



Better Value
for Money



Better Openness
and Transparency



Better
Community Relations



Better
Community Planning



Better Support
for Local Businesses

Alliance Demand Better.

Alliance Party Local Government Manifesto 2019



Better value for money, ensuring your rates benefit the whole community and are not carved-up for political favourites.

[Page 4](#)



Better openness and transparency, so you know how your rates are spent and who influences decisions.

[Page 5](#)



Better community relations, with a focus on diversity, respect, inclusion and equality.

[Page 6](#)



Better community planning, with greater focus on sustainability, the environment, health and well-being, and families.

[Page 10](#)



Better support for local businesses, delivery of new regeneration powers, revitalising high streets, plus developing tourism and the creative industries.

[Page 14](#)

Leader's Foreword

Alliance's record in local government is strong: driving openness and transparency; challenging sectarian carve-ups; promoting a shared society, diversity, good relations and equality; supporting economic development; protecting our environment; and creating safer communities.

That delivery is underpinned by our commitment to ensuring **value for money**, so you can have confidence that your money and council resources are used as efficiently as possible to **deliver better** on your behalf.

In these council elections, it is crucial that we focus on ensuring that the one tier of government which is currently working continues to deliver, and that we increase the influence of Alliance across local government to make it deliver better for everyone.

Every election depends on having both the **right policies** and the **right people** to deliver for you, with you, over the next four years.

In this local government manifesto, we have set out our party-wide **council policy priorities** for the next five year term. We have focused specifically on those matters over which local government has direct control and influence. These broad policies are also supplemented and complemented by priorities specific to your council area and neighbourhood, which you will hear more about directly from your local Alliance candidates.

This isn't a stand-alone document: to get the fullest picture of how **Alliance plans to deliver better**, it should be read in conjunction with our **Westminster and Assembly manifestos**, which set out our policies for each of those tiers of Government, including key Alliance commitments such as: reform of our health service; providing integrated and sustainable education and housing; a fairer system of welfare and benefits to protect vulnerable people; strategic investment in infrastructure; and enhanced environmental protection.

It also needs to be informed by **Bridges Not Borders**, our Brexit policy paper and both **Next Steps Forward** and **Better Government**, which set out our proposals to reform and restore the Assembly and Executive at Stormont, all available on our website www.allianceparty.org.





Alliance candidates are regular people, representing the broadest cross-section of society - people who believe their community deserves better.

The **people** who want to deliver this programme will already be known to you. **Your Alliance candidates** represent the broadest cross-section of society you will find in any local party. They are regular people, who live and work in their community, who share the same hopes and fears for the future as their neighbours, and who not only understand but share the frustration and anger that people feel with the state of politics right now.

They are people who believe rightly that our community deserves better.

What sets them apart, what makes them special, isn't a privileged background or powerful connections, but their determination to not just **believe that better is possible**, but to step up, roll their sleeves up, and **do the work to deliver it**.

Because better is possible. But it isn't inevitable.

We have to **make it happen**. We have to **choose it**.

Demand it. Vote Alliance.

We will **Deliver Better**.



Naomi Long MLA

Leader of the Alliance Party

Better value for money, ensuring your rates benefit the whole community and are not carved-up for political favourites.

Getting better value for money for everyone across Northern Ireland guides Alliance councillors in their work and underpins all of our policy commitments. Better value for money is not as simple as saving money – for example:

- Spending money to improve recycling facilities will provide an environmental benefit for future generations, as well as saving councils money on landfill and incineration.
- Investing in transparency may involve a council incurring costs in the short term to livestream council meetings or even in recording and publishing meeting minutes. This is fundamental in ensuring accountability in council spending. How can we ensure rate-payers' money is spent responsibly, if we don't have openness around its allocation and the council's decision-making?
- Investing in schemes to improve connectivity between rural and urban areas, and spending more money to carry out more meaningful consultations with communities on council projects might have an additional cost, but the benefit is community cohesion and better service provision.
- Innovative and creative attempts to rejuvenate high streets and support local businesses may involve council spending, but in turn creates jobs and boosts the local economy.

Better value for money is about how we spend your money, using it to benefit everyone in the community and in a way that supports efficient, joined-up delivery across the different tiers of government.

Living in a divided society has been estimated to cost Northern Ireland around £1 billion per year. Alliance believes in creating opportunities to ensure that facilities are shared and accessible for everyone, rather than duplicating services in every place. We support the added value of creating a more shared society.





Better openness and transparency, so you know how your rates are spent and who influences decisions.



Transparency

Alliance stands for politics which is open, transparent and accountable, at all levels of Government. We want to see:

- All council meeting minutes and audio recordings available online, including working groups.
- Webcasts of full council meetings.
- Councillor expense claim forms, declaration of interest forms and attendance statistics on council websites.

We are determined to deliver independent audits so that ratepayers know their money is being spent fairly and openly.

We will also push for the consistent use of standing orders in council meetings and for debate that is fair and respectful.



Planning

The devolution of planning powers to local councils has overhauled the planning process. We supported these reforms as they ensure that decisions are locally accountable. However, planning decisions must also be transparent. We want to see:

- All decisions being made in an open manner – with our councillors making their decisions based on evidence not politics.
- Better access to information for the public, including council planning offices providing an easy guide for applicants, objectors and supporters.
- Votes of all members of planning committees to be recorded and published online.



Funding

Councils have a vital role in administering and providing funding streams which can invigorate local economies and provide opportunities for communities. We will:

- End party-political carve-ups of funding streams and unaccountable allocations of large sums of ratepayers' money by improving transparency and capping ad hoc funding streams.
- Ensure funding is via open applications with clear criteria and measurable objectives in order to deliver value for money.

Better community relations, with a focus on diversity, respect, inclusion and equality.



Shared Future

Alliance believes council decisions should promote sharing and integration, rather than division and separation to ensure our council areas are open and accessible to everyone. We will:

- Support the maintenance of existing shared spaces and promote the development of new ones, ensuring that council facilities are open to all sections of the community, breaking down divisions and reducing the need for duplication of services.
- Work to introduce “shared future-proofing”. This would involve a formal assessment of each policy made by councils to analyse whether it harms or helps our move towards integration, including the impact on sharing space, reducing tensions and removing the physical or perceived manifestations of division.
- Improve connectivity between rural to urban and rural to rural areas to enable a stronger and more diverse community.



All council decisions should promote sharing and integration, rather than division and separation.



Equality and Diversity

Alliance will promote equality for all, irrespective of gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religious belief, race and ethnicity, and political opinion. We will ensure:

- All public realm works deliver full accessibility in all areas, including footpaths, dropped kerbs and road crossings. This should be done through co-production and co-design with service-users.
- Council facilities are accessible to all and councils work with businesses to provide access for all.
- Changing Places toilets are included in all our council properties and access is open to all people with limited mobility and disabilities.
- All council communications are provided in alternative formats and seek the provision of sign language in public-facing council facilities.
- Autism, ADHD and learning disability friendly services are provided and awareness is promoted amongst council employees.
- Effective and meaningful consultation happens between the council and all stakeholders, paying particular attention to Section 75 groups and newcomers in particular, recognising the cultural barriers which may have prevented such consultation in the past.
- The improved participation in public life for people with disabilities, LGBTQ people, women and ethnic minorities.
- Consider how best to develop or strengthen Traveller Forums to consider issues relating to Travellers, including accommodation.
- Support for businesses that provide sustainable employment for people with disabilities.
- In light of our ongoing commitment to equal marriage, we will continue to push for legislative change at the Assembly and want to see councils ensure their area is welcoming to LGBTQ people and supporting efforts to eradicate homophobia.

Alliance will promote equality for all, ensuring your council works for everyone.



Community Safety

Alliance has a strong commitment to the rule of law and believes that a shared future can only be achieved when local communities feel connected to and confident in their police force. We believe:

- Councillors have a leadership role in promoting the need to uphold the law and to ensure that policing is local.
- Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) can play a vital role in building relations with and confidence in police at local level so they need to be reflective of local communities and responsive to community needs.
- Councils have an active role in implementing the Executive's plan to tackle paramilitary activity, by proactively engaging with all relevant statutory bodies and community organisations as part of the Community Planning process and adopting a protocol for engagement with those associated with paramilitary organisations.
- Councils have a duty to consult with communities, rather than just community organisations and should implement a zero-tolerance approach towards paramilitaries and community gate-keepers.
- The reduction of hate crime and anti-social behaviour should be prioritised by developing city, rural and neighbourhood community safety programmes.
- Road safety in our communities is crucial and we continue to support the introduction of 20mph zones and traffic calming measures in appropriate areas.



Councillors have a leadership role in promoting the need to uphold the law and to ensure policing is local.



Shared Spaces

Alliance wants to see well-designed public spaces where leisure and social activities thrive in cities, towns and villages, as well as arts and leisure provision that reflects the needs of residents. We will:

- Continue to support high-quality, modern and affordable leisure facilities, including leisure centres and other recreational facilities.
- Guarantee charges for the use of council facilities are affordable, fair and proportionate and that childcare facilities are available where possible.
- Introduce provision for one free leisure activity a year for each person in the council area.
- Continue to make the case for sustainable funding for the arts sector and to champion programmes for culture and arts organisations so they can develop.
- Ensure councils take the lead in developing festival programmes to celebrate diversity, revitalise town centres, support tourism and encourage the creative industries.
- Seek to mitigate against negative impacts of new road closure legislation on community events.
- Continue to pursue a bonfire protocol which facilitates community traditions in a safe, respectful and lawful manner.
- Support the provision of dual language street signage, where demand from local residents is demonstrated through transparent council procedures.
- Ensure local connections are appropriately recognised in the naming of council facilities without memorialising or political posturing: put simply, we believe council facilities should be named in a manner which maintains neutrality and reflects locality.

Alliance wants to see well-designed public spaces, that reflects the needs of residents.



Better community planning, with greater focus on sustainability, the environment, health and well-being, and families.

Community Planning

Alliance believes that councils are at the centre of our communities and should use their community planning powers to ensure that public services work together to deliver for local people, joining up the different tiers of Government. We believe:

- Community planning should always support and promote sharing, sustainability and the environment.
- In rural areas in particular, integrating community transport and more traditional public transport options is vital, as is the roll-out of full fibre broadband across all council areas.
- Councils should consider ambitious and creative ways to produce the outcomes promised in community plans, working with social enterprises and development trusts.
- Planning powers should be used to develop policy to promote sharing, integration and green spaces.

Environment

Alliance is a pro-environment party. We believe that agriculture, biodiversity and animal welfare are part of our natural heritage. We will:

- Protect and increase our green spaces and woodland.
- Measure air quality in our local areas and develop action plans to ensure we maximise the health and ecological benefits of clean outdoor air.
- Prioritise animal welfare and seek to tackle cruelty against animals. We want to see improved powers for councils to deal with animal welfare issues such as wildlife crime, puppy farms and the use of snares. We remain committed to a ban on hunting with dogs.
- Continue to push for a ban on circuses with wild animals and will ensure they are unable to use council land.
- Robustly challenge and seek innovative solutions to persistent public nuisances, such as dog-fouling and fly-tipping.





Sustainability and Recycling

Reducing plastic use and carbon emissions, and improving recycling are essential to protect our environment. Despite improvements in recent years, recycling collection rates remain lower than EU targets across Northern Ireland. We will:

- Recognise the council's responsibility to ensure that it is as easy as possible for people to recycle and this should take into account access to transport and mobility needs.
- Drive co-ordination of waste management across council areas and within council areas, removing confusing rules and barriers to recycling in order to provide a standardised and accessible service to rate-payers and drive up recycling rates.
- Push for increased opening hours of recycling facilities, including Sundays.
- We want to see councils become Carbon Neutral, recognising their responsibility to be leaders in sustainability and recycling, and setting an example for other businesses and households in the district to follow.
- We will ensure council facilities end their use of single-use plastics by 2022 and should consider how they can incentivise businesses in their areas to do the same.



Sustainable Transport

Alliance wants to see transport infrastructure that works for everyone, whilst balancing the need for investment in public transport and sustainability. We will:

- Push for councils to be leaders in sustainable transport, ensuring meeting venues are as accessible as possible by public transport.
- Seek to promote and expand Park and Ride facilities, taking cars out of towns and freeing town centres to be active travel areas (walking, cycling and public transport), in a way which doesn't create overflow parking problems in residential areas.
- Lobby for councils to be given responsibility for on-street parking so that they can take a more strategic approach to parking which takes into account the number of disabled parking bays and the number of electric car charge points required, as well as issues around residents parking and problem parking on pavements.
- Work with the Department for Infrastructure and Translink to improve space, lighting and safety at all rural bus stops to enable and encourage residents to access and use public transport as an alternative to car use.

Active Travel

Alliance is fully committed to the delivery of first class integrated, sustainable and active travel for the people of Northern Ireland and to realising the multiple health, environmental, social and economic benefits of cycling in particular. We will:

- Work with the Department of Infrastructure to deliver safe and convenient cycling lanes.
- Push for the development and realisation of the health, rural regeneration and tourism potential of Greenways across the region and, where possible, with connectivity to the rest of the island.
- Create public, secured cycle parking areas and ensure hire bikes are available in all major towns, close to or in public transport hubs.



Alliance is fully committed to the delivery of first class integrated, sustainable and active travel for Northern Ireland.





Alliance believes that council service provisions must have the well-being of communities at its heart.

Community Well-being

Alliance believes that council service provision must have the well-being of communities at its heart in order to improve the lives of its residents and develop vibrant and welcoming neighbourhoods and communities. We will:

- Push for increased park provision, including play parks, dog-friendly areas and outdoor gyms.
- Introduce longer opening hours for parks, especially in the darker winter months, with appropriate lighting to ensure people feel safe using them.
- Support local senior citizens' groups in representing the needs of their members and work to eradicate loneliness and isolation through the provision of council services.
- Deliver adequate allotment provision which matches demand.
- Improve the range of leisure activities available to young people, ensuring all young people have access to youth provision, especially those who may not traditionally engage with council services.
- Establish shadow youth councils in each area so that young people can help shape council policies and also provide a channel to councils on the issues which affect them most.
- Support schemes and actions which ensure council facilities are safe, welcoming and accessible for all, including:
 - Breastfeeding Welcome – schemes should be advertised widely and councils should work with local business organisations to directly facilitate public breastfeeding.
 - Women's Aid Safe Places – council facilities should be 'Safe Places' where staff are aware of domestic violence and can signpost victims to appropriate services.
 - Dementia Friendly Communities – councils should take a lead in ensuring those suffering from dementia feel included and involved in their community and are able to lead fulfilling and independent lives, as far as possible and for as long as possible.
 - Period Poverty – councils should provide sanitary products on their premises in order to tackle period poverty.
 - Parent Champions – councils should promise to seek the opinion of parents explicitly when consulting on services for children and young people.

Better support for local businesses, delivery of new regeneration powers, revitalising high streets, plus developing tourism and the creative industries.



Business and Tourism

Alliance believes that we need to support local businesses in order to generate our own wealth and create local jobs and a thriving local economy. We will:

- Work to develop council strategies to rejuvenate high streets and town centres, including introducing Sunday trading where there's demand.
- Bring in new and innovative models of funding and investment to our cities, towns and villages, regenerating our town centres and supporting local business associations.
- Support and develop economic hubs within council areas, using community planning to link small businesses and social enterprises with further education colleges.
- Establish an integrated strategy for sustainable tourism, which recognises local strengths and assets that can be developed and projected to a wider audience.
- Reform our outdated licensing laws in order to develop a modern approach that meets our leisure, tourism and economic needs.
- Push for an independent review of the non-domestic rating system, with a specific focus on how to better support local businesses, start-ups and SMEs.
- Deliver the Belfast Region City Deal and the continued collaboration between the six councils involved.
- Work to further develop the proposal for a Derry-Londonderry Region City Deal and explore the potential for inclusion of other areas in city deals.
- Councils should maximise opportunities for social enterprises, considering social value in the tendering and commissioning process. We also support the introduction of a Social Value Act for Northern Ireland.



We need to support local businesses in order to create a thriving local economy.



Local councils are best placed to deliver local solutions on town, city and area-based regeneration.

Regeneration

We believe that local councils are best placed to deliver local solutions on town, city and area-based regeneration.

- We want to see regeneration powers urgently devolved to councils and their use monitored thereafter.
- Councils should become “one-stop-shops” for regeneration and development, ensuring targeting social need is central in decision-making.



Brexit

Alliance is a pro-European party. The European Union brings enormous benefits to our society, and underpins our economy and peace process. Our society only works on the basis of sharing and interdependence. Yet, Brexit entails new divisions, barriers and friction. It poses a huge range of economic, social, environmental, security and political challenges for Northern Ireland.

- Alliance will continue to oppose Brexit and to stand up for Northern Ireland, ensuring the region is prepared for all scenarios.
- Alliance councillors will work proactively with council officials, other layers of government, local businesses and other stakeholders to ensure that sufficient planning and preparation are in place in each of the District Councils.



The European Union brings enormous benefits to our society, and underpins our economy and peace process.



Alliance

Local Government Manifesto 2019

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