

## **Stratford on Avon District Councillor's Monthly Report for March 2024**

**Mike Rice, Liberal Democrat District Councillor for Henley-in-Arden**

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### **Stratford is fifth-best in England for recycling**

Residents in Stratford-on-Avon District are some of the best recyclers in England, according to figures just released.

Stratford District Council was ranked fifth in the top ten English councils for reuse, recycling and composting last year. It achieved a recycling rate of 60.0% in 2022/23. This compared with a 61.6% rate by the leading local authority, South Oxfordshire District Council.

### **More money for good causes**

More government money is available this year from Stratford District Council to increase the district's prosperity. Community projects and facilities are eligible for the money, as are small local businesses.

The money is part of the government's 'levelling up' initiative and comes in two separate funds: the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), now in its third year, and the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF), now in its second year. Just over £500k is available to 'communities and places' from the first fund, while more than £750k is in the second fund.

New and existing rural businesses may apply for money from the REPF as may groups looking to develop new and improved community infrastructure. Both application types should benefit the local economy in some way, either by developing new products and facilities in the case of businesses, or by supporting local communities.

Lizzie's ironing and laundry service, for example, received £19.5k last year from the REPF, while Ragley Meats got £46k for facilities to offer a new venison product locally. Bidford Parish Council received £2.4k to expand the town's monthly market.

Meanwhile, Bishopton Community Centre was awarded nearly £20k from the SPF for creating and improving local green space, including security fencing and smart seating, and Stratford's Methodist church received over £10k for a battery storage system to reduce electricity costs and its carbon footprint.

Enhancing community infrastructure and local green space, and supporting community-led projects are the first of two main aims for the 'communities and places' part of the SPF; while building resilient, safe and healthy neighbourhoods is the second, including "innovative approaches to crime prevention".

Applications for the money may be made during a three-week period from 11 March 2024 and more details are available on the District Council website at <https://www.stratford.gov.uk>

### **Council Tax 2024-2025**

Further to my February report, Stratford-on-Avon District Councillors confirmed the District element of next year's Council Tax at a meeting of the Council on Monday, 26 February.

The amount residents will be asked to pay for a Band D property is £164.12, an increase of £5.00. This is an increase of 3.14%, which for an average home represents just an additional 42p per month to the District Council next year.

All of the services provided by the District Council will cost £3.16 a week for a Band D household. This sum contributes to providing a wide range of services, including recycling and waste collection, planning, street cleaning, housing, housing benefits, leisure services and children's play areas.

Stratford-on-Avon remains a low-taxing authority, 18th lowest out of 164 District Councils across the country in 2023/24.

The Council Tax from Stratford-on-Avon District Council for residents for 2024/25 for each of the valuation bands is:

A	£109.41
B	£127.65
C	£145.88
D	£164.12
E	£200.59
F	£237.06
G	£273.53
H	£328.24

Although the District Council acts as the collecting agent for Council Tax, this year it only received 7.2% of the Council Tax paid by residents. Warwickshire County Council received the lion's share of 76.7%, the Police 12.8% and Towns/Parishes 3.3%.

This means the District Council only retains 7.2p of every £1 paid in Council Tax to provide its range of services.

The District Council's increase of 3.14% is less than those applied by other beneficiaries of the Council Tax. Warwickshire County Council has increased its charge by 4.99%, while the Police & Crime Commissioner's uplift is 4.7%. The lowest increase is by the JPC, with a rise of 2.7% – from £82.05 to £84.25 – for a Band D property.

The Council Tax to be paid by Henley residents by valuation band in 2024/5 will be as follows:

A	£1516.18
B	£1768.88
C	£2021.57

D	£2274.27
E	£2779.66
F	£3285.05
G	£3790.45
H	£4548.54

Anyone who thinks they could be struggling to pay their Council Tax is encouraged to contact the District Council as soon as possible by calling 01789 260990 or email [revenues@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:revenues@stratford-dc.gov.uk), where the team will be able to advise what help is available.