

District Councillor Report (08/02/2021) – Matt Jennings

SDC Covid Cases –

Here in the Stratford District our numbers are now at 142 per 100,000 (311 when I last spoke to you). Warwick is at 157, North Warwickshire is 265, Solihull 313 & Redditch 374

Testing Centre

As previously mentioned - you have 2 choices for tests :

1) If you have NO symptoms :

[Stratford-upon-Avon COVID Community Testing Events | Eventbrite](#)

Location : Rear of The Other Place Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, 22 Southern Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6BH

2) If you DO have symptoms :

Book a test via [NHS Test and Trace](#) or by calling **119**

Location : Leisure Centre Carpark, Stratford

Business Grants update

Running total on Grants paid out so far by SDC is just over £6m (Exact figure £6,028,037.13) – that's 3053 separate grants. We have been working on the Chancellors latest Grant Scheme – the £4k / £6k / £9k scheme – depending on the RV - We estimate this will generate another £11 m of grants for the hospitality / leisure groups.

Other Council News

Super District

You will probably see in the press about the possibility of a 'Super District' – SDC & WDC already have a number of joint roles & projects and both of our finances have been severely affected by the pandemic. We commissioned a report by Deloitte which highlighted a lot of benefits to further integration. This will be presented to our cabinet on Tuesday (9th) before recommendations go to full council on the 22nd Feb.

I have included the full statement at the end of the report (see pages 4.5 & 6)

South Warwickshire Plan

First meeting of the member advisory group held. Agreed process of engagement towards first public consultation in spring 2021. This will protect current Core Strategy when it reaches 5 year anniversary in July.

Honeybourne Rail link

HMG has agreed to include this project for economic study as part of post COVID-19 recovery plan. SDC supports principle BUT favours light rail / tram as more effective than heavy rail.

Green Bins

Last few weeks to take up the 'early Bird offer' reducing this from £40 to £35 for the year ! So far we have had 14,000 sign up ! This comes into effect in April...so get your now rather than later.

Budget - the 2021/22 SDC Budget has been constructed on the basis that SDC will maintain all its existing service provision during the coming year.

The financial hole that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused in SDC's finances this year means that the General Reserve Fund has reduced from £8.9m to est. £4.0m in 2020/21. We continue to be able to offer our services by transferring reserves from SDC's Earmarked Reserves, by internal reorganization and other SDC/WDC related cost savings, and by increasing SDC's revenue.

Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services – For those struggling with Council Tax payments, there are discounts available in certain circumstances - for help and advice, see the District Council's website – <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/council-tax/help-and-advice-for-council-tax-debt.cfm>

Land Charges - The stamp duty holiday has fueled the property market and increased requests for land searches by 100% from August to December 2020. In response to the demand, SDC restructured and doubled the size of its team. Thousands of transactions have already been completed, but there are still many buyers and sellers hoping to take advantage of the stamp duty exemption expiring 31 March 2021.

House purchasers need to ensure that local search requests are received by SDC before 12 February 2021 to provide sufficient turnaround time for completions prior to 31 March. For further information visit [Land Charges | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)

Venture House

Only a couple of weeks to go (15-19th) until the PopUp Business School (PUBS) FREE week long 'online' course on setting up a new business starts. If you know of anyone who may be interested get them to sign up now ! [Pop Up Business School » Venture House \(venturehousestratford.co.uk\)](http://PopUpBusinessSchool»VentureHouse(venturehousestratford.co.uk))

Visit the website – www.venturehousestratford.co.uk - for other free business seminars !

[Online Event - Create videos with YouTube](#) - BT Skills for Tomorrow - 9 Feb

[Online Event - YouTube for your brand](#) - BT Skills for Tomorrow - 9 Feb

[Start up Workshop - Business planning](#) - Chamber of Commerce - 9 Feb

[Ingenuity Information Event](#) - Warwick Enterprise - 10 Feb

[Webinar - LinkedIn for business](#) - Business Ready - 10 Feb

[Start up Workshop - The why and how of networking](#) - Chamber of Commerce - 10 Feb

[Start up Workshop - Photography and art direction](#) - Chamber of Commerce - 11 Feb

[Free Online Pop Up Business School](#) - SDC - 15 - 19 Feb

[Online Event- Interactive Futures 2021](#) - CWLEP, WCC, WDC - 16 - 20 Feb

[Online Social Media Training Course](#) - Skills Ladder - 16 Feb

[Online Event - The habits for a growth mindset](#) - BT Skills for Tomorrow - 17 Feb

[Webinar - Building your strategy, vision, mission & values](#) - Business Ready - 17 Feb

[Webinar - Social media platforms for marketing](#) - Business Ready - 18 Feb

[Start up Workshop - Writing your business plan](#) - Chamber of Commerce - 23 Feb

[Sustainable Materials: Lets talk about waste](#) - WMG - 24 Feb

[Online Event - Writing for social media](#) - BT Skills for Tomorrow - 24 Feb

[Online Event - Social media strategy](#) - BT Skills for Tomorrow - 24 Feb

[Start up Workshop - Business vision and strategy](#) - Chamber of Commerce - 24 Feb

[Start up Workshop - What is a brand and how to create one](#) - Chamber of Commerce - 25 Feb

Stay Safe !

Statement

Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council Working Together

Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council are moving towards the next step: ***"To create a single statutory South Warwickshire Council covering all of the activities currently carried out by Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council by 2024."***

Next week, both Councils will be making important decisions on the future shape and delivery of Council services in South Warwickshire.

Cllr Tony Jefferson, Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council says: "The COVID pandemic has had an enormous impact on our communities and the Council. The Deloitte report clearly identifies that there are significant benefits from our two authorities continuing to integrate; without this there would be even more challenging decisions required from both authorities. Without doubt, this is one of the most significant issues in the history of the District Council."

The Deloitte report will be presented to the District Council's Cabinet on Tuesday 9 February, where Members will be discussing the future relationship between the two Councils, before final recommendations go to Full Council on Monday 22 February.

The options for The Cabinet are as follows:

1. To receive or to reject the Deloitte report "Creating a South Warwickshire Council".
2. To either support the principle of pursuing further integration between Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council to the point of a full merger of the organisations.
3. Subject to option 2:
 - For the Chief Executive to develop proposals for a full merger between Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council in order to create a South Warwickshire Council.
 - That the sum of £100,000 pa for the period 2021/22 to 2023/24 be provided to ensure that there is sufficient programme management support the guide the Council through this the transition to a full merger.

[Agenda for The Cabinet on Tuesday, 9th February, 2021, 3.30 p.m. | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)

Cllr Andrew Day, Leader of Warwick District Council says: "Out of crisis often comes opportunity. Our two Councils have much in common and working together we've been able to respond positively to the pandemic. The local Recovery Plan will be strengthened if Councillors decide to take this historic step, giving an opportunity to improve local government services across South Warwickshire, generating greater value for our residents and taxpayers."

Warwick District Council will be discussing the report at their Executive on Thursday 11 February before going before its Full Council on Wednesday 24 February. The recommendations are the same.

Reasons for this proposal

- Recognised that the sense of place between the two authorities needs to be maintained
- Louder voice sub-regionally for residents and stakeholders
- Financial pressures from COVID and reductions in Government Support
- To help retain as many valuable services as possible

There are many similarities between the two Councils

- Shared economic geography - WDC and SDC have the highest GVAs in the West Midlands
- Shared sense of community between authorities
- Strong political relationships between Leaders
- Within the same County Council area

The Councils also share two management roles - Head of Community & Operational Services (SDC title) and Head of ICT and wider integration of both Management Teams is expected during 2021.

Work has also started on the production of joint local plan and a joint procurement process has started for a joint refuse and recycling contract.

The report from Deloitte concluded:

This high-level business case has demonstrated that there is a strong strategic, economic, financial and operational case for the merging of the two Councils for the following reasons:

- Government policy appears to be encouraging councils to operate at greater scale, and super-districts have been encouraged by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government recently. Creating a super-district, therefore, fits with Government policy and thinking.
- A super-district would have a stronger strategic voice with stakeholders, be more able more easily to enter into partnership arrangements with other organisations, benefit from increased capacity and resilience with a larger pool of resources in all functional areas, deliver improved customer experience by delivering greater consistency of approach, particularly for customers operating across both districts, and be a more effective employer by creating a structure that offers more career opportunities and greater appeal in the jobs market.
- Merging the two Councils builds on a long-term strategic trend of significant collaboration between the two organisations. It also builds on strong foundations as there are similarities between the two Councils.
- A super-district may be better placed to deal with some of the significant strategic issues facing South Warwickshire including the economy, housing or climate change.
- Both Councils face significant financial pressures and need to make savings; merging the councils provides the potential to improve the financial position and ensure that local government can continue to deliver or improve services for local communities.
- A financial assessment has been carried out of the potential costs and benefits. This has found a potential opportunity to generate annual net savings of £4.6m after Year 5.
- The super-district could speak up for the interests of the place and the discrete local communities within it, creating a stronger, unified voice than currently exists, ensuring the place's voice is heard at a strategic level.
- It could support local government in South Warwickshire to deal with the significant economic challenges it faces by creating stronger services such as an aggregated planning function with one local plan that delivers for residents and business. Merging the Councils would also create a more powerful voice for the South Warwickshire economy that can work

within and influence existing partnership organisations and structures such as the WMCA and the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP. Within the WMCA, when GVA is examined, the proposed South Warwickshire economy is the second biggest, second only to Birmingham.

- The super-district could improve service delivery across South Warwickshire through delivering economies of scale and making reinvestments in services to drive innovation, assessing the variation in performance and cost of delivery of services across both Councils, and under a single management structure, delivering greater performance consistency by applying best practice and reducing variation, strengthening its managerial leadership, as larger councils are more likely to be able to offer a better compensation package and varied career opportunities.