

Report from Your District Councillor

Cllr Manuela Perteghella

District Council Budget 2025/6

Stratford-on-Avon District Councillors have set the district element of the Council Tax at a meeting of the Council on Monday 24 February.

The amount residents will be asked to pay for a Band D property is £169.12, an increase of £5. This is an increase of 3.05%, which for an average home represents just an additional 42p per month to the District Council next year. Stratford-on-Avon remains a low-taxing authority, 18th lowest out of 164 district councils across the country in 2024/25.

Although **the District Council acts as the collecting agent for Council Tax, it** only receives 7.1% of the Council Tax paid by residents. Warwickshire County Council receives the lion's share of 76.6%, the Police 12.8% and Towns/Parishes 3.5%.

	2025/26	% Increase
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	£169.12	3.05%
Warwickshire County Council	£1,822.95	5.00%
Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner	£303.71	4.83%
Sub-total	£2,295.78	4.83%
Town and Parish Councils (average)	£84.13	13.95%
TOTAL	£2,379.91	5.13%

In addition, at the budget meeting, **two items of particular interest to Parishes are the £250,000 for Parishes and Community groups to improve their community facilities and £50,000 for Trees for Parishes.** As soon as the council has further detail on how these funds may be applied for, I (or our next district councillor) will let us know.

The agenda and papers may be viewed here: [Agenda for Council on Monday, 24th February, 2025, 2.00 p.m. | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)

Update on the English Devolution White Paper

Central government wrote to the District Council in early February to request that their initial proposals for the re-arrangement of local government in England are submitted to them by 21 March.

As we said last month, the proposal is for two-tier authorities to be abolished (that is District, Borough and County Councils) and replaced with a unitary authority.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council held an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on Monday 10 February at 2pm at Elizabeth House, Stratford-upon-Avon to discuss the implications for the Council from Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation arising from the recent government white paper. The District Council are presently working on their proposals with partners in order to meet the very tight deadline for submission, and another Extraordinary meeting was held on the 10 March.

Let me start by saying that as one of the most local forms of local government, district councils are uniquely placed to support and invest in their communities.

The government is, however, pushing forward a reorganisation along unitary lines, and has asked for a collaborative proposal to be put forward. I am concerned that the deadlines for presenting this proposal, and any different options within it, are very tight. Local government reorganisation and devolution should not be rushed as these changes will have a lasting impact on real people, real families. Equally disappointing is the lack of extra funding to local authorities for this resource-intensive and time consuming reorganisation process.

As these conversations progress, I firmly believe that a South Warwickshire Unitary Council—bringing together Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick districts—offers the best way forward as one of the options for reorganisation. This model, which is contained within the boundaries of the South Warwickshire NHS Trust, and of the emerging South Warwickshire Local Plan, would ensure local government remains anchored in the communities it serves, providing more responsive decision-making than a large, remote unitary ever could, and offering an efficient structure for healthcare and social care. Further, Stratford and Warwick district councils work already closely together with shared services.

A South Warwickshire unitary would also ensure that the distinct economic, cultural and social identity of South Warwickshire is protected, rather than being subsumed into a single, large county-wide authority. A South Warwickshire council would also ensure the needs of rural communities are put first.

While there are differing views on the best structure and model for local government, I remain committed to working with the district councils, residents, businesses, and stakeholders to find a solution that delivers efficient, effective services and ensures that decisions are still made as close as possible to the people they ultimately affect.

South Warwickshire Local Plan

The consultation Preferred Options for the South Warwickshire Local Plan run until 7 March. Despite its very wide scope and complexity it is having a very high response rate (a snapshot showed responses were being received at a rate of 35 an hour). I have submitted my own response both as MP, including my criticism of the top down housing targets. We will now wait to see how the responses shape the next phase. Not all of the proposed sites will make it into the next stage. The Preferred Options Consultation document also contained a

number of draft policies and policy directions that cover issues identified and analysed at earlier stages of the South Warwickshire Local Plan preparation process.

A46 meeting

This meeting focused on proposals for improvements along the A46 between Stratford and Evesham. All the stakeholders had the opportunity to discuss their concerns and contribute to a collective plan of action. National Highways gave an overview and presentation on A46 improvements, highways drainage, litter concerns and ongoing actions, including work at the Billesley junction. The Stratford Transport Group gave an update on Stratford-upon-Avon Integrated Transport Strategy and Action Plan local transport needs and challenges, and how this plan would impact other towns of the constituency. Bloor Homes and Ward Williams presented on development plans for the S78 Shottery Link Road and a date of June 2025 was mentioned for work starting on the Wildmoor Roundabout, however this depends on National Highway signing off the final plans and Warwickshire County Council's timetabling of other works. National Highways was told to circulate the plans for the Billesley junction again, and to look for other option including traffic lights. Midlands Connect looked at long-term strategic improvements required for the A46. Unfortunately the trunk between Stratford and Evesham was not included as part of strategic economic growth and they were asked to look at data again for this stretch of road. We have a clear list of actions – outlining key issues raised by parish and town representatives at the meeting for National Highways, Stratford Transport Group, Midlands Connect, Bloor Homes, and some for Warwickshire County Council too, to ensure that the A46 as it crosses our local area, is made safe, after the increase in HGVs traffic, fatal accidents, near misses and speeding problems, as well issues with dangerous junctions. We got everyone in the room and I want to thank all the participants and speakers, and special thanks to Salford Priors for their organisation of this important A46 meeting. We now need to continue to push for these upgrades to happen as quickly as possible. Minutes and presentations will be circulated via the clerks this week.

Solar Panels on Leisure Centre

Stratford Leisure Centre is nearing completion of a major solar panel installation project, marking a significant step towards improving the sustainability of this key community facility. This ambitious project represents a major investment in renewable energy for the District. The initiative, funded by a £280,000 grant from Sport England's Swimming Pool Support Fund, will see approximately 400 solar panels installed at the centre.

The solar panels are expected to significantly decrease the Leisure Centre's reliance on traditional energy sources, resulting in lower carbon emissions and substantial operational cost savings. Sport England is administering the Swimming Pool Support Fund on behalf of the government. The fund aims to support swimming pools and leisure centres in becoming more sustainable.

Livestock worrying

Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Rural Crime Advisors are participating in 'Operation Recall', a national initiative to raise awareness of livestock worrying. The initiative is being led by Warwickshire Police and supported by partner agencies around the country, such as the National Farmers' Union (NFU), Country Land and Business Association (CLA), National Sheep Association and the RSPCA. At this time of year, pregnant ewes and lambs are particularly vulnerable, but all new born and young animals are at risk. Reports of livestock worrying sadly increase and this often includes deaths and injury due to attacks by dogs on all kinds of animals, especially sheep.

To help with this initiative, the District Council's team is building on their work around livestock worrying as they continue to raise awareness of the importance of responsible dog ownership across South Warwickshire. This work involves visiting rural areas where dog attacks on livestock have already been reported, to discuss safe dog walking with members of the public and provide the National Sheep Association's Enjoy your dog walks information leaflet. If you would like further information or think your local area would benefit from a visit from the District Council's Rural Crime Advisors, Rebecca Jenkins and Alison Packer, or would like '[Operation Recall](#)' leaflets to distribute in your local area please email: community.safety@stratford-dc.gov.uk or [complete the online form here](#).

If you have livestock and would like a 'Dog on Lead' sign, please

email: ruralwatch@warwickshire.police.u

VE Day celebrations

The 80th anniversary of VE Day will be held on May 8, 2025, and various events have already been planned across the UK to remember the sacrifice of those I hope you all have a good time celebrating the 80th anniversary of VE (and I hope to be back in the constituency to join in the celebrations).