

Wootton Wawen Ward District & Arden Division
County Cllr. Ian Shenton
Proud to represent Bearley, Claverdon, Earlswood, Henley in Arden, Langley, Mappleborough Green, Preston Bagot, Tanworth in Arden, Ullenhall, Wolverton, Wootton Wawen
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County Councillor's report for Tanworth in Arden Parish Council Meeting 20th January 2025

Merger of Stratford District Council with Warwickshire County Council – There was a delay in announcing who is in the first wave of unitaries, but we eventually heard that SDC and Warwickshire were not in the first wave of local authorities go become a unitary authority. Most of those that are in the first wave are from the south, these being

- East Sussex and West Sussex
- Essex and Thurrock
- Hampshire and the Isle of White
- Norfolk and Suffolk

It is likely that many more will be selected next year, and, in the meantime, we have been told to submit our first outline plan by the 21st March 2o25 and a detailed plan by November 2025.

It is obvious that not all of the districts and boroughs want to remain as part of Warwickshire with the Lib Dems at Stratford and the Greens at Warwick preferring a north Warwickshire and a South Warwickshire unitary and are relying on the fact that the Devolution White Paper says that in exceptional circumstances that this will be allowed but it is also clear that the ideal size is at least on with 500,000 residents. Therefore, they do not and are unlikely to qualify or be allowed to go ahead. This split would not serve the residents well because all services in Warwickshire are delivered locally and get the benefit of economies of scale. Unpicking Adult Social care , Children's Care, Home 2 School transport, SEND, The Fire Service and Pensions funds would be costly and only benefit the politicians who seek to remain in control of an authority.

Interestingly The Lib Dems, Greens, Labour, the independents at County all voted this week to try and preserve Warwickshire identity as whole, despite representations at the meeting from the districts and boroughs.

My own view is that we have to find the best solution for the residents of Warwickshire, and I want to preserve Warwickshire as a County, I am proud to live in Warwickshire and I don't want us to be subsumed into another authority. Warwickshire has over 600,000 residents and therefor is the governments ideal size.

The debates at both SDC and County reflected the split between those who want the best for Warwickshire residents by creating a new unitary council sing the 5 Districts and boroughs and County as the basis and those that are saying they can get a better outcome by merging with another authority without providing any evidence of who that would be with and why it would be a better fit.

I have volunteered to be on the working group that works up the outline case by 21st March 2025 as I am fascinated by this and honestly believe that our residents will be better served by a Warwickshire unitary.

As a final thought on this, it should be remembered that a new Warwickshire unitary would be created, not that Warwickshire County Council would take over. This is a chance to build a new organisation using the best practices and people from all the 5 districts and boroughs and the County, rationalising the systems and getting even better value for money for our residents.

I will update you next month on progress.

More details on the white paper can be found by clicking here English Devolution White Paper - GOV.UK . or by pasting this link into your browser - https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper

Council tax – At a full council meeting it was agreed that the County Council would increase the County Council tax burden on residents by 4.99% (2.99% general increase plus 1.99% ringfenced for Adult Social Care) – It is clear that all local authorities are under financial pressure especially upper tier authorities such as the county council due to increased costs caused in part by the increase in National Insurance and the greater demand on adult social care (ASC) services. ASC, Children's care, Home to school transport and special education needs and disabilities (SEND) costs account for around 70% of expenditure. Unfortunately, the government have decided to await the publication of yet another report which is not due until 2028. Many authorities are struggling with costs and have taken advantage of what is known as the Statutory Over ride . This is where over spending is carried forward into the next financial year, effectively making a local authority look solvent when its not.

OFFICIAL



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The government appear to have no solution to this issue currently so the overspends may continue until the money runs out and local authorities actively declare themselves bankrupt (known as a s114 notice).

Warwickshire Registration and Libraries services introduce new library membership opportunity for babies - Parents and carers of newborns across the county will be offered a new opportunity to register their baby for a free library membership thanks to Warwickshire County Council's Libraries service and Registration service.

As part of a birth registration appointment currently in Warwickshire, Registrars gift BookTrust's Bookstart packs to new parents. These contain useful information about the benefits of reading books and sharing stories with their new baby from 0-12 months and include a free book and finger puppet to help parents get started.

In addition, Warwickshire Registration Services, in partnership with Warwickshire Libraries, offer parents the opportunity to sign-up for a free library membership at the same time, both for themselves and their newborn, at the birth registration appointment. Warwickshire Libraries have books suitable for parents to borrow and read to their babies in-person at a local library, to find through the online library catalogue, or by browsing the BorrowBox collection which includes a great range of eBooks and eAudiobooks. Babies listen to their parents' voices even before they're born, and so reading to them after they are born can be very comforting to hear these familiar voices and sounds. Reading together, even just a few words or talking about pictures in books, can help families to bond, develop babies' social, language and learning skills, and help establish a good bedtime routine.Warwickshire Libraries also deliver welcoming baby-friendly activity sessions. These include *Rhyme Time* with songs, rhyming words, and the opportunity for parents and carers to meet each other, along with *Dad and Me* sessions at Atherstone Library, which are sing-along-sessions for dads, grandads, and male carers. To find out which baby-friendly activities are happening at your local library, visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/childrensactivities.

Flu Vaccinations - Flu vaccinations Protect yourself and others this flu season. From October, get vaccinated and reduce the risk of flu-related complications. Check your eligibility via www.nhs.uk/wintervaccinations

Warwickshire parents and carers with children moving to Secondary School will get their school offer on Monday 3 March - Warwickshire parents and carers who have applied for a Year 7 secondary school place starting in September will get their child's offer of a school place on National Offer Day (Monday 3 March). Just like last year, Warwickshire County Council will automatically accept school place offers on behalf of each family. This means that parents and carers don't need to take any additional action but instead need to wait to hear from their new school. On Monday 3 March, parents and carers can log onto our Parent Portal to see what school they have been offered, and, with the vast majority of families usually satisfied with this offer, we will automatically accept the place on their behalf. This way, parents and carers have less work to do, and it allows our admissions team to focus more of their time on placing children in schools." On receipt of their school place offer, only those families who want to decline the offer of a school place need to contact the Admissions team. Details on how to do this will be included in their offer letter. Those families waiting for a Reception or Year 3 Junior School place will receive their school place offers on 16 April.

More information about secondary school applications can be found here: Applying for a Secondary School Place – Warwickshire County Council or by pasting this link into your browser https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/homepage/422/applying-for-a-secondary-school-place

Young people with SEND and local businesses invited to discover work-based study programmes at Warwickshire's Supported Internships Fair -Warwickshire County Council is pleased to announce the return of its Supported Internships Fair later this month. The event will offer a unique opportunity for young people aged 16-24 years with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), their families, carers, local businesses and education providers, to discover more about the benefits of supported internships – a work-based study programme for young people with SEND. The free drop-in event will take place on Thursday 27 February, from 3pm to 7pm at the Eliot Park Innovation Centre, Nuneaton and will showcase the variety of supported internships available across the county. It provides an excellent opportunity for young people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan to explore if an internship is right for them, whether they are about to finish education and considering post-16 options or earlier in their education journey and thinking ahead to the future (from Year 9 onwards). Families will be able to talk to local education providers and employers offering internships, to discover more about the benefits, what is involved and how to apply. Local organisations will be on hand to provide additional information and advice and answer questions, and attendees can pick up their guide to supported internships in Warwickshire – with specific guides for businesses and colleges, parents and carers, young people and an easy read version available. Local businesses interested in hosting a supported internship will be able to discover what is involved in hosting an intern and how they will be supported to develop a successful programme. There will also be the chance to learn about the outstanding provision that already exists, network with other local businesses and hear first-hand how offering a supported internship programme can have a positive impact on all employees, as well as the young person. As well as giving



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young people the opportunity to develop the transferrable skills and knowledge needed for a paid job, supported internships can also help with improving confidence, self-esteem, and a social life. You can see a fantastic example of the positive impact of a supported internship by watching the case-study of Rhiannon and Matthew, two Warwickshire young people who went on to full-time employment after completing their internship at The Heart of England Forest.

Warwickshire's Supported Internships Fair will take place on **Thursday 27 February, from 3pm to 7pm at Eliot Park Innovation Centre, Barling Way, Nuneaton, CV10 7RH**. The venue has wheelchair access, accessible toilets and allocated accessible car parking. There will also be a designated quiet space, for anyone who may need time away from the main area. Light refreshments will also be provided at the event.

There is no need to book as this is a drop-in event, however if you have any queries or would like any further information, please email **WCCSupportedInternships@warwickshire.gov.uk**.

Small works - Gully Cleaning and potholes – Please ensure that all gullies that need cleaning and potholes that need repairing are recorded on the County website using the link mentioned below.

Pothole repair funding

Warwickshire County Council is delighted to announce the continuation of funding for its highly cost-effective pothole repair service, ensuring that road maintenance remains top priority for 2025-26.

Read more: https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5971/warwickshire-s-roads-to-benefit-from-continued-pothole-repair-funding

Potholes can be reported by residents which gives the team local intelligence and the most current picture of the state of the network locally. It also allows residents to chart the progress of the pothole they report i.e. if it has already been reported, if/ when it will be fixed, when the job is completed. To report a pothole and chart its progress, these are the simple steps. • Go to warwickshire.gov.uk/potholes

• Click on 'Create an account'

• Add email address which will receive a verification code to enter • Once account active, potholes can be reported by putting in postcode or address

• Zoom in and see if it has already been reported. • Add a brief description and add an image (optional) • You can opt to receive email updates or simply log into account to chart progress

Let me know if you have any small roadworks, white lining, or Rights of Way issues I will investigate these for you and get a quote for any works that need to be conducted. , To report a Highway fault, use this link https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/reportaproblem .

POLICE - Please see below projected dates for our community engagement events. We will be adding more dates and locations to the list as dates are confirmed with venues.

- **Tanworth Village Hall**
- Wednesday 5th March - 11:00 - 12:00
- Tuesday 1st April - 11:00 - 12:00
- Thursday 8th May - 16:00 - 17:00
- Tuesday 10th June - 11:00 - 12:00

For general vehicle crime advice please click here

In an emergency call 999, for non-emergencies call 101

Police antisocial behaviour patrols - Warwickshire Police is conducting targeted patrols in hotspots to tackle antisocial behaviour. The Focusing on those locations aims to prevent crime in the specific areas and reduce overall crime levels in the wider area. Discover more about Op Resolve: https://www.warwickshire.police.uk/police-forces/warwickshire-police/areas/warwickshire-police/campaigns/campaigns/2024/op-resolve/

Instagram videos you can watch on Op Resolve and antisocial behaviour:



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Other County Council announcements



Winter flu vaccination

Flu is very infectious and easily spread to other people. It's important to get your winter flu vaccination if you're eligible. Getting vaccinated every year will top up your protection and reduce your risk of getting severe symptoms.

Check your eligibility via www.nhs.uk/live-well/seasonal-health/keep-warm-keep-well/

#FluVaccine #GetWinterStrong #FightFlu #Winterillnesses



A dress to impress

A beautiful dress crafted by refugees and asylum seekers across Warwickshire is on display at Market Hall Museum, Warwick until late April.

Discover more: https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5959/a-dress-to-impress-community-creation-is-a-breathtaking-symbol-of-unity



National Apprenticeship Week

Apprenticeships are a hugely important part of workforce development at Warwickshire County Council (WCC), offering individuals of all ages the chance to gain valuable skills and experience.

Discover more:
https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5962/warwickshire-county-council-celebrates-national-apprenticeship-week-



Wholetime firefighter recruitment

Applications for wholetime firefighters close on 17 Feb!

Now is your chance – apply today https://ow.ly/7wf650UNNTt

Being a firefighter isn't just about putting out fires—it's about working together as a team to protect lives and inspire change.



Adopting a child

Adoption is a life fulfilling opportunity to provide a home for a child who needs the care, support, love and encouragement that can only be offered through a permanent home.

Find out more about becoming an adopter:
https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5969/have-you-ever-thought-about-adopting-



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Stratford Park and Ride at half-term

Planning to visit Stratford-upon-Avon during the half-term holiday? Why not enjoy the benefits of using Stratford Park and Ride bus service and car park?

Discover more: https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5967/this-half-term-enjoy-the-user-friendly-park-and-ride-service-during-your-visit-to-stratford-upon-avon



Half-term at Warwickshire Libraries

Warwickshire County Council's libraries service is encouraging children and families to get involved in plenty of fun activities at their local library this February half-term.

Discover more: https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5966/enjoy-free-dinosaur-themed-activities-and-learning-about-superfoods-this-half-term-at



Youth mental health features in new podcast

The Warwickshire Youth Council has launched #VoicesofTomorrow, a podcast series tackling important topics for young people. The first episode is all about mental health.

Listen now on Let's Talk Warwickshire: https://ow.ly/eo8850UYHpR

#ChildFriendlyWarwickshire



Fostering: The Power of Relationships

This Valentine's Day, Warwickshire Fostering invites local businesses to join their initiative, "The Power of Relationships," to support children in care.

Discover more: https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5964/power-of-relationships-ways-for-businesses-to-show-how-much-they-care-



New active travel funding

It's great news for Warwickshire's Active Travel schemes as the County Council receives close to £3 million to support the design and delivery of active travel schemes across the county. Read more: https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5970/warwickshire-s-active-travel-ambitions-get-an-important-cash-boost



Be prepared for cyber-attacks

Cyber-attacks can have significant, lasting impacts on your business.

Learn some of the simple steps you can take to become #BetterPrepared for cyber-attacks at https://www.warwickshireresilienceforum.org/risks/cyber-attacks/

New highways maintenance contract

Improved use of AI to improve efficiencies, more timely delivery of delegated budgets schemes and moving the winter gritting fleet to ownership of the contractor are among the key changes in the new highways contract set to go out to tender.

Read more: https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/5973/warwickshire-county-council-approves-procurement-for-new-highways-maintenance-contract