



**JAMES BURN**

**NO ONE LEFT BEHIND**

**WEST MIDLANDS MAYOR MANIFESTO 2017**



**Green Party**

# NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

For the first time ever, the West Midlands is electing a mayor, who will head up the new West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). The arrival of a mayor and the WMCA is only the start of a journey. In electing a mayor, we are choosing which direction we'll head off in; whether we'll continue on our current path or make some sharp turns off it.

West Midlanders can choose to let the WMCA continue operating behind closed doors with virtually no scrutiny. Or, if they want to participate fully in their combined authority and see it run by people who represent the West Midlands, they can vote for me. They can choose to continue with economic plans that have produced raging inequality and hardship for many and ignore the reality of climate change. Or they can vote for my plans and ensure our least well-off areas catch up and everyone have a reasonable standard of living within a sustainable society.

While the mayor currently has few formal powers and a very small budget, we know this will change in the coming months. The mayor will also chair the WMCA and it's been clear throughout this campaign that people expect the new mayor to exercise soft power and influence over a range of functions. It's therefore not only reasonable but right and responsible to outline in this manifesto how I will use the current powers of mayor, and also how I will use any future powers and the considerable soft power the platform of mayor gives.

So this manifesto is my vision for a better West Midlands. A West Midlands we can create together. A happier, healthier and more sustainable West Midlands where no-one is left behind.

## JAMES BURN

Green Party candidate for West Midlands Mayor



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# DEMOCRACY

WORKING WITH PEOPLE, WORKING FOR PEOPLE

## Devolution (should) mean devolution

As a region, the West Midlands had the highest percentage of votes to leave the EU of anywhere in the country. Much of that vote was driven by a feeling that politicians were distant, disinterested and out of touch.

People felt they didn't have any real say in big decisions being made about them and their communities. A generation of different politicians had all promised that their plans would work and make life better. Yet no matter which party was voted into power, little really changed. It's increasingly clear that

people want politicians to listen to them more and involve them more.

The context makes it surprising that central government pushed through the establishment of the WMCA at such speed that the public were unable to have any real say in the matter. And that while the people of both Birmingham and Coventry voted against having a mayor in 2012, central government has now forced local authorities to impose a mayor (with the power to raise taxes) on those very same citizens.

The situation hasn't improved much since. So-called "Devolution Deals" are struck behind closed doors in Whitehall, with central government virtually banning any scrutiny whatsoever and most local politicians not being told what's going on, let alone being involved.

Things are very different in London. On the same day that Londoners vote for their new mayor, they also vote for 25 London Assembly Members to work year-round to scrutinise and hold the mayor and the authority to account. Here in the West Midlands, no such Assembly will be elected.

Instead, scrutiny of the entire WMCA currently rests with a single scrutiny committee that meets only a few times a year. The members of this committee are colleagues of those running the WMCA. To date, Labour and the Conservatives have chosen to shut out all of the other parties not only from the WMCA board but also from the scrutiny committee.

And it's not just London that does things differently. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority has five scrutiny committees, and Liverpool's has three.

Also unlike London, none of the councillors on the WMCA board or scrutiny board have been elected to sit there by

the citizens of the West Midlands.

Neither can the WMCA board itself claim to represent the people of the West Midlands. In one of the youngest and most ethnically diverse areas of the country, the full members of the WMCA includes only one woman and one person from our BAME communities. In 2017, this is not credible. The authority can't hope to lead a population that they don't properly represent.

The idea of devolution is a good one – to bring decision making closer to the people affected. But right now, most people tell me that they don't know the WMCA even exists, and it seems to represent a highly centralised form of power rather than anything else. It's an odd conception of devolution when central government makes further funding dependent on performance against an economic agenda and targets set by them.

Even committees in the House of Lords and House of Commons have strongly criticised how the WMCA has been set up and the lack of transparency and accountability.

In the original devolution agreement, while "funding" is mentioned 17 times and "business" 13 times, "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”.

The fact that change is urgently needed is something that all of the mayoral candidates agree on. Normal people, rightly, want and need to have more say over big decisions that impact them.

First, West Midlanders need to know that the politicians elected to represent them are indeed representative of them – that they understand their concerns, will listen to them and will speak up for them faithfully. Second, they need to know that governments are being held to account and to see trust between politicians and the public rebuilt. Third, they need to know that those holding power will speak up for everyone and make sure that any plans benefit everyone, not just the usual suspects.

It’s clear that the WMCA has a long way to go to get to this point. Democracy needs to be centred not only on representation, but also on participation. Participation makes democracy less passive, and better participation guarantees better representation.

People can only be ruled over and taxed with their consent. In the case of the WMCA, this consent has clearly not been given. Unless people feel that the WMCA is their Combined Authority, it has no chance of lasting. Unless everyone is represented and feels that they can take part, the WMCA has

little chance of making their plans work for everyone. Devolution is a huge opportunity, but one that we will squander unless we get this right.

The mayoral election is our chance to choose someone who can set up formal mechanisms with real teeth to make sure that everyone is held to account and that people can meaningfully participate in decisions made about their lives. It’s our chance to elect 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 that everyone can feel they have control over their lives again and the system works for them as well as everyone else.

As it stands, the mayor will have very little direct power (mainly over transport and some roads), although this will clearly change over the coming months and years.

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 change more likely to work and more likely to last.

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



James at the London Assembly with Green Party London Assembly Members Caroline Russell (L) & Sian Berry (R).

Cllr Russell AM said "I was stunned when I found out the West Midlands Authority had set up just one committee which will meet on four mornings a year to hold the entire thing to account. And unbelievably, the committee members are chosen by the people running the Authority! Holding the mayor and Authority to account and making sure things work well here in London is a full-time job. I'm supporting James Burn's campaign as he will make sure this is sorted out."

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 on the basis of policy pledges that they then quietly drop. My commitment to openness and transparency starts now with an open and complete policy agenda for the future, and will continue after the election.

If elected, I will set up a website to display all of these policy pledges and to publicly

report on our progress. When my ideas are challenged or better ones come along, so the pledges need to be updated (as has happened throughout this campaign and will surely continue to happen), 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 this devolution project will neither be successful in bringing about real change, nor be allowed to continue.

## A new type of politics

It's absolutely the right time for a new type of politics. A politics that listens and involves and makes sure that everyone's voice is heard. A politics that recognises that the most disadvantaged in our society have the most need yet struggle the most to be heard, so we need to take steps to amplify their voice. A politics that is about working with people, for people, and exercising power together with people rather than power over people.

### 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 2018. This will be a part-time Assembly to begin with, and its remit and resources will increase as the scale of devolved powers increases.
- In the meantime, I will campaign for the scrutiny committee to be given additional resources to expand its membership to include parties other than those who rule the WMCA; 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.
- Set up a regular and public "mayor's question time" on a formal footing, to be led by the scrutiny committee and held on a regular basis in council chambers around the West Midlands on a rotating basis, including representatives from the press and the local community.
- 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.
- Commit to be more focused on listening, understanding, bringing people together and empowering communities to use power, than on spin, division and playground politics.



## A new era for openness

The expenses scandal saw trust in politicians slump to a new low. Most people tell me that they think the majority of politicians are only concerned with what helps their own back pocket.

Politics should be about public service, not about carving out a well-paying career. And it's easier to serve and represent people when you share their concerns and live life in a similar way to them.

There are a huge number of hard-working, decent and honest politicians but we need to strive to restore trust so that the public see those representing them in that way. This will require radical new approaches to openness.

### I WILL:

- Only take the average salary for the West Midlands (about £28,000) as mayor. The rest of the £79,000 salary I will use to get more voices heard within the WMCA and to develop the economy in the least well-off areas via supporting small businesses and charities. I will only allow the money I take home to rise as the income of the worst-off people in the West Midlands improves.
- Publish my expenses online in detail, and available for anyone to look at 24/7.
- Sign up to the Code of Practice for Statistics.
- Push the WMCA to webcast their meetings and make minutes available online as soon as possible after their meetings.
- Produce a clear roadmap for the WMCA, including proposed further devolution deals, how they would benefit the region, and how they are negotiated and by whom.
- Ask WMCA officers to launch a simple communications strategy, articulating what the WMCA is, how it and its powers differ from or align with Local Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and the Midlands Engine, and who exactly can make which decisions.
- Require all Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) future technology projects to use open standards and encourage the use of open-source software as much as possible. This will also promote enterprise and innovation. I will encourage the WMCA to do likewise.
- Take advantage of the opportunities “open data” offers, working with public, private, charity and community partners to share and update data where it is in the public interest. For example, this can help with predicting future demand and more efficient provision of services.
- 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 groups, but will also meet as regularly with community organisations.

## Real devolution of real power

Greens have long been strong supporters of devolution and have consistently pushed for more powers to be transferred from central government to regions. Once satisfactory democratic arrangements have been put in place and power is truly being devolved, I will push for even more independence from Whitehall. We live in one of the most centralised countries in the world, with 93% of taxes collected by a central government controlled by 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 like transport. This needs to change.

I welcome the borrowing powers that the mayor and the WMCA are being given. These will allow smart, local investment decisions to be made for the benefit of people living here. I also welcome the move to devolve business rates. However, we need to push for further devolution of taxation policies and fiscal powers.

Without some real financial clout, we will end up with a new authority in the same position as our councils are now: with lots of responsibilities, but no money to fulfil them. This issue is even more important as long as central government continues to hand down ever deeper budget cuts.

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 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 living in our urban areas.

### I WILL:

- Develop, substantiate and articulate the case for increased central government funding for the region.
- Lobby central government for further powers and other 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.
- Be a campaigning mayor, forging coalitions between regions across the country to win better national policies.

It's time for a new type of politics, that listens and involves and makes sure everyone's voice is heard.

A politics that recognises that the most disadvantaged in our society have the most need, yet struggle the most to be heard, so we need to take steps to amplify their voice.

A politics that works with people, for people, and exercises power together with people rather than power over people.





# THE ECONOMY

A HOME-GROWN ECONOMY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

## Business heroes

Too often, politicians view 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 can provide us with food, clean water, sanitation, electricity, entertainment and leisure, healthcare, transport and 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, and 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.

## Time for change

The economy of the 21st century is not like that of the 20th. We need to question what we're doing, why and how. For example, there's a consistent assumption in the devolution talk that devolving powers will result in growth. There's no evidence that this will be the case.

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

For example, the economy is growing at the moment, but it's clear that the wealth isn't being shared. We are seeing a handful of individuals get richer, while the rest of us are seeing a fall in our living standards.

One of the consistent themes throughout this election has been the level of unemployment in the West Midlands. For example, in Wolverhampton employment is 10% lower than the national average.

However, even the assumption that increasing employment will solve all of our problems now 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.

## I WILL:



Cultivate a respectful relationship with businesses of all kinds, rightly valuing the role 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.

A whole generation of working young people are unable to even consider the possibility of owning their own home or having a stable job that pays decent wages. 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. For example, more equal societies are healthier and happier for everyone, with lower levels of violent crime. 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 and hinders the lives of whole communities every day. The reality is that 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 documents (including the Strategic Economic Plan) are entirely lacking in this area. They do not look at the level of economic inequality in the West Midlands in anywhere enough detail, let alone set out plans for tackling it, when this must surely be one of the key drivers for their plans. Furthermore, the Strategic Economic Plan is also blind when it comes to mentioning the relationship between ethnicity or gender and inequality.

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.

### **I WILL:**

- Within my first 20 days appoint a deputy mayor charged with championing inclusive growth and monitoring the creation of a West Midlands strategy for such growth.
- Pressurise the WMCA to produce 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.
- 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.

### **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 in-



**We have an incomparable history of innovation in the West Midlands. This is the place that launched the industrial revolution that changed the world.**

vestment 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.

At the moment, however, out of the 12 Midlands Engine “regeneration opportunities” with a private partner already identified, five are owned by businesses based in tax havens. This means that any profit made will be sucked out of our economy, rather than remaining here to be spent again and again and making everyone better off for years to come.

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 and the US presidential election, 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 of 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. This has now been resourced 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).

## Supporting small business

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 ma-

## I WILL:



- Work with anchor institutions (including the WMCA) to try and ensure that at least one third of public procurement spend in the West Midlands goes to SMEs or co-ops and spend is localised wherever possible.
- Work with anchor institutions to help them adopt socially helpful procurement practices. This will include monitoring implementation of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.
- Aim to derive maximum value from the development of HS2, particularly in championing supply chain opportunities.

jority of jobs here. 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 A 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 to 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.

#### **I WILL:**

- Champion having an SME representative on the WMCA board.
- Support Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs) while advancing the creation of a West Midlands Bank 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.
- 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.
- Lobby central government to apply the VAT threshold to quarterly reporting and to phase its introduction, and to introduce any new business regulations in a carefully planned and phased way in the wake of Brexit, as these are particular threats to SMEs. The number of women and people from

## Untapped potential

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 CDFIs in the West Midlands while working towards setting up a West Midlands Bank tasked with providing loans and finance to small business-

**I WILL:**



- Champion more women, members of our BAME communities and people from socio-economically disadvantaged groups starting their own businesses by highlighting success, 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.
- Make it a specific commitment of the new West Midlands Bank to support entrepreneurs and businesses from diverse backgrounds.

es, encouraging entrepreneurs from traditionally under-represented backgrounds.

As well as helping existing small businesses to ease cash flow problems or giving loans for growth, our new bank will help many more SMEs to start up. Regional banks of this kind are common around the world and this idea is long overdue for the West Midlands.

There's much evidence that investing in

## Taking skills seriously

skills gives a better return than investing in shiny new infrastructure. Much has already been said about the skills deficit within the WMCA but this is actually a very 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 mayor drivers.

We cannot, therefore, view skills independently from the wider economic picture. For example, if we continue to pursue economic plans based heavily on retail (as the current plans are), 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, and part of this will be to better utilise the skills people have already, and to ensure that the skills we are teaching match actual jobs available and areas in which we want to see growth and 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 oppose tuition fees for further and higher education and the cuts to the Education Maintenance Allowance.

### I WILL:

- 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.
- 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.

I also recognise that education is about ensur-



## Arts and Culture

ing young people can live rich and full lives in general, 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, and must ensure that they are supported.

### I WILL:

- 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 facing 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.
- Review how the WMCA can best support and facilitate the developments of the region's strong arts and cultural scene.

As we are facing long-term and entrenched solutions,

## Trialling totally new approaches

we have to 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 try it right here.

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 it has done in Bristol.

We've moved into a new century and need to try bold new 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:

- Lobby central government for a trial of UBI in the West Midlands to help unleash a wave of new enterprise.
- Support the development of local currencies.

We need to modernise not only what we do but also how we do it. In this, the

## 21st century working practices

WMCA needs to lead by example, encouraging the public sector and others to follow suit, either through good use of procurement or by education and training.

There's so much more we can do – whether that's promotion of the Fair Tax mark and the living wage, helping companies to explore modern and more flexible working practices, tackling out-of-control executive pay, ensuring equal pay for women, involving workers more in the running of their companies, encouraging well-being at work, spreading good practice or encouraging business citizenship.

SMEs, as businesses rooted in their communities, are more likely to behave as business citizens, but we also need to encourage and help social enterprises to flourish across our region. The WMCA should listen to, support and involve social enterprises and voluntary groups far more, valuing their skills, expertise, and innovation.

We also need to ensure workers and employers force a new relationship in which the prosperity of a company is viewed as something that benefits all parties. We need workers and employers to work together in partnership, and to make sure workers can organise effectively to collectively negotiate and work with employers through unions. Often what benefits one can benefit all; for example, paying work-

ers a real living wage often correlates to increased productivity, better staff retention and reduced sickness for businesses.

### I WILL:

- Publicly report on the gap between the highest and lowest paid within TfWM and WMCA and work to reduce it to 1:10.
- Use my influence, platform and procurement to promote co-operative business models and trade union recognition to employers.
- Champion the living wage throughout the WMCA and for its contractors, and create a living wage unit to publicise its benefits more widely.
- Strive to get workers a greater say in the running of their companies, including employee-elected directors in medium-sized and larger companies.
- Work with unions and voluntary organisations to fund and create an online hub for providing information on workers' rights and where they can get advice and help.
- Promote the Fair Tax mark.

The world has woken up to the need to reduce carbon emissions. If we don't, it

## Low carbon, big opportunities

will have a massive impact on our economy – one that it will be hard to recover from. But we need to see low carbon not as a threat but as an absolutely huge, once-in-a-century opportunity for the West Midlands that we absolutely must take.

From Goldman Sachs to the Economist and the Carbon Trust, it's agreed that the low-carbon economy is already one of the most significant growth areas of the world economy, and may well be the significant growth area as the world moves to low carbon by necessity. It's already five times the size of aviation and double that of automotive in the UK alone, and is predicted to create about 380 million jobs and £10 trillion of economic opportunities by 2030 worldwide.

And the great news for the West Midlands is that in many of the areas of highest demand, we have a competitive edge and are well placed to take advantage. For example, there is huge demand for low-carbon manufacturing (such as construction materials, renewable generation and energy-efficient materials). The West Midlands remains a world leader in manufacturing; we have skills, expertise, infrastructure, networks, knowledge, premises and a heritage that no-where else in the UK can match.

By using what we have achieved through our work in unleashing creativity and enabling more enterprise, by facilitating and promoting networks of learning and getting research from universities into factory-based production, by focusing our skills budget and by spreading best practice, we can see a new Industrial Revolution taking place in the West Midlands, based on this high-demand area in which we have a competitive edge.

## I WILL:



- Work to encourage a new Industrial Revolution, taking advantage of the huge demand for low carbon manufacturing and our unique manufacturing strengths.
- Champion making economic plans that are truly sustainable.
- Work to ensure that low carbon is no longer seen just as a “sector” but as “just how things are done”.
- Lobby central government for greater public investment in green industries.

This will have a double dividend, as the areas of manufacturing strength are often the weakest areas of our local economy. By stimulating manufacturing in particular, we can see some of our least well-off areas thrive again.

But we also need to stop seeing low carbon as a “sector” and more as “just how we things are done”. The current WMCA economic plans barely address sustainability and seem to view this as an after-thought rather than as essential or an opportunity. This is neither wise nor realistic. Building an economy in this way is short sighted, irresponsible and doomed to disaster.

Our main chance to move away from our low-skill, low-pay economy is by public investment in the green industries of the future to reindustrialise the West Midlands and to ensure sustainable growth. We



need to lobby central government for greater public investment to stimulate our economy and to use our current investment powers to these ends.

## Infrastructure

Just as there has been an assumption that devolution will automatically lead to growth and that growth will benefit everyone, so many politicians seem to think that building infrastructure is automatically a prudent use of money and will be of benefit to all. That kind of thinking is rather like the tail wagging the dog.

First, we need to understand where and how our economy needs to develop to best serve everyone in the West Midlands. Then we need to map out the infrastructure that we need to get us there – be that re-opening and modernising railway lines, improving broadband speeds, ensuring a clean and reliable energy supply or anything else.

We need to form a regional infrastructure strategy, bringing together all partners and the community to work out what the infrastructure needs are and how to meet them, and to investigate using Municipal Bonds to fund essential projects when central government will not.

### I WILL:

- Bring together local councils, the community and other partners to form a regional infrastructure plan based on an economic plan that benefits everyone.
- Concentrate on infrastructure work likely to help build a more home-grown economy. For

example, I will produce an annual broadband action plan and pressurise central government to vastly improve broadband speed, affordability and reliability, and lobby for nationalising the infrastructure if significant progress is not made within the next 18 months.

- Prioritise transport spending on local and regional links as much as national links – for example, working to re-open local railway lines and ensure that A roads are well maintained.

## Great lives in great places

Our economy has huge power. It can entrap and ensnare our citizens and cause misery for millions. Or it can be used to create great lives in great places, sharing wealth and ensuring inclusive growth.

The economy exists to serve us, not the other way around. We need to remember that the purpose of the economy is to increase human well-being.

We face serious economic problems and challenges in the West Midlands, but are also presented with significant opportunities.

If we are content just to do more of the same, we shouldn't bother with devolution. But if we are prepared to move forwards along a different path, with boldness and confidence, we can reach a better destination.



# TRANSPORT

## GETTING THE WEST MIDLANDS MOVING

### Creating a sustainable and accessible transport system

We all rely on our transport system to get us from A to B. Whether it's the daily commute, a trip to the shops, visiting friends or getting to school and back, transport should help us to get on with our lives — not be an endless and expensive hassle.

Our current transport system means that we've ended up with choked roads and poisonous air. Instead of getting to where we need to be quickly, we're too often stuck in traffic. It's a waste of time, money and potential. What's

worse, there are around 3,000 premature deaths caused by air pollution in our region every year.

The establishment of the WMCA is a huge opportunity to create a sustainable and accessible transport system, one by which we can get around more quickly, cheaply, pleasantly and conveniently by using safe 24/7 public transport and active travel than we can by car. This will also make roads work better for those people and businesses who will always need to drive.

We need a transport system that supports our economy. This means investing in local and regional transport links so that people can get to jobs, and small businesses thrive. The Black Country in particular is crying out for a better transport network.

## Better buses

More people use buses to get around than any other mode of transport. Yet bus users consistently have to 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, competitive pricing and high frequency, this is a real option to vastly improve our public transport links.

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.

### 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, in order to promote passengers' interests at every turn and 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.
- Publish a comprehensive bus safety plan.

## A world-class train network

Our train system could carry so many more passengers and we need a mayor with the political will and determination to make this happen.

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, which is simply not prioritising local routes to serve the people of the West Midlands.

Re-opening these rail routes represents sound economics, helping businesses and connecting people to jobs and leisure across the West Midlands, 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.

### I WILL:

- Push for full devolution of rail franchising powers and for regional control of rail infrastructure.
- Lobby hard for investment to re-open rail lines, particularly the 115km of freight-only or un-used 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 im-

provements on other routes, such as the Nuneaton–Coventry–Leamington line.

- Push for the opening of new railway stations on existing passenger lines, such as at Castle Bromwich and Fort Dunlop.
- 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.
- Review the passenger information systems to make them as accessible and user-friendly as possible.
- Work towards implementing student train and bus pricing to reflect the lower income of students compared to over 18s in work.
- Establish free public transport for all 16–19-year-old full-time students in further education.
- 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, overcrowding is dealt with and fares remain as low as possible.

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

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

Public transport is an issue that impacts on the most vulnerable in our society more than anyone else. For example, in many of our least well-off areas, car ownership is lowest and transport links to shops and local centres are also often poor, making food and other essentials more expensive and difficult to access. Furthermore, many people in the high-unemployment areas 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 A roads rather than simply prioritising national links.

### I WILL:

- 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 if possible, 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.
- Prioritise ensuring good local and regional transport links, such as A roads and local train services.

## Cycling and Walking: better for everyone

Cycling and walking are modes of transport that have few downsides. They are affordable, don't impact our environment or add to our air pollution crisis, and improve the physical and mental health of participants. At the same time, people choose to walk or cycle far too rarely.

If we can help cyclists and pedestrians to feel safer, ensure better information, maintain good cycling and pedestrian networks and prioritise cycling and walking as "last-mile" options, we will be able to see the popularity of walking and cycling increase dramatically. We need to focus on doing all we can to get ordinary people walking and cycling.

One way of doing this is by making our streets places where people want to be and enjoy being. Our streets aren't just for travelling along; they should be for strolling down, bumping into neighbours and safely playing out.

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.

### I WILL:

- 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 network of cycle routes across the region. 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 by 2020 (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 as far as possible.
- Work with partners, schools and workplaces to encourage and fund programmes that get people walking to work and school, and help people to 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 roll out 20mph speed limits on all residential roads where people live and shop.
- Initiate plans for cycle hire and 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.

### **Choked roads, choking on air**

Congestion is a real and significant 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 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. This needs to hap-

pen quickly and using Bus Rapid Transport to set up park and ride schemes around our busiest roads may provide one fast solution to improving our public transport system.

We can then work at other ways of reducing congestion and air pollution and clearing our roads and our air, such as 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:**

- Aim to reduce air pollution to significantly below the legal minimum levels by 2021.
- 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 park and ride schemes.
- 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.
- Aim to introduce 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 all new buses are of Euro VI engine standard or better from 2019, and aim for all buses on the road to be of Euro V engine standard or better by 2020.
- Use bus franchising powers to ensure that 10% of buses are electric hybrid or hydrogen powered by 2020.
- 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.
- Explore the use of the M6 toll as a relief road when the M6 is closed.
- Investigate instituting a workplace parking levy in areas well served by public transport.
- Work towards a comprehensive electric car-charging network.
- Work with partners and businesses to ensure that the West Midlands is ready for self-driving vehicles and wider electric vehicle use and to enable real-world trials.
- 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 formation 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.



## Valuing and using our Canal network

Our canal network is a vital part of our industrial heritage, a reminder that the West Midlands was at the centre of the Industrial Revolution. Today, canals are still a valuable resource across our region but are too poorly used.

Our canal network provides for multiple uses, whether it's as a cycle or walking route, a leisure hotspot or a nature corridor.

Our canal network needs to be properly valued and supported and, where appropriate, expanded. That way, everyone can enjoy this wonderful resource on their doorsteps.

### I WILL:

- Support the re-opening of canals such as the Lapal Canal, helping to push for the investment needed and working to overcome other barriers to the re-opening of additional routes.
- Work with the Canals & River Trust to ensure that canals are maintained to a high standard.
- Lobby for investment in canal lighting and other improvements that encourage greater use of our canal network.
- Support, promote and expand “adopt-a-canal” schemes throughout the West Midlands.
- Encourage the development of canal basins to create entertainment, arts and leisure hotspots, such as the Tin Music & Arts Centre in the Coventry canal basin.

## Planning for the future

As well as providing for our current transport needs, we must also make sure that we plan for our transport needs of the future.

Building more homes to tackle the housing crisis to ensure that everyone has a decent place to live, and building new business units for up-and-coming small businesses also means making sure that these new developments are well connected to convenient, accessible and sustainable transport options.

In the past, too many developments have been built without considering how people are going to get from their home to jobs, shops and leisure activities.

Dense development along public transport corridors also creates a more viable market for existing or new modes of public transport to tap into, increasing capacity and frequency on more routes and making them financially viable.

### I WILL:

- Work with local authorities to support developments and increase housing density near existing good-quality rail and Rapid Transit routes and hubs.
- Work to provide improved Rapid Transit and rail links to existing new developments with poor transport links.
- Ensure that new good-quality rail, bus and Rapid Transit links are built to serve new developments and are ready for when people and businesses start to move in.



# HOUSING

AN AFFORDABLE AND SECURE HOME FOR EVERYONE

## A real crisis

The West Midlands is currently witnessing a housing crisis. As a councillor, every week I am contacted by at least two people who have found themselves homeless. They had assumed that they would be able to find a new place to live easily and are in a state of shock, disbelief and devastation when they are told that their best option is a hostel far away from the community they know. There are few worse things in life than lacking a home to call our own, where we can feel safe and secure.

However, nationwide, 1.8 million people are sitting on housing waiting lists and there are

tens of thousands of children living in temporary accommodation.

For many younger people, the dream of buying a home is now totally out of reach. Local Government Association research found that 20 years ago 46% of 25 year olds owned their own home; now, just 20% now are on the housing ladder, and the problem is getting worse, not better. 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.

In the WMCA area, the supply of housing stock has only increased marginally over recent years, far outpaced by demand. We need to build between 10,000 and 15,000 new houses each year. We currently build about 4,000 houses a year. Unless something changes, the problem will just get worse.

As the supply of housing has become ever more scarce and prices have rocketed, this has hit those on the lowest incomes hardest. The amount that people pay for housing is taking up an increasing proportion of their income. For example, housing costs 239% more in the WMCA area in 2016 than it did in 1996. Over that time, the average house price rose from £48,000 to £163,000.

So we don't just need more homes in the West Midlands; we need more affordable (and particularly social housing) homes. Around 6,000 social houses were built in 1981, but these numbers have dramatically declined since and only about 800 were built in 2016 (and similar numbers in the years preceding).

## Big problems, big solutions

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 clearly not worked. Over the last 25 years, the number of houses built by private developers in the West Midlands each year has remained fairly static, at between 3,000 and 4,000 – rarely rising above 5,000 and never approaching the 10,000–15,000 we need.

As the market has failed to provide enough houses, it's clear that the state needs to step in. The hous-

ing crisis can only be solved if central government invests heavily in housing, which should be delivered by local authorities.

A drive on local authority house building funded by central government would not only end the housing crisis but would also provide affordable options for everyone, including those on the lowest incomes. It would also see an end to the ever-increasing number of people being made homeless and of people sleeping on the streets, having been priced out of the housing market.

Such a drive – in addition to other measures, including exploring the introduction of a Land Value Tax (which may discourage developers purposefully not building on valuable land and bring more land into use for housing more quickly) and raising the local authority borrowing cap so that councils can borrow more to build more houses – would help to bring about an end to the housing crisis over time.

### I WILL:

- Make the provision of more housing, including more affordable housing, one of my greatest priorities, communicating with WMCA residents about the causes and extent of the housing crisis.
- Bring together community groups, local politicians and the housing industry to form a coalition to pressurise central government for a major investment in house building in the West Midlands, for tax reform and for raising the local authority borrowing cap.

## Working together to ease the crisis

Until very recently, the low level of consensus and partnership working in the West Midlands made dealing with the housing crisis and building enough houses very difficult.

Each local authority was essentially working in its own silo and forming its own local plan along artificially imposed local authority boundaries. This was not a sensible approach and did not serve any authority or community well.

The WMCA has brought about a new opportunity to come together, talk together and see how problems can be better solved in partnership.

We have begun to have a serious and conversation about housing need and where housing should be built. This is a conversation that the mayor needs to support and extend.

The mayor needs to help to build trust between local authorities and partners and to meaningfully involve citizens so that we can form an agreed regional plan and vision together; to look at the whole area and work out the extent of our need for housing and sites for business, where they should be located and the additional infrastructure needed.

We will need serious discussions about where the houses should be located, the cause and extent of the crisis, where higher density building is appropriate and much more.

This will be a difficult path, and one that it will be especially important to walk along with our citizens, forming a plan in collaboration with them rather than imposing a plan on them. We need to strengthen and protect local decision making, but we also need to empower people to understand the issues and the fact that there are difficult choices to be made.

### I WILL:

- Support and extend the current work started by the WMCA on forming a plan for the region, working with all political parties, councils, industry groups and residents.
- Use a range of participatory methods, such as a Citizens' Jury, to genuinely involve the community in writing this plan so that it has broad ownership and legitimacy.
- Ensure that infrastructure is a key concern when planning for new housing developments.

## Working with what we've got

It would be disingenuous and misleading to pretend that the mayor or the WMCA can solve the housing crisis, but there are without doubt actions that can be taken to increase the supply of housing in the West Midlands.

One of the problems is that a few very large developers have come to dominate the house-building market. If we can break that stranglehold, new homes will be delivered quicker, new ways of ensuring real affordability will be explored (likely providing more social housing) and a greater variety of housing will be built.

We also need to increase the supply of available land while doing all we can to protect valuable green spaces. We should in general build on brownfield land first wherever possible, and challenge the assumption that this is always more expensive than building on greenfield sites. Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) should be used where they can make the greatest impact in completing assembly of viable development sites and to force land bankers to bring sites into use.

Bringing empty homes back into use will not solve the housing crisis but would make a significant contribution. In the West Midlands, there are just over 10,000 homes that have been empty for six months or more; forcing their return to use can be a long and expensive process, but important nevertheless.

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

### I WILL:

- 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.
- Argue for the prioritisation of building on brownfield land first.
- Support Community Land Trusts (a mechanism to provide genuinely affordable housing in perpetuity, both for rent and ownership).
- Use CPOs to force land bankers to bring sites into use.
- Explore if we can achieve economies of scale across the West Midlands in terms of the services and advice offered to owners of empty homes and marketing to get these messages across.
- Work with local authorities to establish standards for home building across the West Midlands, based on the highest possible standards of energy efficiency.

## Action for renters

As buying a home is now out of the reach of so many people and as the supply of social housing has decreased, more and more people now rent their home 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 are common.

Rogue landlords and poor standards hurt both renters and the majority of responsible landlords that we have in the West Midlands. We need to work with both renters and landlords to drive up standards and ensure that tenants feel they have a safe, secure and well-maintained home.

### I WILL:

- Forge a close relationship with the Midland Landlord Association and local authorities, working together to take action on rogue landlords and to increase the number of accredited landlords in the private rented sector.
- Explore the possibility of using the new West Midlands Bank to provide access to low-cost loans to fund improvements to meet the Decent Homes Standard in the private sector.
- Work with and support renters' organisations towards setting up a West Midlands Renters' Union to tackle the issues of poor conditions, a lack of awareness of rights and remedies for tenants and insecure tenancies, and to lobby on behalf of renters.

## Tackling homelessness

The logical consequence of the housing crisis and the short supply of housing has been that overcrowding, homelessness and street sleeping have increased. The number of people sleeping rough in Birmingham city centre is now shocking and deeply troubling.

The more we can work to increase the supply of housing, the less likely people will find themselves homeless. But we also need to do all we can to ensure the provision of good information and housing options when people find themselves homeless, and take a "Housing First" approach to help people to get back on their feet.

### I WILL:

- Champion a "Housing First" approach to help people who are homeless to get back on their feet and stay there.
- Explore with local authorities opportunities for linking together homeless services. This should include investigating how more accommodation options can be provided, setting up a website where people who have stayed in hostels can review them, and a one-stop shop for information.

The mayor needs to help build trust between local authorities and partners and meaningfully involve citizens so that we can agree a regional plan and vision together; to work out the extent of our need for housing and sites for business, where they should be located and the additional infrastructure that's needed.





# ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

## MAKING A SUCCESS OF OUR LOW-CARBON FUTURE

### Climate change: our greatest opportunity

It's time to stop behaving as though climate change is something that we can put off addressing until another day. It is our greatest global challenge, but moving towards a low-carbon future is also our biggest local opportunity. Changing the environmentally damaging and unsustainable practices that underpin our economy is a pressing concern, but meeting that challenge will bring real benefits for everyone in our region.

My vision is simple. I want the West Midlands to become a world leader in low-carbon manufacturing and technology, drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions

(supporting a target for the West Midlands to reduce its climate change emissions by 80% by 2030, in line with the Paris climate agreement, and lobbying government to play its part to enable this to happen) and work towards becoming carbon neutral.

Current WMCA plans seem to grasp neither the scale of the challenge and the threat posed by climate change nor the extent of the opportunity that transitioning to low carbon brings. Sustainability appears to be an add-on or afterthought to their current economic plans. This is not simply unambitious but short-sighted and irresponsible.



Fossil fuels have changed the world and brought wealth to the West Midlands. But their time is drawing to a close and change has to happen. If we can embrace this change and lead the way in combating climate change, we can bring about both a stronger economy and a region in which individuals become more prosperous and have a better quality of life.

## An energy strategy for the West Midlands

My plans for a low-carbon Industrial Revolution will need a resilient, stable, clean and substantial energy supply. At the same time, the cost of energy is rising and the WMCA is a net importer of energy, which means that yet more money is 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 six largest utility companies have a dominant 92.4% share of the market and Ofgem have been unable to rule out 'tacit co-operation' between them on the timing and scale of price increases. This situation means that the current system is supplying neither enough clean energy nor enough affordable energy.

At the moment, the West Midlands has the highest levels of fuel poverty in the UK, and the UK has the highest levels in Eu-

rope. In our region, 280,000 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 over-represented among consumers who have never 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 appears determined to ignore the issue of climate change and energy, other levels of government have pioneered new approaches to tackle the challenge.

For example, Nottingham City Council launched its own municipal energy company (Robin Hood Energy) in 2015. It has brought cheaper bills and greater competition. Average tariffs are £87 cheaper across the East Midlands and the region has moved from seventh to first place in price competitiveness in England.

The company doesn't have to distribute profits to shareholders and can pursue policies to address fuel poverty, support local businesses and provide demand for renewable energy generation in the area. For example, the company proactively en-

sure that everyone is on the lowest tariff automatically. Its profits can be used to contact citizens who have never switched and encourage them to do so.

Similarly, in February 2016 Swindon Borough Council launched a £4.8 million Solar Bonds initiative to fund a 5MW farm. Thanks to the falling costs of small-scale renewable energy generation, they've been able to offer returns of up to 6% based on electricity sales.

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.

#### I WILL:

- Play a full role in discussing with experts, agencies and citizens how we can build agreement around how to transition to a future energy system that is clean and affordable, including assisting in building networks around low carbon and energy.
- Work with partners to pursue setting up a municipally owned West Midlands Energy Company. The company will strive to provide clean and affordable energy to West Midlands homes, helping to address fuel poverty and encouraging the generation of clean energy in the region.
- 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.
- Partner with the Green Investment Bank to bring funds to our region.
- 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.
- Work with the sector towards having community energy and municipal heating projects throughout the West Midlands.
- Improve dialogue with mayors in other countries, playing a leading role again in the C40 coalition working to reduce the climate impact of cities.

## Using energy better

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 has to 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.

### I WILL:

- 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 available for the installation of renewable energy generation.
- Join other political leaders around the country in lobbying central government to start a national renovation programme.
- Press for planning policy for new homes to be built to the highest environmental standards so that they can be warm in winter and cool in summer and require far less energy.
- Use procurement to drive changes in the behaviour of suppliers, rewarding those who improve energy efficiency and take steps towards becoming carbon neutral.

## 21st Century transport

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 re-opening railways, promoting and investing in cycling and walking and creating people-friendly streets will go a long way to help. When we have better “last-mile” options, multi-modal tickets, truly integrated transport 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 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 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 electric 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 self-driving cars but sees them on UK roads first.

The first commercial self-driving cars will likely be a

## I WILL:



- 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 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.

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.

The West Midlands has long been linked with car manufacture. If we are to retain this proud association the WMCA needs to look boldly to the future.

## Protecting wildlife and green spaces

The Strategic Economic Plan sets out a vision to improve the quality of life for everyone living within the West Midlands. 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.

Here, the WMCA needs to follow where others have led. For example, central government has ambitiously committed to leaving the environment in a better condition than it was found over the course of just one generation. And Birmingham joined the Biophilic Cities Network in 2014, pledging to put nature at the heart of decision making and to enable every resident to access nature every day.

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.

For example, in Coventry the WMCA is spending £100 million on redeveloping parts of the city centre. Redevelopments like this should include a park and centre on 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:**

- 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 making sure that productive farmland and ancient woodland/trees are safe from development.
- Publicise the value of trees and woods as health improvers, including their role in improving air quality.
- 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.



**My vision is simple. I want the West Midlands to become a world leader in low-carbon manufacturing and technology, to drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and work towards becoming carbon neutral.**



# EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

INCLUSION OF EVERYONE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL

## Strength from diversity

The West Midlands is one of the most diverse regions in the UK. This diversity is one of the strengths that we need to draw upon more by getting more voices heard and more people involved in the WMCA. Then we will make better, more representative decisions for the common good, benefiting from the range of traditions, experiences, skills, knowledge, cultures and perspectives that our diversity brings.

However, as we've already shown, these voices, and all of the knowledge

and experiences that people in the West Midlands have, are not being represented within the WMCA at the moment.

This is a huge untapped resource. As we open up the WMCA to more people and make plans more inclusively, it will go a long way towards increasing opportunities for everyone to contribute so that we all enjoy the results of 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.

The fact is the groups with the least power in society end up doing least well from society. We do not want a West Midlands where a few privileged people exclude those whom they see as less important or relevant or where the people who can't shout as loudly as others are losing out.

Indeed, the real test for the WMCA will be how it treats and looks after the most vulnerable, not the most powerful. I want to see a West Midlands in which the most vulnerable citizens are welcomed into the very heart of society as valued citizens with an equal contribution to make. But to get to that point, we have work to do.

As we all know, the "one-size-fits-all" approach does not work. Every one of us matters and if the way a society treats its most vulnerable is a measure of its humanity, then it is the mayor's responsibility to hold up a mirror to who we are, excluding no one and taking into account the views and experiences of all.

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 have to 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 well-being of all of us.

Yet despite this undoubted legacy, we live in uncertain times. Too many politicians would scapegoat migrant communities and gamble away the vibrant and multicultural region that we have built in exchange for short-term gains that damage relationships and destroy our economy. Moreover, too many politicians and decision makers have failed to see or understand the systematic inequalities and challenges that many West Midlanders face because of the colour of their skin, their faith or their culture.

Every West Midlander should have an equal opportunity to find work, gain an education, 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.

### I WILL:

- 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 chapters.
- 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.
- Make it a specific commitment of the new West Midlands Bank to support entrepreneurs and businesses from diverse backgrounds and work actively to encourage these applications.
- 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.

- 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.
- Take real action on air pollution across the whole region, especially in those BAME communities that are often overrepresented in congested, high-density areas.
- 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.
- Promote continued understanding between people of different cultures and faiths – for example, through supporting local-level interfaith forums and opening up opportunities to explore what we all have in common.
- Encourage and maintain open working and collaboration between faith groups, BAME communities and women's groups and the police, schools, voluntary groups and others.
- 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.
- 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.

## 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.

### I WILL:

- 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 increase their hours or take up work.
- 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.
- 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 women who are and have been targets of violence and survivors of rape and abuse, and aim to expand programmes aimed at changing attitudes and improving reporting of these offences.
- Support and champion men’s programmes and other issues by promoting a range of support agencies and public services to reduce the causes of violence.
- Work with the police, criminal justice and probation services and community organisations to encourage and support a policy that treats misogyny and abuse and violence directed towards women as a hate crime.

## 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 safe and accepting place for LGBT people, but we still need to do more.

### I WILL:

- 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, including the police, transport service providers and community initiatives, in their work ensuring safety, directly challenging discrimination and prejudice in housing, healthcare and education and taking a zero-tolerance approach to abuse and violence.
- 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.
- Support the provision of specialist domestic violence services that understand the issues that LGBT people uniquely face.

## 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.

### I WILL:

- 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.

## A West Midlands for all ages

- Push the WMCA to require those working on behalf of the WMCA 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.

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

Many youth services have been lost and this has had an impact on the ability of important support networks to work with young people to maintain and improve their emotional and social well-being. 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, already separated from families through changed work patterns, are becoming isolated. Isolation is compounded by a lack of knowledge needed to access the support that is available to them.

We must value and hear the voices of 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 an important part of and where everyone can feel connected, included, financially secure and safe.

#### 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.
- 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.
- 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 & COMMUNITY

KEEPING EVERYONE SAFE

## Policing for and with the community

Our police do an important, difficult and often under-funded job and need the support and trust of the community now more than ever. People need to know that for roles with such power, appropriate checks and balances are in place to keep that power accountable and ensure that it is used responsibly.

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 democratic control and scrutiny.

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's essential that police officers get out from behind their desks

and into the community to help to build trust with local residents and business owners. The police can only keep our communities safe if they have the confidence of the local community and if we work in partnership.

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 inter-agency working.

If the Fire and Rescue Service also becomes part of the WMCA, it will be important to ensure that it is kept independent of the police but also held to account and scrutinised.



## I WILL:

- Fight to ensure that the police force gets the resources it needs to tackle crime and increase community cohesion and safety, setting new priorities in collaboration with the community.
- Push for reforms to reassure every West Midlander that the police are on their side. This will include improving the diversity of the police force, setting ambitious targets for the number of women and BAME officers to reflect the local community. It will also include work with communities to develop new approaches to policing, and a model of policing by consent, preserving public order while maintaining free speech, and looking at new structures to ensure greater democratic control and scrutiny of the police.
- Aim to commission community and voluntary organisations to 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.



At the time of writing, responsibility for the police force rests with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). However, it seems very likely that the PCC's powers will be combined with those of the mayor at some point in the near future.

It is therefore necessary to outline my strategy for policing in this manifesto. Until and unless the powers are combined, I will use the mayor's soft power to advocate for the approach and ideas set out below. It is important that the mayor uses the role to advocate in this way because we all need to do everything we can to make sure that everyone feels safe and secure. No one in our society should be threatened by violence, exploited or harmed.

## Prevention rather than cure

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

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

meracy 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 along with it. If we took a more sophisticated approach to drugs and alcohol abuse, and treated them as addiction problems rather than criminal offences, not only would we totally undermine the dangerous and community-blighting drug trade, we would also see levels of crime plummet. 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, and serves to rebuild communities when they've been affected by crime, often committed by a very small minority of people. 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 reoccur. 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 has to 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. A society that is willing to sacrifice civil liberties in the misguided pursuit of greater security will ultimately destroy both.

#### **I WILL:**

- 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.
- 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

by offering (in appropriate cases) 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.

## Protecting vulnerable people

We must pay special attention to protecting people and groups who have had less power 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, domestic violence and female genital mutilation are thankfully more openly discussed than ever 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 forwards in awareness of hate crime and in tackling it. But we must do more to eradicate hateful and anti-social behaviour, including all forms of hate crime, racist, sexist and homophobic violence and harassment, and crimes against disabled people, investing in programmes that are proven to change attitudes and prevent violence.

### I WILL:

- 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.
- Review the implementation of the Prevent strategy. I would pursue community-led collaborative approaches to tackle all forms of extremism.
- Provide training to all police officers in how to communicate and speak to 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 adequate disability equality training.



# WELLBEING & PUBLIC HEALTH

PUTTING HEALTH AND HAPPINESS FIRST

## What's the point of the WMCA?

The WMCA should be all about well-being. After all, what's the point of having any new layer of government if it doesn't improve the lives of ordinary people?

As I've outlined, there appears to have been an assumption that devolution means economic growth, and that growth means that everyone will get richer (and therefore well-being will improve), even if there's no evidence to back up that assumption.

A huge factor in well-being and health is indeed the level of household income. I've laid out my plans previously to ensure that

we see not only growth but inclusive growth that benefits everyone, and that we help the least well-off areas as a priority.

As the mayor does not have any formal say in how local NHS services are run (and appears unlikely to do so for the foreseeable future) beyond opposing and publicising NHS cuts, creeping privatisation and the lack of consultation in making changes, the major contribution that the WMCA can make to improving well-being within the region is to focus on improving income levels for the least well-off.

Indeed, the economy exists to provide prosperity and 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 clearly very wrong and we need to change how we're running the economy.

So, as mayor, I will put the focus squarely back on well-being by measuring it 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 West Midlanders. We need to prove that the WMCA is working for the benefit of all of its people.

#### **I WILL:**

- 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.

## **Public services and income levels**

There has been much talk around the WMCA about reforming public services to reduce the cost of delivering them. There has been less talk about the impact of a large number of people living on low incomes on demand for public services.

The chances of people on low incomes experiencing mental health problems, poor physical health, homelessness and contact with social services, accident and 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 just 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.

Furthermore, we need to do more to help those on the lowest incomes to be as financially resilient as possible. When money is tight and a financial crisis has to be faced, 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 socio-economic disadvantage.

## **I WILL:**

- Be a champion for the credit unions found throughout 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 of outcome that result from socio-economic disadvantage, in line with the socio-economic duty of the Equality Act 2010.
- 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.

## **Improving everyone's mental health**

There is little as precious as our mental health. The experience, for example, of feeling severely depressed is one of the strongest determinants of our well-being.

While I support and welcome the recent work of the Mental Health Commission and am very pleased indeed to see mental health higher up the policy agenda, we can go further by addressing the factors that make experiencing mental health difficulties in the first place more likely, rather than focusing only on treatment.

There are a number of 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, healthy streets, housing, community safety, food poverty, deprivation, inclusion, active travel, lifetime neighbourhoods, valuing arts and culture (for example, supporting Birmingham's bid to host the Commonwealth Games in 2026 and Coventry's bid to be City of Culture in 2021), and encouraging better physical health through promoting walking, cycling and access to green space – will help in this way.

One of the biggest determinants of our mental health is our level of social connection and avoidance of loneliness. Statistically, focusing on loneliness is one of the things that can most improve people's lives. Indeed, as the Marmott Review showed, socially isolated people are between two and five times more likely to die prematurely.

In the UK, two in every five older people say that the TV is their main source of company. One in five regularly goes a week or more without seeing any neighbours, friends or family members. And it's not just a problem for older people: one in ten people aged between 20 and 30 spent Christmas Day 2016 alone.

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

In addition, we need to do more to tackle the stigma that surrounds mental health, and which often prevents people from recognising the signs and seeking help. More discussion in schools and public forums would be a great first step to aid our understanding.

With programmes 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's more we can do.

#### **I WILL:**

- Launch a war on loneliness, in partnership with local authorities and third-sector organisations, sharing data to map both areas where loneliness is a particular problem but also where there are services and opportunities, and gaps in provision. I will use the mayoral platform to drive this agenda and publicise my programme, working towards a community navigation approach whereby 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.
- Encourage every West Midlander to follow my example and become a dementia friend.
- Be a champion for everyone experiencing mental health problems and for 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.

## **Sex and relationships**

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. In 2015, there were 141,000 new STI diagnoses for 20–24 year olds and 78,000 for those aged 15–19. 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.

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

#### **I WILL:**

- Support central government's plans to implement good-quality, age-appropriate statutory relationship and sex education 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.



Find out more at

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