

District Councillors Report 10th December 2019

Lighthorne Parish Council

Stratford Link Project update

The Stratford Link Project is continuing to run from its latest venue, the Baptist Church Hall in Payton Street, Stratford-upon-Avon.

Sessions are on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1pm until 3pm, and are being run by P3, with support from Stratford-on-Avon District Council and volunteers, a number of which are members of the Baptist Church.

The Link will continue to run at this venue until the end of the year.

Discussions are ongoing as to the location of the Link in 2020.

After having to close earlier this year, the Stratford Link Project reopened in June 2019, and has been running continuously since then at several locations in the town.

The Link Project provides refreshments for service users, along with opportunities to seek advice and assistance from a number of agencies, including P3, CGL and the District Council's Housing Advice Team.

Preventing homelessness is a top priority for the District Council. In February the District Council secured up to £24,000 in funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to support initiatives designed to help reduce rough sleeping in the district. The additional funds are being used to deliver a range of bespoke interventions for entrenched rough sleepers.

Also in Stratford there are a range of charities and organisations working to support vulnerable people in the community. This ranges from supporting people with day-to-day needs, to providing long term support enabling them to make lasting and meaningful change.

These groups have come together with a range of statutory partners to form the **Meaningful Change** campaign. By giving to the charities and organisations involved in this campaign rather than directly to those who beg, you can change

lives. You will help to provide long term support rather than funding the current lifestyles in which many of those begging are trapped.

For more information please visit: www.meaningfulchange.org.uk

The Meaningful Change project will also work closely with the new Fred Winter Centre (Stratford Housing Plus) when opened, to ensure that all services to support homeless people are joined up and provide the best possible opportunities for those in need.

Support organisations include:

- **P3 Charity:** housing-related floating support service to over 25s in Warwickshire; street outreach service for rough sleepers and sofa surfers in Warwickshire: 0808 164 6220
- **St Basils:** housing-related floating support to those aged 16 to 25 in Warwickshire: text NEED ST BASILS to 62277 or call 01789 332 540
- **CGL (Change, Grow, Live):** alcohol and drug treatment centre: 16 Court St, Leamington Spa, CV31 2BB Tel: 01926 353513
- **Citizens Advice Bureau:** 25 Meer Street, Stratford-upon-Avon. Tel: 01789 200136
- **JobCentrePlus:** Martin Raff House, Alcester Road, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 9DA. Tel: 0345 604 3719

The District Council also operates an enhanced **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)** – offering rough sleepers overnight shelter and accommodation during extreme weathers conditions. The SWEP has already been activated twice in the last month.

Anyone who is homeless and needs assistance in relation to help, advice and support can contact:

- The District Council's Housing Advice Team on 01789 260861
- P3 on 01789 336279
- Or in person at the District Council Offices, Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council Culture Report published

[The Culture Report](#) for Stratford-on-Avon District Council, following allegations of sexism and an internal investigation, has been published.

Olwen Brown, a partner at Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP, who produced the report found no evidence of a culture of sexism at the District Council.

In the report, she states: *“Given the evidence I have considered, it seems to me that it would be unfair to brand the Council as having a ‘sexist culture’.”*

The report also states: *“I was also impressed by the way in which the Employee Code and Member Code of conduct are strongly aligned, with for example the Nolan principles now incorporated in the Employee Code of Conduct as well as underpinning, as is required, the Member Code.”*

The report also recognises that: *“My belief is that both Mr Buckland and Cllr Jefferson, as the new Chief Executive and Leader respectively are genuine in their commitment to do what they can to make sure that the Council does not have and is not seen as having a sexist culture.”*

Many of the comments and complaints in the witness evidence relates to the behaviour of two particular members, namely Cllrs Barnes and Feilding. They have been the subject of separate Code of Conduct investigations and were found guilty of breaches of the Code of Conduct, have apologised to all staff at the Council and are going through a training process in an attempt to amend their behaviour.

However, one area of concern is for staff to have the confidence and feel supported to report instances of inappropriate behaviour and that known behaviours had not been tackled previously.

The full report will now go to the District Council’s [Audit and Standards Committee](#) on Monday 18 November for consideration.

The recommendations in the report are:

- Giving officers the confidence and support to raise concerns of unacceptable behaviours.
- Further training for both officers and members on equality and diversity.
- Improving communications for staff about how to raise matters of concern.
- Learning from other workplaces to improve procedures.
- Review the current procedures in place of raising concerns and see if improvements can be made.
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A [detailed action plan](#) to address the recommendations will also be considered at the meeting.

In addition staff are being surveyed on how they feel most comfortable about raising concerns.

David Buckland, Chief Executive in response said: “The District Council takes any allegations involving any form of discrimination extremely seriously and when we were aware the Monitoring Officer instigated an independent review immediately. I would like to thank all the staff and members that contributed to the review and also to the investigator for such a thorough report.

“Whilst I am obviously very pleased that the investigator has concluded we are not a ‘*sexist*’ organisation. Staff can be fully assured that the recommendations arising from the report will be implemented in full, and I would encourage anybody who has any such concerns to come forward. They will be taken seriously and they will be supported.”

- The District Council’s Monitoring Officer commissioned the Culture Report as part of the internal investigation – to produce a further report in relation to the wider culture of the District Council, following the comments in the original Facebook post from the former employee.
- The original investigation was started following a complaint from a private Facebook message posted by the former employee about some of her experiences and view of a sexist culture at the Council.
- All staff and Councillors were contacted to invite those with similar concerns to come forward to help with the investigations.
- A total of eight members of staff came forward and were interviewed as part of the investigation.

Green Waste Collection.

There has been a negative reaction to the charge for the Green Waste Collection. To put this in perspective, the charge is the same cost of buying a weekly Herald newspaper

Applying for Settled Status

This page answers some common questions about Settled Status and the application process.

What is Brexit?

On 23 June 2016 the people of the UK voted to leave the EU in a referendum called by the Government at that time.

Brexit is the popular name for the UK leaving the EU. The date for this is now set at on or before 31 January 2020, following the granting of an extension by the EU. The precise terms of this have yet to be agreed by the UK Parliament, however and a general election has been called in the UK for 12 December 2019. It will be for the next Government and Parliament to finalise a deal with the EU.

Brexit means that the arrangements and agreements of the UK's membership of the EU will end. New arrangements have to be put in place, including those that cover the right of EU citizens to freely live and work in the UK for those already here.

EU citizens affected are the nationals of the 27 EU countries (Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Estonia, Austria, Germany, France, Spain, Portugal, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Malta, Ireland) plus EEA countries (Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein) and Switzerland.

For simplicity, we refer to EU citizens across this website, but unless specified, we actually mean the nationals of the 31 countries in the paragraph above.

What does this mean for me?

If you are a citizen from an EU/EEA country, or a Swiss citizen, and live in the UK, the treaty that protects your rights to live and work here will no longer apply here.

To allow you and your family to stay and work here, and retain your rights to services, benefits and healthcare, the EU and the UK have agreed on certain terms and protections for EU citizens in the UK.

It is possible that the UK decides to leave without agreeing on a deal, the so-called no-deal scenario. However, the UK Government has stated that in that case, it will still respect the agreements reached related to citizen's rights.

The UK has made a separate, but similar agreement with EEA countries and Switzerland, so citizens from Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland will be unaffected by a no-deal scenario.

What should I do?

EU/EEA and Swiss citizens in the UK must apply for a new immigration status to continue to live and work in the UK and to access healthcare and social security benefits for which they are eligible. This new status is called Settled Status and the scheme to implement this is called the EU Settlement Scheme.

The deadline for applications is:

- 30 June 2021 if there is a deal,
- or 31 December 2020 if there is no deal.

Nothing will change in your status until these dates, but it is important to apply if you want to continue to live and work in the UK and keep the rights you have now. Not applying by the relevant cut-off dates above may mean you could lose your right to work, to rent a house or to receive benefits or healthcare. Ultimately, this could lead to your removal from the UK.

The application is free, although there may be costs involved with some parts of the process. Settled Status is granted based on residence only. You do not need to be in-work and can receive benefits.

Can everyone in my family apply?

Yes. EU citizens and their family members, including children, must apply.

If your family includes nationals from outside the EU, they must apply too if they are:

- your spouse, civil partner or durable partner;
- your children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren (under 21 years old);
- Your dependent children over the age of 21;
- your parents, grandparents or great-grandparents.

What do I need to apply?

You need a valid passport or ID document. If yours are out of date (or will soon be out of date) or lost, you should apply for new documents as soon as you can.

If you have a National Insurance Number (NIN), have it to hand. It helps the Home Office to check tax and benefits records as evidence of your residence in the UK. If you don't have a NIN, you may well have to upload extra documentation as proof of your residence in the UK.

If you are making an application for your children, you need evidence of their relationship to you, such as a birth certificate.

You will also need an email address to be able to continue your application process online for future reference and so that the Home Office can send you updates on your application.

You may need to provide additional evidence that you have lived in the UK for the previous five years. You can find a [checklist of documents that will be accepted by the Home Office here](#).

I already have some immigration documents!

If you have a Registration Certificate or were registered under the Workers Registration Scheme you must apply.

If you have a Permanent Residence document, you must still apply. This document will become invalid on 31 December 2020. However, it will count as evidence of residence during your Settled Status application.

Non-EU citizens with a residence permit can apply if they can provide evidence of their relationship to an EU citizen, as well as their biometric residence permit.

If you have Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) you don't have to apply. Settled Status is a form of Indefinite Leave to Remain. However, applying for Settled Status might give you extra rights and more protection. If you do apply, you can skip the proof of residence stage, as you have already qualified for that.

What will I get and what will my rights be?

You will get Indefinite Leave to Remain, which is a UK immigration status that will give you the right to carry on living and working in the UK.

Depending on the length of time you have lived in the UK at the time of your application, or the proof of this time that you have, there are two categories:

1. **Pre-Settled Status** will be offered if you have lived in the UK for **less than five years** when you apply, or if you cannot provide evidence that you have lived in the UK for more than five years. It is valid for five years only and you will need to apply for Settled Status when this runs out, or when you reach five years of residence in the UK. You can work, rent or buy accommodation and have access to the health care from the NHS, but some benefits may be restricted due to the additional conditions that apply.
2. **Settled Status** will be offered if you can show you have lived in the UK for five years or more when you apply. This gives you a version of Indefinite Leave to Remain, with the right to work, rent or buy accommodation, access to healthcare and other social security provisions such as benefits and access to education on the same conditions as UK citizens.

You will have the right to leave and enter the country, however, you will lose your status if you stay out of the country for five years or more continuously.

You will also have the right to family reunification, which means close family members (children and parents, and their children and parents) can join you at a later date.

If you want to, you can apply for British Citizenship one year after you have received your Settled Status, if you meet the criteria for this. If you are married to a British Citizen, you can apply immediately on receiving Settled Status.

How do I apply?

You can start your application for Settled Status [on the gov.uk online portal](#). Settled is dedicated to guide, inform and assist those vulnerable and hard-to-reach EU citizens who may be at risk of not having a status by the time the EU Settlement Scheme ends. This site aims to provide more specific [guidance specific to your circumstances](#). If you still have questions about a Settled Status application for yourself or somebody you know, please [contact us here](#). We usually reply within one working day.

This page was last updated on Wednesday 30 October 2019. Settled will make every effort to update this information to reflect the current situation.

FREE car parking (in SDC pay and display car parks in town) on Christmas shopping nights in Stratford

Residents and visitors to Stratford-upon-Avon will not have to pay for car parking, in selected District Council car parks, in the town on five Thursday evenings in the run up to Christmas. Stratford-upon-Avon District Council is offering free parking in all Stratford District surface) on the dates listed below:

- Thursday 21 November 4pm to midnight (Christmas lights switch on)
- Thursday 28 November 4pm to midnight
- Thursday 5 December 4pm to midnight* (although there is no market due to the Stratford-upon-Avon Victorian Christmas Market on Friday 6, Saturday 7 and Sunday 8 December)
- Thursday 12 December 4pm to midnight
- Thursday 19 December 4pm to midnight

The District Council car parks include:

- Arden Street
- Church Street
- Recreation ground
- Leisure Centre
- Swans Nest Lane
- Windsor Street

Please note: Not all town centre cars parks are Stratford District Council car parks, please check first.

Cllr Ian Shenton, Operations Portfolio holder says: “We have run this free-parking offer successfully for a number of years and it is very popular with both shoppers and retailers alike and is a positive way that the District Council can demonstrate its support for local businesses.

“Shopping in Stratford-upon-Avon with its easy parking, wide variety of retailers, amazing choice of places to eat and its history is a great place to visit all year round but at Christmas time with the beautiful Christmas lights and superb festive market, it becomes a truly a magical and atmospheric place to shop, for all the family.

“I really hope people take advantage of this offer which will benefit everyone from residents to traders and those from outside the district who might choose to visit. We want to make Stratford-upon-Avon the first place of choice for people to come and do their Christmas shopping.”