to eliminate crime. We are promising to take it seriously — every ward, every street, without excuses.

We have already delivered Sheffield's first city centre Public Spaces Protection Order, giving enforcement teams new powers to tackle the disorder residents had been reporting for years. We've helped establish a new way of working which will see more people fined for litter and dog fouling offences. That is what Liberal Democrat influence looks like in practice. There is more to do, and we intend to do it.

Why This Matters for Our Principles

Getting the basics right — a council that works for you

Keeping neighbourhoods safe and clean is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of the council. When residents report the same issues repeatedly without seeing change, trust quickly breaks down. Getting the basics right here means consistent enforcement, faster responses, and clear accountability when things are not done properly. It also means making it easy for residents to report problems and know what will happen next.

Pride in Sheffield

Pride in Sheffield is built street by street and community by community. Well-kept neighbourhoods and thriving local high streets shape how people talk about their city and how they feel living in it. Tackling neglect and disorder is about backing communities, supporting good local businesses, and showing that pride in Sheffield extends to every part of the city — not just the centre.

Opportunity for all

When people do not feel safe, their world shrinks. They stop going out in the evening, avoid public spaces, keep children closer to home. That cost falls hardest on those with least — older residents, women travelling alone, young people with nowhere else to go. Fear is not just an inconvenience; it is a barrier to opportunity. Safe, well-kept neighbourhoods are the foundation on which people build connections, take chances and participate in the life of their city.

- **Cleaner streets, every week** — tackling litter, graffiti and fly-tipping before they pile up, and properly backing the community volunteers who already help keep our neighbourhoods tidy.
- **Stronger action on anti-social behaviour hotspots** — including off-road bikes, working with police and communities to have an ASB action plan for every ward.
- **Firmer enforcement on poor-quality premises and neglected shopfronts** — using every available power to hold landlords and owners to account.
- **Target illegal vape stores and organised shoplifting** — with dedicated enforcement resource and a Sheffield Retail Crime Partnership.
- **A city centre you feel safe in** — day and night, for shopping, socialising and getting home, building on the PSPO and making sure it delivers.



Getting Sheffield Moving

Getting around Sheffield is harder than it should be. Buses that don't come, or don't run in the evenings or at weekends. Roads patched so many times the patches need patching. Parking rules that seem designed to confuse. For people without a car — or without the flexibility to plan around an unreliable timetable — this is not an inconvenience. It is a daily barrier.

Sheffield's transport needs to work for real journeys, not just peak-hour commutes.

We have pushed hard for bus franchising and safer roads, and our councillors have called out both the council and SYMCA when standards slip. The argument on franchising is moving our way. More Liberal Democrat councillors at the table means more pressure to move faster — and more accountability when the people responsible fall short.

Why This Matters for Our Principles

Getting the basics right — a council that works for you

Safe roads, reliable public transport and clear parking systems are everyday essentials. When they fail, they disrupt work, family life and access to services. Getting the basics right means fixing known problem areas, maintaining infrastructure properly and making transport systems easier to understand and use.

Pride in Sheffield

A city that moves well is a city people feel confident in. Buses that run in the evening, roads that are properly maintained, and public spaces you can move through safely all contribute to something harder to measure but easy to feel: the sense that Sheffield is a place that actually works.

Opportunity for all

A missed bus can mean a missed shift. A road that cannot be safely cycled means less independence for children and adults alike. For people in outlying communities, unreliable evening and Sunday services are not an inconvenience — they are a ceiling on what is reachable. Getting Sheffield moving is inseparable from widening opportunity across the city.

- **Buses you can count on** — reliable, connected, and running when you actually need them, including evenings and Sundays when many communities currently have no service at all.
- **Reconstruct the roads that keep failing** — not endless patching, a proper assessment of every problem road and a programme to fix them properly.
- **Safer roads for all** — tackling speeding, dangerous parking and the streets everyone knows are a problem.
- **Plan transport around real journeys** — an integrated review of how bus, tram, car, bike and foot travel connect, with genuine resident input before changes are made.
- **Tram expansion that actually happens** — connecting more of Sheffield, not just promises.
- **Improve electric car charging facilities** — including in places with on-street parking.



Homes You Can Rely On

Housing is the issue that comes up most on doorsteps — and it is rarely one thing. Repairs that take months. Waiting lists that feel endless. Private renters in damp, cold homes who don't know their rights. Too many empty properties sitting unused while families wait. For too many Sheffield residents, the housing system is something they fight, not something that works for them.

It does not have to be this way.

We have already pushed the council to take repairs more seriously, using casework to expose failures and demanding higher standards. These are real changes, won by persistence. A council with more Liberal Democrats in it will keep the pressure on.

Why This Matters for Our Principles

Getting the basics right — a council that works for you

As a landlord and housing authority, the council has clear responsibilities — and residents deserve a service that is reliable, transparent and respectful. Getting the basics right means clear standards for repairs, regular updates, and accountability when work slips. It also means making it easier for people to report housing problems and poor conditions, and ensuring the everyday services that affect residential areas — like waste and street scene issues on estates — are handled promptly and consistently.

Pride in Sheffield

Good homes underpin stable, confident neighbourhoods. When properties are poorly maintained, left empty, or when the areas around homes look neglected, it damages pride and can make communities feel overlooked. Raising standards in housing, keeping estates well cared-for, and supporting parks and green spaces helps neighbourhoods feel like places people can take pride in — and where families want to put down roots.

Opportunity for all

Secure, affordable housing is essential for people to put down roots, raise families and plan for the future. If young people are priced out, renters are stuck in poor conditions, or homes are cold and expensive to heat, opportunity shrinks. Improving housing standards, bringing empty homes back into use, and making neighbourhoods healthier and more pleasant places to live supports opportunity across the city — especially for those who feel they're being left behind.

- **Fix-it-first standards in housing repairs** — making the council a landlord residents can rely on again.
- **Warmer homes, lower bills** — insulation, retrofit support and help with energy costs.
- **Empty homes brought back to life** — whether private or council-owned, they should be lived in.
- **A fair deal for private renters** — easier ways to report problems, stronger enforcement, and real support when things go wrong.
- **Fight to end Right to Buy** — because every council home sold off undermines every new home built, and the numbers will never add up until the government acts.
- **Build more homes through council, housing association and private partnerships** — because no single organisation can solve this alone.



Neighbourhoods You Love

Pride in Sheffield does not start with big announcements. It starts with whether your street is clean, your park is looked after, and the green space your kids use has not been given over to developers. When the basics are neglected, it sends a message — that your neighbourhood matters less than somewhere else.

We want every part of Sheffield to feel cared for. Not just the city centre.

We pushed for bigger blue bins, secured the food waste recycling trial, and championed the Friends groups who look after our parks. The green belt is under pressure and we will fight to protect it. More Liberal Democrat councillors means more votes against a plan that puts our heritage at risk.

Why This Matters for Our Principles

Getting the basics right — a council that works for you

Reliable recycling collection, well-maintained verges and properly supported parks volunteers are basic expectations that residents have every right to hold the council to. Getting these things right consistently is a measure of whether the council is doing its job.

Pride in Sheffield

Sheffield has a reputation as a green, community-minded city — and thousands of volunteers work hard every week to earn it. But pride cannot survive neglect. When parks are quietly run down, fly-tipping spots become permanent, and verges go uncut, it tells residents their neighbourhood is an afterthought. Every part of Sheffield should feel like somewhere worth caring for.

Opportunity for all

Access to good green space is not evenly distributed. Residents with gardens, cars and money can reach the countryside. Many Sheffield families cannot. For children growing up in flats, for older residents without transport, for communities where a local park is the only outdoor space available, what happens to that park matters enormously. Good green space supports health, reduces isolation and gives children room to play and grow. That is not a luxury — it is part of what a fair city looks like. Protecting the green belt means protecting that access for the people who need it most.

- **Brownfield first** — protect the green belt with a council commitment to prioritise previously used land.
- **Better recycling, less mess** — food waste collection, easier recycling sites, and tackling the spots that attract fly-tipping.
- **Plant trees, protect verges, and fund community greening** — with residents having a say on where and what.
- **Back the volunteers who look after our parks** — with small grants, equipment and proper recognition for Friends groups.
- **Keep money in the neighbourhood** — redirect a meaningful share of Community Infrastructure Levy funding back into the local area where development happens, so communities see a direct benefit from growth on their doorstep.
- **Support our volunteer-run libraries** — with the resources and equipment they need to keep delivering for their communities, not just the promise of goodwill.



Healthy Lives and Care You Can Count On

Getting a GP appointment is hard. Getting to hospital is expensive and slow if you rely on public transport. Getting support for a complex care need often means navigating a system that seems designed to exhaust you. These are real problems for Sheffield families — and they are not improving.

The council does not run the NHS. But it shapes how services connect locally, where they are based, and who gets left behind.

We declared a health and care emergency at Full Council, brought the “health on the high street” motion to push services into communities, and demanded the council take a stand on the poverty driving poor health outcomes. These are the right arguments. More Liberal Democrat councillors means more capacity to turn them into the right decisions.

Why This Matters for Our Principles

Getting the basics right — a council that works for you

The council does not run the NHS — but that is not an excuse for being passive. It commissions adult social care, shapes where services land, and influences whether vulnerable residents get reliable support. Getting the basics right means care packages delivered on time, clear guidance for complex needs, and a system that uses the council's real influence rather than shrugging at the gaps.

Pride in Sheffield

A city that lets residents struggle in silence — unable to get to the care they need, left waiting months for support — is not living up to what Sheffield should be. Pride in Sheffield means valuing every resident, not just those who can afford to go private or whose families can step in. Accessible health and care across all parts of the city is part of what it means to be a good place to live.

Opportunity for all

Poor health does not affect everyone equally. In Sheffield, life expectancy varies by years depending on postcode. People without transport, digital access or a support network are far less likely to get care early enough to make a difference. Good health is the foundation of everything else — work, connection, independence. Reducing health inequality is not a side issue. It is the point.

- **Health services closer to home** — bring health services onto high streets and into communities.
- **One point of contact for complex care needs** — so residents stop being bounced between departments and someone takes responsibility.
- **Getting to your appointment shouldn't be a battle** — better transport links to hospitals and health centres.
- **Fight for a properly funded social care system** — lobbying government and holding the council to account on waiting times and unmet need.
- **Nobody left isolated** — spotting who needs help, offering support, and making sure everyone can stay connected.
- **Free bus travel for young carers** — because if you're a young person giving up your time to care for someone, getting around the city shouldn't be another barrier you face.



Opportunity for Children and Young People

Families tell us they are stretched. Childcare costs too much. Support for children with additional needs takes too long. Activities are hard to find and harder to afford. For young people leaving school or college, the routes into good local jobs are not always visible or accessible. Unfortunately, where you grow up still shapes what you can become.

That is not good enough for a city with Sheffield's ambition.

We have pushed hard on SEND failures — using casework and scrutiny to expose how many families are being let down, and lobbying government for better funding. The direction is clear: every child in Sheffield deserves a real chance, wherever they grow up.

Why This Matters for Our Principles

Getting the basics right — a council that works for you

For families navigating additional needs, childcare or school admissions, the council should be straightforward to work with — clear about what support exists and honest when things go wrong. Too often the reality is parents chasing referrals and families bouncing between teams. Getting the basics right means coherent services and a council that treats families as partners rather than problems to be managed.

Pride in Sheffield

Sheffield's future depends on whether young people choose to stay — and whether they feel the city has chosen them. When young people leave for better opportunities elsewhere, it is not just a personal decision; it is a signal about what kind of city Sheffield is becoming. Investing in children and young people, making sure there are activities, pathways and possibilities here, is what keeps Sheffield a living, growing city rather than one that exports its talent and ambition.

Opportunity for all

Where you grow up in Sheffield should not determine what you can become. But too often it does. Children in some parts of the city face longer waits for SEND support, fewer activities on their doorstep, less access to work experience and weaker pathways into good local jobs. The ambition of this mission is simple: that every child in Sheffield — regardless of postcode, background or additional need — can see a future here worth staying for. That means getting support right in the early years, keeping young people engaged through their teens, and making sure the routes into good work are visible, accessible and real.

- **Better support for children with additional needs** — because too many families are still left fighting the system alone, waiting too long, and not knowing where to turn. This includes a single, clear point of contact for SEND support so families stop being bounced between services.
- **Create a visible Sheffield Youth offer** — activities, libraries and community spaces that are actually promoted and accessible wherever you live.
- **More work experience, more local opportunities** — expand council placements and push businesses to take on Sheffield young people.
- **Match skills training to Sheffield's growth industries** — working with universities, colleges and employers so young people can build a career here.
- **Keeping schools safe** — making sure every school has the training and support it needs to protect all students.
- **Better mental health support in schools** — shorter CAMHS waits, school-based provision, and help navigating social media pressures.
- **Support kinship carers** — the grandparents, aunts, uncles and family friends who step in when parents can't, giving them proper recognition and practical help rather than leaving them to figure it out alone.



A Thriving Local Economy with Good Jobs

Sheffield has the universities, the heritage and the people to build one of the strongest economies in the North. Too often the council has got in the way rather than backed that potential — slow decisions, bureaucratic processes, and district centres left to fend for themselves while attention drifts to the city centre.

We have started to change that.

Under Liberal Democrat Chair of the Economic Development, Skills and Culture Committee, we helped get Sheffield residents back into work and shaped a long-term Employment and Skills Strategy. We brought the “Ignite the Night” motion to fight for Sheffield’s venues and nightlife. We have pushed for transport that works in the evening, not just the commuter rush. The groundwork is there. Let’s finish the job!

Why This Matters for Our Principles

Getting the basics right — a council that works for you

Businesses need the council to be straightforward to deal with. A planning decision that drags on for months, a licensing process nobody can explain, an enquiry that bounces between departments — these are reasons businesses give up and investors go elsewhere. Getting the basics right means clear processes, published timelines, and someone accountable when things go wrong. A well-run council is itself an economic asset.

Pride in Sheffield

A strong local economy — thriving high streets, a lively city centre, a night-time scene people are proud of — is part of what makes Sheffield a city people want to live in, stay in and invest in. Sheffield’s heritage as the steel city and birthplace of football is an asset that should be celebrated, not left on a shelf.

Opportunity for all

A strong local economy does not benefit everyone equally unless it is deliberately designed to. Good jobs, apprenticeships, local procurement and skills pathways are the mechanisms that connect economic growth to the people who need it most — those without degrees, those who have been out of work, those in parts of the city that have seen investment pass them by. Sheffield has the universities, the employers and the industrial heritage to build an economy people across the city can share in. That only happens if the council actively backs it.

- **A council that gets out of the way** — faster decisions, simpler processes, and a clear point of contact for businesses.
- **Spend Sheffield's money in Sheffield** — stronger local procurement targets and published data on how much council spend goes to local businesses.
- **Grow Sheffield's tech, creative and manufacturing jobs** — through formal partnerships with universities, colleges and the AMRC.
- **Make the city centre somewhere people want to be** — safer streets, cleaner spaces, and late-night transport that actually gets people home.
- **Empty sites put to work** — bringing unused land and buildings back into use to unlock jobs and investment.
- **Sheffield's story, told with pride** — using our heritage as the steel city and birthplace of football to bring in visitors and investment.
- **Stronger local high streets** — supporting business networks and local traders so district centres can thrive.



A Council Fit for Purpose

Run through every other mission in this manifesto and there is a common thread: a council that is slow to respond, hard to reach, and more focused on its own processes than on the people it is meant to serve. Residents feel it when they cannot get through on the phone, cannot understand why a decision was made, or watch money disappear into management structures rather than local services.

Sheffield deserves better than that.

Liberal Democrats have been making that case in the Town Hall — pushing for transparency, challenging waste, and exposing the gap between what the council costs to run and what residents actually see. Scrutiny matters. But scrutiny alone does not change things. Sheffield needs more Liberal Democrat councillors who can turn the right questions into the right answers — and hold this council to the standard residents expect.

Why This Matters for Our Principles

Getting the basics right — a council that works for you

Everything else in this manifesto depends on a council that functions. One that answers the phone, explains its decisions in plain English, and follows through when it says it will. Across casework and complaints, what we hear is that Sheffield consistently falls short. A council that cannot get the simple things right has no foundation for anything more ambitious.

Pride in Sheffield

Residents should be able to point to their council with confidence. The way it spends money, communicates decisions and treats people reflects on the city as a whole. Too many Sheffield residents feel the council is something that happens to them rather than something that works for them. That is corrosive — and it is fixable. A well-run council would be something Sheffield could genuinely be proud of.

Opportunity for all

When the council is difficult to reach or hard to understand, the burden falls unevenly. People with time, confidence and digital access can usually navigate it. Those without often cannot. Digital transformation without proper support for people who are not online will make this worse. Accessible services and genuine local accountability are not just efficiency goals — they are equity ones.

- **Call the council, get an answer** — one clear route in, whether by phone, online or in person, with published response standards and someone accountable when things go wrong.
- **Give local communities real power** — genuine delegation to Local Area Committees including planning decisions, small highways schemes and neighbourhood priorities, so decisions are made closer to the people they affect.
- **Spend your money carefully** — scrutinise management costs, challenge wasteful spending, and publish clear data on where council money goes and what it delivers.
- **Make council services accessible to everyone** — ensure the Future Sheffield digital transformation works for residents who are less confident online, not just those who already are.



*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.*