

Stratford on Avon District Councillor's Monthly Report for August 2024

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New UBUS service to offer enhancements

From 1 September, the local 'dial-a-ride' UBUS community transport will be replaced by a new service for residents of Stratford-on-Avon District who either cannot access public transport because of mobility issues, or live in an area with limited or no public transport.

The new Demand Responsive Transport Service (DRT) will be operated solely by Warwickshire County Council (WCC) instead of jointly with Stratford District Council (SDC). However, SDC has released further funding of £70,000 to the £50,000 already agreed to ensure the service remains accessible to as many residents across the local District as possible.

The extra funding will be sufficient for WCC to provide a late afternoon and evening service between 4.30pm and 7pm across the whole District. This had originally been proposed to be withdrawn. It will also allow WCC to procure an additional vehicle to cover Stratford-upon-Avon town and the Tiddington area.

As part of the new transport arrangements, there will also be a significant increase in Stratford-upon-Avon scheduled bus route capacity, including improvements to the existing No.19 route, and a new No.6 route between Old Town and Tiddington.

Enhancements provided by the DRT service will include a new booking centre. This will retain telephone bookings as well as provide a web-booking provision and a new booking app. More modern and environmentally-friendly vehicles will be introduced that will maintain a minimum of one wheelchair user space per vehicle and potentially expand this to two, subject to vehicle configuration.

DRT will be available across the whole District between 10am and 2.30pm and 4.30pm and 7pm, subject to demand. Current charges of £4 per single and £6 per return journey will be kept at least for the first 12 months, but free travel will be still available for those with a concessionary bus pass.

It's not too late to apply for free home energy upgrades

Residents should apply for Home Upgrade Grants **before 30 September** for their homes to be made warmer in time for next winter.

To be eligible for an energy-efficiency grant, households must:

- Not use mains gas for heating

- Have a household income of under £36,000 a year, regardless of any savings
- Have a home Energy performance Certificate (EPC) of D, E, F or G (an EPC can be arranged for free if needed)

Eligible properties will be assessed by a retrofit expert and suitable measures will be installed completely free of charge.

Start the application process at [GOV.UK HUG2 eligibility checker](#). Alternatively, find out more on the Stratford District Council website or call Act on Energy at 0800 988 2881.

Stratford's Gateway scheme gets funding

Multi-million pound funding has been secured to regenerate part of Stratford-upon-Avon town centre. The money will deliver 118 new homes on the Gateway site that fronts Birmingham Road and Arden Street, creating 80 local jobs and providing much-needed affordable homes.

The funding – agreed in principle from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) – will support Stratford-on-Avon District Council to deliver the first element of its recently approved long-term masterplan for a cultural quarter at the northern entrance to the town. It is the latest in a series of WMCA investments focused on breathing new life into the region's town and city centres.

As well as generating new housing on a currently derelict site, the money also opens up the opportunity to develop a world-class Shakespeare Museum.

Stratford is growing fastest

Stratford-on-Avon District had the fastest-growing population in the West Midlands in 2022-23, when the number of people in the area grew by 2.42% to 141,929.

According to the latest population estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), the District was also the fifth-fastest growing out of 162 similar District Local Authorities. Preston was the fastest with 2.99% growth.

The population increase of 3,356 from mid-2022 to mid-2023 was made up of newcomers to the area, the ONS report shows. People moving into the area from other parts of the country amounted to 3,407, after those leaving had been subtracted, while another net increase of 444 came from overseas. Natural change – the difference between births and deaths – reduced the population by 474.

Similar trends are apparent in the figures for five years ago and 2011. A population increase since 2011 of 21,105 – 17.5% – came from a net inflow of people into the District. Meanwhile, there was a natural decrease of 3,254 from fewer births than deaths.

More than a quarter of the District's population was older than 65 in mid-2023 and a further 22.4% was aged between 50 and 64. Just 8.5% were aged between 20 and 29.

Stratford is busy planning

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has the busiest Planning Department in the Midlands, according to the government's latest annual planning data.

From April 2023 to March 2024, the department dealt with 1,879 applications, making Stratford-on-Avon the second-busiest in England out of the 162 District Councils. Only East Suffolk District was busier with 2,196 applications.

Wychavon District was second-busiest after Stratford-on-Avon in the Midlands with 1,309 applications.