



## Wootton Wawen Ward District Cllr. Ian Shenton

Proud to represent Bearley, Mappleborough Green, Ullenhall, Wootton Wawen

Mobile: 07971 343074 Email: [ian.shenton@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:ian.shenton@stratford-dc.gov.uk)

### District Councillor's report Bearley Parish Council 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026

**If you need to contact me, please email me as I aim to respond within 24 hours otherwise leave a message on my mobile phone. I am here to help you.**

News is very thin at the moment due to the Christmas/New year period and officers have been focussed on budgets and counter proposals from the opposition parties.

I would like to urge parishes to put in an application for grants from the **Community Climate Change and Nature Fund**. Further details are included in the "Funding Opportunities section" If you need help to complete an application just let me know.

**District Issues** – I am concentrating this report on the following: -

- Avian Flu
- Grants for Parishes preparing or updating a Neighbourhood Development Plan
- Consultation on second homes council tax premium
- Bankruptcy order following persistent non-payment of council tax.
- Funding Opportunities
- Free Trees for Parish Councils
- Other news from my December reports to parishes who met that month

### Avian flu in Stratford-upon-Avon confirmed by Defra.

**DON'T RISK SPREADING BIRD FLU**

Keep to footpaths, with dogs on leads

Do not pick up or touch dead or sick wild birds

Do not touch wild bird feathers or surfaces contaminated with wild bird droppings

If you keep poultry or other birds, wash your hands, clean and disinfect your footwear before tending your birds

If you find any dead wild birds, please report online

[www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds)

Or call the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77

APHA may collect some dead birds for surveillance testing. Otherwise birds can be disposed of, safely if necessary, by the local authority on public land or by the landowner/manager.

[www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-and-disposing-of-dead-wild-birds](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reporting-and-disposing-of-dead-wild-birds)

Animal & Plant Health Agency

Avian influenza has been confirmed in a number of geese along the river Avon in Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) have confirmed avian influenza A(H5N1) is currently present in the wild bird population.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is now urging people who are near the river Avon and the surrounding area not to touch any sick or dead wild birds. The UKHSA, Warwickshire County Council and Stratford-on-Avon District Council are working together with APHA to manage the situation, protect public health, and reduce the risk to other birds.

If you find a sick or dead bird, please contact the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77 or visit the [Report dead wild birds webpage on the GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-dead-wild-birds)

The A(H5N1) strain is highly infectious to other birds, but the risk to human health is considered very low. However, it is vital that people do not touch sick birds or dead bird carcasses to avoid the need to introduce further infection control measures.

For those visiting Stratford and the surrounding areas, please:

- Thoroughly wash hands in soap and water. Hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol can be used as an alternative but this is less effective.
- Stay on the footpaths and keep dogs on leads.?
- Avoid touching or picking up dead or sick birds.?
- Do not handle feathers or any surfaces that may be contaminated by droppings.?

Mamoona Tahir, Consultant in Health Protection leading on avian influenza for UKHSA West Midlands, said: "The risk to the public from this strain of avian flu is very low, however it is important that people do not touch any sick or dead birds. As a precaution, anyone who may have come into contact with the droppings or birds in an area where the infection has been confirmed will be monitored and offered a course of antiviral medication if needed."



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In areas where avian influenza has been confirmed or is suspected, anyone who has been in contact with sick or dead birds or their droppings, whilst not wearing the correct personal protective equipment (PPE), should make sure any footwear is properly cleaned and thoroughly washes their hands in soap and water.

They should also notify the UK Health Security Agency's West Midlands Health Protection Team on 0344 225 3560. This is so that public health experts can determine if antiviral medication or active surveillance of their condition is necessary. If someone has handled infected birds whilst wearing adequate PPE, they must still undergo active surveillance.

Dr Shade Agboola, Director of Public Health, Warwickshire County Council said: "The incidence of avian flu in the wild bird population is something that we are taking very seriously. The UKHSA has made it clear that the risk of the disease transferring from birds to humans is considered to be very low. To ensure this situation remains, members of the public should not touch or go near sick or dying birds and any dead birds found should be reported to DEFRA."

It is likely that avian flu is circulating more widely than Stratford. If anyone sees sick or dead birds by waterways or on private land in the surrounding areas in Warwickshire, do not touch them and call the Defra helpline on 03459 33 55 77.

### **Grants for Parishes preparing or updating a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)**

The Conservative group at SDC have put forward a proposal as part of the budget process to give grants to parishes to help fund the preparation of NDP's or to update them. This is likely to be publicised late February or March if approved by the Cabinet. If I hear anything sooner, I will circulate a note to everyone. This looks to have been received favourably by the Lib Dems administration but needs to be fully approved by the full council in February.

### **Stratford-on-Avon District Council launches consultation on second homes council tax premium.**

Stratford-on-Avon District Council is starting a six-week consultation on a proposal to introduce a Council Tax premium on second homes across the district.

From April 2025, Councils in England had new powers to charge up to 100% additional Council Tax on second homes. These are properties that are substantially furnished but not anyone's main residence.

The District Council is considering applying the maximum premium of 100%, which would mean second homes pay double the standard Council Tax rate. Currently, second homes in the district pay the full Council Tax without any discounts.

Following the consultation Council will make the decision on whether to implement the Council Tax Premium in February 2026. If approved the premium would take effect from 1 April 2027. To provide the required notice owners of second homes would be notified by 31 March 2026.

The proposal aims to address housing availability and affordability in the district, where average house prices remain significantly higher than the regional average (£382,000 compared to £257,000 in the West Midlands). By increasing the cost of owning a second home, the District Council hopes to encourage more properties back into the local housing market.

Have Your Say

The consultation is open now until Monday 2 February, and responses will help shape the final decision.

For more information and to take part in the consultation, visit: [Council Tax Premiums on Second Homes Consultation | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)

The online questionnaire can be found here: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/counciltaxpremium>

Paper copies of the questionnaire are also available at the District Council offices.

### **District Council secures bankruptcy order following persistent non-payment of council tax.**

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has successfully obtained a bankruptcy order against Mr P James from Banbury Road, Warwick after repeated failures to pay council tax, despite numerous reminders and legal notices.

Payments on the account ceased after 31 March 2021, following a history of compliance. Despite reminder notices and a court summons being issued, no payments were made. Initial correspondence was returned, but further documents were hand-delivered to ensure receipt.



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During the

recovery process, the District Council received multiple letters asserting "Freeman of the Land" arguments, which were formally addressed. Enforcement agents were instructed in line with legislation, but when the account was returned unpaid, the District Council had little alternative but to commence bankruptcy proceedings. Even after a court hearing date was set, Mr P James continued to submit "Freeman of the Land" letters and Subject Access Requests. These were included in the evidence bundle presented to the court. The Judge ruled that there was "nothing of merit in stopping the bankruptcy order from being granted", and the order was duly made.

The bankruptcy order was granted in February last year, and recovery is ongoing for the sum of £5,707.21. Bankruptcy carries serious implications, including being recorded on the individual's credit file.

Earlier last year, a separate contested bankruptcy case against Mr M Spriggs from Stratford-upon-Avon, also resulted in a ruling in the District Council's favour for £6,535.75. In that case, the Judge confirmed that council tax is payable under an Act of Parliament and not subject to contractual consent, rejecting arguments that the process was unlawful.

For more information on Freeman of the Land please visit: [Freeman of the Land Council Tax Legality | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#)

### Funding Opportunities

**Community Climate Change and Nature Fund Round Three is open for applications!** - Stratford-on-Avon District Council introduced The Community Climate and Nature Fund (CCNF) in November 2023 and has since enabled the funding of a multitude of climate and biodiversity initiatives across Stratford-on-Avon District. Funded projects include the installation of solar panels and air source heat pumps, to pond restoration and flood prevention projects.

Round Three of the CCNF opened in May 2025 and will stay open until April 2026. All applications will be considered at the nearest appraisal date following their submission, the dates are as follows:

- 14th January 2026
- 15th April 2026

For your application to be considered at the next appraisal date (14th January 2025) please submit your application by **5pm on Monday 12th January**.

The latest assessment period ended on 22 October 2025. The following projects were successful:

- £10,000 to Welford on Avon Bowls Club to install 60 solar panels on their club roof, as well as the installation of battery storage.
- £4,033 to Hoppers Lane Wood Trust to restore and plant on the 0.6ha Hoppers Lane Wood site.
- £5,530 to Henley-in-Arden Parish Council to deliver their project titled: "Henley Buzz and Bloom - Creating Colour, Habitat, and Heritage for Henley".
- £3,104 to Tysoe Tennis Club to upgrade the club's floodlighting to LED.
- £6,000 to Henley Memorial Hall to install 3 air source heat pumps throughout the Hall.
- £6,000 to Kineton Village Hall Association to install 2 air source heat pumps in their Hall.

[More information on how to apply can be found on our website here](#)

Please send any enquiries about the CCNF to: [climate.emergency@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:climate.emergency@stratford-dc.gov.uk).

### Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Cabinet approves £350,000 Community Grant Scheme

Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Cabinet on Monday 6 October, approved a new £350,000 Community Grant Scheme aimed at enhancing community infrastructure across the district.

The scheme, developed in collaboration with local and regional partners, will support capital projects that improve accessibility, resilience, and diversity in community spaces.

The grant programme is designed to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VE and VJ Days, with a vision to transform community spaces into living memorials that honour the sacrifice and spirit of past generations. It will also promote unity, remembrance, and community cohesion.

#### Key features of the scheme:



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- **Funding allocation:** £50,000 for small grants (£5,000 - £20,000) and £300,000 for large grants (£20,001 - £100,000).
- **Eligible applicants:** Town and Parish Councils, registered charities, PTAs, community interest companies (CICs), and similar non-profit entities.
- **Project types:** Structural repairs, accessibility improvements, facility upgrades, outdoor space enhancements, and new community asset creation.

### Eligible projects may include:

- External structural repairs to community buildings.
- Refurbishment or installation of kitchen and bathroom facilities.
- Building extensions to improve internal space.
- Accessibility improvements such as wheelchair access, handrails, and raised flower beds.
- Enhancements to play areas, recreation grounds, allotments, orchards, and leisure facilities.
- Creation of new community assets.

The District Council will host workshops to guide potential applicants through the process, with support from Warwickshire CAVA and other partners. Projects will be assessed by a dedicated panel using a robust scoring system that prioritises community impact, deliverability, and location of the project.

For more information, including eligibility criteria and application guidance, please visit the [Community Grant Scheme 2025 | Stratford-on-Avon District Council](#) or contact the Communities and Social Inclusion Team on [socialinclusion@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:socialinclusion@stratford-dc.gov.uk)

### Application timeline:

- Launch: Late October to 11 November 2025
- Briefing sessions: Mid-November 2025
- Application deadlines: 31 January 2026 (small grants), 27 February 2026 (large grants)
- Awards announced: May to June 2026, aligned with Armed Forces Day

Project delivery: April 2026 to March 2027

**Free trees for Town and Parish Councils** - Town and Parish Councils have received an email from SDC's Sue Greenall, asking for expressions of interest to gauge the level of interest in a scheme for tree planting in their areas. If your Town or Parish Council has suitable areas of public or publicly accessible land and would be interested in applying for the grant and hasn't already responded to the email, please send the following information to [sue.greenall@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:sue.greenall@stratford-dc.gov.uk)

- Name of the Town/Parish Council and contact details for scheme organiser.
- Show the proposed planting location(s) on a map.
- Confirm the number of trees and species that you would be looking to purchase and plant.
- Confirm who is the legal Landowner of the proposed planting area and whether permission for planting will need to be sought.

Once all expressions of interest are received and based on the information provided, an application form will be issued along with a list of conditions to be met and details of evidence that would be required.

### Other news (from my December reports to Parishes who met in that month)

**SWLP** – A meeting with Councillors was held at SDC in December and the favoured sites include Bearley/Wilmcote and Henley which I have outlined in previous reports. The next consultation will not happen until late spring.

What is also clear is that developers are determined to lodge speculative applications for sites that are not in the plan due to the 5-year Housing Land Supply issue (5YHLS). The issue is due to SDC only having a 2.74-year HLS which leaves us open to this rash of applications which, if SDC refuse to pass, could be overturned by the Building Inspectorate. The result is development where we don't want it with developers being in more control over development than SDC itself. This issue was caused by poor judgement in my opinion as I was very clear a year ago, when the government announced a new formulae for calculating the 5YHLS, that this would apply to Stratford District. At the meeting with councillors in December 2024 officers said that because we already had a development plan this would not apply. My view was a stark contrast to theirs. The result is that the government overrode officers and enforced the new calculation as I said they would. It could be another two years before we



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recover full control

of planning, in the meantime applications will continue to increase as developers take advantage of this poor decision.

**Warwickshire Rural Community Council (WRCC)** - On the 25<sup>th</sup> of November WRCC made the decision to wind up its operations with the formal announcement on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December. In its statement, WRCC said that despite "undergoing a significant programme of change during 2025", it had nevertheless suffered two years of "losses and income targets not being met". Trustees decided at a board meeting to close the charity with immediate effect, with the charity now "engaging an insolvency practitioner as the first step towards liquidation."

WRCC said that all its members of staff, who it thanked for their "commitment and dedication," would effectively lose their jobs "without notice." The charity added in its statement: "All trustees and our chief executive, Chris Cowcher, are truly sorry that it must end this way. "We hope that our partners and other organisations will continue to champion rural communities, ensuring local voices are heard and their needs met in the future.

This has implications for their meals on wheels service, oil syndicates, and warm hubs, who derive most of their income from WRCC and at this stage I am not sure whether Cadent (the principal supported of funding) will continue. If not, then a number of warm hubs could be at risk including our own. The WW Warm hub has funding that will last for the current budget year to March 2026.

Recent history of WRCC reveals that in 2012, it invested in an Energy syndicate to reduce the cost of oil orders for villagers and businesses without access to mains facilities. Over the past 5 years they ordered over 3.5 million litres of kerosene and saved members over £180,000 against average prices quoted. They have been involved with village halls throughout Warwickshire, working with Leicestershire & Rutland RCC to run the Halls Together service. This continued to support committee members who're dealing with the modern day to day challenges of managing community spaces in rural areas. In November 2023, they set up the Warm Hubs project across Warwickshire and Solihull, to target social isolation and fuel poverty/cost of living crisis. In the summer of 2024, they started up the Community Food Fleet service, after the former Meals on Wheels service had been discontinued, to the delight of many residents around Warwickshire.

**In the meantime, myself and another councillor are trying to establish who we should talk to at Cadent to talk about funding for all warm hubs. I will report back with an update at the January 2026 meeting.**

**SDC Mobile app** - Stratford-on-Avon District Council is delighted to announce that residents using the Council's mobile app have helped raise an incredible £1,000, which has been donated to the Chair's chosen charity: [Eco Work-Shop CIC](#). The scheme was made available through Biffa Waste Services Ltd, the Council's waste and recycling collection contractor, with a donation of 10p being made to the Chair's Charity each time a search was made via the Recycling Info feature on how to recycle a household item or material. Thanks to your efforts, this milestone demonstrates the power of community action. Every item recycled through the app has contributed to this fantastic achievement. As well as recycling information, the Council's mobile app offers information on waste collection days, reminders, reporting a missed bin, news and much more!

Download the app today: [www.stratford.gov.uk/app](http://www.stratford.gov.uk/app)

### Chickenpox Vaccination Offered to Children Across Warwickshire

January 2026 sees the introduction of an update to the childhood immunisation schedule, the MMRV vaccine, which now includes protection against chickenpox as well as Measles, Mumps and Rubella.

Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella (chicken pox) will be offered as a combined vaccine - ensuring a comprehensive coverage against the four main highly contagious diseases for children. The combined vaccine means fewer doses and fewer appointments.

### Mobile Phone Users With Poor Phone Signal Urged to Take Survey

**A survey has been launched to find the areas in Warwickshire suffering from poor mobile phone coverage.**

The latest initiative from Warwickshire County Council aims to gather reports directly from residents and businesses about signal quality and to identify coverage 'blackspots' which require service improvements from the mobile phone operators.

Help us build an understanding of coverage in your area by completing our mobile connectivity survey online at <https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/mobile-coverage/issues/>