**Stratford on Avon District Councillor’s Monthly Report**

**for January 2025**

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**South Warwickshire Local Plan**

Time is running out to make your views known on the South Warwickshire Local Plan. This currently has a ‘preferred option’ of building 2,500 homes to the north-west of Henley, largely on the former golf course.

The Plan, which is due to come into effect in 2027, will decide how Stratford and Warwick Districts are developed until 2050.

Public consultation ends on 7th March 2025.

Go to tinyurl.com/SWLP-Consultation-Event. Henley is ‘strategic growth’ location SG23.

The Labour government has said it wants to build 1.5 million new homes. This has raised the number of new homes the government wants in South Warwickshire to over 2,000 a year.

It is likely, however, that two-thirds of the ‘preferred options’ in the latest version of the Plan will NOT be chosen. This is why your views are important.

The next version of the Plan will be published in the autumn.

Doing nothing is not an option for the two District Councils. We have to have a an up-to-date Local Plan to avoid a free-for-all for developers. Development will still happen without a Plan, but it will be wherever developers want it.

It is also important to stress that the Plan is looking at what’s best for South Warwickshire, not just Henley-in-Arden, Alcester, Studley, or any of the other market towns and villages in the area.

A key component of the Plan is infrastructure. This is your opportunity to say what Henley needs – roads and public transport, flood prevention, drains and drainage, schools and medical facilities, amenities or public open spaces.

**English Devolution White Paper**

An Extraordinary Meeting of Stratford-on-Avon District Council will be held on 17th March to discuss the county’s response to the government’s English Devolution White Paper.

This proposes to abolish ‘two-tier’ local government and replace it with ‘unitary’ local councils. These in turn will form part of regional ‘strategic’ authorities.

Warwickshire is currently a ‘two-tier’ jurisdiction. It has borough councils for Rugby and Nuneaton and district councils for Stratford, Warwick and North Warwickshire in one tier, and Warwickshire County Council in the other tier.

The government wants to abolish Warwickshire’s five Borough and District Councils and put their duties and services put into a unitary authority, although not necessarily the same unitary authority.

A unitary authority will offer all of the services currently provided by the borough and district councils and many of those currently arranged by the county council.

Unitary authorities will in turn be part of a higher ‘strategic’ authority. A good example is the West Midlands Combined Authority, which already includes the unitary authorities of Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull and Wolverhampton.

It is possible a new unitary authority may cover the same area as the current Warwickshire County Council. It will not, however, provide the same services as the current county council. Some of the ‘bigger ticket’ responsibilities, such as for transport planning, will be taken over by the strategic authority. This could, for example, include Worcestershire, or another adjacent county, as well as Warwickshire.

The government is expecting a proposal in March for how its devolution ideas should be applied to Warwickshire, with firm plans to follow by the end of November this year. It is hoping for agreement by the Borough, District and County Councils to these firm plans.

**2025/26 Council Tax**

Residents in Band D properties will see the Council Tax levied by Stratford-on-Avon District Council increase by 3.05% to £169.12 in the next financial year starting in April.

The resolution approving the £5.00 rise was passed by Stratford-on-Avon District Council at its Council Meeting on 24 February.

The District Council increase is lower than the 5.00% uplift by the County Council to £1,822.95 for a Band D property and 4.83% by the Police and Crime Commissioner to £303.71.

The total Council Tax for Henley Band D residents next financial year will be £2,381.77, including a Parish precept of £85.99, representing a 2.1% uplift.

For Henley residents, the amount they pay in Council Tax next year will range from £1,587.85 for a Band A household to £4,763.54 for a Band H property.