

## **District Councillor annual report 2021/22 Lighthorne Parish Council 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022**

It has been a very interesting year for Stratford District Council. The pandemic had an enormous effect on the economy of the District resulting in Stratford being the 4<sup>th</sup> hardest hit local economy in the Country. However, the District Council were able to help with New Restart Grants to help businesses recover. The grants enabled businesses financially as they reopened. Anyone eligible to receive a business grant from the council during the pandemic did not have to apply as the payments were paid automatically. Firms received a one-off payment from £6,000 to £18,000 depending on the rateable value and type of business.

### **Stratford District Council Environmental Health**

Stratford District Council's food safety environmental team had a very busy year as they found that some eating establishments had relaxed their hygiene rules due to the team not being able to visit these establishments as frequently as they wanted to. The food safety team carried out several unannounced evening visits to takeaways in the district but unfortunately, due to the lack of food safety inspections, the standards in most premises had fallen, and significant food hygiene and health and safety issues were identified. Generally, however, the team found that food hygiene standards had fallen across the district during 2021.

### **Blue Bin Collection**

A fire at the Pure recycling plant did for a short time cause inconvenience to the residents across the District. Although the site was destroyed, there were no injuries to the staff on the site. The council worked very hard with Biffa to find an alternative solution to this problem in finding somewhere that could take the dry recycling which amounted to 20,000 tons per year.

### **Ward Boundary Changes**

Ward Boundaries have been announced which has inevitably resulted in a few Parishes being transferred to other wards.

## **Council adopted new Housing Strategy for Stratford-on-Avon District**

Stratford-on-Avon District Council adopted a new Housing Strategy for the District.

***“Sustainable Homes, Sustainable Communities Housing Strategy for Stratford-on-Avon District 2021 to 2026”***, set out the key housing challenges in the District and identified what the Council and its partners needed to do to meet the expectations of local people and communities.

It also included the ***‘Homelessness Review, Homelessness Strategy’*** including people who sleep rough and Private Sector Housing Strategy.

## **Health**

People in Stratford-on-Avon District are generally in better health compared to the England average Life expectancy in the District is 85.2 years for women (England 83.4) and for men 81.5 years (England 79.8). These figures are the highest in the West Midlands region.

## **Avian Flu**

The Avian Flu outbreak caused a problem across our area resulting in Stratford District Council urging the public not to touch sick or dead birds as Avian influenza was confirmed by Defra in Worcester and Warwickshire. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) confirmed there was an avian influenza A (H5N1) in wild bird populations in Worcestershire and the Stratford area of Warwickshire. The UK food standards agencies advised that avian influenzas posed a very low food safety risk for UK consumers.

## **Climate Change**

An ambitions paper was reviewed by OSC in October 2021 and was put before Cabinet in November for approval.

It was proposed that we can make a difference in simple ways - recycle more, don't waste food, reduce what goes to landfill by putting waste in the correct bin, don't leave the tap running whilst brushing your teeth, walk to the local shop (if you have one) rather than using the car, use reusable drinks bottles, not

single use ones which invariably end up in the wrong waste stream. The report concluded that these are simple steps that all residents can take without impacting greatly on their normal way of life.

For more information about what Stratford-on-Avon District Council is doing to tackle Climate Change, visit:

<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/environment/climate-change.cfm>

### **Stratford-on-Avon District Council Cabinet budget proposals**

On Monday 17 January 2022 Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Cabinet agreed the draft budget proposals for consultation for the next five years (2022/23 to 2026/27). The Council tax increase this year is £5 per household, the maximum allowed by the Government. This meant a Band D property would increase in April this year (2022) from £149.12 to £154.12.

Although the collecting agent for Council Tax, **the District Council only receives 7.5% of Council Tax paid by residents**. Warwickshire County Council receives 76.6%, the Police 12.6% and Towns/Parishes 3.3%. This meant the District Council only receives just under 8p of every £1 paid in Council Tax to provide services.

### **Help available for residents impacted by energy price increase**

Following the announcement that the price cap increase on energy charges would impact millions of households, Stratford District Council continued to work with local charity, Act on Energy to promote grants, advice, and support available to residents in South Warwickshire. Act on Energy can be contacted on 0800 988 2881. Or visit: <https://actonenergy.org.uk/>

### **Proposals to create a South Warwickshire Council**

In 2021, both Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils faced a very uncertain financial future and investigated a possible merger between the two Councils. Government funding for all Councils had reduced in recent years, and at Stratford-on-Avon yet further significant reductions were expected due to changes to the New Homes Bonus whereas at Warwick District the cost of delivering services, including refuse and recycling, was expected to increase significantly. It was estimated that both Councils would have a shortfall of around £4-6m each year by 2025/26. Across the two Councils this meant that £10m of annual savings were needed over the next five years to address this shortfall and help preserve services. However, the merger did not take place as it was found the risks (financially) to the residents of our District were too high.