

A large, stylized graphic of the Union Jack flag, composed of bold red, white, and blue geometric shapes, positioned on the right side of the page.

**THE WEST
MIDLANDS**
– IT IS TIME FOR
A FRESH START



THE WEST MIDLANDS – IT IS TIME FOR A FRESH START.

I have lived and worked in the West Midlands all my adult life. I brought up my family here, my wife works as a lawyer here, my son works in manufacturing in the Black Country.

I come from an ordinary working class background, my dad was a dock worker and my mum a school secretary.

I left school at 16, determined to make something of myself. I worked my way up in business and have worked with the Japanese government, the United Nations, and on the Olympics.

I led the team that set up the West Midlands Combined Authority and have already brought in £1 billion worth of investment to our region. Now I want to deliver as your Mayor to get every corner of the West Midlands moving.

But after 14 years of Conservative government and seven years of a Conservative Mayor, people in the West Midlands are paying the price. The opportunities that were open

to me when I was starting out just aren't there for our young people today.

I have never been a politician before, but I am not prepared to sit on the sidelines anymore, whilst the region I love, my home, is left behind – it is time for a fresh start.

Our economy does not work for working people thanks to Conservative chaos and their failure to level up. Too many people in our communities feel ignored, they lack the support and investment to reach their full potential, or are forced to rely on insecure jobs with low pay. Whilst owning a home is a distant dream for many.

My priority will be to create new jobs and training places in every town and city across the West Midlands – with an apprenticeship guarantee, and skills and training for people who want to retrain into new jobs.

I will also revitalise our high streets and work with Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour so everyone can feel safe and be proud of where they live.



I will fix the housing crisis by building new affordable homes and crack down on rogue landlords so that we can all have good, safe, and warm homes. I will also bring the buses back into public control so that people can get about more easily.

I will be a Labour Mayor for everyone - from Chelmsley Wood to Coventry, from the Black Country to Birmingham, from urban to rural, and everywhere in between. It is time for a fresh start.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Parker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Richard Parker
Labour candidate
for Mayor of the West Midlands

“My priority will be to create new jobs and training places in every town and city across the West Midlands - with an apprenticeship guarantee, and skills and training for people who want to retrain into new jobs.”

OUR PLEDGES

Create 150,000 jobs and training opportunities across the West Midlands

- Guarantee a high-quality apprenticeship to every young person who wants one
- Support for those who want to retrain into new roles
- Build the skilled and experienced workforce businesses need to thrive

Revitalise our high streets and bring back pride in our towns

- Fund new market stalls for traders
- Give Councils powers to take back empty shops for new businesses
- Introduce banking hubs so that all residents and businesses have access to a high street bank

Work with Councils and the Police and Crime Commissioner to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour

- Introduce town centre patrols to make our high streets safe again
- Deliver a Women's Safety Unit to tackle violence against women and girls
- Recruit 650 more police

Bring buses back into public control

- Ensure affordable fares, reliable buses, and improved safety
- Build a London-style integrated transport network
- Work with communities to design the bus network they need

Fix the housing crisis and crack down on rogue landlords

- Build 20,000 extra homes in the region by 2031
- Introduce a landlords register
- Ensure good, safe, and warm homes

CREATE 150,000 JOBS AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS THE WEST MIDLANDS

150,000 new jobs and training places across the whole region

You shouldn't have to leave where you live to have a career. That means supporting people into work and ensuring they have the skills, and transport to access well paid jobs. We will create high quality, well paid jobs and training places and back business to thrive.

Apprenticeships guarantee

As a start to getting people the good careers that they want, we will guarantee a high-quality apprenticeship to every young person who needs one.

Skills and training for people who want to retrain into new jobs

We will support people who want to develop their skills for new roles.

More well-paid jobs in the West Midlands

At the core of my Mayoralty will be getting people into well-paid jobs. This will run through everything we do.

I am not a politician, I am a business person. I have worked with businesses to deliver investment and jobs for our region. My family works here, my son works in manufacturing in Wolverhampton. I know the jobs we need and how to deliver them. The Conservatives are letting business and workers down.

The West Midlands is a region of pioneers and inventors, yet today too many businesses are unable to recruit the skilled workers they need and too many people, young and old, are not able to access training and skills development to progress in their lives, and there are insufficient good, well-paid jobs

The UK is now the 8th largest manufacturer in the world, with the West Midlands a key part of that, both historically, and today.

We will make the West Midlands the best place to do business in the UK.

We will create a team that will work with Councils to fast track planning for businesses

to speed up investment and delivery, help businesses to relocate and developers build more homes, and create jobs across the construction industry, that people can get to, and support our key sector strengths in the economy to secure more good, well paid jobs.

We want to be the first region to develop the jobs and industries of the future and successfully transition to the green economy, building on the skills that we already have. A gigafactory will play a key role in this to enable manufacturers to source batteries locally.

We will create a modern West Midlands Industrial Strategy and an Economic Prosperity Plan to grow our economy, remove the barriers to growth and boost jobs. This will provide certainty to businesses to invest. We will also explore how to best bring together business bodies, trade unions, regional institutions and organisations, universities and places of learning, government departments who operate in our region and Councils together, to support our plans, efforts and resources – this would be through a West Midlands Prosperity Council.

We will also build teams with Councils, business, trade unions, trade bodies, schools, colleges, and universities to deliver for key sectors including automotive and transport, creative industries, digital, life sciences and health, education, professional services, logistics, and manufacturing – from the start ups, to the scale ups and more established businesses.

We will launch several task forces to bring together our ingenuity to tackle key challenges and to offer new ideas and focus on growth, including; manufacturing, digital, tech and artificial intelligence; green growth and a fair transition; culture and creativity; and equality of opportunity for all.

We will work with businesses, universities and colleges, and trainers to review the apprenticeship levy to make sure it works, for the skills needs of local businesses in growth areas.

We will ensure education, skills and job readiness for our young people, including

support for Apprenticeships and Foundation years, is linked to our West Midlands Industrial Strategy and Economic Prosperity Plan.

I will use my influence across the region to campaign for the West Midlands to become a Real Living Wage region and ban exploitative zero hours contracts. But I won't stop there, I will campaign for good pay and careers for our residents. I will set the standard by ensuring the Combined Authority only does business with firms that pay the Real Living Wage to their staff. I will bring forward a Good Work standard similar to other Combined Authorities.

We want to implement Labour's New Deal for Working People as soon as possible to protect and enhance workers' rights, and close the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

We will work with employers to develop a West Midlands Jobs and Welfare Hub to offer individual, good quality employability support, including a guaranteed work experience offer. Employers will need to sign up to good pay and progression for their staff in order to partner with us.

We will encourage all of our Councils to become Living Wage accredited and work with them to develop procurement processes to support local businesses and jobs.

We will work with all our schools, colleges and universities, old and new, to improve social mobility in our region, and bring them together with businesses to grow the industries of the future.

We will also ensure there is a consistent mentoring offer and mental health support alongside careers advice for students.

Attracting international investment into and within the region is key. We will build on the work of the West Midlands Growth Company to improve support for local, small and medium-sized, and independent businesses to trade here and across the world. We will forge new links beginning with our nearest neighbours in Europe to support our businesses.

We will campaign for the British Investment Bank, other government investment and business funding agencies, and institutional

financiers to invest more funds into our region and to offer better support for our businesses, including family businesses which are the bedrock of our region. This could be via direct investment, equity, loans or grants.

We also want our business to have better advice and access to best practice, skills, connections to customers and work spaces. The support offered should include access to information and support for a range of business models, including co-operatives and employee ownership with an ambition to increase this sector.

There is great work already happening across the West Midlands to breathe new life into our high streets and improve safety, often led by Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). We will create a West Midlands BIDs forum to share knowledge, best practice and feedback to us on how to improve our high streets and shopping parades.

We will bring together employers, charities, and colleges and universities to put in place programmes to offer jobs for the over 50s, to support those who are keen to return to work or change careers, and work with the health and care services, to support people in ill health or with disabilities who want to work.

As part of our decent, warm homes plan, we will work with the education sector to ensure we have the skills we need to insulate and adapt our homes to be more energy efficient. We will lobby for funding from the government to ensure that our colleges are adequately funded to offer these courses and hire the trainers they need.

We will back Labour's national Fair Pay plans for the social care sector, to boost pay and conditions for our precious care workers.

We will partner with colleges and universities to create new entry routes to careers in social care, including apprenticeships, to tackle the chronic shortage of vital workers.

We will also pioneer West Midlands wide support for carers, sharing best practice and working with Councils and charities.

We will champion care leavers and care experienced people, to improve the care system. We will work with Councils to ensure

consistent support across the West Midlands, with a particular focus on homes, education and job opportunities. We will promote being Corporate Parents as a meaningful and proud role to be played by political leaders.

Parents, overwhelmingly women, are held back from jobs and careers because of the lack of affordable childcare. We will work with a Labour Government and Councils to lead a revolution in universal childcare offer in the West Midlands and will look to implement the recommendations of the Sir David Bell review. The first thousand days are crucial for young people, we need to give them the best start in life.

Lack of access to English language training is holding too many people back. We need to reform and invest to help more people train to secure jobs, support their families and contribute to society.

Equalities, fair pay, decent terms and conditions, and job opportunities will be core to my West Midlands mayoral mission, and we will work closely with colleagues in the trade union movement and with businesses to do this.

REVITALISE OUR HIGH STREETS AND BRING BACK PRIDE IN OUR TOWNS.

- **Take back empty and boarded up shops for new businesses**
- **Fund market stalls for traders**
- **Bring new markets to our town centres and breathe new life into high streets**
- **Make people feel safe again by introducing targeted town centre patrols on high streets blighted by anti-social behaviour and crime.**
- **Introduce banking hubs on our high streets, to make sure everyone has a local branch and increase footfall on struggling high streets.**

We are proud of where we live – so we will back our pride to secure additional investment for safe and vibrant high streets, crack down on retail crime and anti-social behaviour and work with Councils, traders and Business Improvement Districts to increase security measures. No place will be left behind.

Our high streets of the future will have a wider range of uses, including homes so people can shop locally, a place to develop skills, leisure and culture experiences, business start up hubs, and a mix of vibrant independents and chains, to increase footfall.

We will work with Councils to set high standards for the ways our high streets and shopping parades look with imaginative public realm design and shop front improvements.

We will utilise new powers from a Labour government to bring empty shops on our high streets back into use to help businesses to set up, in partnership with Business Improvement Districts and Councils via a range of measures such as compulsory purchasing orders, 'meanwhile' uses and flexible business rates.

We will also look to establish an empty property register for our high streets and a proactive introductions system, which will work with partners to search for occupiers and promote empty spaces.

We will establish a new Local High Streets Taskforce to innovate and regenerate empty shops and to identify derelict sites that can be put back into use.

We will create high streets and shopping parades at the heart of our communities, improve public transport links and encourage people to be better able to walk and cycle

We will work with Councils to ensure that there is a proper plan for all our high streets and campaign for more funding like the £20 million for the Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Centre.

We will look to introduce local banking hubs on our high streets, to make sure everyone has a local branch or access to local banking facilities and to increase footfall. We will explore this with our partners, financial bodies, Business Improvement Districts and Councils to find innovative ways to secure local access to banking and where these could locate such as within council and local facilities.

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND TACKLING CRIME

After 14 years of Conservative government cuts which have undermined policing in the West Midlands, it is vital to ensure that criminals are brought to justice, victims feel supported and communities across our region feel safe. People across our region tell me that tackling crime and effective policing are top priorities for them.

I will work closely with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Councils, faith and community groups, and West Midlands Police to make our streets safer.

Working together, we will make the West Midlands a safer place to live and work.

Key pledge: Work with the Police and Crime Commissioner and Councils to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour to make our streets safer

- **Recruit 650 more police**
- **Make policing more visible by deploying more officers on our streets**
- **Increase use of civil orders designed to protect women and girls against domestic abuse and violence.**
- **Put more domestic abuse specialists in 999 control rooms to make sure victims are responded to urgently and effectively**
- **Strengthen roads policing to reduce the number of people who are killed and seriously injured on our roads and tackle the criminals using our roads as a racetrack**

The safety of women and girls across the West Midlands will be a priority for me and my team.

We will work with the health system, Councils, and the police to tackle misogyny, sexual harassment and Violence Against Women and Girls across our region. We will further develop the women's safety work already in place in the West Midlands.

One of our top priorities will be to campaign in partnership with the Police and Crime

Commissioner to reduce and prevent knife crime and other forms of serious violence.

We will work with our schools and colleges, faith leaders and community organisations, and police to better educate young people and ensure perpetrators are brought to justice.

We will work with Councils, faith groups and the community sector to make sure that survivors of domestic abuse are able to access safe accommodation and support, whether they decide to stay in their home or leave.

People from all over the world have made the West Midlands their home and we are rightly proud of our diversity. Everyone, no matter their background, deserves to feel safe on our streets.

We will call out hate wherever we see it, and work with Councils and the police to tackle all forms of hate crime and protect people going about their daily lives.

We will work with the Police and Crime Commissioner, police, Councils, other public sector organisations, and charities to put visible neighbourhood policing back on our streets to crack down on anti-social behaviour and bolster roads policing.

During my campaign, I have heard clearly from communities that their safety must be a top Mayoral priority in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner. I believe a starting point is by investing in young people, supporting their mental health and continuing to place youth workers into accident and emergency departments to work with young people who find themselves the victims of violence. We can then reduce crime rates and build stronger, more resilient communities.

Central to our plans will be the appointment of a youth worker in every community to provide young people with a positive role model and a safe space to talk about their concerns and signpost to jobs and training. Only by engaging and building trust to provide positive role models will we address some of the underlying causes of crime, such as poverty, social exclusion, and lack of opportunities.

The cuts to policing since 2010 saw West Midlands Police lose over 2,200 police officers and even with the so-called uplift, it doesn't make up for the losses, and the West Midlands still has nearly 800 fewer officers than it did in 2010.

I will work with the Police and Crime Commissioner to continue to fight for fair funding for West Midlands Police – which has lost out on £40 million a year under this Conservative government

Right across the region, and the whole country, too many people don't feel safe where they live. Conservative cuts to policing, essential preventative public services, and our criminal justice system have done serious, lasting damage to our communities.

We need to continue to restore neighbourhood policing so that people can feel safe again and don't have to worry about people close to them being drawn into crime.

Anti-social behaviour blights the lives of many people and we know that having visible policing out on the streets tackling crime, gathering intelligence and cracking down on anti-social behaviour is essential to making our communities safer. We will guarantee town centre patrols dedicated to their areas.

Deaths on our roads are not inevitable, but road collisions and crashes are the number one killer of young people. We will put in place a road danger reduction strategy and sign up to Vision Zero across the region by 2040. With my transport plans, we will see more people choosing to use public transport, or to cycle and walk to get around our region, which will reduce the number of cars on our roads.

In many parts of our region, our roads are being used as a racetrack by criminals who put the lives of others in danger. Working in partnership with the Police and Crime Commissioner, the police, and local Councils we will utilise tools such as ANPR cameras and trial noise cameras to pick up engine revving. Working together, we will also bolster our roads policing and bring together agencies to crack down on people using our roads in this way.

We will build on the successful programme placing specialists into our 999 call centres for victims of rape, sexual violence and domestic abuse. Across the criminal justice system too many victims of these crimes are failed and we see very low conviction rates. Together, we will target action on these crimes to ensure perpetrators are held to account and that victims get justice as well as the support they need to get on with their lives. We will work with a Labour government to implement measures to tackle violence against women and girls and look to introduce a Domestic Abuse Register.

We will work across the West Midlands on issues that blight residents' lives such as noise nuisance and anti-social behaviour and use respect orders that a Labour government will roll out to tackle persistent offenders.

We will work with the Police and Crime Commissioner, the police, retailers and BIDs to target and prosecute prolific offenders of retail crime and violence. We will commit for the police to attend retail crime incidents, and support the Stop Shop Theft pledge.

We will crack down on pet thefts and the organised gangs that do this.

TRANSPORT – A TRANSPORT SYSTEM THAT WORKS FOR PEOPLE

Our vision for public transport is to offer safer, healthier, greener, and more efficient mobility options to meet the needs of our growing population and support our industrial strategy.

We need a properly-funded, fully-integrated public transport system to work better to give residents better access to local services, education and jobs, spend less time travelling, reduce pollution, and tackle the climate emergency.

We need a public transport system that is accessible and inclusive, no matter who you are, or where you need to get to.

We will bring the bus services into public control which is key to achieving this, to ensure that routes reach where people need to go. This will be an immediate priority for us. We will work with a Labour government to implement this quickly.

The delivery of more buses, trains and trams has been far too slow under the current Conservative Mayor. In order to break the current log jam we will undertake a review of all transport projects now and into the future to ensure they can be delivered and that the priorities are ambitious and deliverable.

We want to reclaim our region's heritage in problem-solving and invention. We will lead on new transport solutions, such as Very Light Rail and hydrogen. This is crucial if we are to reach our net zero ambitions and links with our industrial and skills strategies

Safety is key to encouraging people to use public transport or to walk and cycle. We will work with Councils and the police to ensure our roads are safe and tackle anti-social behaviour.

Safety for people going about their lives will be a key priority of ours, no matter how they travel.

Pledges: Bring buses back into public control

There are fewer, less reliable buses, while fares are too expensive. We need more buses to run around the clock to get people to and from work, school, college, and our high streets.

A reliable, inter-connected bus network is a huge priority for our region. Too many bus routes have been cut and too many workers are spending too much of their pay cheque on cars or relying on taxis to get to work because buses are unreliable. Too much of our region is cut off from public transport and we need to change this.

Everyone should have access to a bus route that takes them where they want to go. You should not have to limit your life choices based on where you live.

When we bring the bus network into public control, it will allow us to design routes that people need and make buses more affordable, more reliable, more frequent, greener, and better connected.

We will work with communities to help design a bus network that works for them.

We will introduce greener, modern buses on our network to reduce pollution.

We will eliminate "ghost buses" and introduce accurate, real time information at bus stops.

We will expand the West Midlands bus on demand and ring and ride services to ensure a consistent, accessible and simplified offer.

Our economy is 24/7. But our public transport system is barely 9-5. We need to ensure that vital workers in our health and logistics systems can get to work on time and safely. And people can access and enjoy our vibrant cultural offerings during the day and in the evenings.

Trains

We need to improve regional capacity and connections to achieve our economic potential and to connect people to jobs, education and leisure.

We also need to unlock rail capacity to reduce the number of lorries on our roads. HS2 and the Midlands Rail Hub should have been viewed hand in hand as key rail projects that would have delivered economic growth not only to the West Midlands but to the UK as a whole.

This is yet another example of the West Midlands missing out as the loss of HS2 to the north means a lost opportunity to remove

freight from our congested roads and support our vital logistics industries. The opportunity to level up our region has been lost in favour of mending potholes in London.

With the cancellation of the Northern section of HS2 we need to reset major rail projects in the West Midlands to uplift capacity on key routes to the rest of the country.

We will explore all options and work with other mayors to make HS2, our airport, towns and cities at the heart of a national transport network, and a gateway to the world.

We will work with the Mayor of the East Midlands to secure and deliver investment for the Midlands Rail Hub to unlock capacity constraints in central Birmingham, improve access to HS2 at Curzon Street, and deliver quicker and more frequent train links across the region and re-establish direct services between Coventry and Leicester and Nottingham, and invest in frequency and capacity between Coventry and Leamington Spa.

We will complete the opening of stations where work is already underway but completion is delayed: Moseley, Kings Heath and Stirchley train stations on Camp Hill line in Birmingham. Darlaston and Willenhall stations in Walsall.

Our review will ensure delays like that at University station do not reoccur.

We will rebuild Witton station. We will also work with Councils and sports venues across the region to ensure enhanced public transport alternatives on busy events.

Tram and Very Light Rail

The West Midlands tram network is very limited compared to other places. Greater Manchester's tram opened in 1992 and now has 64 miles of track on 8 lines. The West Midlands Metro opened in 1999 and has 14 miles and only 1 line. The Conservative Mayor's promises and hard hat photos do not match his delivery.

We will complete current projects:

- Open the long-promised metro extension from Wednesbury in Sandwell to Brierley Hill in Dudley.
- Invest in the East Birmingham Metro extension to Solihull including a link to the Birmingham International HS2 station – key to realising the benefits of HS2 and regenerating the poorest part of the West Midlands region.
- Explore how construction work at HS2 Curzon Street can be re-prioritised so that trams to Digbeth can run sooner, supporting local residents and fans travelling to match days and other events.
- Invest in the Very Light Rail programme currently being pioneered in Coventry

Affordability and convenience

We need cheaper and simpler fares that can be used wherever you are and however you travel. Passengers need to be able to move seamlessly from one transport mode to another, with affordability and accessibility at the heart of our plans.

Post-pandemic, our working and commuting patterns have changed, we will review ticketing options to make them more flexible. We will investigate hopper fares for people to change buses on the same ticket, as has been successfully implemented in other cities.

We will roll out contactless bank card ticketing across all modes of transport throughout the network.

There are one million student journeys every week using our public transport. If we invest in affordable and reliable public transport, we will invest in their futures and affordable travel for young people and students is a priority.

We will also look at cheaper bus travel for children.

Too many of our arts, music and sports venues are impacted by poor public transport links especially in the evenings. We will review all the venues across our region to improve services to them so that more people can enjoy the fantastic entertainment that the West Midlands has to offer.

Active travel:

Our vision is for more people in the West Midlands to choose to walk and cycle. To achieve this, we need to plan safer routes to cycle and walk which are integrated with other modes of travel. This is good for people and good for our planet.

We will work with Councils to ensure accessibility and safety at pedestrian crossings and on pavements, and work with them to prioritise pedestrians and cyclists at junctions.

We want more safe and segregated cycle lanes and routes.

We will increase the number of cycling routes and the number of people who cycle.

We will work with the police to further increase the use of close pass training to keep cyclists safe.

We will lobby for the West Midlands to become the go to region for Active Travel England to invest, share best practice and resources on design and delivery between our Councils.

Many residents are unhappy about dangerous pavement parking and we will campaign for Councils to have powers to prevent this.

We will ensure that people with disabilities and access needs have the opportunity to contribute their views to these plans.

Road safety:

It is not inevitable that there should be deaths and serious injuries on our roads. If we work together with Councils and the police, we can make our roads and pavements safer and healthier. Our pledge is to put in place a plan to achieve Vision Zero (no deaths or serious injuries on our roads) by 2040 in line with other major city regions around the world.

We will work with the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, Police and Councils to increase the number of average speed safety cameras, third party dashcam footage reporting, and the capacity for enforcement action against unsafe and criminal road use. Road safety is a good example of where joint working between the Combined Authority,

Police and Crime Commissioner, Councils, Police, and the community can work best.

Safety and accessibility on public transport:

We will ensure all users, particularly women, young people, people with additional access needs, and late night workers, are safe on our network by deploying more safety officers. We will increase funding to the West Midlands safer travel partnership and ensure there is a new focus on evening safety to support our night time economy.

Homes and tackling homelessness

Key pledge – fix the housing crisis and crack down on rogue landlords

➤ Increase housing target to 19,000 new homes every year

Work with a Labour government, Councils and builders to increase our annual target which will ensure 20,000 extra homes are built in the West Midlands by 2031.

➤ Crack down on rogue landlords – with a register for responsible landlords

Work with Councils to toughen enforcement and build on the targeted pilots to improve the quality of housing in the private rented sector.

It simply cannot be right that in 2024, in the second biggest region in one of the richest countries in the world, thousands of our children are living in cold, damp homes with mould.

Our vision is for the West Midlands to have high-quality homes, built to high energy efficiency standards, and inclusive neighbourhoods. I will use my powers to work with the government, Councils, builders, housing associations and arm's length management organisations to do everything possible to address the current Tory housing crisis and skills shortages by increasing the number of people with the expertise we need to build more homes.

With crippling heating bills and poor insulation, thousands of people across the West Midlands are choosing between heating

and eating. We will introduce a mass insulation scheme to make our homes greener, safer, warmer and cheaper to heat. We will train the people with the skills to deliver this as part of our jobs and industry programme.

We will pioneer Labour's green investment fund in the West Midlands and leverage funding to insulate thousands of homes and cut bills for those that need it most.

Insufficient social housing and sky high mortgages have driven people to the private rented sector in record numbers. For many the private rented sector is the only option, but too often it's expensive and of poor quality.

To drive up standards and protect people from rogue landlords, we will work with Councils to deliver a West Midlands Renters' Charter, which will help protect people from exploitation and insecurity and include the right for renters to have pets in rented accommodation.

We will work with Councils to introduce a database of rogue landlords, and with a Labour government on measures to support private sector tenants

The current Mayor has built no homes for social rent in his two terms of office. The construction of social and genuinely affordable homes, which we will fully champion, will be at the heart of our plans to fix the housing crisis, with development corporations providing capacity, support and expertise to Councils. We will support Councils and housing associations to build a minimum of 2,000 council and social homes per year by 2028, with a target of 20,000 by 2030.

We will campaign with the Police and Crime Commissioner, Councils, and housing associations for a specialised housing court that will focus on addressing the underlying causes of anti-social behaviour.

With our colleagues in the Co-operative movement, we will develop a cooperative and community-led housing strategy to support this sector to identify new funding sources and we will support and encourage the

development of Community Land Trusts, and embed the lessons from Councils where this model has been successfully implemented.

We will also work with Councils and housing associations to make sure our existing stock of social homes are safe, warm and at a higher energy efficient standard. We will also work to ensure that they are early signatories of our West Midlands Renters' Charter.

We will campaign for local first time buyers to get the first opportunity to secure homes in new housing schemes with a government-backed mortgage guarantee scheme.

We will work with Councils to ensure there is a consistent offer for care leavers across the region, including acting as a guarantor for care leavers in private rented accommodation.

To keep bills down and save energy we will upgrade existing homes to make them more energy efficient by installing energy-saving measures such as loft insulation. This will begin with vulnerable groups and with the backing of a Labour Government mean that everyone has a safe and warm home.

Tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers will be a core aim of my mayoralty. I will work with the Combined Authority Homelessness taskforce and local Councils to make sure that everyone has a bed at night and offer increased support to the most vulnerable in our society.

The pandemic's "Everyone In" programme shows us what's possible when we work together.

We will work with all seven Councils to get everyone in during cold weather by making sure the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol is available across the whole West Midlands.

We will campaign for further devolution and strategic planning powers across the West Midlands, which we will use responsibly and democratically. We will work with a new generation of locally led development corporations, to put construction of social and genuinely affordable homes at the heart of our plans.

We will support Councils to increase their powers to implement Compulsory Purchasing Orders on under-utilised sites.

We will fast track developments where affordable homes are prioritised, especially high-density housing on brownfield sites.

We will work with partners to prioritise sites close to existing transport hubs.

We will introduce a West Midlands living rent programme which can be topped up by devolved funding.

We will invest in and support planning and support environmental health teams in our Councils to speed processes up to get homes built, ensure standards are high and that there is meaningful enforcement.

PUT MORE MONEY BACK IN YOUR POCKET

Pledges

- **Every decision we take will be based on if it helps working families through this Conservative-made cost-of-living crisis.**

As a poverty fighting Mayor, we will introduce a specific target on the Combined Authority to reduce poverty and increase well-paid jobs above the real living wage.

- **I will be the Mayor who fights for well paid jobs and stands up for those struggling to pay the bills.**

We will start a West Midlands Jobs and Welfare Hub to help people into work and make sure those out of work are getting all the support they need. This will offer careers advice and support, and include a guaranteed work experience offer.

- **We will help to roll out breakfast clubs to support our kids and introduce a £1 million Mayor's community fund to help struggling community groups across the West Midlands.**

We will work with Councils, businesses, and the voluntary sector to fund breakfast clubs in primary schools and tackle holiday hunger.

The Tories' mis-management of the economy and failure to develop clean and cheap renewable homegrown power for our region, have led to soaring bills. Too many people are struggling to heat their homes. This must change.

The precariousness of our energy market combined with the climate crisis means that the change has to incorporate a transition to a green renewable supply to enable good jobs, warm our homes and to cut fuel bills.

The proposals from the Labour party for a pathway to clean power by 2030 demonstrate clear leadership in the fight to tackle climate change.

We will lower bills, introduce thousands of green jobs for the future, for plumbers, builders and installers, and safeguard our future energy security.

I welcome Labour's commitment to invest in clean energy projects up and down the country. I will lobby for the West Midlands to get its fair share of investment allowing expansion of community owned energy to make sure that local people have a stake in energy production in our area.

OUR ENVIRONMENT AND TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

Quite simply we have to go green quicker, for our planet, to create new well paid jobs, and to warm our homes more cheaply.

We will bring forward the region's current 2041 net zero pledge. This isn't just because it's the right thing to do for our planet, but it is essential if we are to attract the well-paid jobs of the future, cut fuel bills, warm our homes, and secure better jobs. Under the Conservative Mayor and a Conservative government, the West Midlands is losing the race for green jobs.

A 2022 Government league table report of the 9 English regions on generating renewable energy placed the West Midlands at 8th. Partnering with Councils, local communities, local private sector companies, we will reinvigorate proposals to develop a regional energy supply, with solar panels on domestic and commercial roofs throughout the region.

We will also provide seed funding to local community energy projects.

We will redouble efforts to deliver a battery factory to support the motor sector and work with Councils and employers to increase electric vehicle charging points. There won't be a West Midlands car industry as we know it today in a decade if we don't, and we'll miss out on thousands of other jobs if we don't win the race to net zero.

We will campaign for funds to offer incentives to the West Midlands independent small business sector to transition to greener industries.

Electric vehicles are not the only alternative to fossil fuels. We will work with industry to innovate and develop other technologies, such as hydrogen, which is already powering buses in Coventry. Our region has led the way in transport solutions in the past, and it will again.

Quality of life, health and well-being and the environment are high on our agenda. Access to nature for all West Midlands residents will play a vital role in our plans, working with Councils, nature charities and community groups.

We will enhance biodiversity and our natural environment. This will include our rivers, such as the Sherborne, Tame, Rea and our precious canals are vital blue corridors for our wellbeing, to keep active, and support biodiversity and nature recovery.

We will hold water companies to account to keep our rivers clean from sewage and protect wildlife through additional scrutiny and effective partnership work.

We will work with Councils and environmental charities to set up a West Midlands Flood resilience taskforce to protect our homes and businesses from flooding.

We will collaborate with Councils and partners to explore whether there is appetite to work together on a spatial plan for the West Midlands. This will include the ambition set out in the West Midlands National Park's plans.

We will work with our farmers to support sustainable farming, environmental protections and campaign for high animal welfare standards.

We will work with Councils to reduce residual waste, increase recycling, introduce food waste collection, share best practice from across the region and elsewhere to achieve environmental goals.

TACKLING THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

We will work with our Councils to support those struggling and in difficulty.

We will work with Councils, businesses, and the voluntary sector to fund breakfast clubs in primary schools and tackle holiday hunger.

There should be no need for food banks. We will do everything we can to prevent people from going hungry.

We will create a Food Bank Forum which will work to achieve food security for everyone, signpost funds, offer mutual support and look at different models of food provision such as food pantries, and community kitchens.

We will expand on Birmingham's Warm Welcome spaces as a model across the region.

Community groups and volunteers are society's safety net. We will make cutting poverty a key priority of the Combined Authority and help small local charities, social entrepreneurs and voluntary groups to access funding, expertise and support.

Currently community groups are plugging the holes in the government's safety net and people are falling through the cracks.

We will ensure that the West Midlands secures its fair share of grant and lottery funds.

We will work with a Labour Government and our Councils to reform childcare and pioneer a universal offer for the West Midlands. The first 1000 days are crucial for young people, we need to give them the best possible support.

We will support new and existing cooperative financial services, such as credit unions and building societies, and support co-ops, Small and Medium sized Enterprises and community businesses to bid for procurement contracts.

We will work with financial organisations to reduce the barriers to cooperative capital raising.

GETTING OUR FAIR SHARE

We have a Conservative Mayor who is content with the West Midlands getting second best and has been silent on the biggest issues we face – the cost of living crisis and fourteen years of funding cuts to public services.

Our Conservative Mayor also rolled over under pressure from his own Government over HS2 and accepted a deal that breaks his and his government's manifesto promises.

We will fight to reverse cuts to West Midlands public services and will not rest until our transport plans are funded in full.

PRIDE IN OUR PLACE, DEMOCRACY AND INCLUSION

Nobody and nowhere left behind.

As Mayor I will bring the region together. No one will be left out. I will champion diversity and work with faith groups and all communities to make sure that everyone in our region feels that they belong and can make the most of their lives here. Equality, diversity and inclusion will run through all my work.

For many people, faith and their expression of their faith is core to their identity. Faith and community groups play a vital support role across the region. I will support and build on existing work, ensuring access to funding and sharing of best practice.

We are the region of Shakespeare, Tolkien, George Eliot, Elgar, Two Tone, Heavy Metal, and Bhangra.

Arts and culture are a precious part of our region's spiritual and civic infrastructure and which cannot be sustained by precarious, part-time, semi-professional work forces. We need to ensure that there is fair pay, good working conditions, and career progression. The creative arts also play a vital role in our region's wellbeing and pride and should be celebrated and supported.

We need the ability to make films and television programmes here. We will campaign for a fair deal from the BBC and

other broadcasters for our region to protect jobs and retain creative talent here.

We will support the night time economy and our live performance venues, cinemas, and clubs across the region such as the successful refurbishment of Wolverhampton Halls.

Too many of our pubs are being lost forever following the challenges of Covid, the cost of living crisis and inflation. They are community assets and we need a region-wide register to create a pubs and hospitality strategy to make sure that as many venues as possible are protected and businesses are supported to thrive.

Community groups often lack the space to get together whilst many community spaces are under-utilised or are under threat. We will develop a community space strategy and back campaigns, such as Save Birmingham and Save Station Street, to list Assets of Community Value to safeguard our creative arts, heritage and cultural spaces.

We know how important access to green and blue spaces is to people's health and wellbeing. We will work with environmental charities to value and protect our rivers, canals and open spaces and campaign for proper government funding to support assets which belong to all of us and make sure everyone has access to enough green space.

It is often said that we are a nation of animal lovers, but sadly some people don't treat animals well. We will campaign to strengthen animal protection laws and work with the police and our Councils to punish animal cruelty. We will also implement a renters' charter to include support for renters with pets who are often discriminated against by landlords.

We will continue to make the West Midlands an international destination for major sporting events building on the Invictus Games bid and the 2026 European Athletics Championships, but this will not be at the expense of grassroots sports and will include improved cycling facilities.

We will aim to double the size of the co-operative sector in the West Midlands and

pioneer new forms of community ownership: energy. We will support community ownership within house building too.

PUBLIC HEALTH

People in some parts of our region can expect to live 10 years longer than people in other parts.

We want to improve health outcomes for all and close health inequality gaps. We will work with our Councils, charities and the health and care system, for the West Midlands to become a Marmot region, and make sure everyone living here has access to the healthcare and support they need, when they need it.

We need transformation within Mental Health care for adults and children and young people. Too many people are only able to access mental health support when there is a crisis, and even that is patchy and not sustained. We will work with the education system, NHS, police and Councils to introduce mental health support workers in every school and to vastly increase mental health provision for adults.

We will reform public services and use our convening and communications powers to take an all agency approach to ensure that there is coordination between the public sector and community groups. This will enable us to support the most vulnerable people in our region, and help them thrive.

FAITH IN OUR DEMOCRACY

I pledge to work with and for all the people of the West Midlands. Too many have lost trust in our political system due to partygate and cronyism. I pledge to uphold the highest standards to restore trust in public life.

I pledge to be accessible, visible and accountable and have bases outside of Birmingham, in Coventry and the Black Country.

I will run regular Mayor's Question Times, and work from all our towns and cities using public offices to make sure every area is accounted

for and that we are using our existing resources efficiently.

I will ensure that public board meetings are accessible for all and held in all our areas, from community centres, to public buildings and local venues.

We will review how the Combined Authority works with our Councils to increase accountability.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

There is a lack of long-term, strategic, connected thinking that is holding us back. The purpose of a Combined Authority is to work as a team with our Councils to set and deliver on the right priorities together and work closely with other public bodies, and partners on behalf of our people and communities.

But this is not what we've had since the Combined Authority came into being.

A different, joined-up approach could make a huge difference to this region. The Combined Authority will support capacity and enhance the skills we need for effective collaboration, data analysis and strategic planning.

We will introduce a rigorous focus on delivery at the Combined Authority and ensure that best practice is shared for the benefit of everyone. The Combined Authority will only be the lead where a project can't be done locally, and ensure that there is a modern constitution to support this.

We will work in partnership to promote our region internationally, to rebuild relationships with our twinned cities and other partners around the world, and build trade links and make connections based on the diaspora communities that we are lucky to have here.

GETTING OUR FAIR SHARE AND FUNDING OUR PLANS

The West Midlands is missing out on our fair share of government funds, for example in transport. We will lobby hard for the West Midlands to get its fair share of monies from the central government.

We will simplify the process for the Combined Authority to make funds more flexible and accessible.

We will not add to your taxes.

We will fight to reverse cuts to West Midlands' crumbling public services, such as our NHS and police and campaign for renewal. We will not rest until our region's transport plans are funded in full.

We have a failing Conservative Mayor who over promises and under delivers, who's content for the people of the West Midlands to get second best and has been silent on the biggest issues we face - the cost of living crisis and fourteen years of funding cuts to public services.

We won't rest till we have the same powers as London and the same levels of funding as the best funded areas.

