

District Councillor report Parish Council Meeting 8th June 2022

I do hope this finds you well after the jubilee celebrations.

Merger

More detailed financial information is emerging regarding the Merger collapse.

SOUTH WARWICKSHIRE MERGER TALKS END

Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) and Warwick District Council (WDC) have jointly decided to end their political merger talks to form a South Warwickshire District Council, without securing an agreement.

Whilst there was a clear strategic logic to the merger, the move to bring matters to a close recognised the significant differences in the approaches of the two Councils in respect of financial risk and borrowing.

The context for the due diligence request was the level of borrowings WDC has at an estimate of £405 million this showed a £100 million increase in 12 months. At a time of rapidly rising interest rates this appears to be an area of a very substantial risk. Therefore, the Cabinet at Stratford District Council felt that under the circumstances, it would not be in the interest of its residents to continue with the merger.

Early analysis shows that Stratford District Council have spent around £162K and estimated £271K worth of savings has been achieved, which equates to a net benefit of £110k of this joint working. This does not include the one-off savings relating to the Local Plan, that will be achieved as well. This means, that at this stage there is no need for an emergency budget. Our future budget plans and targets will depend on the Government settlement that we receive later in the year. The joint working that will continue includes:

- Business Rates Administration
- Information Governance
- Joint HS2 Liaison Officer
- Legal Services
- Development of the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP)

- Development of the South Warwickshire Economic Development Strategy
- Joint Waste & Recycling Contract
- Climate Change

Both authorities will revert to individual Management Teams from 12 May 2022. The interim the Management Team at Stratford District Council will revert to the structure of 1 Chief Executive, 1 Deputy Chief Executive and 5 Heads of Service which was in place prior to the establishment of the Joint Management Team in August 2022.

Council Tax Rebate Scheme

As from 20th May, Stratford District Council have paid 28,445 households totalling £4.26 million – this means 75% of eligible residents have now have the grant.

Stratford District Council are now focussing on those households where they have no bank details, therefore letters are starting to go out.

The Government have given Stratford District Council until 30th September 2022 to make all the payments.

District Leaders Column

Tony Jefferson, Leader of Stratford District Council predicts “*a storm is coming*” as inflation is raging and projected to get above 10%, a level unheard of in a generation. Energy prices are set to by world markets and the Russian invasion, sanctions and Russian response are making the situation worse.

Both energy and food are basics: The impact of price increases in these will be felt most heavily by the poor and those on fixed incomes. Obviously, this will impact people on benefits while pensioners may also be badly affected.

Nevertheless, and despite the increasingly bleak outlook, Stratford District Council are continuing their efforts to support economic growth and business development in the District.

For example, Porterbrook Rail Innovation Centre at Long Marston have plans for investment and development of the site. Stratford District Council has

assured them that SDC would do as much as they can to help to make this a reality.

The aim of Stratford District Councils' aim is to cushion the impacts of national trends by being proactive locally and focused on job creation while encouraging prosperity.

Over £2 million of government funding is available to businesses in Stratford District and Rugby Borough who can demonstrate their ambitions for growth post-Covid.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has been awarded £1.2 million and Rugby Borough Council has been given £916,176 from The Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme, which supports businesses that are not covered by other grant schemes or where additional funding is needed. These funds are limited so businesses that feel they are eligible to apply should complete an initial Expression of Interest form which can be obtained from <https://bit.ly/CovidARGRecoveryFund>. Once assessed, suitable businesses will progress to a full application.

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New Chairman

Stratford District Council has appointed Mark Cargill as their new Chairman

Perinatal Health

Partners across Coventry and Warwickshire have developed new webpages on the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust site for parents and allied professionals to raise awareness of perinatal mental health and signpost to services.

Perinatal mental health refers to mental health problems which occur during pregnancy or in the first year following the birth of a child. Within Coventry and Warwickshire there are services available across many different sectors to support parents, carers, and families at different stages. It is important that

mothers, birthing persons and their families access a range of services to support and alleviate these needs.

The new site has 4 key pages:

1. General introduction to what perinatal mental health is
2. Information about perinatal mental health referrals - what to expect, who to talk to about possible referral, myth busting and lived experience
3. Local sources of help and support
4. Further links to training and learning for parents, carers and allied professionals

Visit the new pages here: <https://www.covwarkpt.nhs.uk/mental-health-support-in-pregnancy-and-after-birth>

Revised Site allocation plan

Finally the Cabinet have approved a revised preferred options site allocation plan. A public consultation will take place June 16th -July 29th and we will be updated re the details closer to the time.

Wishing you all a great weekend and week ahead

Kindest Wishes

Penny-Anne

Penny-Anne O'Donnell

District Councillor Ettington ward