

COVENTRY CITIZENS PARTY



Policy Agenda

Making Connections
2024



Your city. Your voice.

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Democracy and Council Restructuring

Boundary Commission Review

There are 18 local wards in Coventry and 3 councillors in each ward (54 in total). We will ask the Boundary Commission to reduce the number of councillors by a third so there are 36 in total.

Alongside reducing cabinet positions this could save up to £300,000 every year while still enabling an effective cabinet structure and political opposition.



Local Elections



We will hold elections once every 4 years instead of every year for 3 years out of 4 which could save £1m over 10 years. The council previously rejected changes to the system after reporting on the potential savings. We are also calling for an Additional Members System (AMS) alongside a reduction in the number of councillors. This would mean voting for one candidate under the current system and a list of city-wide candidates under a proportional representation system.

Cabinet Structure

We will scrap all deputy positions and cut the cabinet from **10** to **6**. We will also restructure council services and integrate health and social care while protecting key services.

1. Policy & Leadership

Scrutiny and Council Planning; Public and Press Relations; Councillors and Regional Relations; Chair of Cabinet and Management Board; Emergency Planning and Risk Management; Corporate Governance and Information Management; Constitutional and Political Management

2. Neighbourhoods & Policing

Community Safety and Policing; Public Protection and Licensing; Domestic Violence and Sexual Exploitation; Democratic and Legal Services; Health and Safety; International Relations and Diplomacy; Community Centres; Transport and Planning; Housing and Homelessness; Migration and Asylum

3. City Finance

Budgets and Strategic Finance; Resources and Operations; Revenues and Benefits; Human Resources; Organisational Development; Staff and Pensions; Customer Services

4. Employment, Education & Training

16+ Education and Training; Schools and Early Years; Universities, Libraries and Adult Education; City Centre and Urban Regeneration; International Trade and Investment; Local Enterprise Partnership (Warwickshire); Social Enterprise and Mutuals; Voluntary Sector Relations

5. Public Health & City Services

Highways, Drainage and Lighting; Taxi Licensing; Refuse and Street Cleaning; Public Realm; Environment and Disaster Management; Parking and Traffic Management; Bereavement Services; Children's Services and Safeguarding; Adult Services and Social Care; Public Health and Marmot Strategy; Hospitals and Clinical Commissioning Group

6. Culture, Media & Sport

Parks and Events; City Archives; Heritage and Conservation; Arts and Museums; Sports and Leisure; Tourism and Marketing

Direct Democracy Platform

We will propose plans to create a new direct democracy platform that will enable residents to get involved in making decisions which affect them. A new online platform will allow residents to contact councillors directly on issues in their area including proposals which affect the whole city. This will give residents a bigger say on local issues and the ability to influence key decisions.

West Midlands Combined Authority (West Midlands Mayor)

63.6%

Voted to reject an elected mayor in Coventry in 2012

2016

Coventry joined WMCA and elected new mayor in 2017

£16m

Fees and extras paid to WMCA in 2019/20

We will provide a referendum on the city's membership of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

We believe Coventry and Warwickshire can work in partnership to bring investment and secure funding for the region without political mayors and their unnecessary costs.

Community Care and Public Health

Coventry & Warwickshire Hospital

1867

Hospital opened on Stoney Stanton Rd after public demand

1941

Hospital bombed during the blitz and rebuilt in 1960s

2006

Hospital closed and now turned into student flats

We will ask the government to reopen the Coventry & Warwickshire Hospital

We will also propose plans to reconnect the site to create a new hospital complex and introduce extended hours at the existing walk-in-centre. Coventry's population is growing rapidly but local services can't cope with the increased demand. The old hospital has been turned into luxury student flats which are not fully occupied so it should be brought back into public use.

Council Tax Support

Council tax support was cut by 15% for all working age residents in 2016 following a decision by the Conservative government to scrap council tax benefit entirely in 2013. We will look at ways to reinstate council tax support and review the council's enforcement and vulnerability policy.

General Health Advocacy

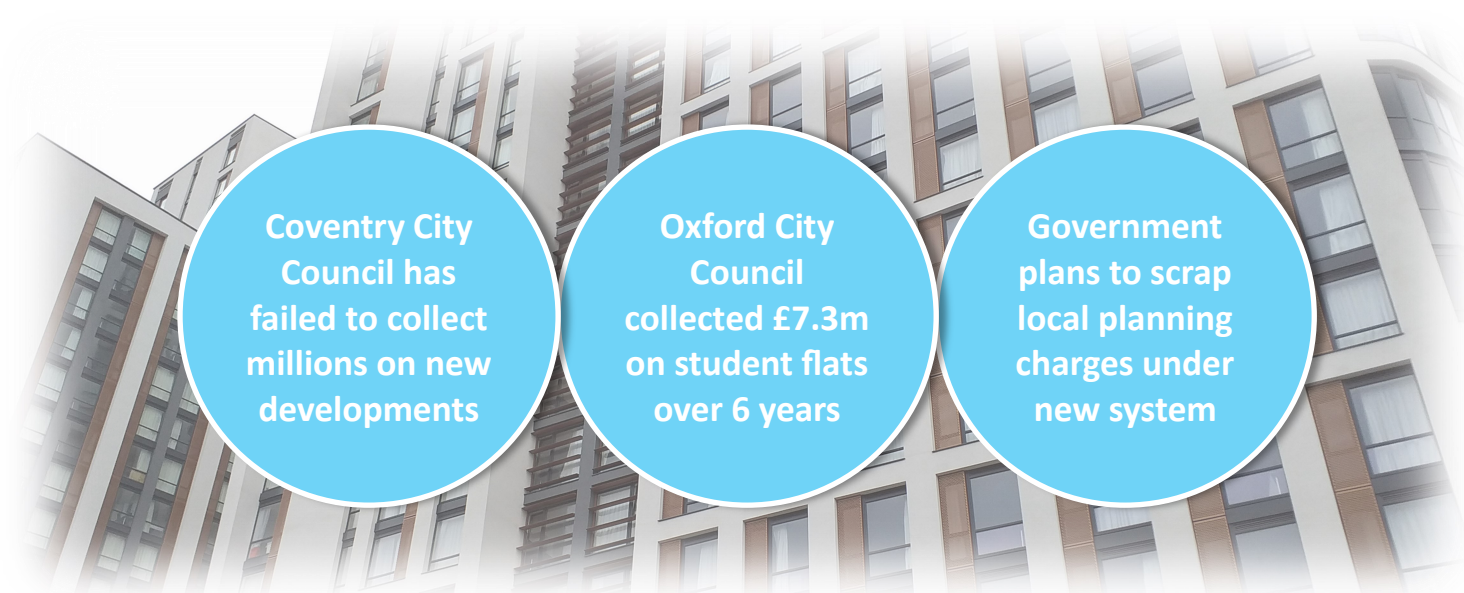
We will look at funding to provide a General Health Advocacy (GHA) service for older people. The council already provides funding to different organisations which offer support to older people across Coventry and Warwickshire. However, there is currently no GHA support in Coventry. Many older people often need support from someone to go to medical appointments and speak up for them. GHA support can also improve the health and wellbeing of older people by having regular contact and an impartial person to talk to about their problems.

Housing and Student Accommodation

Student Accommodation

Student accommodation makes up around 26% of all private rented properties in Coventry (2018). We will oppose new student developments in outer city areas and encourage development of social housing and affordable homes instead. We are also committed to using local planning charges to restrict development of HMOs (House in Multiple Occupation). We are also calling for a new tax on empty student flats in purpose-built blocks which we will put back into public services and local infrastructure projects.

Community Infrastructure Levy



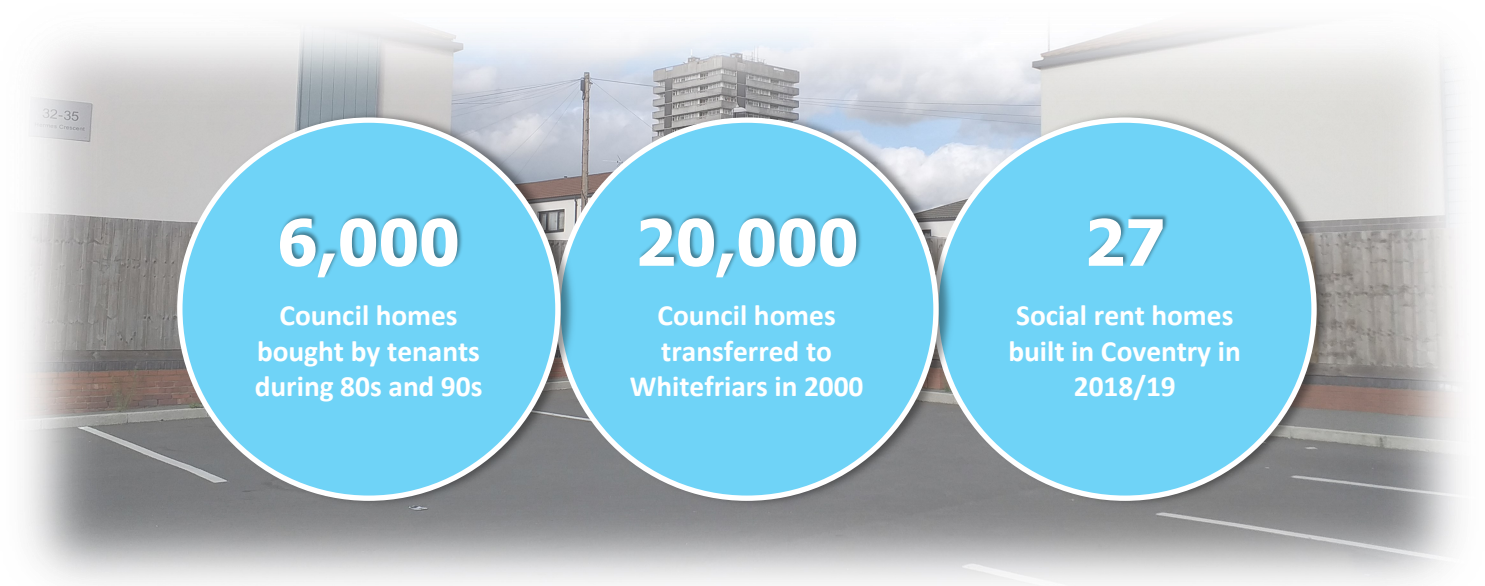
We are calling for a Community Infrastructure Levy in Coventry

The Community Infrastructure Levy is a local planning charge used by councils to help fund roads, schools and hospitals. Planning charges can also help manage the local economy by deterring unnecessary developments like student accommodation.

Homelessness

We will allow the Council House to be used as a postal address and offer free birth certificates for homeless people (if they were born in Coventry). This will enable them to claim benefits and apply for housing and jobs. This will also give rough-sleepers money to buy food and clothing. Homeless people cannot claim housing costs if they are not staying at registered temporary accommodation. People who use this service will also be expected to engage with other council services and partner agencies in relation to their housing situation.

Social Housing



We support the national campaign to build more council housing and will propose plans to create a new local housing company which will be owned by the council. This will help the council to overcome restrictions on borrowing and build more social housing. We will also review the council's Local Plan and allocate more social housing in the city whilst protecting the greenbelt.

Housing Associations

We are calling for a review into the status of larger housing associations in Coventry. This is because many housing associations across the country have failed to build enough new homes for social rent despite making millions in profits each year. Local housing associations have also been criticised for failing to carry out repairs and not providing appropriate tenancy support to vulnerable people who might be at risk of losing their home.

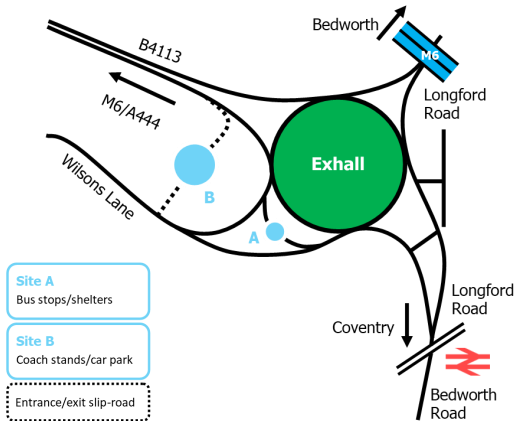
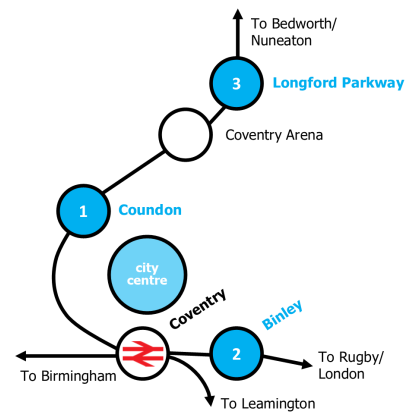
Transport and Parking

Railways

We are committed to improving connections to the East Midlands with a direct service to Nottingham via Nuneaton and Leicester. We also support plans for the electrification of the Nuneaton line and electrification and doubling of the Leamington line. This will enable electric trains to run between Leamington, Coventry and Nuneaton.

Rail Stations

We support plans to open a new rail station at Coundon Road to help reduce traffic congestion and air pollution in the area. We are also calling for two new stations on Allard Way in Binley and Bedworth Road in Longford. This will improve access to parks and leisure and improve links to outer city areas. We are also calling for two new underground platforms at Coventry Station to improve services to Leamington and the East Midlands.



Express Interchange

We will work with Nuneaton & Bedworth Council to create a new Express Interchange for buses and coaches on Wilsons Lane in Exhall. The site is ideal for express coaches using the country's motorway network to connect with local bus services. A new Park & Ride service can also help to reduce traffic congestion and improve journeys between Coventry and Nuneaton. We are also calling for a new rail station in Longford as part of the project.

Buses

We are calling for new rapid bus links in the city and will work with National Express to make changes to one of its busiest routes. The 21 service is typically delayed and overcrowded at peak times. We are calling for two new services to run on a circular route from the city centre to the main hospital via Wood End and Willenhall in both directions. We are also calling for new night services.



City Centre Parking

We will introduce free parking in the city centre during evenings and weekends. This will help to increase footfall which can also help increase business incomes and attract new shops.



University Hospital

We will put pressure on central and local government to fast-track plans for a new access road on to the A46. We are also calling for better access to A&E and a new multi-storey car park at the front of the hospital.

Broadgate

We are committed to improving the city's road network and creating new pedestrian and cycle routes. We are also calling for a new road through Broadgate for buses, taxis and cycles. This will be good for tourism, retail and other businesses and could also be a more sensible route for the VLR (tram) to increase footfall.



Skills and Training



Skills & Training Hub

Henley College merged with City College in 2017. However, the Henley campus is due to permanently close. Plans for new homes on the site have also been submitted to the council. We are calling for a new skills and training hub in the area to replace it. This is because it is one of the most deprived areas in England.

Apprenticeships

We will support local businesses to create more apprenticeship schemes for young people. We will also look at introducing new adult apprenticeship schemes to help people learn new skills and find a job if they have been out of work for a long time. This project can also be based at a new skills hub to support poorer communities in outer city areas.

City Centre and Urban Regeneration

Business Rates

We will look at ways to reduce local business rates. This can support existing businesses to grow and attract new businesses to both the city centre and local district centres. We would also like to see more independent businesses and start-ups to bring new innovations and employment opportunities to the city.



Commercial Offices

Independent research (2018) states that only 9% of office premises in Coventry is of a high quality. It also recommends that struggling city centres reduce reliance on retail. Other research (2020) states that demand for flexible office space will increase over the next 10yrs. We are calling for more flexible office space and affordable housing in city centre regeneration plans.



Market Plaza

We would like to see the space around the Coventry Market opened up. This can help draw visitors into the city centre. We are also calling for a new garden or plaza on Queen Victoria Road with the old market clock reinstalled.

Public Toilets

Many citizens complain there aren't enough public toilets in the city centre. We will look at plans for new public toilets at a suitable location near Broadgate.

Neighbourhoods and Policing

Young People's Warden

We will apply for funding to recruit a team of Young People's Wardens who will work with police and young people in Coventry. The aim is to help prevent violent crime and achieve better outcomes for young people. We need to challenge cultural violence and give young people more opportunities to be part of normal society. A Warden will act as an ambassador and agent for young people. Developing the project will require partnership working and government support.

Neighbourhood CCTV

We will look at plans to install new CCTV cameras in local district centres where crime and anti-social behaviour is a persistent problem.

Riley Square Regeneration

We are committed to the regeneration of Riley Square in Bell Green. In addition, we would like to see plans for a new supermarket and car park for the wider community. This can increase footfall across the site and help attract other types of businesses.



Environment and Parks



Waste and Recycling

We will carry out a public information campaign to let residents know what items can and can't be recycled and review the city's recycling output and processes. We will also review current waste and recycling collections.

Fly-tipping

We will crackdown on persistent fly-tipping in the worst offending areas by increasing warden patrols and engaging with local residents. We will also carry out a public information campaign to let local residents know the law on fly-tipping, how to dispose of waste and unwanted items, and which household items can be taken away for free.

Storm Drains

We will look at installing new storm drain filters to help prevent flooding and waste build-up. This will include looking at different systems which can be used across the city.

New City Forest

We will look at planting a new forest or woodland on the outskirts of the city. This will be good for the environment and could be part of a new walking and cycle route.

Sowe Valley

We will propose plans to transform the Sowe Valley into an urban river walk with tree-lined paths, open meadows and parks. This will also connect to a new rail station and the Alan Higgs Centre in Binley. We will also look at dredging the river to help prevent flooding and remove overgrowth to improve the river scene whilst protecting wildlife and the environment.



Greenbelt

Greenbelt land should be protected by building on other sites first but it is not exempt from development. We will review the council's Local Plan to protect greenbelt land wherever possible.

New City Farm

We are calling for a new City Farm. The old site in Hillfields was much loved by local residents and many people would like to see a new outdoor family attraction in the city. We will look at how the project could work in different parts of the city.



Culture and Heritage



Sikh War Memorial

The Sikh community is an important part of the city's culture. We will propose plans to move the Sikh War Memorial from its current location on a busy roundabout on the A444 to a new plaza in Longford Park. This will allow people to pay tribute at the memorial and learn more about it.

Coventry Canal

We are calling for a new Waterbus with stops at Electric Wharf, Courtaulds and Leicester Causeway. This could help reduce overcrowding on city buses at peak times and attract new investment in the waterway. We are also proposing a summer tour service to Hawkesbury Junction as part of Coventry's City of Culture legacy.



The Elephant

In 2020, 876 people signed our petition to turn The Elephant (old sports centre) into a new arts and exhibition centre. In 2021, the council decided to buy the IKEA building for £9m to create a new arts hub. The council is wasting £400,000 every year keeping the old sports centre empty while borrowing millions to spend on the IKEA building. We are calling for the council to sell the IKEA building back to the private sector and invest in the old sports centre instead.

Office Spending Cuts

Executive Salaries

We will review executive salaries over £100,000 to save money and improve the council's public image whilst attracting and rewarding talent for work in important services.

Councillors' Expenses

We will scrap councillors' travel expenses for meetings held at the Council House and normal activities carried out as part of their duties. Ordinary working people do not get paid to travel to work and neither should our elected representatives.

Cost Statement

Revenue and Savings

The Coventry Citizens Party will make a number of potential savings and generate additional tax revenue which we will put back into public services and use to fund our major projects. We will also look at ways to make other savings whilst protecting key services. We believe we can also secure funding from the West Midlands and central government.

Get Involved

Please contact us if you would like to help with campaigning or become a candidate for the party.



www.covparty.uk

contact@covparty.uk