



**Wootton Wawen Ward District & Arden Division
County Cllr. Ian Shenton**

Proud to represent Bearley, Claverdon, Earlswood, Henley in
Arden, Langley, Mappleborough Green, Preston Bagot, Tanworth
in Arden, Ullenhall, Wolverton, Wootton Wawen
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District & County Councillor's report for Meeting 17th March 2025

Merger of Stratford District Council with Warwickshire County Council – There was a delay in announcing who would be in the first wave of unitaries, but we eventually heard that SDC and Warwickshire were not in the first wave of local authorities to become a unitary authority. Most of those that are in the first wave are from the south, these being

- East Sussex and West Sussex
- Essex and Thurrock
- Hampshire and the Isle of White
- Norfolk and Suffolk

It is likely that many more will be selected next year, and, in the meantime, we have been told to submit our first outline plan by the 21st March 2025 and a detailed plan by November 2025.

It is obvious that not all of the districts and boroughs want to remain as part of Warwickshire with the Lib Dems at Stratford and the Greens at Warwick preferring a north Warwickshire and a South Warwickshire unitary and are relying on the fact that the Devolution White Paper says that in exceptional circumstances that this will be allowed but it is also clear that the ideal size is at least on with 500,000 residents. Therefore, they do not and are unlikely to qualify or be allowed to go ahead. This split would not serve the residents well because all services in Warwickshire are delivered locally and get the benefit of economies of scale. Unpicking Adult Social care, Children's Care, Home 2 School transport, SEND, The Fire Service and Pensions funds would be costly and only benefit the politicians who seek to remain in control of an authority.

Interestingly The Lib Dems, Greens, Labour, the independents at County all voted last week to try and preserve Warwickshire identity as whole, despite representations at the meeting from the districts and boroughs.

My own view is that we have to find the best solution for the residents of Warwickshire, and I want to preserve Warwickshire as a County, I am proud to live in Warwickshire and I don't want us to be subsumed into another authority. Warwickshire has over 600,000 residents and therefor is the governments ideal size.

The debates at both SDC and County reflected the split between those who want the best for Warwickshire residents by creating a new unitary council using the 5 Districts and boroughs and County as the basis and those that are saying they can get a better outcome by merging with another authority without providing any evidence of who that would be with and why it would be a better fit.

I have volunteered to be on the working group that works up the outline case by 21st March 2025 as I am fascinated by this and honestly believe that our residents will be better served by a Warwickshire unitary.

As a final thought on this, it should be remembered that a new Warwickshire unitary would be created, not that Warwickshire County Council would take over. This is a chance to build a new organisation using the best practices and people from all the 5 districts and boroughs and the County, rationalising the systems and getting even better value for money for our residents.

I will update you next month on progress.

More details on the white paper can be found by clicking here [English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper) . or by pasting this link into your browser - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>

Council tax – At a full council meeting it was agreed that the County Council would increase the County Council tax burden on residents by 4.99% (2.99% general increase plus 1.99% ringfenced for Adult Social Care) – It is clear that all local authorities are under financial pressure especially upper tier authorities such as the county council due to increased costs caused in part by the increase in National Insurance and the greater demand on adult social care (ASC) services. ASC, Children's care, Home to school transport and special education needs and disabilities (SEND) costs account for around 70% of expenditure. Unfortunately, the government have decided to await the publication of yet another report which is not due until 2028. Many authorities are struggling with costs and have taken advantage of what is known as the Statutory Over ride . This is where over spending is carried forward into the next financial year, effectively making a local authority look solvent when it's



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not. The government have no solution to this issue currently so the overspends may continue until the money runs out and local authorities actively declare themselves bankrupt (known as a s114 notice).

District News

South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP) Preferred Options Consultation - The Preferred Options eight-week consultation period ran until Friday 7th March 2025 and included a range of draft policies and draft policy directions.

An important issue that evolved followed questioning by me at a briefing for Councillors, namely that the SWLP team and Head of Planning are considering that all developments over 500 dwellings should also have space for the Gypsyhttps://vtm.be/ & Traveller Community. Whether this is adjacent to or a separate site near to the new development is yet to be decided.

The Preferred Options document identifies 24 potential Strategic Growth Locations and 12 potential New Settlement locations, which are an indication of where SDC considers large-scale strategic growth may be best be located. Overall, the growth locations identified would accommodate well more than South Warwickshire's housing and employment needs, and it is not expected that all these locations will be allocated in the SWLP.

Community Climate Fund Phase Two - More climate change cash available - Sports Clubs are now eligible to apply for grants from the District Council's Community Climate Change Fund, which has just reopened for new applications. Projects enhancing biodiversity will also now be eligible from the Fund, which has been renamed the Community Climate and Nature Fund. Among the 10 successful applicants in the first phase of the £100,000 Fund were Great Alne Parish Council with £4,000 to develop a community flooding scheme, Snitterfield Village Hall with £5,000 to install an air-source heat pump and Bearley Parish Council, which got £2,000 for LED streetlight bulbs. [You can view some case studies of the successful projects here.](#) A total of £55,863 is now available to successful applicants in phase two of the Fund. [Applications will open from the 10th of January. Find out more here.](#)

The District Council will also be hosting a Webinar Event to provide interested parties with the opportunity to formulate project ideas and obtain detailed guidance on the application process. To register your interest to attend the event, please contact climate.emergency@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Rough Sleeper Count - Stratford-on-Avon District Council is required by Central Government to carry out an annual rough sleeper count on a specific night during October/November. The most recent count took place on the night/early morning of 6 and 7 November 2024, in conjunction with partner agencies via an early morning street count and an intelligence gathering meeting. Despite efforts in the District to reduce rough sleeping the number of people reporting sleeping outside increased during 2024, which reflects national trends. Numbers of people rough sleeping have increased since 2022 across all regions of England.

This year's count concluded there were 10 rough sleepers outside on the selected night. From a height of 17 in 2017, this compares with 10 in 2018, 6 in 2019, 4 in 2020, 3 in 2021, 4 in 2022, and 2 in 2023.

The District Council continues to invest in measures to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping and reduce the length of time people spend on the streets, via its housing strategy, its work with partner agencies including Spring and P3, and the work of its Housing Advice Team carrying out the Council's statutory functions under the homeless legislation. If anyone is concerned about someone, they believe to be rough sleeping in the district, they can report this via the Street Link website: www.streetlink.org.uk/. People who wish to donate in order to help those on the street can do so via 'Meaningful Change'.

Stratford-Upon-Avon Meaningful Change provides an alternative way for the public to give to people rough sleeping or begging. By donating to Meaningful Change, rather than directly to the person on the street, you can be sure your money will go towards making a *meaningful change*. The money is pooled and used to fund interventions designed to help people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness make a meaningful change to their lives. You can donate via the Meaningful Change website - <https://meaningfulchange.org.uk/stratford/donate/>

There are various organisations in Stratford that can help and support those sleeping rough.

- P3 Charity: Intensive support to people in the district, and Housing Related support to over 25s in Warwickshire: <https://www.p3charity.org>



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- St Basils: housing-related floating support to those aged 16 to 25 in Warwickshire <https://stbasils.org.uk/get-help/>
- CGL: Drug and Alcohol Service Warwickshire <https://changegrowlive.org>
- Spring Housing: The Fred Winter Centre in Stratford-upon-Avon is managed by Spring and has accommodation units and a community hub supporting local people with a focus on housing plus a range of services which address homelessness and hardship - <https://fredwintercentre.org.uk/>
- Citizens Advice South Warwickshire: Self-help, telephone support, drop-in session and appointments are offered with support available at the district council offices and community advice locations in the district. www.citizensadvice.org.uk
- JobCentrePlus: Stratford-upon-Avon JobCentre Plus <https://www.jobcentreplusoffices.co.uk>

Property Flood Resilience Grant - Following widespread flooding from Storm Henk in January 2024, Ministers activated the Flood Recovery Framework to provide support to those affected. One of the schemes within this framework is the Property Flood Resilience (PFR) Grant that allows eligible residents to claim back for up to £5,000 of improvement works to their properties that will make them more resilient to flooding. The closing date for new applications is approaching on Monday 31st March 2025 and to ask for you to encourage any eligible residents from your parish that you are aware of to come forward and contact the Flood Risk Management team on stormhenkpfrgrant@warwickshire.gov.uk before it is too late.

Eligible residents are those that suffered internal property flooding during Storm Henk (2nd to 12th Jan 2024.)

Whilst the Flood Risk Management team have twice written out to the 106 eligible properties that they are aware of, uptake remains lower than hoped. A further letter detailing the closing date will be sent out in the coming days, alongside a post on the WCC social media pages.

Warwickshire Registration and Libraries services introduce new library membership opportunity for babies

- Parents and carers of newborns across the county will be offered a new opportunity to register their baby for a free library membership thanks to Warwickshire County Council's Libraries service and Registration service.

As part of a birth registration appointment currently in Warwickshire, Registrars gift BookTrust's Bookstart packs to new parents. These contain useful information about the benefits of reading books and sharing stories with their new baby from 0-12 months and include a free book and finger puppet to help parents get started.

In addition, Warwickshire Registration Services, in partnership with Warwickshire Libraries, offer parents the opportunity to sign-up for a free library membership at the same time, both for themselves and their newborn, at the birth registration appointment. Warwickshire Libraries have books suitable for parents to borrow and read to their babies in-person at a local library, to find through the online library catalogue, or by browsing the BorrowBox collection which includes a great range of eBooks and eAudiobooks. Babies listen to their parents' voices even before they're born, and so reading to them after they are born can be very comforting to hear these familiar voices and sounds. Reading together, even just a few words or talking about pictures in books, can help families to bond, develop babies' social, language and learning skills, and help establish a good bedtime routine. Warwickshire Libraries also deliver welcoming baby-friendly activity sessions. These include *Rhyme Time* with songs, rhyming words, and the opportunity for parents and carers to meet each other, along with *Dad and Me* sessions at Atherstone Library, which are sing-along-sessions for dads, granddads, and male carers. To find out which baby-friendly activities are happening at your local library, visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrensactivities.

Small works - Gully Cleaning and potholes – Please ensure that all gullies that need cleaning and potholes that need repairing are recorded on the County website using the link mentioned below.

Pothole repair funding

Warwickshire County Council is delighted to announce the continuation of funding for its highly cost-effective pothole repair service, ensuring that road maintenance remains top priority for 2025-26.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5971/warwickshire-s-roads-to-benefit-from-continued-pothole-repair-funding>

Potholes can be reported by residents which gives the team local intelligence and the most current picture of the state of the network locally. It also allows residents to chart the progress of the pothole they report i.e. if it has already been reported, if/



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when it will be fixed, when the job is completed. To report a pothole and chart its progress, these are the simple steps. • Go to warwickshire.gov.uk/potholes

- Click on 'Create an account'
- Add email address which will receive a verification code to enter • Once account active, potholes can be reported by putting in postcode or address
- Zoom in and see if it has already been reported. • Add a brief description and add an image (optional) • You can opt to receive email updates or simply log into account to chart progress

Let me know if you have any small roadworks, white lining, or Rights of Way issues I will investigate these for you and get a quote for any works that need to be conducted. [. To report a Highway fault, use this link https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/reportaproblem .](https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/reportaproblem)

POLICE - Please see below projected dates for our community engagement events. We will be adding more dates and locations to the list as dates are confirmed with venues.

- **Tanworth Village Hall**
- Tuesday 1st April - 11:00 - 12:00
- Thursday 8th May - 16:00 - 17:00
- Tuesday 10th June - 11:00 - 12:00

[For general vehicle crime advice please click here](#)

In an emergency call 999, for non-emergencies call 101

Police antisocial behaviour patrols - Warwickshire Police is conducting targeted patrols in hotspots to tackle antisocial behaviour. The Focusing on those locations aims to prevent crime in the specific areas and reduce overall crime levels in the wider area. Discover more about Op Resolve: <https://www.warwickshire.police.uk/police-forces/warwickshire-police/areas/warwickshire-police/campaigns/campaigns/2024/op-resolve/>

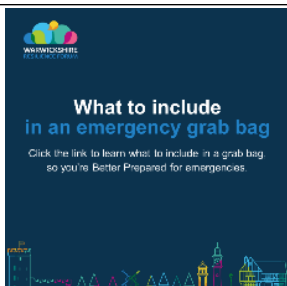
Instagram videos you can watch on Op Resolve and antisocial behaviour:

Home composting workshops - Why not find out more about the benefits of home composting for reducing waste in a series of new sessions this spring? There are four face-to-face home composting sessions taking place at venues across Warwickshire between March and May.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/green-waste/composting/6>

Hard to recycle items - Ensuring that all residents' waste finds its way into the correct recycling stream is a priority for Warwickshire County Council's Waste and Recycling Team. Find out more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6000/warwickshire-makes-it-easier-to-correctly-dispose-of-those-hard-to-recycle-items>

Love Food, Hate Waste - Discover some simple hacks, tips and guidance to make the most of your food at home. Find out why it's so crucial that we all do our bit to save our food from the bin - and protect our beautiful planet at the same time too. More: <https://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/>



Emergency grab bags - If you had to leave home for a few days in an emergency, would you know what to bring with you to keep your pet safe and healthy?
 Learn what to include in a 'grab bag' for pets, and become #BetterPrepared at <https://www.warwickshireresilienceforum.org/prepare/>