

Stratford on Avon District Councillor's Monthly Report

Mike Rice, Liberal Democrat Councillor for Henley in Arden

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Medical Centre Car Park

Patients for Henley Medical Centre have found it increasingly difficult to park close to the Surgery since the District-run car park has become the only free public car park in Henley.

At peak times during the school holidays, with many more visitors to the extended Riverlands children's playground, elderly and sick patients have been greatly disadvantaged when they have found car park spaces allocated for them already full.

Of course, these places may have been taken by other patients. However, it is also likely that some may have been taken by other car park users.

Nothing can be done about such anti-social behaviour, especially in an unsupervised free car park. Action has now been taken, however, to try to inhibit 'accidental' mistakes.

Until recently, the signage indicating which spaces were reserved for patients was wholly inadequate. A small, wordy sign, no more than 200 x 300mm, stood behind each parking bay. Car park users would have had difficulty reading these signs unless they were already parked in front of them.

The signs have now been replaced by Stratford District Council with much larger signs that clearly and unmistakably state in large red letters "Patient Parking Only". It is to be hoped that these signs deter casual car park misusers and that all patients may park close to the Surgery in future.

Shopmobility Service

Stratford on Avon District Council is considering a move to change the provision of the Shopmobility Service, which operates from the Bridgeway Car Park building in Stratford, alongside the multi-storey car park.

The District Council is committed to supporting Shopmobility, which provides a vital service for both local Stratford District residents and tourists alike. A discretionary service of the Council, Shopmobility is currently Council-funded on an annual basis. The Council is exploring ways of ensuring a longer-term commitment to continuity of service.

One of the alternatives is a proposal by the company which currently services the equipment, Active Mobility, to take over and expand the service. A second site in Union Road would be added to the service, which would operate for longer hours, offer wider deliveries and introduce card payments.

The Council's Cabinet is to consider a recommendation to transfer the Shopmobility Service to Active Mobility for an initial period of three years at its meeting on 4th September.

Stratford-upon-Avon Local Nature Reserve

At the same Cabinet meeting on 4th September, the Council's climate change manager is to recommend designating Lench Meadows – an area of green space on the edge of Stratford – as Stratford-upon-Avon Local Nature Reserve.

Falling within an area which was recently enhanced as part of the Riverside Project, Lench Meadows was previously designated as a local wildlife site, but was subject to no active ecological management.

Under the latest proposals, the site will have long-term active management and will be registered as a Biodiversity Net Gain site, enabling external funding.

Henley is growing slowly

Henley-in-Arden is little bigger now than it was a decade ago, according to the latest research carried out by Stratford District Council using data from the 2021 Census.

Using the latest ward boundaries used in the May 2023 election – and adjusting 2011 data accordingly – Henley had a population of 3,230 in 2021 compared with 3,064 in 2011, an increase of just 5.4%. In terms of households, Henley had 1,582 in 2021, which was 88 more than in 2011. At 5.9%, the household increase was slightly more than the population uplift.

Henley's population rise compared with a 184% increase in Long Marston and upward moves of some 60% in Southam South, Southam North and Long Itchington, Bidford West and Stratford Avenue wards.

Among the 41 wards that make up Stratford District, Henley had some of the oldest residents. Nearly a third of its residents in 2021 were over 65 years of age and more than 5% were older than 85. Henley residents ranked 10th in the District by those of pensionable age, behind Wootton Wawen in fourth and Tanworth-in-Arden in eighth places.

Conversely, only 14% of Henley residents were aged between zero and 15 years. Only five wards in the District had fewer young children in 2021.

The research looked at other demographic factors apart from population age, including health, home occupancy, home heating, car ownership and house types. Henley, for example, had nearly 80% of its population living in one- and two-person homes, putting it into the top five wards in the District for the smallest households.

In terms of housing types, 16% of Henley residents lived in socially-rented housing in 2021, ranking the ward as the 10th highest in the Stratford area.

Mike Rice

