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

 **for October 2025**

**Mike Rice, Liberal Democrat District Councillor**

**for Henley-in-Arden**

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**Whither Warwickshire?**

Over 2,300 responses were received from residents, businesses and other affected parties expressing their views about the future of local government in Warwickshire in the public consultation that has just closed.

These responses will be analysed in the coming weeks and put into a report expected in mid-October. This report will form part of Stratford-on-Avon District Council’s detailed response to the government that is due by 28 November.

At its full Council meeting on 14 July, Stratford District Council (SDC) voted that two separate unitary councils was its preferred option for Warwickshire.

Each of these two unitary councils – for North and South Warwickshire – would provide all of the services currently delivered by Warwickshire County Council and Stratford District Council (and the other four District and Borough Councils in the county).

Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Council areas would combine to form South Warwickshire, while the other three council areas would make up North Warwickshire.

Warwickshire County Council, on the other hand, has said in the past that it would prefer a single unitary council.

All of the local government services like refuse collection, planning and licensing, housing, highways and traffic, schools, libraries, adult social care, special educational needs and environmental health will all be delivered for Henley residents by the one unitary council.

Two other reports will be prepared by external consultants before SDC reports back to the government. One of the hurdles to separating North and South Warwickshire into two unitary authorities – each providing local government services currently delivered separately by District and County Councils – is deciding how the services that the County Council does now should be delivered in future.

This “potential desegregation” of services could be handled in a number of ways, apart from individually by a single unitary council. The services could be delivered separately for their areas by the two unitaries, collectively by two unitaries working together, or by a third party for the two unitary councils. These different ways will be explored more fully by the consultant Peopletoo.

Meanwhile, the consultant Deloitte will be looking at detailed business cases for the benefits of a single unitary council versus two separate unitary councils. This analysis will identify the likely costs of reorganisation and the possible savings in running costs.

SDC’s final report should be published on 31 October. The JPC and other Parish Councils in Stratford District will have the opportunity to comment on the final report at an additional Parish Forum meeting on 6 November.

SDC’s full Council will consider the final report on 17 November before it is sent to the government on 28 November.

The timetable thereafter is expected to be as follows. A formal, government-led consultation will be held next spring, most likely before the ‘pre-election period’ for May elections. There are none in Stratford District, but that’s not the case for other Warwickshire councils.

A government decision on the future of local government in Warwickshire is then expected in the summer of 2026, after the May 2026 elections.

**Lost housing appeal poses problem for Henley**

Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) lost a planning appeal last month. The appeal was by a developer who wanted to put 130 large houses on Bordon Hill, near Ann Hathaway’s Cottage, against the SDC’s better judgement (and its Core Strategy).

Many of the new houses built in Stratford District in recent years were said not to count towards SDC’s new housing target under the government’s rules introduced in December 2024.

The lost appeal has important implications for Henley-in-Arden and the rest of Stratford District.

All local planning authorities must show they have enough new homes likely to be delivered over the next five years to meet government housing targets. This is known as the ‘five-year housing land supply’.

Housing targets in Stratford District were doubled last year by the government to 1,126 a year. This is the number of houses the government now expects to be built each year in Stratford District for the next five years, which is double the number imposed by the previous government.

The government inspector ruled that SDC’s five-year housing land supply was only 2.74 years. In housing terms, that’s 2,285 homes under target.

The absence of a five-year housing land supply means that SDC’s existing planning policies are considered out of date and planning permission should be granted unless there are good reasons against.

Opportunistic developers may now try to force through new housing schemes around Henley while SDC plays catch up.

SDC now has two priorities: restoring its five-year housing land supply and striving at the same time to finish the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP). The former may mean having to grant planning permissions to sites it would have refused previously.

Getting the SWLP finished as soon as possible is now crucial. It is only by maintaining an up-to-date Local Plan providing sufficient new homes to meet government targets that SDC will be able to retain effective control of where new houses are built and of the services and community facilities needed to support them.

**Meet your local Councillor**

**If you’d like to know more about housing around Henley, come along and meet your Liberal Democrat District Councillor, Mike Rice, between 10.00am and 12 noon on Saturday, 18th October 2025, at the Community Library, Methodist Church, 115 High Street, Henley-in-Arden.**

**Bring your local issues, learn about local developments or simply come along to chat about what’s going on in Henley.**

**Get yourself checked out**

Don’t forget to take advantage of the prostate cancer screening programme being subsidised by Stratford District Council that’s coming to Henley soon.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men. One in eight men will get it. Yet the NHS does not routinely screen for prostate cancer.

A simple blood test is all that’s required. Local men aged over 40 years can have a test for the subsidised price of just £14.

The blood tests will be carried out between 10.00 and 14.00 at Henley Memorial Hall, Station Road on Saturday, 22nd November. **But you must register in advance.**

Find out more and how to register for a blood test today at <https://sdc.mypsatests.org.uk> or call 01926 419959.