

District Councillor Report

The Budget and local government.

A general overview of the Government budget with regards to local government. The Chancellor announced that:

The LG DEL budget for 2025-26 will increase to £14.3 billion, which includes an additional £1.3 billion of new grant funding for local authority services including at least £600 million in new grant funding for social care. The Government needs to give clarity on whether councils will be protected from extra cost pressures from the increases to employer National Insurance contributions for directly employed and contracted out services.

There will be a Right to Buy reform, funding for potholes, childcare, SEND provision and places, affordable housing, as well as funding to prevent homelessness, and increases in the number of families in temporary accommodation and help to prevent rough sleeping. The government will set out further details through an upcoming local government finance policy statement.

Local authorities are expected to receive around £1.1 billion of new funding in 2025-26 through the implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme to improve recycling outcomes from January 2025, equivalent to a further c.1.6% real-terms increase in local government resources.

The government is working closely with local leaders on the upcoming English Devolution White Paper. This will set out the government's plans to widen devolution to more areas and deepen the powers of existing mayors and their combined authorities. We need clarity on how devolution will impact district/borough and county councils.

Most importantly for our rural areas, the government announced that they are investing over £500 million in 2025-26 to deliver Project Gigabit and Shared Rural Network to drive the rollout of digital infrastructure to underserved parts of the UK, including delivering full gigabit broadband coverage by 2030.

The chancellor has also announced that the government will provide an additional £100 million investment in cycling and walking infrastructure in 2025-26, to support Local Authorities to install cycling infrastructure and upgrade pavements and paths. Further, it will provide over £650 million of

funding for local transport in 2025-26 to ensure that transport connections improve in our towns, villages and rural areas as well as in our major cities. They will invest over £200 million in 2025-26 to accelerate EV chargepoint rollout, including funding to support local authorities to install on-street chargepoints across England. It will provide over £1 billion funding to support local areas and bus operators, in 2025-26, providing high quality bus services across the country. The government is extending the bus fare cap, which was due to end in December 2024. The new cap will run from January 2025 to December 2025 at the higher rate of £3.

And the government will provide a nearly 50% increase, on 2024-25, in funding for local roads maintenance. This will go further than the government's commitment to fix an additional one million potholes across England each year, investing almost £1.6 billion to maintain roads, an increase of £500 million on 2024-25.

Community Climate Change Fund Phase Two

In November 2023, Stratford-on-Avon's Community Climate Change Fund was established to aid initiatives from community groups, charities and Town and Parish Councils that address climate change in their communities.

Are you a community group or Parish Council with an idea for a green project? Contact us now to discuss your project idea!

Applications for Phase Two will open on 10th January 2025 and close on 10th February 2025.

The following groups will be able to apply for grant funding:

Town or Parish Councils

Formally constituted charity and community groups.

The CCCF will fund projects which meet one of the following criteria:

Projects which result in a direct reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

Projects which build resilience to the impacts of climate change

Projects which will result in research enabling access to more significant funding applications.

A total of £55,863 will be available to successful applicants.

Please email climate.emergency@stratford-dc.gov.uk so we can help you with your idea!

The State of the District Report: This report feeds into the district council's own budget preparation. A few notable points from the report include –

- The increasingly older demographic with almost half the population over 50 which is higher than for England as a whole. By 2041 it is projected that a third of residents in the district will be over 65, against a national

figure of a quarter for England. People are also living longer than ever before. These changes bring both challenges and opportunities for government and communities.

- House prices that are higher than the median for England or Warwickshire
- Rents that are the third highest in the West Midlands and which have increased by 13% since 2019. Renters of three bed properties are paying rents above the national average
- The rise in long-term vacant properties including in Housing Association ownership
- The housing mix of new build properties

The report has sectors on crime, employment, business and economy and poverty and health. There are some worrying figures about the rise in fuel poverty since 2020.

Assistance with your Bin Collection

An assisted collection service is available on request for residents who, due to age, disability, infirmity or a medical condition, are unable to present their wheeled bins / recycling boxes / sacks on the property boundary for collection. If another member of the household is able to place the receptacles on the boundary, then the property does not qualify for an assisted collection. Where an assisted collection is appropriate, the bins / boxes / sacks will be collected from an agreed point on the property. Please note that access must be granted to collection crews to ensure this service can be carried out effectively.

We routinely review the assisted collection service list to establish if circumstances have changed and whether households still qualify for the service.

If you feel you would qualify and benefit from this service, please apply online or get in touch using the contact details below.

Contact

Email: streetscene@stratford-dc.gov.uk

Telephone: 01789 260616

Help for Residents

As we step into the winter season, the excitement of festive activities can sometimes be overshadowed by challenges, especially for those facing health risks or financial pressures.

To support residents in staying safe, warm, and well this winter, Stratford-on-Avon District Council is working with Warwickshire County Council and partners to raise awareness of the information and advice available to help support those who may be particularly vulnerable during this time of year.

Residents who claim Pension Credit may also be able to get the Winter Fuel Payment and help with heating costs, as well as access to other financial support. The Council is also asking residents to check in with friends and family who may be entitled to Pension Credit and to support them with checking eligibility and making their application. [Find out more about Pension Credit eligibility here: https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility](https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/eligibility)

Winter's colder temperatures can heighten health risks and place extra strain on household budgets, often leading to anxiety that affects both physical and mental wellbeing. Over the winter months the Council will be signposting to a range of useful advice and information through its social media channels and website: <https://www.costoflivingwarwickshire.co.uk/>

Launched in 2022 www.costoflivingwarwickshire.co.uk/ was designed as a one-stop shop for practical and financial advice from county, district and borough councils and other partners. Recognising that many households continue to face financial pressures and other seasonal challenges, the website continues to be updated, helping residents navigate information and assist public services to signpost and advise those needing support.

For further information and links to resources, visit <https://www.costoflivingwarwickshire.co.uk/>

Home Energy Grants

Residents who do not use main gas to heat their home and have a household income of under £36,000 a year, regardless of any savings, and have an EPC for their home of D, E, F or G that they can apply for a Home Energy Grant. Please refer them to Act on Energy for advice.

<https://www.actonenergy.org.uk/>

Act on Energy operating hours are:

Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm

Call 0800 988 2881

Skills Escalator Funding

Funding is available to small and medium sized businesses or self-employed based in Warwickshire to apply for up to £750 training support per person to

upskill their employees. Courses need to be completed by 31/3/2025, and funding is paid upon completion of the course. This project is funded by the UK government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

To request an application form and for further information, email the Warwickshire Skills Hub at skillshub@warwickshire.gov.uk

District Council Newsletter

The district council has a regular digital newsletter for residents. There are also ongoing discussions to bring back the hardback View Magazine.

Details of how to sign up to the newsletter are on the district council website:

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/communications/email-newsletter.cfm>

Speeding

Warwickshire County Council has let me know that there is now a centralised reporting system to submit evidence of speeding/ speeding data, see link below:

<https://warksspeedconcerns.org/>

Any report made via this system is reviewed by the Warwickshire County Council road safety team who can then direct actions based on risk, impact etc., which could include immediate prevention activities such as community speed watch, education initiatives or SNT (police) speed checks, enforcement activity and long-term problem-solving initiatives such as road layout changes, changes in speed limits and so forth. So please do report incidents of speeding.

Have your say: Arts & Culture Strategy for Stratford-upon-Avon Town

The consultation is now open to have your say on a new Arts and Culture Strategy for Stratford-upon-Avon.

On behalf of the Town Centre Strategic Partnership Group, a team including Escape Arts, The Royal Shakespeare Company, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon BID, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Stratford Library, Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council, Stratford Town Trust and Warwickshire County Council, are creating an Arts and Culture Strategy for the town.

As part of this work they want to hear a wide cross section of views, to make

sure people who live, work and visit have the opportunity to take part and help shape the future for arts and culture in the town. This work is part of a broader review of the town.

To start the process, work began to map what activity was happening and future aspirations across the town. In June, the team held a workshop with 72 local, regional and national creative, civic, and community organisations represented focusing on what the vision and ambition for arts and culture was in the town.

The questions and findings from this event have now been developed into an online questionnaire for residents, young people, artists and businesses.

The team is seeking views and invite you to complete the survey, which can be answered in 5/10 minutes.

The consultation is now live: <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/arts-culture-strategy/>

The consultation runs to 30 November.

Once the consultation has taken place the data will be collated into a report, which will be used to develop the strategy.

The consultation is available at: <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/arts-culture-strategy/>

and is split into different groups:

- Residents: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/artsresidents>
- Artists: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/artartists>
- Young People: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/artyoungpeople>
- Businesses: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/artbusinesses>

For those who require an alternative format, paper copies and support will be available at Elizabeth House and Stratford-upon-Avon Library.

Finally...

As previously announced, I will have to stand down as your district councillor. This looks likely to be in May, which means the Welford on Avon by-election will coincide with the Warwickshire County Council elections. If anyone would like to know a bit more about the role of a district councillor please do get in touch. Or you can find out here:

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/council-democracy/be-a-councillor.cfm>

I look forward to spending more time in the constituency during the Christmas Parliamentary recess.

I wish everyone a very peaceful Christmas and a very good start to the New Year 2025!

Warmest wishes

Manuela

email: manuela.perteghella@stratford-dc.gov.uk

mob. 07870488071

Fb: <https://www.facebook.com/CllrManuelaPerteghellaWelford>