



## 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 Councillor's report for Bearley Parish Council Meeting as of 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025

**Happy New Year.** I hope that 2025 is a good year for everyone

It promises to be an interesting year local authority wise with cost pressures affecting budgeting and possible mergers of two-tier authorities such as Stratford District Council and other Warwickshire districts and boroughs with Warwickshire County Council to form a new unitary council.

**At a national level**, yet another social care review as announced by Wes Streeting MP when we already have enough evidence of what is wrong from previous reviews. This latest review just "kicks the can down the road" and delays any meaningful action being taken. The Government have backtracked on what they said about WASPI (women against state pension inequality), it continues to drag its feet on compensating those affected by the Post Office Horizon scandal and even the unions railed against the government on its withdrawal of the winter fuel payments (which it failed to mention in its manifesto). So, the signs don't look good for any changes to adult social care funding.

Successive cross-party committees and governments have wrestled with the problem of an aging population and how to provide care at an affordable level, affordable to the local authorities, of which many are being pushed to the brink financially and affordable to patients and their families. It will be interesting to see in 2025 how this issue will be dealt with as only additional funding will really resolve it, for now, and the only way Government can provide that is by borrowing more (when it has already borrowed £113bn since last March), raising taxes either directly or indirectly (through revaluation of properties for council tax purposes, pension fund taxes, withdrawing concessionary bus passes, to name but a few). **Cutting costs further is getting difficult without losing the quality of the service that the County currently provide.** The other possibility as I highlight below, is savings by reorganisation of local authorities, merging the districts, boroughs and County into a new unitary.

**However, I also wonder whether Parish Councils be next** in line for some attention from national government as many sit on large reserves and some services could get passed down to them as part of the creation of new unitary councils. There is no suggestion as yet that Parishes will be expected to take on additional work, but this will be interesting to watch as the government have not been as open with the electorate as they promised to be on a number of issues. Watch this space!!

**Turning to some good news** December 2024 marks 130 years since the Local Government Act of 1894 gave women the right to stand as a district councillor. 57 per cent of Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Cabinet members are women. And 39 per cent of the District Council's councillors are women. This year also marks 50 years since the creation of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

**At this time of the year, we are looking at budgeting and council tax setting.** Looking at the budget that the District Council Cabinet approved last week, Council tax will rise by £5 for a Band D property at District level. On top of this you have to add a further 4.98% from County plus a further amount from the Police. At District level it would appear that the main aim is to spend the reserves as fast as possible with many of the schemes being Stratford Town centric or badged as transformation. Whilst they may be worthy schemes there is too little detail in the Cabinet papers to know how accurate the estimated costs are and what exactly the benefits to residents are. However, I am confident that officers would alert us if there were contentious items of expenditure.

With so many people struggling financially my suggestions were to increase the help available substantially and hold back on some of the projects. Additional funding to the housing benefit, freezing the green bin charge, substantial increases in the cost-of-living grants and freezing the Council tax level for band A and Band B properties would all have helped our residents. None of these are likely to find their way into the Lib Dem's budget

## South Warwickshire Local Plan

Following the decision of the two Councils Joint Cabinet Committee meeting Thursday 12 December, residents, businesses and other stakeholders are to be invited to have their say on the Preferred Options version of South Warwickshire Local Plan (2050) for the combined areas of both Councils for the next 25 years.

**The Consultation opens on 10 January 2025 and will run until 7 March.**

The Councils will be running a series of in person and online events to promote the consultation and really want people to respond and make their comments on the emerging plan. One of the simplest ways to respond will be online, which will be live from the start of the consultation in January until the deadline in March. Although the more traditional ways of responding via email and by post will still be available.



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**Details of how to take part in the consultation will be published in the new year as well as the link to the online consultation.**

The Preferred Options consultation will provide a third opportunity for residents to have their say on the emerging Local Plan, following feedback from the previous Scoping and Call for Sites (2021) and Issues and Options and second Call for Sites (2023) consultations. It is informed by a wide range of evidence that is now available to view on the South Warwickshire Local Plan website. Once adopted, the Plan will set out how both Councils intend to deliver the housing and employment and infrastructure development required to meet our needs up to 2050 whilst also protecting our open spaces, green belt and countryside from unplanned development. The Plan will be the basis upon which all planning applications will be determined in a way that supports those needs and how we address the pressing issues around climate change, biodiversity, connectivity, and resident wellbeing.

It will include the identification of 36 emerging housing and employment growth location options (12 potential new settlement and 24 strategic growth location options) across South Warwickshire which are considered to be potentially suitable growth locations.

The consultation document importantly recognises that not all of the locations identified will ultimately be required to meet the area's growth needs and the Councils will be undertaking further analysis following the consultation to filter down which growth locations and specific sites should form part of South Warwickshire's final growth strategy.

As part of the consultation, a targeted call for sites exercise will be held specifically for the following:

- Gypsy and Traveller sites
- Commercial and Community-Led Renewable Energy generation sites
- Housing and Employment sites within the 12 potential new settlement locations

You can find out more information about the South Warwickshire Local Plan at: [www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp](http://www.southwarwickshire.org.uk/swlp)

**Dog Fouling** - Stratford-on-Avon District Council is carrying out a six-week Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) consultation on dog fouling. There have been dog fouling orders across the District since 2009, which has been subject to regular reviews, with the last review taking place in 2020. A PSPO gives a local authority powers to tackle a particular nuisance by banning or restricting certain acts or behaviour in an area where it is having a negative effect on people's quality of life.

"By making this PSPO the Council can take action where dogs are fouling. Dog waste can easily be bagged, put in specific dog fouling waste bins or any public on street litter bin, if there isn't a bin it should be taken home and put in your normal black bin waste. People caught letting their dog foul without picking up and properly disposing of the waste could be subject to a £100 fixed penalty notice or up to £1000 fine following prosecution."

**The consultation is now open and runs until 24 January 2025**

Once adopted, a PSPO can remain in place for three years. To have your say and read the proposed PSPO please visit: Proposed PSPO (Dog Fouling) Consultation | Stratford-on-Avon District Council . Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) are a legal means of controlling activities that cause concern in communities. They were introduced by the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 and allow for the service of fixed penalties where they are found to have been breached. PSPOs are reviewed every three years to ensure that they are effective and necessary in what they set out to control.

**Community Climate Fund Phase Two** - In January 2025, the first phase of the Stratford-on-Avon District Council Community Climate Change Fund opened for applications to invest in work to tackle the climate emergency. Phase Two has a total budget of £55,863 available to successful applicants. Applications close on 10<sup>th</sup> February. Following feedback from phase one, the following changes have been made:

- Sports Clubs are now eligible to apply for the Fund.
- Projects which will result in the enhancement of biodiversity will now be eligible.
- The name of the fund has been changed to Community Climate and Nature Fund, to reflect the above change.

**Merger of Stratford District Council with Warwickshire County Council – This is a summary of the note I sent to all Chairs and Parish Clerks in December** - I thought it might be useful to give you an update on this and to correct any misunderstandings about what is happening (or not happening) as the BBC have reported on this.



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It is true that the Labour Government are looking to remove the two-tier system of local government that we have now, and this would mean that district and borough councils in Warwickshire would be merged with a higher authority. This could mean that all services would be transferred to Warwickshire County Council with a target date of 2026 or 2027. Warwickshire County Council is made up of district and borough councils (Stratford on Avon District, Nuneaton & Bedworth borough, North Warwickshire borough, Rugby borough, Warwick district).

It is reasonable to assume that removing a tier of local authorities could make the new unitary more efficient and save money, but the aim is to give more powers that allow decisions to be made quickly and in the interests of that unitary plus a corresponding settlement rather than imposing decisions from a central government. As the white paper says, we are very centralised and one of the few national governments that rely on centralised decisions and power.

The Leader of Warwickshire County Council must apply by 10<sup>th</sup> January 2025 to the government with its proposed merger, which it has done. If it is accepted, then it is also likely that the May 2025 County elections would be delayed by a year (or possibly but unlikely two years). The elections at that point would be to the newly formed unitary council of Warwickshire. Stratford District Council would cease to exist by 2027 at the latest with all its responsibilities being the transferred quickly to the unitary council well before the 2027 deadline.

**Nothing is set in stone yet and there is a great deal of uncertainty, but I am expecting some clarity this week.**

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>

**Flu Vaccinations** - Flu vaccinations Protect yourself and others this flu season. From October, get vaccinated and reduce the risk of flu-related complications. Check your eligibility via [www.nhs.uk/wintervaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/wintervaccinations)  
[#FluVaccine](#) [#GetWinterStrong](#) [#FightFlu](#)

**Issues log** – The following extract from my log are all the issues remaining outstanding as at 20/01/2025

Date	Parish/Town	Issue	Action 1
28/10/24	Bearley	Snitterfield School	Note sent to David Buckland X 2 - no response....doesn't seem to be interested in an event that would help schoolchildren understand how the council works

**POLICE**

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

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

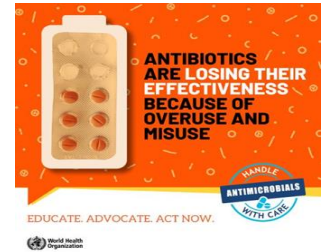
**Police antisocial behaviour patrols** - Warwickshire Police is conducting targeted patrols in hotspots to tackle antisocial behaviour. The Focusing on those locations aims to prevent crime in the specific areas and reduce overall crime levels in the wider area. Discover more about Op Resolve: <https://www.warwickshire.police.uk/police-forces/warwickshire-polic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

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

- **Verbal abuse** – <https://youtube.com/shorts/rkKkODSysKQ>
- **Noise** – <https://youtube.com/shorts/vVgK-qPfZcc>
- **Littering** – <https://youtube.com/shorts/Blc75FMDxto>



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**Other announcements**



**Winter flu vaccination**  
 Flu is very infectious and easily spread to other people. It's important to get your winter flu vaccination if you're eligible. Getting vaccinated every year will top up your protection and reduce your risk of getting severe symptoms.  
 Check your eligibility via [www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/keep-warm-keep-well/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/keep-warm-keep-well/)



**Fire safety – portable heaters**  
 With the cold weather setting in, portable heaters can be a lifesaver. However, they can also be a fire hazard if not used correctly. Here are some tips to stay safe:

- Placement is key: Keep your heater away from flammable materials like curtains, furniture, and bedding.
- Safety features matter: Choose a heater with tip-over and overheating protection.
- Never leave it unattended: Turn it off and unplug it when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Direct plug-in: Avoid using extension cords or power strips.
- Regular checks: Inspect your heater for damage and keep it clean.
- Smoke alarms are essential: Make sure they're working properly.

Read more: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/home-fire-safety-tips/safe-home-heating/2](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/home-fire-safety-tips/safe-home-heating/2)  
 #firesafety #wintertips #homeheating

**Tips to keep warm** Low indoor temperatures can have a serious impact on your health, especially if you have a medical condition or are older. Here are a few tips to keep warm:

- try to heat rooms you spend a lot of time in, such as the living room or bedroom, to at least 18°C
- try to reduce draughts; you can fit draft excluders around doors cheaply
- keep your bedroom windows closed at night
- wear several layers of thinner clothing; this could keep you warmer than one thicker layer

For more information visit [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/keepwarm](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/keepwarm)



**Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service helping patients to return home safely from hospital**  
 Find out how Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service is helping hospital patients to return home safely with their Hospital to Home service:  
[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5863/warwickshire-fire-and-rescue-service-helping-patients-to-return-home-safely-from-hospital](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5863/warwickshire-fire-and-rescue-service-helping-patients-to-return-home-safely-from-hospital)



**Be better prepared for extreme cold weather**  
 Take a few minutes to learn how to keep your home running smoothly in cold weather. Find out how to prevent pipes from freezing, and more top tips at  
[www.warwickshiresilienceforum.org/risks/extreme-cold-weather/](http://www.warwickshiresilienceforum.org/risks/extreme-cold-weather/)  
 #BetterPrepared