



A
WEST
MIDLANDS
THAT
WORKS
FOR
EVERYONE




Green
Party

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 Green Party



A POST-COVID MANIFESTO

DEMOCRACY

ECONOMY

TRANSPORT

HOUSING

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

CRIME AND COMMUNITY

WELL-BEING AND PUBLIC HEALTH



Green Party
for the common good



A POST-COVID MANIFESTO





A Green Post-Covid manifesto for the West Midlands

The West Midlands Combined Authority was due to elect its new Mayor in 2020, but the Covid-19 pandemic meant that this election was delayed to 2021. Although in some ways today's world is a very different place to what it was in 2020, some things have not changed:

- our poverty statistics are still some of the worst in Europe;
- our unhealthy dependency on the car is as bad as ever;
- our desperate lack of safe, decent and genuinely affordable housing is blighting people's lives;
- our job prospects and rights at work stay low while the value of property and other assets goes up; and
- the Combined Authority still operates in an undemocratic way.

And so much of what we need to do also remains unchanged. We must consider how we improve our democracy, our economy, our transport, and our housing; our approach to the environment, diversity, crime and public health must all come under the spotlight if we're to create a society fit for the future.

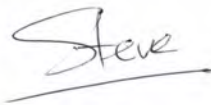
The one thing that has changed is that we now have even less time to take action to avoid the worst of the climate emergency that's waiting for us at the end of this decade. But to defeat the climate emergency we must first look after our people and give them the systems and opportunities they need to be able to live and work safely and securely.

Time for new thinking

That's why this manifesto speaks to the urgent need in the West Midlands to do things differently – to be unafraid to reimagine the way we live, work, move and prosper in a 21st Century metropolitan region. My three key pledges – an end to the West Midlands poverty scandal, a genuinely Green Industrial Revolution, and a transport system you can actually use – are a bold and innovative solution to that need.

I believe the Covid-19 pandemic has woken us up to the reality that it is possible to do things differently – if the political will is there. A saying I'm fond of is, "if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got". That's the real choice at this election: whether you're happy with the continuation of the 150 years of stale ideas and the political status quo that has led us to where we are today; or whether you're ready to say "no more – it's time for a new direction."

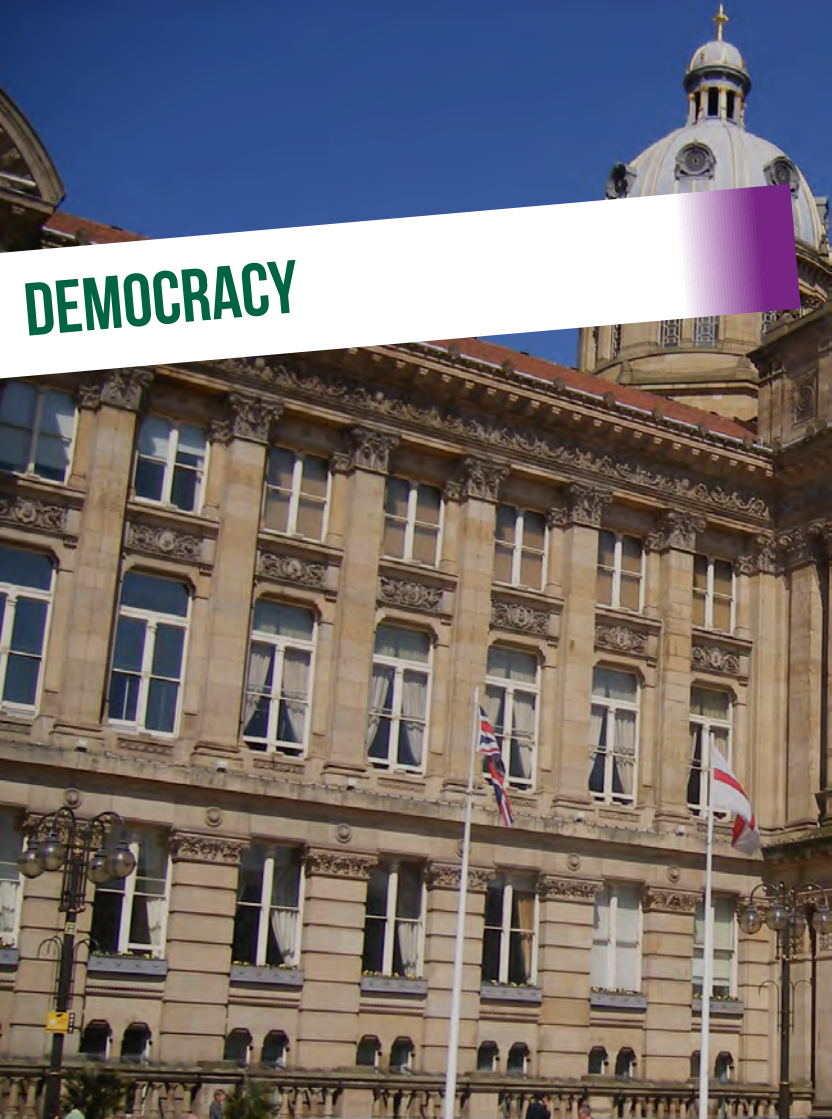
This manifesto is that new direction – I urge you to read it with an open mind and consider what it can mean for you and your loved ones for the next three years.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Steve Caudwell

Green Party Candidate for Mayor the West Midlands

DEMOCRACY



Making decisions together, for the benefit of everyone

British politics has long been dominated by the two big parties, due to our first past the post system. Many people are not fans of either of the big parties, but tend to vote for the one they feel is the lesser of two evils. Since the 1950s voter numbers have been falling, as people who live in 'safe' seats know their vote makes no difference to who is in power.

In the 2016 referendum, the West Midlands had the highest percentage of votes to leave the EU. Much of that vote was driven by a feeling that politicians were distant and uninterested. People felt they had no say in big decisions affecting their lives.

Each new generation of politicians promised to make life better. Yet no matter which party was voted into power, change was imposed from above and people's views were ignored. It's increasingly clear that people want politicians to listen to them.

In spite of this, central government pushed through the establishment of the WMCA without the public having any real say in the matter. While residents in both Birmingham and Coventry voted against having a mayor in 2012, central government forced local authorities to impose a mayor with the power to raise taxes on those very same citizens.

Nearly five years have passed since the WMCA's creation, and many residents in the West Midlands still have little idea what the West Midlands Mayor does or how decisions are made. The Mayor is head of a system that has no connection with the average person.

Things are different in London. When Londoners vote for their mayor, they also vote for 25 London Assembly Members to scrutinise and hold the mayor to account all year round. The West Midlands has no such Assembly. Instead, an unelected scrutiny committee, colleagues of the councillors making up the WMCA board, meets a few times a year.

Apart from Labour and Conservative members, the Board and the scrutiny committee contain no other party representatives or independent voices.

As well as being unelected, the WMCA board does not represent the diverse West Midlands population. Of the board members eligible to vote, there is no BAME community representation and only 3 out of 11 members are women. This makes a mockery of the WMCA's Inclusive Leadership Pledge. Even committees in the House of Lords and House of Commons strongly criticised how the WMCA was set up and the lack of transparency and accountability.

In the original devolution agreement, "democracy" doesn't feature, with "democratic" only getting one mention. The Strategic Economic Plan mentions "business" over 180 times, but never once "service users", "public participation", "democracy" or "community organisations".

Normal people want more say over big decisions that impact them. First, people need to know that their elected representatives will listen to them, take their concerns on board and speak up for them faithfully.

Second, they need to know that governments are held to account, to rebuild trust between politicians and the public. Third, they need to know that those in power will work to benefit everyone, not just the usual suspects.

The WMCA has a long way to go to get to this point. Democracy should mean not just representation, but also participation. Unless people feel that the WMCA is their Combined Authority, it has no chance of achieving its full potential. Unless everyone is represented and feels that they can take part, the WMCA has little chance of making its plans work for everyone. Devolution is a huge opportunity, but one that we continue to squander.

The mayoral election is our chance to choose someone who can set up mechanisms with teeth to make sure that everyone is held to account and that people can participate in decisions made about their lives. Someone who can keep the authority honest and focused on the people it needs to serve, to ensure that no one is left behind and the system works for everyone.

As it stands the mayor has very little direct power. But that may well be an opportunity and an enabling factor rather than a limiting one. To get things done, the mayor will have to work with people, to collaborate, to dialogue and listen. And change made together is more likely to work and more likely to last.

That's why, while I haven't made any promises I can't keep in this manifesto, I have been clear about the direction in which I want to lead the West Midlands in every area where the WMCA either has some control now, or seems likely to in the future.

That may be with the soft power of chairing the WMCA and holding a veto over its budget, the use of the platform and position of mayor, or any future powers.

Manifestos have started to get a bad name with the public as politicians gain election based on policy pledges that they then quietly drop.

My commitment to openness and transparency starts now with a complete policy agenda, and will continue after the election. If elected, I will set up a website to display all these policy pledges and to report on our progress. When my ideas are challenged, better ones come along or pledges need to be updated I'll report clearly about what's going on and why.

No matter what the future brings in terms of mayoral powers, if we continue with the current WMCA model that looks nothing like its citizens, does things to them rather than with them, and struggles to understand their needs, then the WMCA will have failed.

A new type of politics

It's time for a new type of politics. A politics that listens to and involves people, and makes sure that everyone's voice is heard. A politics that takes steps to amplify the voice of the most disadvantaged. A politics that is about working with people, for people, and exercising power together.

A new era for openness

When we talk about politicians, most people tell me that the majority are only concerned with their own back pocket. Politics should be about public service, not personal gain.

There are very many hard-working, honest politicians but we need to restore trust so that the public see their representatives in that way. This will require radical new approaches to openness.

Real devolution of real power

The Green Party has long supported devolution and pushed for more powers to be transferred from central government to the regions, but only with proper democratic structures in place. Once that is achieved, I will push for more independence from Whitehall.

We live in one of the most centralised countries in the world, with 93% of taxes collected by the central government in London. The West Midlands continues to be a poor cousin of London and other areas, having less money spent per head to run essential services. This needs to change.

Along with greater financial independence, we also need to see more power devolved – for example, power over rail franchising. Just as in Scotland and Wales, the mayor and the WMCA need a direct say over health and social care, education and the criminal justice system as well as many aspects of environmental policy, such as

flood protection and energy.

Many of the policies that we want in practice mean working with mayors and local government across the UK to put the case for more devolved powers and policies that help the millions of citizens outside the London area.

I WILL:

- Lobby central government to **allow the WMCA to have a directly elected Assembly** on the same day as the next local elections in 2022. This will be a part-time Assembly to begin with, and its remit and resources will increase as the scale of work increases.
- In the meantime, I will **campaign for the scrutiny committee to be given additional resources to expand its membership** to include representatives of voluntary organisations, community groups, unions, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and under-represented or vulnerable groups; to set up sub-groups focused on different areas; to have an independent website; to elect an opposition Chair; and to change how scrutiny representatives are appointed, to make them less vulnerable to political pressure.
- **Use Citizens' Assemblies to ensure the direct participation of members of the public** in forming policy, investigating issues of real concern to the WMCA and co-producing WMCA plans.
- Work towards setting up to 20% of the mayoral budget through **participatory budget setting**.
- **Lobby for a more diverse and representative WMCA board** and sub-groups with more representatives from groups other than larger businesses.

I WILL:

- **Refuse all gifts and hospitality** and encourage all WMCA Board members to do the same.
- **Publish my expenses online** in detail, and available for all to see.
- Sign up to the **Code of Practice for Statistics**.
- Push the WMCA to **webcast their meetings**.
- **Produce a clear roadmap for the WMCA**, including proposed further devolution deals, how they would benefit the region, how they are negotiated and by whom.
- Ask WMCA officers to **launch a simple communications strategy**, setting out what the WMCA is, how its powers differ from or align with Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the Midlands Engine, and who exactly can make which decisions.
- **Promote and engage more with community groups**, giving local communities a bigger say over how the mayor's powers protect and develop their local areas. I will value my relationship with business and will also meet as regularly with community organisations.

I WILL:

- Develop, substantiate and articulate **the case for increased central government funding** for the region.
- **Lobby central government for taxation policies**, such as Council Tax banding and stamp duty, to be fully devolved, as well as powers to determine new taxes like a Land Value Tax, which could replace Business Rates and Council Tax with a much fairer system.
- **Work to forge coalitions between regions** across the country to win better national policies.



ECONOMY



The background of the page features a close-up, slightly angled view of a dark grey or black surface. On this surface, the Jaguar logo (a leaping cat) and the word "JAGUAR" in a stylized font are visible at the top. Below them is the Land Rover logo, which consists of the words "LAND ROVER" in white capital letters inside a green oval with a white border. The logos are slightly out of focus, giving a sense of depth.

A Genuinely Green Industrial Revolution

The local economy, put simply, is the system of how money is made and used within the West Midlands. It relates to things like how many goods and services we produce and how much money people can spend on these things.

On its website the West Midlands Combined Authority states that “a strong economy raises the quality of life for everyone”.

But what is the definition of a strong economy? One that attracts foreign direct investment, panders to big business and measures its success in terms of gross domestic product (GDP); or one that thrives by incubating new business, anchoring wealth within the region, creating decent well-paid jobs with success measured by its impact on poverty? The first is 20th century economics, the second is the key to economic success in the 21st, and it is where we must take the West Midlands if everyone is to prosper.

Time for change

When the WMCA was formed in 2016 it was assumed that devolution would result in growth. But nearly five years on, there is still little evidence that this is the case. Growth in the region is modest and productivity is around 11.8% below average.

There is also an assumption that when (or if) we see more abundant growth, everyone will benefit. Again, there is no evidence to say so.

Even when the economy was growing before Covid, it was clear that the wealth wasn't being shared. We were seeing the same handful of individuals get richer, while the rest of us saw a fall in our living standards.

One of the consistent themes in recent elections has been the level of poverty in the West Midlands. For example, in the Black Country two in five children are growing up in poverty.

Even the assumption that increasing employment will solve all our problems needs

questioning. Most children living in poverty in the West Midlands actually live in households where at least one adult works. It's clear that work, for many, isn't providing the decent standard of living it should.

A whole generation of working young people are unable to get a stable job that pays a decent wage, let alone consider the possibility of owning their own home. At the moment, more than half of all West Midlands adults have less than £100 in savings. They are just a broken washing machine or winter coat away from disaster.

As mayor, I will strive towards a West Midlands where no one is destitute and there are no more than 10% of people living in poverty at any one time, and none for more than two years.

However, it's not just the fact that so many people in our society are on such low incomes that's a problem. The increasing level of inequality that we are seeing needs tackling for its own sake.

Over half of all children in the West Midlands now live in households that don't receive enough money to achieve a lifestyle most people would say is the minimum acceptable in our society (the 'minimum income standard'). If we can change that, everyone will benefit.

Too often, politicians talk about poverty and deprivation in vague terms, rather than understanding how it blights the lives of whole communities every day. If we compare a map of the most deprived areas of our region 25 years ago with a map of these areas now, it's clear that very little has changed. The financial and social capital, opportunities, housing, transport links and other factors mean that getting by and getting on is far more difficult in some communities than it is in others. We need to move beyond targeting support to individuals and work on developing our least well-off communities too.

The WMCA's Strategic Economic Plan, Industrial Strategy and Inclusive Growth Unit are a

starting place to address inequality, but still rely on the traditional levers of the free market and private business to drive growth, the "rising tide lifts all boats" theory, which has been proved false. They do little to counter the effects of years of austerity on public services and the changes this has driven in the labour market.

To truly build an economy fit for the 21st century we must look to community wealth building, where we stimulate the economy through our anchor institutions such as hospitals, universities and integrated public services. Community wealth building is an intentional reorganisation of the local economy in order to tackle the inequities and disadvantages that are today, more than ever, so acutely felt in our homes and communities across the UK.

We absolutely need growth that genuinely benefits everyone and every area, and we need everyone in the WMCA to own and understand this issue and share this agenda.

My vision

The scale of the problem is huge. We need a substantial and sustained effort to see long-term transformational change, not just a couple of new policies.

We have huge areas that have seen industry decline and little replace it, and a vicious cycle of low-skill, low-pay jobs. This has combined with high levels of ill health due to these conditions, worse public services thanks to central government cuts hitting these areas hardest, and poor access to housing and transport to create a toxic mix that has trapped whole communities in a downward spiral.

This impacts every area of our economy. The fewer people working in jobs that are paying decent wages, the less money there is flowing around the local economy for everyone. The more people are ill or in need, the greater the demand on public services.

However, it hasn't always been this way. Back in 1970, the West Midlands had the highest relative

household earnings in Britain and people could hardly remember a time when unemployment was above 1%. We enjoyed a high-skill, high-pay economy.

And we have an incomparable history of innovation in the West Midlands. This is the place that sparked the Industrial Revolution that changed the world, where between 1760 and 1850 three times more patents were applied for than by any other area.

Given its history, people, transport links and geography, the West Midlands is clearly not in its natural economic place. It is within our power to dramatically increase and improve our current fortunes.

However, that won't happen by using the powers that central government is giving us just to carry on doing things in the same way. It won't happen by competing with every other Combined Authority for the same pot of inward investment from big businesses. It won't happen by clinging to 20th Century business practices while the rest of the

world embraces the reality and opportunities that the new century is bringing.

It will happen by seeing the changing world as an opportunity. It will happen by working out what the West Midlands is good at and best placed to do among the emerging high-demand areas. It will happen by being known for building on our strengths so that we can provide secure and decent jobs both now and in the future. It will happen by moving to a home-grown, localised economy based on small businesses and innovation that generates money for our economy and keeps it here.

It will happen by having a vision for our economy that thinks beyond the next election.

A home-grown, resilient economy

If a supermarket opens, of every £1 spent there, just 5p remains in the local economy. If a local shop opens, 50p of every £1 spent remains in the local economy. So

it's obvious that working to nurture home-grown SMEs and co-ops in the West Midlands needs to be a priority if we are to build a prosperous local economy.

If we're serious about helping the least well-off areas to catch up, we have to grow enterprise in those very communities. This means helping companies to start up in every area, rather than just improving the transport network and hoping wealth created elsewhere will trickle down.

An economy based on more small businesses and co-operatives will also be more resilient. If a multinational company opens a factory in the West Midlands, they can as easily shut it and move it somewhere else if the economic conditions change. If someone who lives in Wolverhampton starts a business there, it's very unlikely to move anywhere else. In the wake of Brexit this makes clear sense.

Building on our strengths

Despite huge central government cuts, the public sector remains the biggest employer in the region and spends an enormous amount of money on goods and services.

One of the quickest wins in moving towards our new economy is to localise that spend. This means helping all our hospitals, councils, schools, fire stations, police facilities and other public bodies (our “anchor institutions”) to buy their goods and services from local businesses.

For example, one of our hospitals was spending £100,000 each year on curries – which they bought in from Sunderland. These are now being sourced locally and the money is now circulating around the local economy, making everyone better off.

The WMCA needs to lead the way here, and can also help by mapping demand for goods and services and acting to help create new businesses to plug the gaps so that the West Midlands can serve the needs of the public

sector in the region

And we can go further. We can make sure that people in the West Midlands have the skills needed to match public-sector vacancies both now and in the future, and can encourage all of our anchor institutions to adopt socially helpful procurement practices – for example, using their influence to help more members of disadvantaged groups into employment.

We can far better use the power of the West Midlands public-sector spend for the benefit of the region. For example, we can break large contracts down into smaller bundles so that SMEs and co-ops can bid for them; ensure at least one-third of all contracts go to SMEs; share procurement systems so that there are fewer forms to fill in and more opportunities can be accessed; pay on time and require contractors to do the same; consider social value; and write localisation and socially helpful deliverables into contracts (such as more apprenticeships or local people taken on).

Business heroes

Too often, politicians view small business simply as a cash cow – an easy target for taxation.

That kind of thinking is simplistic and unfair. Businesspeople are often the unsung heroes of our society. Not only does enterprise help to build and heat our homes, it provides us with food, clean water, sanitation, electricity, entertainment, leisure, healthcare, transport, in fact everything we need to flourish and enjoy a decent standard of living. More than that, business provides jobs and work. Work allows people to support themselves and their families, to contribute to the well-being of their community through their output, to improve their mental health and self-esteem, to form social connections and increase social capital, to have a sense of purpose and can provide a huge amount of satisfaction.

Helping the right kinds of enterprise to do the right thing needs to be an absolute priority for politicians.

Supporting small businesses

Small businesses are already the backbone of our economy. In the few years after the economic crash of 2008, more than eight of every ten new jobs that were created were in small businesses and SMEs already provide the vast majority of jobs in the West Midlands. Their presence helps to make our neighbourhoods distinctive and places that people enjoy living in.

But there's so much more we can do to create the conditions in which small businesses can start up, survive and thrive – from focusing WMCA budgets on support for SMEs and co-ops, to working more on regional and local infrastructure, including main roads; getting serious about ensuring fast and reliable broadband; ensuring an accessible and affordable supply of a variety of industrial and office units; and consolidating the current confusing array of support services into a well-advertised one-stop shop for support around

everything from sales, marketing and customer service to long-term and ongoing access to personal advisers to help to increase exports and assistance to get business plans into shape and analyse how robust and realistic they are.

We also need to look very carefully indeed at Business Rates and supplemental levies for new and small businesses. Taxing these small businesses out of business will be totally counter-productive.

Finally, we need to help SMEs and co-ops to make their voices heard more clearly. The mayor needs to help make concerns about unnecessary red tape heard at the highest levels of government. But first we need to get our own house in order and see an SME representative on the WMCA board.

Untapped potential

The number of women and people from BAME communities starting up businesses needs to grow

substantially. Levels of enterprise in our least well-off areas are also well below where we need them to be. This means that we have a huge untapped resource and that there are legions of entrepreneurs and innovators who have yet to unleash their creativity. Our economy and society is far poorer because of it.

Women and those living in our least well-off areas have borne the brunt of austerity cuts, and rates of employment in BAME areas remain unacceptably high. If we want to see a more socially just and equal society, we have to use this resource better.

Many people can't start up their own enterprises simply because they lack the capital to do so. Most small businesses are funded by friends and family, and if you don't have connections with available cash, getting a company up and running is very challenging indeed. Banks are not set up to help small businesses and securing a loan against your home rightly puts many off.

We need to support and publicise the existing Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) in the West Midlands while working to encourage more community banks tasked with providing loans and finance to small businesses, encouraging entrepreneurs from traditionally under-represented backgrounds.

Taking skills seriously

There's much evidence that investing in skills gives a better return than investing in shiny new infrastructure. Much has already been said about the skills deficit within the West Midlands and the impact that Brexit will have on this, but it is actually a complex issue. Simply getting more people a qualification won't necessarily lead to an increase in productivity. Under-use of existing skills, our low-skill, low-pay economy and a lack of investment in general are likely the major drivers behind the skill gap.

We cannot, therefore, view skills independently from the wider economic picture. For example, if

we continue to pursue economic plans based heavily on retail, we will continue to see creation of low-skill, low-pay jobs and the productivity gap will likely not reduce – no matter how well trained those doing the jobs are.

I have outlined in this section how we can create a better economy. Part of this will be to better utilise the skills people already have, ensuring that we teach skills that match actual jobs that are available, in the areas where we want to see growth, or where there are skills gaps. It will also include working in partnership with business and the public sector to encourage a huge increase in the number and quality of apprenticeships on offer.

In addition, we need to help people to progress once they are in work by helping them to continue to develop their skills. This includes helping those who run SMEs to become more productive and to provide more training to their staff.

Able students from the least well-off areas are far less likely to go on to further and higher education than their richer counterparts, so I will continue to oppose tuition fees for further and higher education and cuts to the Education Maintenance Allowance. I will also champion the creation of an internship programme, developed in collaboration with local businesses and universities, aimed at lifting young people who can't afford further or higher education out of poverty.

Arts and culture

While education is about ensuring young people can live rich and full lives in general, it is not just about preparing them for work.

In the same way, we need to recognise the huge contribution that arts and cultural organisations make not only to our quality of life, but also to our economy. We must ensure that they are supported and that we safeguard their future. With

funding streams continuing to disappear, and low levels of disposable income in the surrounding area the survival of many institutions is at risk.

Trialling totally new approaches

As we are facing long-term and entrenched problems, we must be prepared to try brand new approaches to unleash a new wave of innovation and end the stifling of creativity. For example, it's high time that the UK saw a trial of Universal Basic Income (UBI), so I will lobby central government to do so right here, in the West Midlands.

UBI is a policy that could tackle low pay (and the perils of the gig economy, where many people are one pay cheque away from disaster), job insecurity and the complex benefits system. More than that, it means that people are free to be entrepreneurial and set up businesses without running the risk of losing everything.

For example, if you're a parent with three children and a mortgage, the idea of working to create a brand-new start-up might be too much of a gamble. But if you know you have a basic income as a safety net, you can throw yourself into your work without needing to worry.

The West Midlands has a proud history of innovation and entrepreneurship, but too many people feel trapped in monotonous jobs where they feel that they have no control or opportunities to be creative or contribute. UBI may be a way to turn their aspiration into reality but until we try it, we won't know.

I will also support research into how a West Midlands Pound could benefit the local economy and help us to build a stronger identity, as the Bristol Pound has done for Bristol.

We've moved into a new decade and need to try bold new 21st century solutions like UBI and a West Midlands Pound to solve the problems that we brought with us from the last.

We also need to be prepared to think more socially about business. If a business is more of a social nuisance than a social good and contributes less economically than the amount it costs the taxpayer to deal with the harm it causes, then supporting that business is a bad use of public money. My door will be wide open to businesses who want to create decent jobs and provide a public good – but not to those who exploit workers and employ unethical or environmentally unsustainable practices.

I WILL:

- Within my first 20 days **appoint a deputy mayor charged with championing community wealth building** and monitoring the creation of a West Midlands strategy for such growth.
- **Commission a comprehensive assessment of deprivation** across the area, and a clear action plan to address it with measures that will include measuring the distribution of growth.
- **Ensure TfWM and the wider WMCA buys local wherever possible**, local authority pension funds are redirected to local investments and that support is made available to establish more community banks.
- **Encourage anchor institutions** such as hospitals, schools and universities to recruit from lower income areas, **pay the living wage** and provide career progression opportunities for staff.
- **Develop our local supply chains** with focus on SMEs; employee-owned businesses; social enterprises, cooperatives and community businesses.
- **Ensure that the WMCA and its constituent members put land and property to best use for society**, so that the financial and social gain is harnessed by our local communities.
- **Push the WMCA to use investment monies to support businesses** (including social enterprises) and co-ops in starting up, surviving and thriving, especially in the least well-off areas of the region.

I WILL:

- **Work with anchor institutions to help them to adopt socially helpful procurement practices.** This will include monitoring the implementation of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- **Aim to derive maximum value from the development of HS2,** particularly in championing supply chain opportunities, and ensuring these benefits are felt throughout the wider region and not just one or two areas.
- **Cultivate a respectful relationship with businesses of all kinds,** rightly valuing the role that they play in our society and economy, committing to a full consultation and listening exercise before considering changing Business Rates or applying any additional levies.
- **Champion having an SME representative** on the WMCA board.
- **Support the creation of more community banks** to help SMEs who cannot access finance through traditional banks. I will also look to exclude the smallest and most vulnerable companies from supplemental levies.
- **Stimulate businesses and particularly social enterprises** to start up in areas where there is high public-sector demand in the West Midlands but insufficient local supply.
- **Work to ensure the availability of suitable units for start-up businesses,** especially manufacturing and creative premises. I will report annually on the availability and affordability of industrial and leisure space in the West Midlands, and what steps the WMCA is taking to improve the situation.

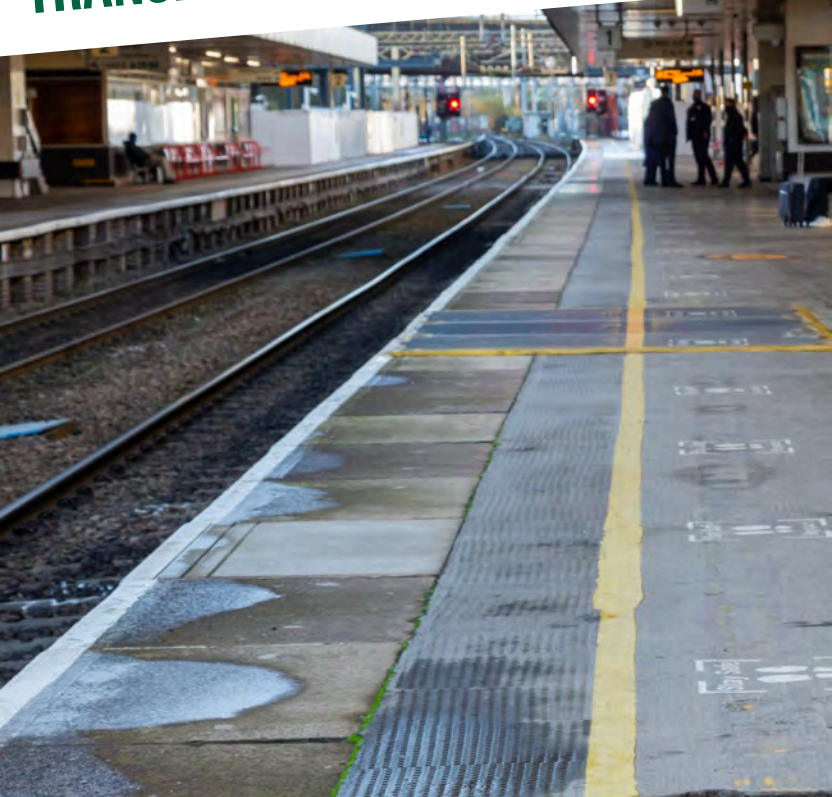
I WILL:


- Push the WMCA to **use investment monies to support SMEs and co-ops in starting up, surviving and thriving**, especially in the least well-off areas. This will include working with partners towards a well-advertised one-stop shop for small business support and advice, consolidating the confusing array of provision currently available across the West Midlands. This will offer specialist advisers to help small businesses to increase exports, to write and evaluate business plans, and more.
- **Champion more women, members of our BAME communities and people from socio-economically disadvantaged groups** starting their own businesses by highlighting successes, campaigning with other groups and working in partnership with schools to inspire children.
- Working with our one-stop advice service and assertive outreach, **I will share success stories**, support campaigns like “She Means Business”, promote role models, encourage mentors and **provide targeted education and training**.
- Aim to **ensure that the skills budget is spent in areas and communities where there is employment demand**, and with the objective of increasing productivity, in line with my economic plan.
- Work in partnership with businesses and the public sector to **create more apprenticeships**.
- **Ensure that young people living in poverty have a fair chance at a university education**, by working with local businesses to establish a dedicated internship programme.

I WILL:

- Work with anchor institutions (including the WMCA) to ensure that **people in the West Midlands have the skills needed to match vacancies** both now and in the future.
- **Support a revolution in careers advice and guidance** by supporting and enabling work connecting employers and educators, giving young people real experience of work before leaving education.
- Aim to **develop an adult education strategy that supports the skills needed in the public sector** but also includes personal development as well as business needs, along with greater provision of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses.
- **Offer free advertising for arts groups and events** on TfWM property and vehicles, and push the WMCA to do the same.
- Oppose the huge cuts that this sector is suffering and **act as a champion for the arts**, using my position to promote and support them.
- **Promote involvement in the arts as a path to well-being**, and celebrate everything that's already happening at every level of our community.
- Support the establishment of **an arts and crafts network for the West Midlands**, allowing organisations to share best practice and resources.
- **Review how the WMCA can best support and facilitate** the developments of the region's strong arts and cultural scene.
- Push for the **integration of independent arts and crafts organisations** into an integrated public services delivery model.

TRANSPORT



A man with a beard and bald head, wearing a dark navy blue coat, stands in the center of the frame. He is looking directly at the camera. The background is a blurred public transport station, likely a train or tram stop. To his right, a train is visible, with the word 'COUNTRY' partially legible on its side. A red metal railing is in the foreground on the right. In the background on the left, a digital display shows '130155' and some text about 'On the... Long Budge and North...'.

A public transport system you can actually use

We all rely on transport to get us where we need to be. Transport should help us get on with our lives — not be an expensive source of frustration. But in the West Midlands, over-reliance on the car causes congestion, poisonous air, stress and ultimately ill-health and premature death.

The evidence is clear that active travel (walking and cycling) is the cleanest, healthiest and most

efficient way to undertake short journeys. I will champion initiatives to encourage all who can, to make active travel their method of choice.

But we won't break our car dependency whilst our public transport system isn't a viable alternative; we need a system that's safe, effective, easy to use and always available. Most importantly, we must question whether people will leave the car at home when the price of public transport remains a barrier. That's why all the options must be on the table when we re-imagine our system, including making public transport free for all at the point of use.

Better buses

More people use buses to get around than any other mode of transport. Yet bus users must put up with a second-class service while paying premium prices. Buses are seen by many as an undesirable form of travel: unsafe, dirty and unreliable.

Bus use has far more potential than is currently realised. For example, in areas not served by metros or trains, we could introduce Bus Rapid Transit routes that stop less often and re-allocate road space to them so that they can become a faster way of getting around than driving. With comfortable seats, enhanced safety and high frequency, this is a real option to vastly improve our public transport links.

Better integration of bus services with rail and tram services is also needed, so that routes and timetables complement each other and form a well-connected public transport network tailored to the needs of the travelling

public. A franchised system would make this possible and avoid the current situation where bus services duplicate and compete with train and metro services.

The mayor's new franchising powers, once fully in place, will have the potential to improve bus services and vehicles far quicker than is currently possible. These powers mean that the mayor can make sure that buses go where they need to, when they need to.

A world class rail network

Our train system has a key role to play tackling the climate emergency and could carry so many more passengers. But there are some big challenges to overcome. The mayor should be a key figure - holding franchisees to account for their poor performance and working with the British Transport Police to bring an end to anti-social behaviour. At the same time, the coronavirus pandemic has caused a drop in passenger numbers meaning that government must prop up train services that are no

longer financially viable.

We need a collaborative approach to tackling the problems on our railways and better public engagement. Terminating the failing West Midlands Trains franchise and bringing this back into public ownership is a crucial step in putting our railways to work for the West Midlands.

There are 115km of rail lines in the West Midlands that we need to re-open, such as the Stourbridge to Walsall, Sutton Park and Moseley lines. And there are others that need major improvements to serve local people better.

Currently, the power to re-open and improve these lines largely rests with central government. The mayor needs to lobby government to translate current rhetoric into action for the West Midlands.

Re-opening these rail routes represents sound economics, helping businesses and connecting people to jobs and leisure, instead of letting this valuable infrastructure go to

waste.

It would also reduce congestion and air pollution – even more so if the routes were linked with modern, zero-emissions buses running from stations, as most lines run near or alongside major roads.

To make this happen, we need greater investment and more powers over railway services and infrastructure in the West Midlands.

Transport that helps the least well-off areas and our most vulnerable citizens

It is vital that we plan a transport system that serves everyone, regardless of where they live and how much they earn.

Lack of public transport affects the most vulnerable in our society more than anyone else. For example, in areas where car ownership is lowest, transport links to shops and local centres are also often poor, making food

and other essentials more expensive and difficult to access. Also, many people in the high-unemployment parts of the West Midlands live near areas where there are job vacancies but have no easy way to get there.

Public transport also enables many of the people most vulnerable to isolation to stay connected. If we can make public transport more accessible and help passengers to feel safer using it, we can help to build a society in which people feel less isolated.

Finally, the small businesses that are the lifeblood of our economy and benefit our least well-off areas need us to invest in ensuring good-quality transport links, including maintaining local and regional main roads rather than simply prioritising national links.

Cycling and walking: better for everyone

Cycling and walking cost nothing, don't impact our environment or

add to air pollution, and improve people's physical and mental health. At the same time, people often avoid these options. We need to focus on doing all we can to encourage walking and cycling.

If we can help cyclists and pedestrians to feel safer, maintain good cycling and pedestrian networks and prioritise cycling and walking as "last-mile" options, walking and cycling will become more popular.

Streets should be pleasant and safe places to stroll along. The more people feel safe on our region's streets, the more they will get the health benefits of walking. Communities feel stronger and safer when there are friendly faces on the pavements, too.

If we are serious about making walking and cycling attractive options for more people, significant investment in infrastructure, information, training and facilities is required.

Choked roads, choking on air

Congestion is a major problem in our region. Hours are wasted as people sit in cars going nowhere fast. And while our roads are choked with cars, our citizens are choking on poisonous air.

Around 3,000 premature deaths in the West Midlands are caused by air pollution, which contributes to cancer and heart disease. It's so bad that the European Commission has issued a final warning to the UK for repeated breaches of air pollution limits for nitrogen dioxide in 16 air quality zones, including Birmingham.

We need to end road widening schemes, which have been shown to generate more traffic as the extra lanes created fill up. Road widening leads to a worse environment for walking and cycling and a deterioration in the local centres through which these roads pass. Wider roads increase community severance, undermine the attractiveness of local centres, and generally make for a more intimidating and less pleasant environment. We should make more efficient use of the

road space we already have rather than proceeding with damaging road widening schemes.

We urgently need to build a world-class public transport system that enables people to use transport methods that don't contribute to air pollution and congestion.

We can then work at other ways of reducing congestion and air pollution and clearing our roads and our air, such the continued adoption of low-emission zones, workplace parking levies, car clubs, lift-sharing, getting diesels off the roads and more.

We also need to recognise that taxis help to fill the gaps left by public transport and reduce the need to own a car. I value the region's taxis, which provide a well-regulated, quality service that we do not want to lose.

I WILL:

- Lobby hard for the only real solution that would bring down prices and improve frequency and reliability: **bringing buses back into public ownership**.
- **Implement the mayor's powers over bus franchising** as soon as practicable to make sure that all areas are served by good-quality services.
- Ensure that all buses have the best possible access, including working with bus manufacturers and using franchising powers to make sure that older people, parents and disabled people are consulted when making procurement decisions, to **maximise access for people of all ages and needs**.
- Work to **introduce good-quality and fast Bus Rapid Transit routes**, particularly where there is no suburban rail or metro route. No area should be far from quick services to its nearest centre.
- Introduce more bus priority measures such as **bus gates, intelligent traffic signals and bus lanes**, by reallocation of road space not by road widening.
- Work with neighbouring local authorities to **establish new bus services or strengthen existing ones** to link the conurbation with rural towns in neighbouring authorities, where there is no nearby rail service.
- **Publish a comprehensive bus safety plan**.
- Lobby government to **end the failing West Midlands Railway franchise** and bring this back into public ownership
- **Push for full devolution of rail franchising powers** and for regional control of rail infrastructure.

I WILL:

- Lobby hard for **investment to re-open rail lines**, particularly the 115km of freight-only or unused double-track railway lines in the Black Country, South Staffordshire and Birmingham, for commuter services. I will also lobby for **electrification, increased frequency and other much-needed improvements** on other routes, such as the Nuneaton–Coventry–Leamington line.
- **Lobby hard for planning and construction of the Bordesley Chords to be brought forwards**. This is a vital piece of infrastructure which will link the Camp Hill line with Birmingham Moor Street enabling more trains from the East Midlands, Moseley Kings Heath and Worcestershire to run into Moor Street.
- Push for the opening of **new railway stations on existing passenger lines**, such as at Castle Bromwich and Fort Dunlop on the Birmingham–Tamworth line, Aldridge and Walmley on the Sutton Park line and Balsall Heath on the Camp Hill line.
- Work with partners to **introduce a multi-modal smart ticketing system** across all operators, which includes trains as well as buses and metros, and ensure that payments for a day's travel using smart tickets and contactless cards are capped at the day ticket rate, as in London.
- Investigate the **introduction of ticket barriers** across the network.
- **Make it easier to buy rail tickets** at unmanned stations, ending the excuse for travelling without a ticket.
- Review the passenger information systems to make them as **accessible and user-friendly as possible**.

I WILL:

- Support well-designed plans to **extend metro lines**.
- **Investigate the introduction of smaller light tramway routes**, similar to the people mover on the Stourbridge Town line, to fill in the gaps where metro and heavy rail lines are inappropriate or not viable.
- Join campaigning groups to make the case for the **nationalisation of the railways** to make sure that profits are invested back into the network and fares remain as low as possible.
- Work collaboratively with British Transport Police and other agencies to **bring an end to anti-social behaviour on our trains**.
- Ensure that the public transport system is used to **link areas of high unemployment to areas where there are suitable job vacancies**.
- Use procurement of light rail vehicles by TfWM to stimulate manufacturing and create jobs by **prioritising West Midlands-based manufacturers** and use any increased franchising powers to do the same for bus and rail vehicles. The West Midlands used to be a centre for public transport manufacturing and can be again.
- **Map areas of high levels of food poverty and prioritise linking them to affordable food sources**, with subsidised transport running when and where it's needed.
- **Improve access to help more older and disabled people** (including people affected by dementia) to use public transport and lessen feelings of loneliness and isolation.

I WILL:

- **Prioritise ensuring good local and regional transport links**, such as main roads and local train services.
- **Develop a long-term plan to increase walking and cycling**, including how to integrate them with public transport and how to incentivise and reward them over car use.
- Prioritise both **making our streets much more friendly** to walking and cycling and creating a high-quality, joined-up **regional cycle route network**. Cycling will be considered at the very start of all new plans for the area.
- Support the recommendations of the Cycle Charter, produce a costed plan and **lobby government for increased cycle funding for at least £10 per person per year in the West Midlands** (aspiring to a medium-term target for £20 a year) and ensure that at least 5% of all trips in the region are made by bicycle by 2023.
- **Promote a 'vision-zero' approach** to planning, to minimise danger to cyclists and walkers.
- Work with the housing sector to **ensure new homes and developments have safe cycle storage facilities** and ready access to the cycle network.
- Work with partners, schools and workplaces to encourage and **fund programmes that get people walking to work and school**, leave the car at home, especially for the shortest journeys.
- **Appoint walking and cycling champions** who will promote the interests of pedestrians and cyclists across the West Midlands.
- Work with local councils to **extend 20mph speed limits** to all residential roads where people are in favour.

I WILL:

- Initiate plans for **cycle superhighways**.
- Ensure that we have **community-led, people-friendly street projects in every area** and support Healthy Streets and Lifetime Neighbourhood principles.
- Ensure that **any improvements to the Key Route road network take account of the needs of all road users** and protect pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users, and work with Highways England and local authorities to ensure that other roads do the same.
- Use bus franchising powers to ensure that **all bus drivers have improved safety training** with regards to cyclists, pedestrians and other vulnerable road users, and work with the freight industry to improve training for lorry drivers in the West Midlands.
- **Prioritise investment in key cycle arterial routes** that enable access to transport hubs and employment opportunities. Particular investment is needed around UK Central and in Wolverhampton.
- Support the adoption of **low-emission zones across the West Midlands**, reducing air pollution significantly below the legal minimum levels.
- Support the implementation of **Low Traffic Neighbourhoods throughout the region**, in collaboration with residents.
- Prioritise public transport improvements that will give the greatest number of people **a viable option of leaving their car at home**, like Bus Rapid Transport.

I WILL:

- **Introduce smart road charging** in areas where public transport is a viable alternative to driving and use this income to fund improvements in public transport.
- Introduce further low-emission zones on our region's roads and **work towards phasing out the most polluting vehicles** from the region's roads by 2025.
- Introduce incentives to **encourage a transition to electric and low-emission taxis**, and ban idling in highly polluted areas.
- Use bus franchising powers to ensure that **100% of buses are electric hybrid or hydrogen powered by 2025**.
- Help more freight and waste traffic to **switch to using railways**.
- Introduce information boards **detailing pollution levels in highly polluted areas** and publicise days on which pollution levels are high.
- Investigate **instituting a workplace parking levy** in areas well-served by public transport.
- Work towards a **comprehensive electric car-charging network**.
- Support work to connect the Urban Traffic Management Control Centres across the WMCA, enabling them to **share intelligence in real time and develop a proactive approach to traffic management**. The existence of the WMCA should also mean that we can properly coordinate roadworks between councils to minimise traffic disruption.
- Reduce the need to travel through **improved remote working**.

HOUSING



The housing crisis continues

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to housing. But across the West Midlands it is clear we are failing our citizens in this aim - rough sleeping has reached epidemic proportions,

homelessness continues to increase, and the price of an average house is unaffordable on an average wage.

The government's approach to solving the housing problem has been to make more land available to private developers to build more homes that the average person in the West Midlands simply can't afford.

Nationwide, 1.16 million people are sitting on housing waiting lists, an increase of 350,000 since 2017. But perhaps even worse, tens of thousands of children are now living in temporary accommodation.

For many young people, the dream of buying a home is now totally out of reach. In 2016, Local Government Association research found that the proportion of 25 year olds owning their own home had fallen from 46% to only 20% in 20 years, and the problem is only getting worse. Over the last two decades, the average house price has risen almost four times as much as the corresponding rise in average earnings and six times the rate of inflation. Here in the West Midlands house prices are growing faster than in any other part of the country, with a 3.4% increase in 2019 and a 5% increase in 2020. With the average wage increasing by only 0.5% in 2019 it's clear that the gap continues to widen.

House building in the West Midlands region has begun to

accelerate, seeing a 30% increase since 2014/15, with around 15,000 houses being built per year. The WMCA has a target of 215,000 additional homes to build by 2031, but disappointingly is only aiming to make 20% of these affordable. A housing deal has been agreed with government, which will see £250 million made available to the region including £100 million for land remediation. But with such a large gap between the cost of a home and the average salary, the WMCA should be striving to provide a much higher proportion of affordable and social homes.

Building the right type of home

For such a wide-ranging problem we need a wide-ranging solution. The market has been allowed a free hand in housing and this approach has not worked. It's clear that the state needs to take more action.

A drive on house building by local authorities and housing associations would not only address the housing shortage, but would also provide affordable options for everyone, including those on the lowest incomes. It would see an end to the ever-increasing number of people on low incomes being made homeless and of people sleeping on the streets.

Other measures include exploring the introduction of a Land Value Tax, to discourage developers and others from land banking – sitting on land while waiting for values to rise.

A vision for the future

In order to provide a housing solution that will both meet today's needs and be fit for tomorrow, we need a clear vision for the future of housing in the West Midlands. Changing patterns of work, shopping and leisure, the needs of an increasingly older population, struggling infrastructure and the climate emergency all need to be

considered, not just the immediate need to build more homes. We must consider what we build, where, how we build and who we are building for, as well as how housing fits into the bigger economic and transport picture for our region.

Our high streets are in decline. In the last four decades we came to regard them solely as shopping destinations, and lost sight of the original social role that they fulfilled. To survive the switch to online shopping, our high streets need to re-invent themselves, becoming mixed-use developments of living, socialising, working and retail space.

In the transport section of this manifesto I set out my plans for a truly integrated public transport network for the West Midlands, along with better provision of cycling and walking facilities. Housing must play its part in this too, with each home having secure storage for cycles, ready access to green space, and located within half a mile of the bus or rail network.

We must also look at construction methods, and ensure that all future development takes place within our existing boundaries and does not eat up any further green belt. This will require a renewed commitment from constituent members to pursue brownfield first for housing, along with preference given to compact sustainable communities in our local plans.

Bringing vacant land back to life

We need to increase the supply of available land while protecting valuable green spaces. As I explored earlier, we should build on brownfield land first wherever possible. Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) should be used to end land banking and bring vacant land back into use.

Bringing empty homes back into use will play a part. In the West Midlands, there are just over 10,000 homes that have been empty for over six months, sometimes for years; forcing their return to use takes time, but is

important for the general condition of an area as well as for the housing they provide.

We also need to ensure that the houses we build stay in use for many years to come. We need to establish and agree environmental standards for new housing developments across the WMCA area which will be fit for the future.

Action for renters

As buying a home is now out of reach for so many, more and more people now rent privately. We have seen private-sector rents rise far more than the retail price index over the last ten years, and complaints about badly maintained homes, rogue landlords and insecure tenancies abound.

Rogue landlords and poor standards hurt both renters and the majority of responsible landlords. We need to work with both renters and landlords to drive up standards and ensure that tenants have safe, secure and well-maintained homes.

Tackling rough sleeping

The logical consequence of the housing crisis and the short supply of affordable housing has been that overcrowding, homelessness and rough sleeping have increased. The number of people sleeping rough in Birmingham city centre continues to be shocking and deeply troubling, and the current mayors record on this is dubious at best.

Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness, and rightfully causes concern among the public and decision makers alike. Rough sleeping is not normally the first form of homelessness that people experience, but it is the most catastrophic and places those sleeping on the streets in a great deal of danger. Although rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness, it is also the least prevalent making it completely within our gift to end.

Doing so will require a co-ordinated effort across our region, to ensure that sufficient emergency accommodation is

available, that outreach services effectively help people into temporary accommodation, and that initiatives like Housing First are in place to resolve long term homelessness and rough sleeping.

I WILL:

- Make the **provision of more social and affordable housing** one of my greatest priorities.
- **Bring together** community groups, local politicians and the housing industry to achieve this.
- Commission an exploratory **report into the future housing needs** for the West Midlands to address the changing nature of our community.
- Work with the WMCA, local authorities and the public to **curb any further release of Green Belt** land for housing.
- **Support the establishment of alternative methods of construction** and brownfield site reclamation.
- Work with the WMCA, local authorities, community groups and housing organisations to **bring more compact and sustainable communities to the West Midlands**.
- Ensure that any land released by the WMCA for housing has covenants in place to **promote sustainable construction and cycle storage facilities**.
- Push for small developers, self-builders, Community Land Trusts and housing co-ops to be supported, to **end the dominance of a few big development companies**.
- **Support Community Land Trusts**, a mechanism to provide genuinely affordable housing in perpetuity, both for rent and ownership.
- **Use CPOs** to bring sites into use.

I WILL:

- Work with the WMCA, community organisations, housing providers and local authorities to **bring rough sleeping in the West Midlands to an end by 2023**.
- Ensure **accurate data is collected and published by the WMCA** to help co-ordinate our response to homelessness across the region.
- Push for **full adoption of Housing First** across the West Midlands.
- Explore opportunities for linking together homeless services to **prevent future rough sleeping**.
- Work with partners to **establish and scale up a 'no first night out' approach**.
- **Lobby government for funding to provide personal budgets**, via local authorities, providing a person-centred approach to help end repeat homelessness.

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY



A Green New Deal for the West Midlands

As we begin a new decade, we face a collective challenge perhaps greater than anything that has gone before. The climate we all rely on is breaking down, our society is divided, and our politicians are distracted.

The impacts of the climate crisis are starting to affect us all – the weather is becoming more extreme, wildlife is declining, sea levels are rising. Our century is only 20 years old, but we've already had 18 of the hottest years on record. Last summer saw the hottest day ever recorded in the UK, and the hottest month ever recorded across the world.

Here in the West Midlands it is predicted we will see more flooding between now and 2030, with each major flooding event costing the farming industry £20 million, damage to homes amounting to between £185 million and £360 million, and disruption to transport between £30 million and 80 million.

None of this is happening by accident. It is the consequence of an out-of-control economic system that plunders the Earth's natural resources to create wealth for the few, casting the climate into chaos and driving damaging levels of inequality.

It's time for a new start for the West Midlands, so the Green Party developed the Green New Deal. This is a comprehensive ten-year plan ambitious enough to tackle climate and ecological breakdown at the scale and speed set out by science. It will deliver a fast and fair transformation of our economy and society, renewing almost every aspect of life in the West Midlands: from the way we travel to the way we heat our homes.

As the originators of the Green New Deal, we are the only party you can trust to act in time to tackle the Climate Emergency and rapidly reduce social and economic inequality – and to make these our top priorities.

The West Midlands Combined Authority and Climate Change

In June 2019 the WMCA declared a climate emergency, setting its sights on 2041 as the 'latest possible' date to be carbon neutral and meet the Paris Agreement. But in 2018 the scientific research behind the Paris Agreement was superseded by a report from the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which found that the climate is changing faster than expected. The report highlighted that we must act quicker and go further than originally anticipated if we are to limit global warming to 1.5°C – a temperature increase at which we will already experience significant impacts to our way of life.

We need to engage our communities in formulating a vision for the West Midlands of the future, ensuring that at its heart we are making life better for everyone, not harder. Empty promises and failure to act by elected politicians must not be tolerated.

To put climate change at the heart of every decision made in the WMCA, I will create a new cabinet position tasked with ensuring that our 2030 commitment to be carbon neutral is embedded across all our plans, and that every decision made by the WMCA is compatible with the pledge to achieve net-zero by 2030. The post holder will ensure every single area of WMCA activity, strategy and planning has a carbon reduction pathway to get us to that target. The post holder will also produce a publicly available annual report on progress and be clear if we are on track to achieve our carbon zero target.

But an internal focus is not enough; we must use our influence to effect vital change

outside the WMCA, such as with the Local Enterprise Partnerships. LEPs do not have to address climate change, but some already do. For example, the Leeds LEP commissioned a report from the Carbon Trust on how to support decarbonisation across the economy. Local authorities need to actively influence the development of LEP strategies and proposals to ensure they embed carbon reduction targets and activities.

We must also position the WMCA and its constituent members as Centres of Excellence, providing vital advice to individuals and businesses in collaboration with community organisations.

A great example of this is the 'Carbon Literacy Project' supported by Manchester City Council. This charity aims to help individuals, businesses and others in Manchester and elsewhere better understand climate change and what can be done to tackle it. The charity is also helping educate Councillors and council officers around the country.

We must also be bold in standing up for what is right and commit to opposing fracking and other fossil fuel extraction – both on council owned lands and also more widely. Greater Manchester combined authorities have committed to oppose any fracking and have embedded this opposition in their draft plan.

And perhaps most importantly we need to work with businesses, anchor institutions and the public to declare their own climate emergencies.

Powering the West Midlands

To deliver a Green Industrial Revolution we will need a resilient, stable, clean and substantial energy supply. The cost of energy continues to rise and the WMCA is a net importer of energy, leading to yet more money being taken out of our economy. In the West Midlands, the unavailability of affordable and clean energy is one of the greatest threats not only to our

environment but also to our economy.

The West Midlands continues to have the second highest level of fuel poverty in the UK, which has the highest levels in Europe. In our region, 304,000 households face a stark choice between heating or eating on a daily basis.

Low-income households are more likely to be overcharged, are often on the most expensive tariffs such as pre-payment meters and are least likely to have switched since the market was opened to competition.

We can and should do more to ensure a clean and affordable energy supply and to guarantee that no one pays more than they need to.

While central government continues with their complacent and dismissive attitude towards climate change and energy, other levels of government have been exploring new approaches to tackle the challenge.

We can and should root community energy projects in every area of the West Midlands. By 2050, half of our population could be “energy citizens”, producing their own energy and meeting just under half of our energy demand.

Energy generation is an area in which the WMCA can and must take a lead.

Greener homes

In addition to bringing down the cost of energy and relying more on renewables, we also need to use energy more efficiently. If we use less energy, we will reduce both costs and harmful emissions. Heating draughty buildings accounts for about a third of our carbon emissions, so this must be a priority.

One central government after another have been far too slow to start a national renovation programme. While other countries have forged ahead, we now have some of the worst-quality housing stock in Europe.

This makes no sense, as investment in energy efficiency pays for itself many times over in the long term, bringing significant environmental benefits and savings for the taxpayer and improving people's health, comfort and happiness. This programme would also create a huge number of local jobs, as about 2.5 million homes need refurbishing in the West Midlands alone.

Enabling a transport revolution

As outlined in my transport section, we need to take serious measures to tackle congestion and air pollution for their own sake. But we also need to move towards lower-carbon methods of travel in general.

My policies on promoting and investing in cycling and walking, re-opening railways, and creating people-friendly streets will go a long way to help.

When we have better “last-mile” options, truly integrated transport scheduling and a better information system, we will see significant change – but there’s even more that can be done.

The West Midlands is the home of high-quality car manufacturing. To maintain this position, we must lead innovation in the development of electric and hydrogen vehicles. This is another example of an area that can help us to kick-start a new Industrial Revolution and take advantage of the economic opportunities that low carbon has to offer.

We also need to make using electric and hydrogen cars more accessible to everyone. For example, the ‘Autolib’ electric car-sharing club was launched in Paris in 2011 and has been a huge success. The scheme has 155,000 subscribers and averages more than 10,000 rentals a day. It has resulted in a reduction of 4.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions and has created 5,935 charging points, which are also available to non-

members for a fee.

However, we shouldn’t just be leading the way in making green vehicles. I want the West Midlands to be a place where we pioneer the use of new types of transport. It can be the West Midlands that not only makes on-demand cars but sees them on UK roads first.

The first commercial on-demand cars will likely be a taxi fleet that does not go outside a pre-defined geographical area. Birmingham and the West Midlands can and should be the first area to pilot this, bringing investment from the industry and jobs for local people.

We can also make sure that we use technology to make the best use of our energy supply. Vehicle to Grid Technology (V2G) allows electric car owners to sell electricity back to the grid. Car batteries can be charged up at night when demand is low and send power back to the grid when demand is higher.

We must also look to the aviation industry and our airports to effect change, accepting their responsibilities and the role they must play in tackling the climate crisis. By 2050 aviation will be the single largest emitter of carbon in the UK, and so Birmingham Airport needs to work to decarbonise every aspect of its business; from encouraging more passengers to travel to the airport by public transport, to generating energy across its many buildings and fields, to developing an electric air taxi fleet, and much more. The airport has declared a climate emergency of its own, so I look forward to helping them to deliver on their ambitions.

Protecting wildlife and green spaces

The WMCA's Strategic Economic Plan sets out a vision to improve the quality of life for everyone living within the West Midlands. But, rather confusingly, it does not recognise the role that the natural environment plays either in increasing our quality of life or in

enabling the economy to function.

In post-industrial Britain, it's clear that we must learn to restore our natural world, that it's possible and indeed essential to live within our means as we grow our economy, and that we need to see the environment as an asset to be protected, valued and worked with.

For example, our green spaces – parks and commons, rivers and gardens, trees and canals – help to reconnect West Midlanders with nature and with themselves. They provide a welcome breathing space for people to relax, play and exercise, as well as a range of vital habitats for wildlife. In urban areas, these places are especially important – but they are increasingly under threat.

Green spaces can vary in size from parks and nature reserves to small gardens, but all have a contribution to make to health, well-being and biodiversity. These functions have an economic value and reduce pressure on public services, as investing in green

space brings improvements to health through absorbing pollution and offering a place for residents to exercise. Time spent in nature can also support mental health by reducing levels of stress or depression. Indeed, research shows that £1 invested in high-quality public spaces will bring £30 in savings for the taxpayer.

By creating space for nature in our town and city centres, we can make them attractive places to live and work. Increased foot traffic has been shown to make our streets safer, encourage exercise, improve well-being and help local retailers, reinforcing my vision for a more localised economy, revitalised town centres and reduced congestion.

Furthermore, if we want to retain talented graduates and skilled people in our region and attract them from elsewhere, offering a good quality of life is crucial, and so protection for our unique green spaces is essential.

Green spaces can inspire children to be physically active and develop a passion for nature,

encouraging them to learn more about the world around them. Playgrounds are also important spaces for our children to exercise and to learn to play and socialise.

If we start to value our green spaces more, we will help to protect rare plants, trees and flowers and aid pollination, which supports local agriculture and people growing food at home or on their allotment. Protecting productive farmland and allotments from development so that food can be grown locally is another way in which we can minimise pollution. Promoting sustainable agriculture is essential to preserving the huge variety of native plants and animals, especially in rural areas.

So we can and should be designing new developments with green spaces at their heart, and through planning ensure that every new home built is at most five minutes' walk from a local green space.

Flooding is increasingly becoming an important issue and green spaces and trees should also be valued for their role in absorbing rainfall and preventing flooding.

I WILL:

- Create a cabinet position to **champion carbon neutral operations** across all aspects of the WMCA and to report annually on progress.
- Work with partner organisations such as LEPs to **encourage their own climate emergency declaration**.
- Work with the WMCA, local authorities and community organisations to **set up a centre of excellence**, providing advice and guidance to individuals and businesses.
- **Oppose fracking** and push the WMCA to formalise the same.
- Work with Anchor institutions to **develop and embed a zero-carbon supply chain**.
- **Establish a WMCA Carbon Charter and Kitemark** – awarded to carbon neutral businesses and embedded in public sector procurement processes.
- **Improve dialogue with mayors in other countries**, playing a leading role again in the C40 coalition and the UK100 working to reduce the climate impact of cities.
- Aim to help local authorities to come together to **issue Green Bonds to assist with decarbonisation**, fund low-carbon infrastructure and support our low-carbon future. They will draw investment to the region, driving innovation and creating jobs.
- **Take all possible steps to divest the West Midlands Pension Fund (WMPF)** of its investments in fossil-fuel industries and push for more pension funds to be invested in local energy technologies.
- Join other political leaders around the country in lobbying central government to **start a national Green New Deal programme**.

I WILL:

- Lead discussions with experts, agencies and citizens as we **form plans for the transition to a future energy system that is clean and affordable.**
- **Work with partners to set up a municipally owned West Midlands Energy Company.** The company will strive to provide clean and affordable energy to homes, helping to address fuel poverty and encouraging the generation of clean energy in the region.
- Work with the sector towards having **community energy and municipal heating projects** throughout the West Midlands for new developments.
- Lead efforts to **ensure that public buildings of the WMCA**, member councils and others are properly insulated and energy efficient.
- Investigate **making the roofs of public buildings and multi-story car parks available** for the installation of renewable energy generation.
- **Have a “green roof policy” like Paris** – every new build has a soil or solar roof.
- Regulate to **prevent fossil fuelled heating in new builds** immediately.
- Press for a **change to planning policy**, mandating all new homes are built to zero carbon standards.
- **Lobby government for funding to retrofit existing homes** and support the work of third parties introducing green technologies such as Cadent's HyDeploy programme.

I WILL:

- Encourage enforcement of **minimum energy efficiency standards in the private rented sector**. Newham Council in London has pioneered the use of licencing to identify rented homes and ensure full cost recovery of proper regulation and enforcement of housing standards.
- Explore options and work with local authorities to **ensure all newbuilds are zero carbon**, as far as current legislation allows us, whilst lobbying for legislation and powers to change. This will cover building materials, construction, transport and operation. Once built, the structures will also generate energy.
- **Take serious measures to enable a move away from reliance on more polluting forms of transport**, as outlined elsewhere, including aiming for an integrated transport system, re-opening railways and investing in walking and cycling.
- Meet regularly with and **support our automotive industry** as it transitions to low carbon.
- **Work to enable real-world trials of self-driving and on-demand cars** to put our region at the forefront of this emerging technology.
- Aim to **bring an electric car-sharing scheme to the West Midlands**.
- **Work with the Energy Research Accelerator** to introduce a trial bringing V2G to the West Midlands.
- Work with public and private sector organisations with large fleets to investigate the opportunities of both FCEV and EV, **supporting the establishment of a hydrogen station network** for the West Midlands.

I WILL:

- **Be a champion for the environment that we all share and live within.**
- Push the WMCA to match central government's commitment to **restore the landscape and environment across the region over the next 25 years** and to resource a plan to achieve this, integrated across all areas of WMCA work.
- Invite a representative from the Local Nature Partnerships that cover the WMCA area to **join as a non-constituent member**.
- **Speak up for our green spaces**, encouraging local authorities to use planning powers to protect local parks from development.
- **Place a high value on green spaces and trees within any regional plans** and developments and articulate their value clearly.
- Champion sustainable agriculture and **make sure that productive farmland and ancient woodland are safe from development**.
- **Push for all new developments to include green space and parks**, and encourage an increase in the amount of green space and vegetation (particularly trees) in the West Midlands.
- Work to help local authorities to **identify local opportunities to enhance environmental infrastructure**, such as establishing wildlife corridors, planting trees and protecting natural flood plains.
- Aim to **expand sustainable urban drainage systems** to better protect the West Midlands from flooding.
- Champion the inclusion of **safe, high-quality play areas in parks** and as part of new housing developments.



DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Our diversity is our greatest strength

The West Midlands is one of the most diverse regions in the UK. We have a breadth of culture that benefits the region with the range of traditions, experiences, skills, knowledge and perspectives that

our diversity brings. But to date, this fantastic resource has gone largely untapped and unrepresented in the WMCA. To make better, more representative decisions we need to ensure that our own democratic processes represent the community we serve, and that everyone can play a part.

If we open the WMCA up to more people and make plans more inclusively, it will go a long way towards ensuring equal opportunity for all, and in turn a better standard of living. This is what being fair means - policies whereby power is shared more equally.

It is well known that inequality has a severely negative impact on communities, eroding trust, increasing anxiety and illness, and encouraging excessive consumption, often leaving people with unmanageable debt.

Evidence clearly shows that to address our health and social problems, we must reduce inequality and increase inclusion. Whether it be physical health, mental health, drug abuse, education, imprisonment, obesity, housing, trust and community life, violence, teenage pregnancies, or child well-being, outcomes are significantly worse in more unequal societies.

Average private rental prices in the region have increased at above the national average for

over two years, over 380,000 households need housing benefit to survive, rough sleeping has increased by 30%, 2600 households are homeless and living in temporary accommodation and the average house price is now 7 times the average income. All these issues point to an economic policy that is just not working for the benefit of all members of our community, and that must change.

The real test for the next mayor will be how they put the WMCA to work for the most vulnerable in society. More of the same just isn't good enough.

The fact is the groups with the least power in society end up doing least well. We do not want a West Midlands where the people who can't shout as loudly as others are losing out. There are many who currently aren't heard loudly enough, be they isolated older people and homeless younger people, people with physical or learning disabilities unable to access public transport, our diverse ethnic and cultural

communities facing discrimination, our LGBT+ communities dealing daily with ignorance and prejudice, refugees fleeing danger, or carers struggling without a break. We must make sure that the WMCA works for everyone and not just those with the loudest voices and easy access to those in power.

Equality regardless of faith, culture or skin colour

The richness of our culture and the friendliness of our neighbourhoods continues to attract and retain as many talented newcomers to the region as it always has. For example, this includes those who stay after university to contribute in our hospitals and other important services. The West Midlands' unique flavour has been built on hard work, resilience and the passion of those who have given everything they had to build their lives here, contributing immeasurably to the wellbeing of

all of us.

Yet despite this undoubted legacy, we continue to live in uncertain times. Migrant communities have been the scapegoat for what is the failure of politicians, where for example government housing policy, not migration, has created the disastrously high cost of accommodation we face today. Moreover, too many politicians and decision makers have failed to see or understand the systematic inequalities and challenges that many in the West Midlands face because of the colour of their skin, their faith or their culture.

Everyone in the West Midlands should have an equal opportunity to gain an education, find work, access healthcare, and build a good life in a safe home. Ethnicity, skin colour and faith should not predetermine poorer outcomes in life. Yet currently in the West Midlands it does, and for too many of us. For example, for BAME groups the employment rate is only 56%.

As mayor, I would take active steps to challenge discrimination in the West Midlands and fight for a more equal region. It's time that people were not judged by their appearance or their faith but by their talents.

Closing the gender gap

The UK is one of the most forward-thinking countries in the world, but women are still getting a raw deal. Childcare is significantly more expensive in the UK than in most other European countries and far too many women are in part-time, low-paid jobs despite having postgraduate qualifications and skills that are in short supply.

My policies around procurement and the Living Wage will be one move towards changing this, along with positive action within the public workforce to bring truly equal opportunities.

And while we have come a long way, more than three million women in the UK still experience domestic abuse, while even more

women and their families continue to be affected by violence and abuse that has happened in the past. This must change.

Providing inclusive, LGBT+ friendly services

The West Midlands, particularly Birmingham, has a large community of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT+) people who have found a place where they can be accepted for who they are.

I am proud that the West Midlands has become an increasingly accepting place for LGBT+ people, but with reported levels of hate crime against the community continuing to rise year on year we still need to do more. Between 2017 and 2018, one in five members of the West Midlands LGBT+ community experienced a hate crime or incident. And while LGBT+ culture thrives in Birmingham, the community's cultural hub and safe space is under threat from development.

New residential developments threaten to close many bars and businesses that the LGBT+ community call home unless vital protections are put in place.

Creating a region where disabled people are valued

Disabled people are more likely to be severely negatively affected by current central government policies – for example, the bedroom tax and continued cuts to services. Furthermore, more than three in five of us will be unpaid carers at some stage in our lives and most of these will be women, and yet this group remain poorly supported.

While the most damaging changes to funding are being made at a national level, we can soften the blow in the West Midlands by building a place where more people can participate in every aspect of life and not be confronted with unnecessary or artificial barriers.

I am committed to the principle of “nothing about us without us” and

to involving disabled people, carers and community support group representatives more closely in early policy stages within the WMCA. This will be at the highest level and across all areas of the mayor’s work.

I will also review the disability impact assessments undertaken through commissioning when designing policy and services, particularly in transport, public services and new builds, sharing what works to increase access and reduce and remove barriers.

A West Midlands for all ages

The West Midlands has one of the youngest populations in the country. This brings both opportunities and challenges.

A recent report by Brum Youth Trends found that nearly 9 out of 10 young people don’t feel heard by those in power, while more than 6 in 10 either feel unsafe or that police don’t protect them.

The findings come as young people face growing threats to their safety such as knife crime and homelessness.

At the same time, many youth services have been lost, affecting the ability of support networks to work with young people to maintain and improve their emotional and social wellbeing. Young people who suffer from mental health problems, the lack of affordable housing and unemployment are likely to be affected for the rest of their lives. It is therefore critical that young people are enabled to develop resilience, are directly engaged and feel that their voice makes a difference.

The issues affecting older people and those in the middle, often struggling with both childcare and care for older people, are equally pressing though different. Increasing numbers of older people, separated from families through changed work patterns, were already becoming isolated before the Covid pandemic. The numbers of people of all ages

suffering from isolation during the pandemic are incalculable. Isolation is compounded by a lack of knowledge needed to access the support that is available to them.

We must value and hear everyone, from the youngest to the oldest citizens and ensure that a fulfilling life is accessible to all. Being aware of the issues that people at different life stages face and recognising that they may need different services and approaches means doing everything possible to engage – listening and sharing the knowledge and learning gained as widely as possible so that innovative ways can be found to tackle the changing issues that we all face as we age.

I want to build an inclusive region that people feel part of and where everyone can feel connected, included, financially secure and safe.

I WILL:

- **Be a visible and engaged champion of equality and diversity across our region.**
- Provide more support for SME's to embed Inclusion practices in their organisations by **establishing a kitemark accreditation programme.**
- **Transform the Combined Authority Board**, ensuring it is representative of the diversity of the West Midlands and that portfolios better represent the work of the Authority.
- Create an **out of hours Mayor's helpline**, providing vital support, advice and signposting for people who feel discriminated against.
- Focus on **helping the least well-off areas to access the resources that others take for granted**, to enable them to catch up.
- **Make the WMCA stronger and more representative of the people that it serves**, as outlined in earlier sections.
- Make recruitment to all TfWM and contractor jobs **anonymous to avoid bias on the grounds of race, gender or any other factor**. I will push for the WMCA to follow suit, and to incentivise other organisations to do the same.
- **Create a voluntary code of practice** encouraging local business and recruitment companies to adopt anonymous CVs, and actively champion the uptake of this.
- Encourage Find It in Birmingham/Sandwell to further **develop their capabilities to include more BAME groups** so that buyers can more easily identify BAME- and women-owned businesses and contractors.

I WILL:

- Work alongside businesses to bring in **voluntary targets on BAME and gender apprenticeships**.
- Use the Citizens' Assembly to **conduct an inquiry into why people from BAME communities are under-represented in the labour market**, and review the approaches that have made a significant difference in other places around the world. This will involve evidence from policy makers, academics, think tanks, the community and others.
- **Set targets for senior staff in TfWM to better involve people from all backgrounds**, including from local BAME communities, so that we are all included in decision making, receive an appropriate transportation system and service delivery and are represented fairly. I will push the WMCA to follow suit.
- As we approach the Commonwealth Games, **create opportunities for wider celebration and recognition of commonwealth culture**, encouraging community celebrations that include the whole community.
- Encourage and maintain open working and collaboration between **faith groups, BAME communities, women's groups, the police, schools, voluntary groups and others**.
- Lobby government, the West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner to **create new community liaison and equality officer roles**.
- Highlight the **contributions that refugees, asylum seekers, ex-pats and economic migrants have made** and continue to make to the West Midlands.
- **Promote the right of gypsies and travellers to fair and equal treatment** and strive to improve relationships and understanding.

I WILL:

- Pursue and champion **community-led, collaborative approaches to tackling all forms of extremism**.
- As part of the Renters' Union, **support BAME Tenants' Unions**, both in their existence and their unique ability to support communities.
- **Request evidence of inclusive and appropriate public service delivery** and review the legally required equality consultations to ensure fairness for all.
- **Champion equal and fair pay for women**.
- **Advocate for specialist services for women** from specific cultural and national groups to be kept open.
- **Support a clear and uniform response to issues like female genital mutilation and forced marriage**. I will also champion support for asylum-seeking women who have experienced abuse in their countries of origin and elsewhere.
- Push for investment funds to be used to help to **improve the availability and affordability of childcare** by subsidising an "all-in-one" course to get more people qualified as childminders and set up as owners of their own childminding businesses. This will get more people into employment and enable even more people to take up work or increase their hours.
- **Ensure that women are well represented among senior staff in TfWM** and push the WMCA to follow suit.
- **Make gender pay gap reporting compulsory for every firm contracted by TfWM** and encourage the WMCA to do likewise as part of the improved ethical procurement policy.

I WILL:

- Encourage the commissioners of public services to **open opportunities for businesses owned by women and minority groups to deliver our local services** and champion “She Means Business” and other local and national networks aimed at supporting diverse entrepreneurs, such as CRÈME, WeConnect and Find It in Birmingham.
- Aim to **fully support and expand services for people who are targets of violence and survivors of rape and abuse** and expand programmes aimed at changing attitudes and improving reporting of these offences.
- Work with the police, community organisations, criminal justice and probation services to **encourage and support a policy that treats misogyny, abuse and violence directed towards women as a hate crime**.
- Be a vocal advocate, **listen carefully and act on what LGBT+ people say**, including those of all ages, ethnicities and abilities.
- I will support public services, the police, transport service providers and community organisations in their work to **ensure safety, challenge discrimination, stamp out prejudice and end violence and abuse**.
- Lobby the WMCA to **create a dedicated LGBT+ information hub on a WMCA-backed website**. This will provide support and information about local services, including help for BAME and other ignored and marginalised LGBT+ youth across the West Midlands.
- Help community organisations, public services and businesses to explore together **how they can become more sensitive to the needs of trans people**, especially trans youth and BAME trans people.

I WILL:

- Support programmes in schools that **teach children about characteristics protected by the Equality Act.**
- Support the provision of **specialist domestic violence services** that understand the issues that LGBT+ people uniquely face.
- Be a **vocal supporter of LGBT+ businesses both in Birmingham and across the region**, helping to ensure that safe community spaces and facilities are safeguarded for the future.
- Recognise, promote and **share the social model of disability** that is based on removing the barriers to participation that disable people, ensuring that everyone can benefit from jobs, safe homes, good healthcare, skills and all of the other opportunities society provides.
- Push the WMCA to require those working on its behalf using public money to **provide evidence of how they have or can provide accessible and inclusive services**, and also of their commitment to employing disabled people.
- **Commit to making public transport accessible, particularly for those with additional mobility needs.** I will work in partnership to improve signage, lighting, safety and access to platforms in stations for the benefit of disabled people and to increase feelings of safety.
- Advocate inclusive and accessible apprenticeships and other initiatives for skills and employment so that service providers demonstrate how they tailor their opportunities to **help apprentices with disabilities to achieve their full potential.**
- Work with the police and communities to **tackle hate crimes targeted at disabled people.**

I WILL:

- Ensure that **all plans and policies are considered from the perspective of people of all ages** and use my influence to work towards an age-friendly region accessible to all.
- **Champion the inclusion of younger and older representatives at all levels of the WMCA**, as well as those in the middle who care for family members at both ends of the age spectrum.
- Recognise the skills, expertise and energy of older people by **encouraging employers to offer more part-time and flexible work** as an alternative to full-time work or sudden retirement.
- **Champion using the skills programme to help more young people into work** and to start their own businesses.
- Ensure that young people living in poverty have a fair chance at a university education, by **working with local businesses to establish a dedicated internship programme**.
- Push for **improved access and training for digital services for older people**, and encourage all public-sector bodies to improve accessibility to all of their digital services.
- **Support service providers to log their digital impact assessments in one place**, which can then be shared by relevant sites as a resource for web designers and website owners. This “community insights” testing offers the opportunity for businesses to get feedback on their own digital service, improve it and increase their revenues.
- Publicise the principle of **“lifetime neighbourhoods” and the importance of dementia-friendly cities** and places in all new planning rules for new builds, streets and homes.

I WILL:

- Support **a dementia-friendly region** through training and information for frontline staff throughout TfWM and by encouraging councils and private companies (through commissioning) to do the same.
- Work and meet regularly with existing groups and organisations to **help young people to scrutinise and challenge the work of the WMCA**.
- Continue to visit colleges and universities to **directly engage with young people and be challenged by them**.



CRIME AND COMMUNITY



Policing for and with the community

Although policing and crime are the responsibility of the Police & Crime Commissioner, the West Midlands Mayor has a key role to play in the creation of a cohesive community where residents and visitors to the region can live and work free from fear.

Our police do an important, difficult and often underfunded job and need the support and trust of the community to effectively tackle the challenges facing our region. People need to know that appropriate checks and balances are in place to ensure police powers are used responsibly.

An effective police force is also one that truly represents the people that it serves. In a region as complex and diverse as the West Midlands, it is essential that police officers are freed up to come out from behind their desks and into the community to help build trust with local residents and business owners. The police can only keep our communities safe if they can work in partnership with, and have the confidence of, their local communities.

We need to do all we can to make clear that the police serve the whole community. One step towards this would be to have the police under greater community scrutiny.

To promote good relations between the police and the people they serve, there should be more community officers, from a more diverse range of backgrounds, and closer links with local communities.

Prevention rather than cure

For too long, we've taken an approach to public safety and crime driven by tabloid editors who want to sell papers, rather than one based on evidence why criminal acts are committed in the first place and what we can do to prevent them so that we can make communities safer.

In addition, recent funding cuts to the Ministry of Justice, the Courts, Legal Aid and the prison system have led to delays in processing cases and, ultimately, their collapse. Victims of crime therefore rightly perceive that they are not getting justice, and this has an impact on our perception of policing.

A whole range of factors make involvement in criminal activity more likely, including poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, and child neglect. At present, 78% of people imprisoned have two or more diagnosed mental health issues, 60% have no qualifications and 65% have numeracy skills below those of an

average 11-year-old.

Acknowledging these facts doesn't excuse people from what they have done, but without understanding the drivers for criminal behaviour we can't hope to practically address it.

Many of the actions outlined in this manifesto will, in the long term, help to address the social issues that make crime more likely.

At the same time, we need to enable the police to use the latest and best possible methods to prevent crime from occurring and ensure that those who have committed a crime do not do so again. As mayor, I will support the police in trialling and implementing new methods that have a strong evidence base and help them to make the case for these to the public.

For example, the link between drug and alcohol use and crime is very well known. The evidence is clear that our current drug policy is not working for communities blighted by drug use and the high levels of crime that go with it. If

we treated drug and alcohol abuse as addiction problems rather than criminal offences, not only would we address the dangerous and community-blighting drug trade; we would also see a fall in crime levels. And that's not to mention that this approach is far cheaper than our current methods.

I will also work towards making more use of restorative justice. This too saves time and money, while serving to rebuild communities when they've been affected by crime. By enabling those who have broken the law to work towards making amends for what they have done and really understanding the impact that their actions had, the situation is much less likely to recur. It also means that the victims of crime are more likely to feel that justice has been done.

I also want to see more community safety, community cohesion and inclusion work in general, all of which can help people to feel safer and to reduce crime.

While keeping communities safe must be a priority for any mayor, that must not come at the cost of civil liberties, nor leave certain groups feeling persecuted or singled out by the police.

Protecting vulnerable people

We must pay special attention to protecting people and groups who have had less legal rights historically and are often more vulnerable. We need to work harder to help all people to escape violence and find a place in everyday society. My agenda for a more inclusive society in general should help, but there is more than can be done.

For example, women and girls must have the utmost confidence that the police will handle all cases of gender violence with sensitivity and a resolve towards delivering justice. Issues like forced marriage, rape, sexual assault, domestic violence and female genital mutilation are thankfully more openly discussed

than before, and awareness has risen. At the same time, services that help to challenge these horrific abuses are under threat.

Similarly, we have made great strides in awareness of hate crime and in tackling it, but with reported levels of hate crime continuing to rise we must do more. Crimes motivated by hatred including racist, sexist, homophobic and transphobic violence and harassment, along with crimes against disabled people, need to be treated more seriously. We also must invest in programs that are proven to change attitudes and prevent violence in the first place.

I WILL:

- Lobby to **ensure that the police service gets the resources that it needs** to tackle crime, promote community cohesion and increase safety, while setting its priorities in collaboration with the community.
- Push for reforms to **ensure every resident in the West Midlands feels that the police are working for the benefit of their community**. This will include improving the diversity of the police service by setting ambitious targets for the number of women and BAME officers to better reflect the local community. It will also include work with communities to develop new approaches to policing, preserving public order while maintaining free speech and looking at new ways to ensure greater scrutiny and accountability of the police.
- In collaboration with community and voluntary organisations, **investigate ways in which the police can improve their relationships with local communities**, particularly in areas with high levels of violent crime.
- **Support the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service remaining independent from the police**, while ensuring proper scrutiny and accountability.
- **Support the work of the Society of Evidence Based Policing** and other similar organisations to make sure that what the police do are the things most likely to make a difference.
- Promote a **restorative justice approach** to dealing with crime.
- Champion **community safety approaches** that can reduce crime and make areas safer, such as Street Associations.
- Aim to balance power with accountability and ensure that **safeguards for civil liberties and fair treatment** of all sections of the population are preserved.

I WILL:

- **Focus more resources and effort on tackling the causes of crime** so that no-one has to deal with its effects and the cost of crime to the taxpayer is reduced. This will include campaigning for a less harmful drugs policy that is evidence based, and where appropriate, offering the option of engaging in intensive programmes of restorative justice, mentoring, training, job support and housing advice to reduce reoffending, along with tough law enforcement.
- Create a fund for voluntary and community groups that **help to reduce the causes of criminal behaviour**, such as youth groups that address knife crime.
- Continue to **ensure that all police officers are trained in how to sensitively handle domestic and sexual violence** and abuse of both children and adults. I will increase women's confidence about reporting sexual violence by ensuring that every case is investigated with the seriousness and sensitivity that it deserves.
- **Appoint a high-profile voluntary champion for justice for women and girls**, to drive forwards a public education programme so that the West Midlands sees dramatic changes in the way that we all perceive and tackle domestic violence, rape and sexual crimes (including child sexual exploitation), and so that survivors of sexual violence and abuse know where to go for help and are confident they will receive it.
- Build upon ongoing strategies to **prevent female genital mutilation, forced marriage and honour killings** by continuing to develop strong community relationships and greater confidence in the police.

I WILL:

- **Lobby for the replacement of the 'Prevent' Strategy** with community cohesive policing which engages rather than antagonises BAME communities and addresses concerns about the use of stop and search powers.
- **Provide training to all police officers in how to communicate with children** so that the most vulnerable citizens in our society have a better chance of being protected.
- Make sure that **language is no barrier to accessing services.**
- Ensure that **all police officers receive comprehensive equality training.**

WELL-BEING AND PUBLIC HEALTH





Putting public services to work for the West Midlands

Across Europe there is growing consensus within the health and social care professions that integrating our vital public services will provide citizens with better

outcomes while also helping to reduce costs, freeing up funding to invest in new initiatives that help to improve health and well-being. The only thing standing in the way of replicating this move in the West Midlands (and the UK as a whole) is our current politicians' fear that they might not have the ability to make it work.

The current system is fragmented into a huge number of different bodies working in silos, and sometimes against each other. Closer working between GPs, hospitals and social work departments will give us the 21st century service we need. We'll see a healthier population as we enjoy economies of scale, shared administration and back-office services and everyone pulling together towards the same goal - along with giving the residents of the West Midlands a greater say on their own public services.

But the benefits don't just stop there. Imagine a world where you can access all of your essential services in one building; visit your GP, borrow a book, find local job opportunities, sort out your housing, join a social club in the on-site café, talk to your parent's social worker and more - all under one roof at the heart of the local community.

With other essential public services such as our libraries struggling to survive in the West Midlands thanks to a decade of

Austerity, this is the only realistic way of improving services without spending more. And as we seek to rejuvenate high streets across the region, bringing public services together in one central place would help to bring more people into our towns, supporting regeneration.

The West Midlands Mayor can make this a reality. But such additional powers would need the mayor to be subject to more scrutiny and accountability to residents of the West Midlands and would be another driver to reforming the hugely undemocratic and unaccountable WMCA with far more public participation.

Making health and happiness our priority

Since its inception the WMCA has seen its role as promoting economic growth across the West Midlands; assuming that growth will benefit everyone, even when there's evidence of the reverse.

While household income does indeed play a huge part in well-being and health, it is not the only consideration. Growth needs to be inclusive, benefiting everyone by ensuring that we help the least well-off areas as a priority.

The economy exists to provide prosperity and good jobs to citizens and thus to improve their well-being. It exists to serve us, not the other way around. If the economy is growing and people's well-being isn't improving, then something is very clearly wrong and we need to change how we run the economy.

So, as mayor, I will put the WMCA's focus on well-being by measuring and reporting on it as our primary indicator of success. I will not allow there to be any assumptions made that any one change will automatically make life better for people who live or work in the West Midlands.

We need to prove that the WMCA is working for the benefit of all its people.

Public services and income levels

In the West Midlands more than two in five people of working age were living in poverty in 2017/18. With many people on low incomes struggling to cover the basics, there is naturally a high demand for public services. People on low incomes have a higher risk of mental health problems, sickness, and homelessness, and contact with social services, accident & emergency departments and public services in general are higher than for the rest of the population.

It is better both for individuals and communities not to need to use public services, and for the public purse not to need to fund them. If we create a more equal and inclusive society by developing our economy as outlined in this Manifesto, it will be a society that needs less extensive and therefore less expensive public services to be provided in the first place.

It is widely proven that local government public health spending is up to four times as effective as NHS spending at improving well-being and reducing mortality rates.

We need to do more to help those on the lowest incomes to be as financially resilient as possible. When money is tight too many people are turning to high-cost lenders, unaware of the other options available to them, such as credit unions.

Due to the severe impact of poverty and low incomes on public service demand, it is logical for the WMCA to ensure that every action that it takes has a positive impact on addressing inequality across our region.

Improving everyone's mental health

There is little as precious as our mental health. Each year approximately 1 in 4 people in the UK experiences a mental health problem, while 1 in 6 people in England reports experiencing a

common mental health problem, such as anxiety or depression, in any given week.

While the number of people with mental health problems has not changed significantly in recent years, worries about things like money, jobs and benefits are making it harder for people to cope.

I am pleased to see mental health higher up the policy agenda and welcome the Stevenson & Farmer review "Thriving at Work", but we can go further - by addressing the factors that make experiencing mental health difficulties more likely, rather than focusing only on treatment.

There are several economic, social, biological and psychological factors that make experiencing a mental health problem more likely and we need to do all we can to address these in addition to providing support.

Many of the policies I have outlined around transport, clean air, healthy streets, housing, community safety, food poverty, deprivation, inclusion, active

travel, lifetime neighbourhoods, valuing arts and culture will help in this way. So too will encouraging better physical health through promoting walking, cycling, access to green space and leisure facilities and events such as Coventry being City of Culture in 2021 and Birmingham hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2022.

One of the biggest determinants of our mental health is our level of social connection and avoidance of loneliness. In the UK loneliness has reached epidemic proportions and researchers estimate that up to one in four people suffer from it. The problem will only get worse as the population ages, as more people live alone, and as our workplaces change, weakening the bonds between people. Covid 19 has obviously exacerbated this problem, particularly over Christmas when people were not able to visit elderly relatives.

Statistically, action on loneliness is one of the things that can most improve people's lives. Indeed, as the Marmot Review showed,

socially isolated people are between two and five times more likely to die prematurely.

So, as mayor, I want to bring people and communities together. That will come through my policies to try to ensure a more inclusive region for everyone, but I also want to launch a campaign against loneliness as part of my drive to see not just the economy but every other aspect of living in the West Midlands improve.

In addition, we need to do more to tackle the stigma that surrounds mental health which often prevents people from recognising the signs and seeking help. More discussion in schools, workplaces and public forums would be a great first step to aid our understanding. With programs like this, we could begin to address the shocking fact that suicide is the biggest killer of young men in this country.

At the other end of the spectrum, we are also seeing more awareness of the needs of people with dementia, but again there is more we can do.

Relationships and sex education

We need to equip the next generation with the life skills and confidence needed to thrive in a complex, interconnected world and to navigate more successfully the relationships that are so vital to our well-being.

NSPCC research shows that almost half of teenage girls believe that it is acceptable for a boyfriend to be aggressive towards a female partner, while one in two boys and one in three girls believe that there are some circumstances in which it is acceptable to hit a woman or force her to have sex.

A survey of teachers by the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) revealed that 53% of teachers were aware of pupils as young as seven sharing sexual messages and pictures (2016). In 2015, there were 141,000 new STI diagnoses for 20 to 24-year-olds and 78,000 for those aged 15 to 19. This situation simply cannot

be allowed to continue.

It's not just maths and science lessons that have the power to change children's lives. We can and should start teaching children about relationships and well-being.

I WILL:

- **Ask central government to give powers over both Health and Social Care to the WMCA**, so the two systems can be brought together to improve outcomes, improve efficiency and increase the range of services available.
- Work with GPs, hospitals and social work departments to **integrate their services** and provide access on the high street.
- Extend the reach of health and social care services by **promoting collaborative working with independent arts organisations** and community groups.
- **Make the headline measures for the success of the WMCA well-being measures**. These will be broken down across every geographical area and socio-economic group.
- **Put these measures on the front page of the mayoral website**, and report publicly and regularly on progress towards long-term targets.
- Use our well-being measures to **challenge the right of any programme to exist in its current form**.
- Publicise and continue to **oppose NHS cuts, reductions in Public Health grants to local government, further privatisation and the lack of consultation** in making changes.
- Ensure that **the WMCA pays a Living Wage as an employer** and encourages its contractors to do so.
- Be a **champion for credit unions operating across the West Midlands**, using the role of mayor to raise their profiles.
- **Assess the impact of every significant and relevant mayoral decision on reducing the inequalities across the West Midlands**, in line with the socio-economic duty of the Equality Act 2010.

I WILL:

- Maintain a **focus on the need to raise the incomes of the worst-off in our society**, both to benefit them and to reduce the demand on public services.
- Lobby Government to **pilot a Universal Basic Income in the Combined Authority area** to tackle poverty and give financial security to everyone.
- Work with the WMCA to **adopt the Core and Enhanced Standards recommended for employers** and encourage all their contractors and supply chains to do the same.
- Launch a **campaign against loneliness in partnership with local authorities and third sector organisations**, sharing data to map areas where loneliness is a problem, where there are services and opportunities, and where the gaps in provision are, so that we can act.
- Use the mayoral platform to drive this agenda and publicise my programme, working towards a community approach where volunteers actively provide outreach, signposting and help in areas where loneliness is identified as a particular problem. I will also **harness the power of digital communication to combat loneliness**.
- Be a **champion for people experiencing mental health problems and their families**, leading by example to reduce stigma and ensuring that mental health remains high on the agenda.
- **Work to help communities and organisations to become dementia-friendly** – for example, by requiring new transport developments to take people with dementia into account.

I WILL:

- Support central government's plans to **implement good-quality, age-appropriate statutory relationship and sex education** (RSE) and further action on PSHE education.
- **Oppose cuts to local government's public health budget** and lead the fight on sexual health prevention and sex education.

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