

Working in Partnership for Aberdeen

Aberdeen's SNP and Liberal Democrat councillors have agreed to form a partnership to focus on the delivery of vital local services on which people depend, to improve quality of life over the next five years. Our partnership will seek to transform our city, making it a better place for people to live, work, raise a family and visit.

The cost of living crisis is hitting the pockets of Aberdonians hard, forcing many to make the difficult decision between heating and eating. Our partnership will do all we can to help people hit by the cost of living crisis, alleviate poverty and improve the quality of life for our citizens.

As a Council, it is a key priority that we invest in our children's futures, to ensure that they achieve positive destinations and are given the best opportunities in life. We will review our School's Estate and deliver Aberdeen's first green Academy for the communities of Countesswells and Hazlehead. It is important that we build a school's estate which is fit for the future and provides the best learning environment for our young people. With partners, we will work to improve attainment, expand curriculum choice and develop services that will secure the wellbeing that young people and their families need. We will promote creativity and excellence and make opportunities for learning and culture more accessible.

Building on the work already in progress to make our city centre more attractive, our partnership will deliver an open, inclusive and accessible green space at Queen's Square, linking to a redeveloped Castlegate which will act as a gateway to our city's beachfront.

As we strive to achieve Net-Zero, we need to work with partners to ensure a Just Transition which is fair, both economically and socially, for the citizens of Aberdeen. The climate emergency that we face is not in dispute, and our partnership seek to work with Government, partners, the people of Aberdeen and the private sector to deliver a city that is fit for future generations.

We seek to invest in our road and pavement network, ensuring active and green travel is at the forefront of any new projects and a review of existing transport infrastructure is progressed taking account of the need to expand the city cycle network.

We will work with partners to improve the stock and variety of Council and social housing across the city, ensuring it meets the varying needs of our citizens and provides more choice for our older citizens. We also need to future-proof Aberdeen's current housing stock to ensure that our properties help us to achieve our Net Zero goals and expand district heating networks to help alleviate fuel poverty.

In order for our partnership to achieve our aspirations, we will transform the Council's governance structure, making it more accessible and accountable. We will stop referring to the people of Aberdeen as customers. We will ensure that Committee meetings are more frequent and accessible, to improve transparency, listen to our residents and deliver on the priorities of our citizens.

Cllr Alex Nicoll

Leader of the SNP Group

Cllr Ian Yuill

Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group

Supporting People with the Cost of Living

Many people in the communities across our city are struggling with rising costs of living. Our partnership will undertake a comprehensive review of Council policies to ensure it is doing all it can to tackle the challenges people face on a day to day basis by progressing the following steps.

- Commission an urgent report, to identify how the Council could further support struggling and vulnerable people throughout this crisis.
- Press the UK Government to do more to protect the most vulnerable from the cost of living crisis, including to match the Scottish Government's commitment to uplift social security payments by 6%, in line with inflation.
- Investigate whether the Council's purchasing power can be used to reduce the cost of every day items for household.
- Actively support Aberdeen's foodbanks and provide assistance with bulk purchasing where desirable.
- Look into whether providing citywide Aberdeen Gift Cards to low income households across the city would be an effective way to bolstering their purchasing power while giving local businesses a much-needed boost.
- Top-up the locally administered Scottish Welfare Fund and look at expanding the criteria for applications to the fund, to help more people to access crisis grants during this cost of living crisis.
- Investigate how Aberdeen City Council could support the provision of fair and affordable banking, insurance and financial services, and the expansion of credit unions and advice services.

A City of Opportunity

Our partnership aims to ensure that every young person in our city is provided with educational opportunities and support that will give them the best possible start in life. Working together we will:

Improving Educational Choices

- Commit to realising the potential of each individual, by seeking to widen curriculum choice and implement progressive choices.
- Work with the city's universities, North East Scotland College and businesses to increase educational and training options and the number of care experienced young people and young people from deprived communities, going onto positive destinations, including further and higher education, vocational training and apprenticeships.
- Promote the number of apprenticeships on offer through the council.
- Build on the success of the Summer of Play, extending these learning experiences at least into school holidays, including the Spring and October holidays.
- Look to establish a school leavers fortnight – utilising the time between final exams and the end of the school year to offer pupils new experiences and help to build-up their life skills.
- Ensure that no child living in Aberdeen is excluded from Gaelic Medium Education due to a catchment area.
- We will actively work with partners to increase citywide delivery of music education, promoting excellence and enabling group performance.
- We will investigate options to expand the instrumental music service and measure the impact of this.

Creating Better Learning Environments

- Review and invest in our school estate, ensuring all of Aberdeen's schools are fit for the educational needs and the challenges of the 21st century. This will involve:
 - Building the city's first green schools.
 - Completing the construction of primary schools in Tillydrone, Torry and Countesswells.
 - Refurbishing the former Riverbank School into a green school for St Peter's RC Primary.
 - Putting Hazlehead and Countesswells at the top of the list of communities benefitting from any new build academy programme.
- Work to ensure that every school community provides a safe and respectful environment for young people and staff.

Caring for Young People

- Seek to make Aberdeen a UNICEF Child Friendly City.
- Review the cost of the school day, to make sure no child is missing out on opportunities because of their financial situation.

- Ensure the Council follows best practice as a corporate parent to get the best outcomes for looked-after young people, those in kinship care and those with additional support needs such as autism, developmental disorders or mental health problems.
- Ensure local education services identify young people with mental health problems and help them get early support and help, where appropriate, to transfer to adult services.
- Continue to seek to support young people to receive care in Aberdeen, through fostering, adoption and other services and seek to reduce “out of authority” placements.
- Work with the Scottish Government to expand free early learning and childcare to one- and two-year-olds from low-income households.
- Explore options to make travel to school safer and more child-friendly and to reduce vehicle congestion at school gates.
- Continue to maintain existing play parks and invest in new equipment and other measures that meet and develop personal and social needs of the young person.
- Work on a local scheme to build on and complement the success of the Scottish Government’s Baby Box - increasing the support available to new parents.
- Offer Aberdeen City Youth Council a regular meeting with the council’s political leadership and Senior Management Team.

A Vibrant City

Aberdeen for many years was seen as a premier tourist destination. The discovery of Oil and Gas in the North Sea has seen our city grow to be known as the Energy Capital of Europe. Today we stand on the cusp of a new era as a leader in the delivery of green energy. We will work tirelessly to make Aberdeen a more attractive place to live, work, study and visit with a vibrant cultural offering. Our partnership will:

City Centre and Beach

- Refresh our tourism and cultural strategies for the city.
- Revitalise our beachfront, working with partners including Aberdeen FC with an aim to deliver new sports facilities and a new stadium, not using public funds except where collaborative working is mutually beneficial.
- Expand the Beach Masterplan, extending the footprint from the River Dee to the River Don.
- Bring forward plans to improve active travel links between the Castlegate and the beach.
- Create a new urban garden for our city centre in Queen Street, with active travel routes linking in with the wider city centre and the improved links to the beachfront.
- With a view to ensuring safe pedestrianised areas in our city, we will effectively engage with the Disability Equity Partnership, public transport providers, city centre businesses and others over the future of central Union Street and Broad Street, to ensure that they are accessible to people with disabilities and limited mobility and commit to maintaining bus and taxi access to Central Union Street until that is achieved.
- Oppose the creation of new city centre shared surfaces, areas where vehicles and pedestrians share the same surface, except where prevented by existing contractual agreements.
- Continue to move the City Centre and Beach Masterplans forward, expanding it to include George Street and ensuring it remains current with annual reviews.
- Invest in Aberdeen Arts Centre, making the necessary repairs to ensure the future of this landmark building.
- Establish a task force to identify disused and derelict land and buildings and help bring them back into use, including investigating the purchase and conversion of upper floors along Union Street.
- Appoint a City Centre spokesperson

The Arts Matter

Our city should become distinguished by the range and depth of active creative expression and artistic enjoyment experienced by those who live here and by visitors. By supporting and working with cultural partners, we will ensure there is richness and diversity of arts activities.

- Aim to make Aberdeen a premier destination for festivals, productions, conferences, bands and events.

- Support Aberdeen Performing Arts and other cultural providers to offer the widest possible arts programme for all across our communities.
- Work with Aberdeen Performing Arts to address their funding issues and to allow them to progress their Covid-safe upgrades.
- Investigate establishing an art hub, where artists can create, display and sell their work.
- Appoint a City Makar to promote literary creativity and expression.
- Support the Scottish Languages Bill and ensure that Doric is properly recognised and gets the promotion it deserves.
- Work with partners to explore opportunities to develop heritage, museum and online services with a special emphasis on local history and stories of our heritage.
- Maintain a strong network of libraries across Aberdeen which provide services relevant to the 21st century.
- Help to deliver the Denis Law Legacy Trail.

Building a Greener and Sustainable City

We are committed to meeting the challenges facing our local and global environments and to do so will set and work to achieve ambitious objectives to play our full part in building a greener and sustainable city. We will:

- Declare a climate emergency.
- Work with partners to deliver a just transition to net zero and plan to make Aberdeen a net-zero city by no later than 2037, and earlier if that is possible.
- Support efforts to move towards a circular economy with the establishment of repair hubs, helping people to access the tools that allow them to repair or upcycle.
- Support Aberdeen's continued pioneering of Hydrogen technologies and make the case to bring alternatively powered rail services to the City.
- Commit to providing an annual carbon budget alongside the council's annual budget and providing CO² emission statements as part of the Annual Accounts of the Council.
- Seek to gain the maximum benefits for Aberdeen's people and businesses from the Scottish Government's £500 million Just Transition Fund and their £100 million Green Jobs Fund
- Invest at least £25 million over five years and work with partners to expand the city's Electric Vehicle charging network.
- Continue to reduce the carbon footprint of the council's building estate and vehicle fleet and adopt an "environment first" approach to all new Council building projects, seeking to maximise the energy efficiency of, and minimise the carbon footprint of, new buildings and investigate the feasibility of generating energy by installing ground source heat pumps in Council owned open spaces.
- Review current recycling and waste minimisation policies and practices within Council establishments and for flatted accommodation with the objective of reducing waste, increasing recycling levels and improve efficiency of the Council collections.
- Encourage the recycling of more garden and green waste by repealing the unfair Garden Tax charge for collecting residents' garden waste from brown wheelie bins.
- Recognise the threat climate change already poses to our city by investing in flood and erosion prevention measures in Lower Deeside and along the beach.
- Work with communities to review the management of council-managed open spaces to create more sustainable and safer green areas and open spaces and develop a Community Environmental Improvement Fund, for communities to access, to implement their own small-scale local environmental improvements.
- Recognise the importance of Aberdeen's Green Belt, green spaces and open spaces so they can be enjoyed for purposes of leisure, sport and environmental wellbeing, and investigate the creation of new pocket parks.
- Promote and improve woodland in our city and in particular launch a "A Million Trees for Aberdeen" programme to plant, with partners, a further one million trees in Aberdeen by 2032 at minimal cost to the Council.

- Invest in Aberdeen's green future by maintaining and planting street trees and ensuring the right trees are planted in the right places.

Greener Transport, Safer Streets, Real Choices

A good quality and environmentally friendly transport network where people have real choices about how to travel is vital for any modern city. Sadly, many of Aberdeen's roads and pavements are in very poor condition, many roads are unfriendly to cyclists, and some communities are either poorly served or not served at all by bus services.

Working together we will tackle these challenges by:

- Delivering a revised Local Transport Strategy.
- Supporting the development of local train services running between Inverurie and Montrose, by working towards delivering new railway stations in the city.
- Working with the Scottish Government and NESTRANS to improve the city's bus network, including considering options for an Aberdeen Rapid Transit network, with the support of the Scottish Bus Fund, and consider options for council-run services in the city.
- Improving the provision of bus services across the city, through investment in new supported services, to enable bus services to be provided to areas and at times which are not economically viable.
- Reviewing our cycle and active transport network, and work with Aberdeen Cycle Forum to deliver our shared vision of making Aberdeen a cyclist friendly city and provide covered secure cycle storage in suitable locations across Aberdeen.
- Improving cycle and active transport infrastructure, including by seeking to integrate safe, physically segregated cycle lanes in new road building projects and taking steps to ensure any proposal for resurfacing or other long-term investments consider options to improve cycle and active transport infrastructure.
- Installing new bus shelters to meet local needs.
- Expanding mandatory 20mph speed limits in residential and other areas where this is supported by communities.
- Making a real and continued investment in Aberdeen's roads and pavements with the objective of resurfacing and improving an average of at least 40km of roads and 40km of pavements a year from 2023/24 for at least ten years so that by 2032 at least 80% of roads and pavements are in good condition.
- Agreeing that a Workplace Parking Levy is not well suited to Aberdeen and that no such policy will progressed in this Council term.
- Creating a Road Safety Fund with an annual capital budget of at least £1 million to be used to make roads and pavements safer for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers and other road users and implement traffic management projects which improve road safety.
- Beginning the construction of the Berryden Corridor.
- Removing the pinchpoint on Wellington Road, allowing the installation of a southbound bus lane.
- Working with partners to improve the infrastructure supporting access to the Harbour expansion at the Bay of Nigg.

- Delivering an improved and safer junction at Sheilhill.
- Improving safe traffic flow on Lang Stracht including enhancements to promote active travel along this route.
- Committing to not funding a Pitfodels link road from council funds.
- Working with partners to explore options to build a new foot and cycle bridge over the River Dee.

Homes for the Future

Our partnership will ensure that our current housing stock is fit for the future and brought up to the highest standards where possible, as well as adding to the current number of council homes. We will also ensure those who live in privately rented homes are afforded the standards that they deserve by ensuring robust enforcement where required. We will:

- Work with partners to produce a ten-year plan to increase the stock and variety of Council and social housing to meet the needs of Aberdeen's citizens and continue to deliver Council and social housing projects, including at Greenferns and Granitehill, to tackle the Council house waiting lists and do everything in our power to end homelessness.
- Extend Aberdeen's district heating network to offer affordable warmth to many more homes and help alleviate fuel poverty.
- Ensure that sufficient resources are available for the monitoring and landlord registration and HMO licensing, work to support tenants in private rented housing and work with private landlord to improve housing standards across the city.
- Investigate what further support can be given to home owners to carry out repairs and make energy efficiency improvements, including investigating establishing a Help to Repair scheme – allowing people to sell an equity stake in their homes to the council, in order to fund essential repairs and to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.
- Review and clarify guidance for the Council's buy-back scheme and look to expand the scope of what can be bought.
- Investigate whether the Council's housing stock can be upgraded to help meet our Net-Zero targets.
- Invest in amenity improvements in and around the Council's housing stock – such as painting of communal areas and properly maintaining and improving communal gardens.
- Repeal the guidance that exempts student accommodation developers from affordable housing contributions.
- Ensure that Aberdeen City Council's housing stock provides more choice for our city's older citizens.
- Support the adaption of homes to accommodate people's changing needs, and to support the building of more homes that are future-proofed for accessibility.
- Work with North East local authorities to draft a regional Gypsy Traveller action plan for the North East and compile a map of traditional halting sites across the city.

An active city

Our partnership will look to ensure that citizens of Aberdeen are afforded opportunities for themselves and their families to keep fit and engage in activities to improve their health. Our partnership will:

- Increase participation in swimming, increasing the number of children who can swim and cutting the gap in swimming proficiency that exists for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Establish an access to sports fund - helping to remove some of the financial barriers to sports and exercise, which far too many children face.
- Work with Sport Aberdeen, the NHS and others to promote the development of community-based initiatives in sports, exercise and nutrition to improve the health and wellbeing of residents of our city.
- Back Sport Aberdeen in their efforts to invest in and improve sporting facilities.
- Install distance markers along popular walking and running routes across the city
- Investigate options to install more outdoor gyms in the city.
- Work with partners to widen access to, and promote, women in sport.
- Work with partners to seek to bring national and international sporting championships to Aberdeen.
- Work with Aberdeen FC and AFC Community Trust to explore options for their stadium and facilities to host select school fixtures and events.
- Explore how new sporting facilities at the beach could be best be made available to young people, including whether free clubs could be established during school holidays.

A Prosperous City

Aberdeen and the North East have been major drivers of the Scottish and UK economies for many years. The move to Net Zero presents Aberdeen with challenges and opportunities. Our partnership will work to develop Aberdeen's economy together with the private sector, third sector, residents and Government. We will:

- Develop our economy in a genuine partnership with the private sector, third sector and residents.
- Campaign for Aberdeen to be the home of a new Green Freeport and ensure that fair work conditions and Net Zero ambitions are central to any bid.
- Work with partners to stimulate sustainable economic development, including a managed transition to a carbon neutral economy and work in partnership with the academic, business and other relevant sectors to ensure the long-term future of the energy industry.
- Encourage collaborations of entrepreneurs in our universities, college and the private sector to develop businesses, services and employment opportunities in the city.
- Seek to bring more civil service jobs to Aberdeen.
- Work with partners, including Scottish Enterprise, to expand the support available for new start-ups, including investigating access to microfinance and affordable leases on workspaces for start-ups and replicating the success of the Torry Rocks scheme.
- Review and update the council's inward investment strategy.
- Seek to buy goods, services and food locally whenever possible, subject to complying with the law and public tendering requirements.
- Recognise the importance of the third sector in Aberdeen's life and economy and support and work with ACVO.

Empowering Aberdeen's Communities

We believe that individuals and communities, and not the City Council, are best placed to decide their own priorities. We will work to empower communities across Aberdeen and in particular we will:

- Double the budget for leased community centres and work with the management committees of these community centres to enhance the important services and activities they provide.
- Work with communities to establish trusts, community enterprises, charities or other entities that support community empowerment and community wealth building.
- Work to strengthen the city's network of community councils and, over time as they acquire greater democratic legitimacy, give them a greater role in Aberdeen's governance.
- Support people to engage with Community Asset Transfers throughout the process.
- Aim to devolve at least 1% of the council's annual budget to communities, allowing them to decide their spending priorities through participative budgeting.
- Support Inchgarth Community Centre with their extension plans.
- Increase the amount of land available for community market gardens, orchards and allotments for community food growing and support the expansion of community food pantries.

Caring for Each Other

There is rising demand for care and wellbeing services. Every individual deserves to have the confidence that the Council will do what it can to ensure that the widest possible range of quality support is given where, and when, it is needed. We will work with partners to address the growing diversity of physical and mental health issues that are experienced by the people in our city. We will:

- Work with NHS Grampian to explore options for a city centre health campus.
- Work with partners to consider the establishment of a Health and Social Care Career Academy in Aberdeen.
- Support greater personalisation of care and consider whether it would be possible to implement policies to maintain quality of life of disabled citizens in our community and support the health and well-being of carers by providing support and respite.
- Work to help older people stay in their own homes and communities for as long as possible.
- Work with partners to identify and agree specific integrated solutions for tackling the health and social problems caused by misuse of alcohol and drugs.
- Work in partnership with the NHS and partners to make Aberdeen City Council a mental health champion.
- Support the roll-out of further changing places toilets across the city.
- Support voluntary groups and other partners that help people tackle loneliness and isolation.

A Safer Aberdeen

Aberdeen City is a welcoming, peaceful and safe place to live, work and visit. We will continue to do all we can to protect individuals and communities from harm caused by crime and antisocial behaviour. Working together we will:

- Support, encourage and assist the city's Community Policing Teams, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and other community safety partners.
- Improve community safety by continuing to invest in the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Investigations Team, in City Wardens, in community safety projects.
- Promote and develop city centre community safety through sustained partnership work with Street Pastors, the private sector and others and by continuing effective measures including Taxi Marshalls.
- Tackle fly-tipping and establish a squad to tackle illegal graffiti across the city.

A Transparent, Accessible and Accountable Council

Aberdeen City Council works for the people of Aberdeen, and it is important that people can access, understand, and take part in the Council's democratic processes.

To make Aberdeen City Council more transparent, accessible, and accountable we will:

- Recognise that citizens and communities – rather than the City Council - are best placed to say what services they require and how these are provided and seek to give greater control over appropriate services and facilities to local communities.
- An overhaul of the Council's committee structure, including the establishment of new Anti-Poverty and Net-Zero Committees.
- A full review of delegated powers and of the council's directorates, and the end of the public being described as "customers".
- Make webcasting of council committees permanent, making it easier for people to see how decisions affecting them are made, and remove barriers to public participation in these meetings.
- Ensure the use of Plain English by the Council.
- Consult citizens, community councils and other partners on the work of the City Council, including carrying out a public engagement and consultation as part of the annual budget setting process.
- Explore options to establish local Citizens' Assemblies – with the first remit of a Citizens' Assembly being to advise the council on what's needed to tackle gender inequality in Aberdeen.
- Improving access for citizens to Council services and contact centres.
- Appoint an Older People and Mental Health Champion in the Council.
- Recognise that Aberdeen City Council's role and our partnership's focus is to provide the best possible local services for Aberdeen and its residents, we agree that no Council staff time or resources will be directed towards promoting any particular point of view on national referenda. Our partnership parties will not propose motions at Council or committee meetings advocating any particular position in relation to Scottish independence or an independence referendum.
- Recognise that councillors have a democratic mandate and can make representations as individual Councillors to the Scottish and UK Governments, national organisations, and others without the need for Committee or Council agreement.
- Seek to work with CoSLA and the Scottish Government to reform local government funding in the interest of fairness for Aberdeen.
- Work constructively with the Scottish Government to seek additional funding for Aberdeen.

Valuing our Staff

Our partnership believes our staff are the heart of the Council and we simply could not deliver services for the citizens without their efforts. We will:

- Commit to continuing the Council's commitment to no compulsory redundancies.
- Recognise that the Council depends upon its staff to deliver the services it provides and believe the Council must properly reward, train and support its staff.
- Engage regularly with staff and trade union representatives.
- Double paternity leave for Aberdeen City Council staff and encourage other employers in the city to do likewise.