

Parish and Partners Foreword

Dear All,

Welcome to the March 2026 edition of Parish and Partners Briefing, bringing you a wide range of updates from across the District.

You'll find important information on the recently approved Council Tax levels for 2026/27, outlining how essential services continue to be delivered despite ongoing financial pressures.

We also highlight major community investments, including the return of subsidised health screening events and new awards through the Community Climate and Nature Fund, supporting local sustainability and biodiversity projects.

This edition showcases several environmental and community initiatives, such as the successful Free Trees for Farmers Scheme, progress on the temporary suspension of kerbside textiles recycling, and the Council's work to develop long term solutions.

We also include updates on the newly approved Growing Opportunities Plan 2026–2029, which brings together more than 40 partner organisations to tackle poverty, improve wellbeing and support residents of all ages.

In addition, you can read about the refurbishment of the Stratford upon Avon Recreation Ground play area and the launch of the Council's refreshed website, designed to improve navigation, accessibility and online services for residents.

We also celebrate notable achievements within the District, including outstanding food hygiene ratings among local businesses and national recognition for Stratford-upon-Avon's Waterside Upmarket, crowned Best Large Outdoor Market.

Plus, we highlight the launch of the new Stratford-upon-Avon community website, a digital first aimed at boosting local engagement, supporting businesses and enhancing the visitor experience.

Rural communities will find updates on preparations for Open Farm Sunday 2026 and the continued work of Rural Crime Advisors, while businesses can explore outcomes from the Stratford Business Conference and new support available to encourage economic growth.

Finally, we bring you the latest from the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, along with forthcoming meeting dates and opportunities to stay informed.

We hope you enjoy this edition.

David



Want to receive regular news and updates from your District Council directly to your email inbox?

Then sign up now to The Online View - Stratford District Newsletter: <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/communications/email-newsletter.cfm>



Council Tax level for Stratford-on-Avon District

Stratford-on-Avon District Councillors set the district element of the Council Tax at a meeting of the Council on Monday 23 February.

The amount residents will be asked to pay for a Band D property is £174.18, an increase of 2.99%, which for an average home represents just an additional 42p per month to the District Council next year.

This means that all the services provided by the District Council cost £3.35 a week for a Band D household. This contributes to meeting the cost of providing a wide range of services including recycling and waste collection, planning, street cleaning, housing, housing benefits, leisure services and children's play areas.

The Council Tax from Stratford-on-Avon District Council for residents for 2026/27 for each of the valuation bands is:

- A £116.12
- B £135.47
- C £154.83
- D £174.18
- E £212.89
- F £251.59
- G £290.30
- H £348.36



Although the District Council acts as the collecting agent for Council Tax, it only receives 7.0% of the Council Tax paid by residents. Warwickshire County Council receives the lion's share of 76.7%, the Police 12.8% and Towns/Parishes 3.5%.

This means the District Council only retains 7.0p of every £1 paid in Council Tax to provide its range of services.

Cllr David Curtis, Portfolio Holder for Resources, said: *"This budget balances the need to be financially responsible, whilst protecting and improving vital services for our residents. It offers support for residents across our District; to our most vulnerable and the elderly, for our rural communities, town centres and business community, to young families and the protection of our environment for future generations."*

Cllr Susan Juned, Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council, said: *"Despite financial pressures, the Council has been able to continue to deliver vital services such as economic development, leisure facilities, environmental improvements and waste collections whilst also delivering improved rural crime prevention and continued assistance to residents who are still facing cost-of-living pressures."*

Stratford-on-Avon remains a low-taxing authority, 18th lowest out of 164 district councils across the country in 2025/26.

Council Tax Resolution 2026/27 - Total Band D Council Tax

	2025/26	2026/27	% Increase
Stratford-on-Avon District Council	£169.12	£174.18	2.99%
Warwickshire County Council	£1,822.95	£1,903.86	4.44%
Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner	£303.71	£318.71	4.94%
Sub-total	£2,295.78	£2,396.75	4.40%
Town and Parish Councils (average)	£84.13	£87.42	3.91%
TOTAL	£2,379.91	£2,484.17	4.38%



Council Tax level for Stratford-on-Avon District - *continued*

Anyone who thinks they could be struggling to pay their Council Tax is encouraged to contact the District Council as soon as possible by calling 01789 260990 or email revenues@stratford-dc.gov.uk, where the team will be able to advise what help is available.

Following Full Council approval, provision has been made within the 2026/27 budget to fund the following:

- **Gateway Clearance and Development - £1,500,000 (one off)**
Funds site clearance and temporary car parking works to avoid ongoing business rates.
- **Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Capacity - £1,000,000 (one off)**
Temporary staffing for Legal, Finance and HR to meet increased workload once the LGR timetable is set.
- **Housing to Rent - £1,000,000 (one off)**
To secure additional social housing units and reduce reliance on costly temporary accommodation.
- **High Street Pedestrianisation - £326,000 (one off)**
Proposed 12 month pedestrianisation scheme (previous 2025/26 pilot unable to proceed).
- **Climate Change Fund - £500,000 (one off)**
Fifth consecutive year of funding for local climate initiatives.
- **Biodiversity Net Gain - £31,000 (ongoing)**
To meet statutory BNG reporting duties.
- **Neighbourhood Development Plans - £100,000 (over 3 years)**
Supports parish councils to produce up to 10 plans per year.
- **South Warwickshire Place Partnership Board - £20,000 (one off)**
To deliver local health inequality priorities.
- **Upper Lighthorne Parenting Project - £20,000 (one off)**
Supports wellbeing work with families and schools.
- **VASA Volunteer Driver Scheme - £12,000 (for 3 years)**
Supports transport for older and mobility impaired residents.
- **Veterans Healthcare and Development Officer - £8,000 (for 2 years)**
Contribution to veterans support services.
- **Communities and Social Inclusion Enabler - £24,000 (2026/27), then £59,000 ongoing**
Continues work on social exclusion and community cohesion.
- **Youth Work Catalyst Project - £41,000 (over 3 years)**
Supports youth engagement and anti social behaviour work.
- **Cost of Living Crisis Mitigation Fund - £250,000 (one off)**
Adds to projected £250,000 rollover to create a £500,000 hardship support fund.
- **Shakespeare's England - £25,000 (over 2 years)**
To continue support until new arrangements are confirmed.
- **Extension of Natural Play Cycle Area - £150,000 (one off)**
Expands well used cycle play area.
- **Refurbishment of Shottery Fields Play Equipment - £100,000 (one off)**
Replaces ageing equipment and improves inclusivity.



Stratford-on-Avon District Council approves Council Tax Premiums for second homes

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has approved the introduction of council tax premiums for second homes across the District from 1 April 2027.

This follows national changes enabling councils in England to apply an additional charge of up to 100% on second homes, defined as properties that are substantially furnished but not used as anyone's sole or main residence.

Stratford-on-Avon District has over 850 second homes, representing more than 1% of the District's entire housing stock. Raising the cost of owning a second home is intended to encourage some properties back into the housing market.

Increasing the supply of homes for local residents remains a priority within the Council Plan, which commits to delivering "affordable, well built and maintained homes" and making decisions in the broader public interest.

A formal consultation on the proposed premium was carried out between 15 December 2025 and 2 February 2026.

- 589 online responses were received
- 8 paper questionnaires were submitted
- 14 additional responses were received via letter or email
- All 859 second-home owners were contacted directly
- The consultation was shared widely through local press, social media, the Citizens' Panel, parish and town councils, and the residents' email newsletter

[The consultation report is available for the public to view.](#)

Cllr Liz Coles, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Revenues and Customer Services, said: "*Stratford-on-Avon District Council remains committed to improving the availability and affordability of homes for local residents while ensuring that essential services and housing programmes continue to be sustainably funded.*"

All second-home owners affected by the change will receive written notification before 31 March 2026. Across the summer, the District Council will also be holding some advice clinics for residents who want to understand in more detail what this means for them and if any exceptions apply to them.

The 100% premium will then be implemented from 1 April 2027, in line with statutory requirements to provide one year's notice before changes take effect.



Stratford-on-Avon District Council launches refreshed website

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has recently launched its newly refreshed website. Developed entirely in-house, the redesigned site has been delivered at no cost, ensuring best value for residents while improving access to essential services.

The project forms a key part of the District Council's Digital Strategy and responds directly to findings from the Residents' Survey 2024, which highlighted the need for simpler navigation, clearer information, and faster online transactions.

The new website has been shaped by a broad range of insight, including:

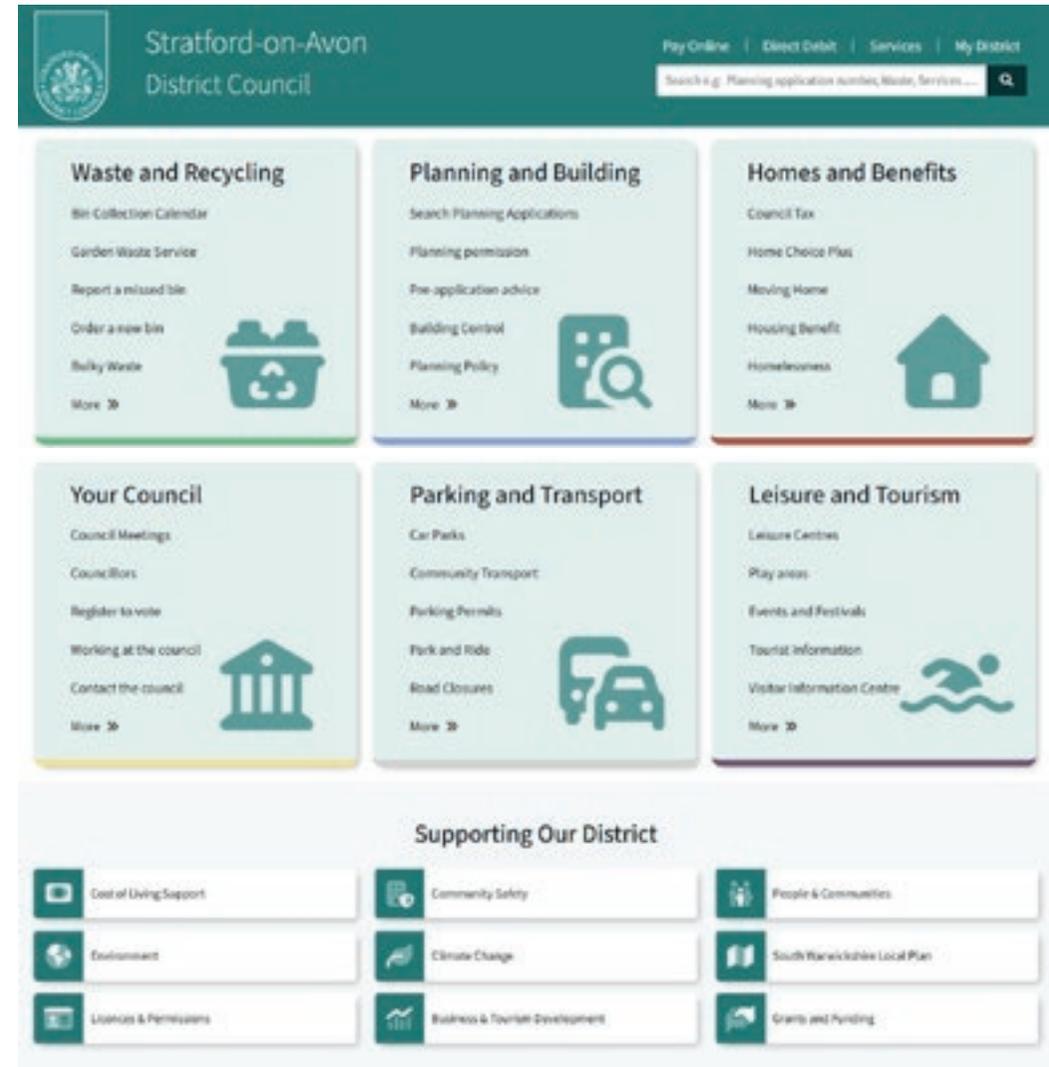
- Feedback from the Residents' Survey
- Google Analytics data highlighting real usage patterns
- Workshops involving staff and service teams
- Several rounds of user-focused reviews and refinements

The new website introduces:

- Simpler navigation and clearer pathways to the most commonly used services
- Improved accessibility, including better contrast and layout
- A more modern, mobile-friendly design to support the increasing number of residents who access the site on phones and tablets
- A more intuitive structure that reduces the number of steps needed to complete key tasks
- A refreshed Newsroom with clearer updates and more dynamic content

This is more than a visual update; it is a complete rethink of how residents access information online.

Cllr David Curtis, Portfolio Holder for Resources at Stratford-on-Avon District Council, said: *"We are committed to providing accessible, intuitive and reliable digital services. By delivering this redesign in-house and basing every decision on residents' personal experience, we've created a modern, user-friendly platform that meets the needs of our community while ensuring excellent value for money."*



Stratford-upon-Avon Recreation Ground Play Area gets a refurb

The renovation of the children's play area at the Recreation Ground in Stratford-upon-Avon is now complete.

Project highlights include:

- £250,000 investment in high-quality, inclusive play equipment
- Designed for children aged 1-11 years
- 75+ engaging play features Forest and River thematic design Installed using EcoCore Panels (recyclable and made from more than 95% post-consumer recycled waste)
- Capacity for 150 users at any one time
- A dedicated Accessible Sensory Play Area
- A new shaded picnic area with additional seating
- Improved paddling pool surround with non-slip surfacing
- New play features added within the paddling pool to encourage water play
- Enhanced landscaping throughout, including newly laid grassed areas
- Revamped sandpit with running water reinstated
- Redecorated public toilets with a new boiler installed
- Selected car park markings relined, including zebra crossings



Cllr Lorraine Grocott, Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Neighbourhood Services, said: *"This project represents a significant investment in our community and provides a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable space for children and families to enjoy for many years to come."*



Temporary suspension of textiles recycling collections across Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick Districts

The kerbside textiles recycling service from Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils will be temporarily suspended from 1 April 2026.

The Salvation Army, the Councils' current textiles offtaker, has confirmed that challenging market conditions, rising operational costs and wider geopolitical instability affecting its recycling operations have led to this decision. With the removal of The Salvation Army clothing banks from the waste depots in both Districts, the Councils are unable to continue offering the current kerbside textiles recycling service in its existing form.

During this suspension period, residents are encouraged to make use of the many local alternatives available for donating, reusing, or repairing textiles. These include:

- Charity shops across Stratford-on-Avon District and Warwick District, many of which continue to accept good-quality clothing, shoes, and household textiles.
- Local donation points operated by charitable organisations, which remain open and available for residents wishing to pass on items for reuse.



Working together
to deliver Waste Services

Residents looking to extend the life of clothing and fabric items can also make use of the growing network of Repair Cafés across Stratford-on-Avon District and Warwick District - [Visit a Repair Café Near You](#), where volunteers help mend garments and other household items.

Items that cannot be reused, donated, or repaired must not be placed in household recycling bins. Textiles cannot be processed at the Sherbourne Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) and placing them in recycling bins can contaminate loads.

Cllr Lorraine Grocott, Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Neighbourhood Services at Stratford-on-Avon District Council, said: *"Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council will continue to work together on long-term solutions and will provide updates on their respective websites and social media channels as soon as a revised service plan is confirmed."*

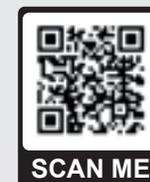
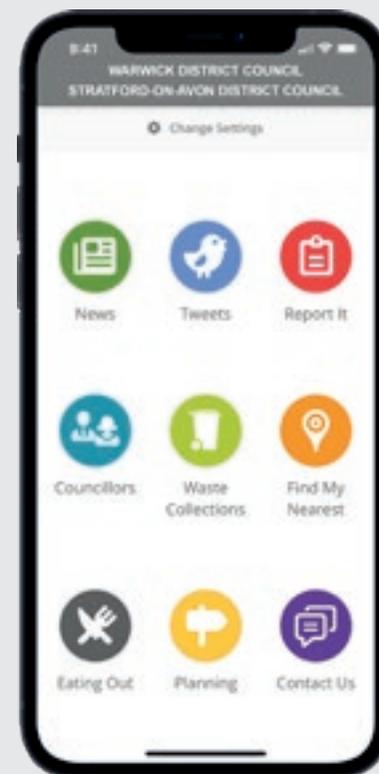
Cllr Will Roberts, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood at Warwick District Council added: *"Whilst we want to encourage all our residents to recycle as many household items as possible, we would like to ask them to follow these temporary guidelines for the disposal of textiles, while we seek a practical and sustainable alternative."*

Details of items that can be recycled as part of the fortnightly kerbside collection service can be found on the [Warwick District](#) and [Stratford-on-Avon District Council websites](#).

Download our app 'Stratford District Council'

Find out which day you need to put your bin out, where and how to recycle different materials and report a missed collection to us all in one place!

For every recycle search you make, a donation goes to charity.



Stratford-on-Avon District Council's 2026 health screening events across the District

For a second year, Stratford-on-Avon District Council has joined together with the Graham Fulford Charitable Trust (GFCT) to offer a series of health screening events for both men and women across the District.

The events will enable men and women to have a number of health tests from a simple blood test, allowing them to, where necessary, seek further advice or action via their GP.

The tests on offer cost £14 each, subsidised by the District Council and are:

- For men over 40 - PSA (Prostate Screening)
- For men and women aged 18 and over - diabetes and cholesterol

The events are taking place at:

- Saturday 18 April at Lighthorne Heath Village Hall, Valiant Close, CV33 9UF
- Saturday 9 May at Graham Adams Centre, St James Road, Southam, CV47 0LY
- Saturday 30 May at Wellesbourne Village Hall, School Road, CV35 9NH
- Saturday 20 June at Shipston Scout Hut, New Street, CV36 4EW
- Saturday 18 July at the Greig Hall, Kinwarton Road, Alcester, B49 6AD
- Saturday 19 September at Studley Village Hall, High Street, B80 7HJ

- Saturday 17 October at Stratford Leisure Centre, Bridgeway, CV37 6YX
- Saturday 7 November at Henley-in-Arden Memorial Hall, Station Road, B95 5JP

The events will run from 10am until 2pm at each of the locations and residents are able to book at a discounted rate of £14 for each test.

Spaces are limited and need to be booked in advanced at: <https://sdc.mypsatestests.org.uk/>

Last year's health screening events delivered significant results, with a total of 1,137 tests carried out across PSA, diabetes and cholesterol checks. 663 men participated in PSA testing, with 24% referred to their GP for further investigation, an important step in supporting early diagnosis and treatment. The screenings also revealed that 11% of participants had blood sugar levels outside the normal range, while a significant 80% showed cholesterol readings requiring follow-up with their GP.

Cllr Liz Coles, Housing and Customer Services Portfolio said: *"The response to last year's health screening events was outstanding, and the results underline just how vital these checks are. By identifying early signs of potential health issues, from elevated PSA levels to concerns around blood sugar and cholesterol, we've helped many people take proactive steps toward better health."*

"We're proud to be running the programme again this year and encourage everyone to make use of this potentially life-saving opportunity."

For more information and to book please visit <https://sdc.mypsatestests.org.uk> or call 01926 419959 or email info@myhealthtests.org.uk



Stratford-on-Avon District Council is promoting Prostate, Cholesterol and Diabetes Health Testing for Men & Women

PSA test aged 40+
Diabetes and Cholesterol aged 18 and over

2026 testing events

The Graham Fulford Charitable Trust run health testing events that enable men and women to have a number of health tests from a simple blood test, allowing them to, where necessary, seek further advice or action via their GP.

The tests on offer are:
+ PSA (Prostate Screening) age over 40.
+ Diabetes, cholesterol, age over 18.

The events will run from 10am until 2pm at each of the locations and residents are able to book at a discounted rate of £14 for each test. (subsidised by Stratford-on-Avon District Council)

Saturday 18 April at Lighthorne Heath Village Hall, Valiant Close, CV33 9UF
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<https://sdc.mypsatestests.org.uk/>



New projects funded by SDC's Community Climate and Nature Fund Round Three

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 range from 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 £150,000 was made available to successful applicants, across four quarterly assessment periods. The third of four assessment periods ended on 14th January 2026, and a total of 6 applications were approved. The following projects have been funded:

- £5,985 to Harbury Scout Group to install solar panels on the roof of their scout hut.
- £5,990 to Forest of Hearts to support a nature enhancement project at the Garden of Arden.
- £10,000 to Friends of Henley Station CIC to install solar panels on the roof of the Station Bar in Henley in Arden.
- £7,369.44 to Snitterfield Playing Fields to install solar panels, battery storage and inverter on their new Pavilion.
- £5,041 to Stockton Village Hall to install new double-glazed windows and roof insulation.
- £8,210 to Stockton FCCC to improve drainage and resilience of their 9 football pitches.

Cllr Susan Juned, Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council, said: *"It is a privilege to support these communities in their ambitions to conserve nature or become more energy efficient. Their work is really appreciated."*

Round Three will remain open until 13th April 2026, and applications can be submitted at any time before this date. £34,139 is still available to successful applicants.

[Find out more about the eligibility criteria on our website here.](#)

If you or someone you know is interested in applying for the CCNF, please contact climate.emergency@stratford-dc.gov.uk and SDC's climate change team will be on hand to give advice and guidance throughout the application process.



Walking & Cycling

With the potential of sunnier days ahead it is a good time to get outside and enjoy the fresh air and beautiful countryside.

However this can be particularly challenging for anyone who has had a period of inactivity due to illness or mobility issues.

The Social Inclusion team at the District Council would like to create a list of less well known public access walks and/or gentle cycle routes in our district which are easily accessible and suitable for beginners.

Please e-mail socialinclusion@stratford-dc.gov.uk with the details and locations of any routes and paths you feel would be suitable.



Farmers collect trees as part of Free Trees for Farmers Scheme

Farmers from across Stratford-on-Avon District have collected their tree packs as part of the third round of the Free Trees for Farmers Scheme, marking another major step in the District's nature recovery efforts.

The scheme, now delivered by the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, aims to improve habitats and help landowners boost biodiversity and support climate adaptation across agricultural land, with continued funding support of £35,000 from Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

The newly collected trees, supplied as hedge, woodland, and fruit tree packs will now be planted to support natural flood management, carbon sequestration, and ecological recovery across the District. Farmers were offered anything from small mixed-species packs to hundreds of saplings, enabling them to choose the best fit for their land.

Councillor Susan Juned, Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District said: *"We're delighted to continue supporting this initiative, which brings real environmental benefits while helping farmers future-proof their land. Partnering with the Wildlife Trust ensures expert delivery and long-term impact for our local ecosystems."*

This round of the Free Trees for Farmers Scheme is part of a wider £55,000 package approved by the [District Council's Cabinet](#) in June last year to support nature recovery, which also included £20,000 for the Wilder Communities Project, a Wildlife Trust-led initiative planting hedges and wildflowers in community green spaces across the District.

This year's distribution follows two highly successful earlier rounds with 8,000 trees distributed to 38 farmers in Round One through the Warwickshire Rural Hub (a partnership funded by Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Warwick District Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council) supported by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, and the Trees Call to Action Project, to any farm located within the boundary of the three local authority areas and 13,000 trees distributed across the District during Round Two.



Council Tax Help

**Are you,
or someone in your household,
living with:**

- a degenerative brain disorder such as Alzheimer's
- a learning disability
- other kinds of dementia
- a severe stroke
- severe or chronic mental illness

**and are entitled to one
of the following benefits:**

- Employment Support Allowance
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- increased Disability Pension
- Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
- Income Support that includes a disability premium
- the care component of high or middle rate Disability Living Allowance
- Constant Attendance Allowance
- Incapacity Benefit

**then you may be entitled to
a Council Tax discount**

**and save money
off your Council Tax bill**

For more information please contact
Revenues on

📞 01789 260990

✉️ revenues@stratford-dc.gov.uk



District Council's Cabinet approves new Growing Opportunities Plan

Stratford on Avon District Council's Cabinet has approved the new **Growing Opportunities Plan 2026-2029**, setting out a district wide commitment to tackling poverty, improving wellbeing and creating greater opportunities for people of all ages.

Developed collaboratively with more than 40 partners from the Social Inclusion Partnership (SIP), the Plan brings together public, voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise organisations to deliver real change where it matters most.

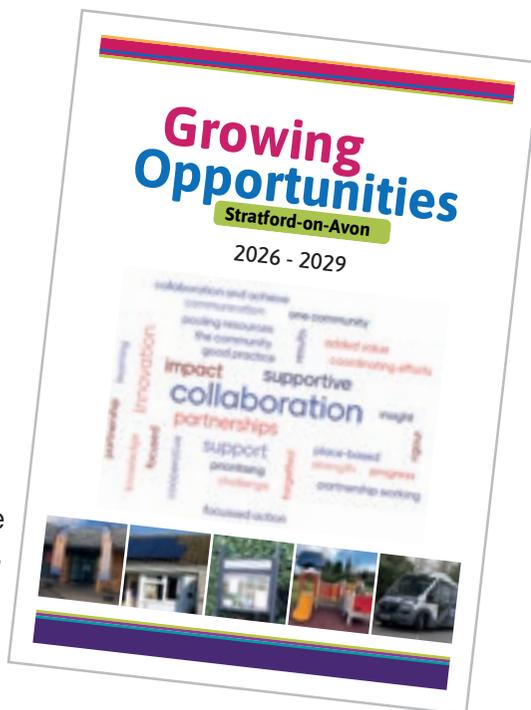
It builds on the success of the previous plan and uses a strong new evidence base to focus efforts where they will have the greatest impact.

The newly approved Plan is structured around seven key missions, designed to make a measurable difference to residents' health, financial stability, safety, and long term opportunities.

These include:

- Strengthening partnership working
- Boosting economic opportunities
- Supporting families and young people
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Reducing rural inequalities
- Enhancing community safety
- Supporting environmental and energy efficiency goals

Each mission is supported by a detailed three year Action Plan featuring clear objectives, delivery partners and measurable outcomes, ensuring progress can be tracked annually.



The Plan will deliver targeted work to support people into training and employment, reduce fuel poverty, improve access to health services, strengthen youth provision, support voluntary organisations, reduce crime and anti social behaviour, and boost access to essential services in rural areas – all areas where partners have identified clear need.

It is also underpinned by extensive consultation with SIP members, local organisations and community partners, ensuring that the voices of those closest to residents' needs have shaped the priorities for the next three years.

Councillor Liz Coles, Housing and Customer Services Portfolio, said: *"By approving the Growing Opportunities Plan 2026 - 2029, Cabinet has reaffirmed our commitment to working hand in hand with our partners to improve lives right across the District."*

"This is about making a real difference - helping families through the cost of living pressures, improving health and wellbeing, creating opportunity for young people, and ensuring no community, rural or urban, is left behind. The strength of our partnership is what will turn this Plan into action, and action into lasting impact for residents."

The Plan formalises a district wide approach where charitable organisations, statutory bodies, health services, education partners and local community groups each deliver actions aligned to the shared missions.

This includes:

- Annual reporting on progress from all partners
- Partnership led delivery of over 200 targeted actions
- A mid point refresh to ensure the Plan remains responsive to changing needs

The District Council will publish annual updates demonstrating progress against the actions and commitments contained in the Plan. Partners will continue to collaborate closely to deliver support and opportunities where they are needed most.

Stratford-on-Avon District boasts outstanding food hygiene standards

Food businesses in Stratford-on-Avon District continue to demonstrate exceptional food hygiene standards, with the vast majority of local food businesses achieving top ratings under the national Food Hygiene Rating Scheme.

All food businesses in Stratford-on-Avon District are regularly visited by Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Environmental Health officers to review and rate their hygiene standards.

After each inspection the food business will receive one of the following ratings:

- 5 (very good)
- 4 (good)
- 3 (generally satisfactory)
- 2 (improvement necessary)
- 1 (major improvement necessary)
- 0 (urgent improvement necessary)

Out of 1,154 premises rated across the District:

- 85.1% have achieved the highest rating of 5 - Very Good.
- 95.6% are rated either 4 or 5, reflecting strong compliance with hygiene requirements.
- An impressive 98.8% of establishments hold ratings of 3, 4, or 5, meaning they meet or exceed legal standards.
- Only 1.2% of businesses fall within the 0-2 range, where improvement or major improvement is required.

Councillor Lorraine Grocott, Environmental and Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder said: *"These figures highlight the commitment of local food businesses to maintaining safe and hygienic practices, ensuring residents and visitors can dine with confidence."*

"It's good to see such high standards across the District. These results reflect the hard work of our food businesses and the dedication of our Environmental Health team in supporting compliance and public safety."

Check before you eat: residents and visitors are encouraged to check food hygiene ratings before dining out or ordering takeaway. It's quick and easy to do via the Food Standards Agency website: www.food.gov.uk/ratings

Alternatively you can download the District Council mobile app, where the food hygiene ratings are also available, under the 'Eating out' icon: www.stratford.gov.uk/app

Local businesses are also urged to display their ratings and continue striving for excellence, helping to keep Stratford-on-Avon a safe and enjoyable place to eat.



SAVE TIME DO IT ONLINE

Did you know you can now claim Housing Benefit online. Go to www.stratford.gov.uk

If you want to make a payment for Council Tax or Business Rates use our dedicated payment line **0345 600 6956**



Stratford District Council backs Open Farm Sunday 2026

Stratford District Council's Rural Crime Advisors are proudly supporting and promoting Open Farm Sunday (OFS), taking place this year on 7 June 2026.

Open Farm Sunday is one of the farming industry's biggest annual celebrations. Organised nationally by LEAF (Linking Environment And Farming), the event invites farms across the UK to open their gates and welcome the public for a rare behind the scenes look at modern agriculture.

A chance to discover where our food comes from

For many visitors, Open Farm Sunday offers a unique opportunity to see first-hand how food is produced from crops and livestock to sustainability initiatives and environmental stewardship.

Farmers use the day to demonstrate the hard work, innovation, and care that goes into British farming. It's a chance to highlight important environmental projects, share the realities of rural life, and discuss key issues affecting countryside communities.

A fun, educational day for all ages

Whether it's tractor rides, animal encounters, guided walks, or hands-on activities, each participating farm creates its own experience. The event has become a much loved family outing, offering something for children and adults alike.

Open Farm Sunday has long been recognised for bringing communities together, strengthening the relationship between farmers and the public, and celebrating the vital role agriculture plays in everyday life.

Farmers encouraged to register their events

Stratford District Council's Rural Crime Advisors are encouraging local farmers interested in taking part this year to register their event online. Registration helps ensure farms receive the resources, guidance, and promotional support provided by LEAF.

Members of the public are also invited to get involved by visiting local participating farms and showing their support for this important industry event.

Find out more

To learn more about hosting an event or attending Open Farm Sunday, visit the official website: [Homepage - Open Farm Sunday](#)



The District Council's Rural Crime Advisors carry out crime prevention visits to farms, during which they review existing security measures and offer recommendations to help strengthen them. They also run a loan equipment scheme that allows farmers to trial items such as driveway alarms and surveillance cameras for a three month period with no financial commitment. Tack marking kits and tool engraving equipment are also available to borrow. This scheme has grown significantly over the years due to its popularity. If you are a farmer and interested in having a crime prevention visit, please get in touch.

Email addresses:

rebecca.jenkins@stratford-dc.gov.uk

alison.packer@stratford-dc.gov.uk





Open Farm Sunday 7th June 2026.

Help the public to understand, appreciate & value British farming.

Open Farm Sunday connects farmers with consumers, showcasing sustainable farming practices and the vital work farmers do. It's a chance to dispel myths, promote British farming, and inspire the next generation. Welcome visitors to your farm and help them gain a deeper appreciation for food production and nature.



7 GREAT reasons to take part:

- 1. Build stronger community connections.**
Open Farm Sunday puts farming in the heart of communities, bringing together farmers and the public, fostering a sense of community.
- 2. Boost business success.**
Increase awareness of your farm and any diversifications - it's a great way to increase foot fall and drive sales.



- 3. Showcase sustainable farming practices.**
Demonstrate your commitment to farming with nature, soil health, wildlife conservation, and how you are addressing climate change - visitors are eager to know more.
- 4. Foster a better understanding of food production & sustainability.**
Help people understand the challenges and rewards of farming, as well as the importance of sustainable food systems.
- 5. Positive PR for British food & farming.**
With hundreds of farmers across Britain hosting events, Open Farm Sunday gets farming in the national news in a positive way, generates conversations about our industry and drives demand for British food.
- 6. Inspire future generations.**
Ignite people's interest in the farming industry and the huge range of rewarding and high-tech career opportunities in the agri-food sector.
- 7. It's fun!**
Enjoy the opportunity to share your passion. It's a great wellbeing boost receiving positive feedback from visitors.



Find out more & register your event for free: www.farmsunday.org

Any questions? Get in touch with the OFS team:
OpenFarmSunday@leaf.eco Annabel: 07912 463151

OFS is managed by LEAF, a registered charity (no. 1045789)



All the town's a stage for Stratford-upon-Avon thanks to historic digital first

Stratford-upon-Avon is making historic preparations for a bumper influx of business by launching its first ever website dedicated to the whole community.

The digital platform - www.stratforduponavon.org.uk - will act as a digital directory for both residents and visitors covering major and community events, through to recommendations of places to eat, drink and stay, as well as a directory of local businesses.

The £24,000 website investment was part funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and developed by a steering group representing the town, including Stratford-upon-Avon BID, Stratford Town Council, Stratford Literary Festival, Discover Gather Give, Shakespeare's England and Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

It comes as the town is bracing itself for rising interest in the locations that inspired the Oscar-nominated film Hamnet, with the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust already reporting an early year-on-year rise in visitors in January compared to the same period last year.

The town is also gearing up for a busy events calendar, including Shakespeare's Birthday Celebrations, Stratford Motor Festival, and Stratford Literary Festival to name a few.

Aaron Corsi, BID Manager at Stratford-upon-Avon BID, said: *"Local businesses and residents told us they wanted a clearer, more joined-up way to see what's going on in the town all year round, so we're making it easier for people to move beyond a single visit and spend more time in the town."*

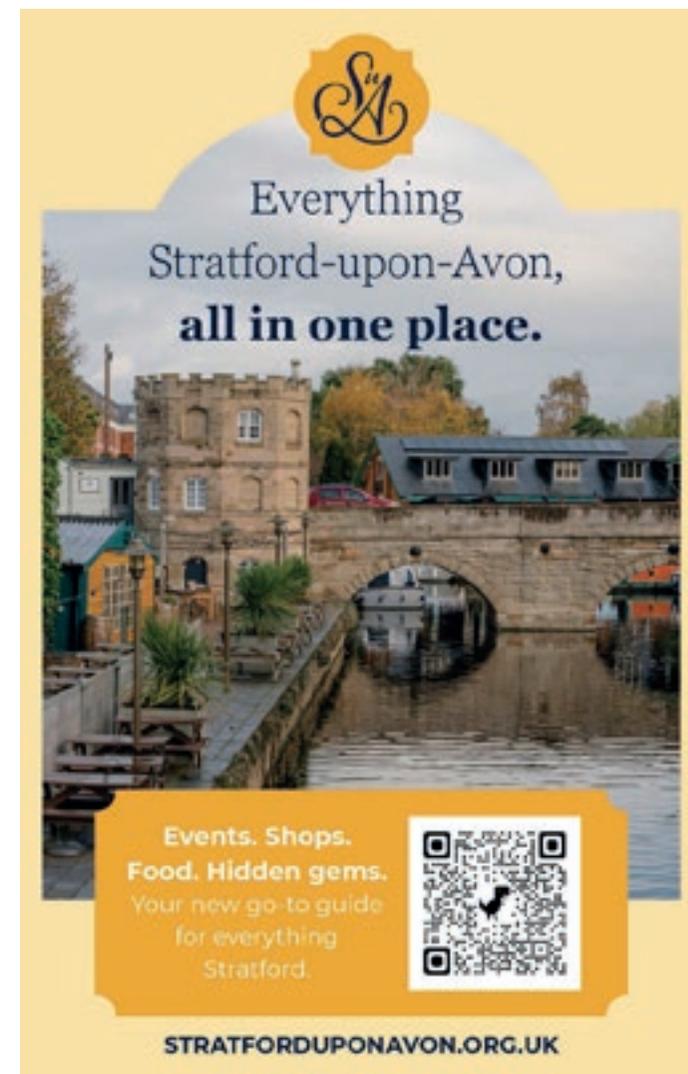
"That means more footfall, more connections and more opportunities for local businesses to thrive, while helping visitors experience Stratford-upon-Avon in a deeper, more rewarding way."

"This is more than a website; it is a digital hub that has been created by the Stratford community for the Stratford community and those wanting to visit the town - and so we are encouraging people to upload their own events and offerings so it can continue to evolve"

Darren Tosh, from Warwickshire's tourism board Shakespeare's England, added: *"Stratford-upon-Avon continues to attract an increasing number of visitors from across the UK and beyond, but we know the best places are those that work well for the people who live there too."*

"This website reflects that thinking - it's practical, welcoming and rooted in local insight for locals - and complements our own efforts in attracting domestic and international visitors to Stratford and the wider region."

"Our latest research on day visitors to the town from 2024 showed that Stratford out-performed the national average - and while it remains to be seen if this continued in 2025 - for the year ahead we are anticipating that the Hamnet effect will leave the town perfectly poised for another strong year."



All town's a stage for Stratford-upon-Avon thanks to historic digital first - *continued*

Annie Ashworth, Festival Director of Stratford Literary Festival which attracts thousands of people a year to the town, is backing the new investment in the town website.

She added: "Stratford has so many great events and businesses, and it's long overdue to have a hub website for the town where everyone - residents and national and international visitors - can find out what's on.

"It's great news and can only help footfall for businesses. It's been a pleasure to have been a part of its creation."

George Cowcher, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development at Stratford-on-Avon District Council said: "This new website is an important step in improving how residents, businesses and visitors access information about Stratford-upon-Avon.

"By bringing together events, services and opportunities in one clear, user-friendly place, it supports both the local community and the wider visitor economy. We are pleased to have worked in partnership with organisations across the town to help deliver a resource that will continue to grow and benefit everyone who spends time in Stratford-upon-Avon."

Stratford-upon-Avon Town Council, Town Clerk Caroline Nash, added: "Stratford-upon-Avon is a town we are rightly proud of, and this website provides a simple, welcoming way for residents and visitors to see what it has to offer. By bringing together events and practical information in one place, it supports local businesses, strengthens community life and helps showcase Stratford as a place to live, visit and enjoy."

Deborah Green Account Director at Launch creative agency said: "We are incredibly proud to have partnered on this project for Stratford-upon-Avon - creating a brand and digital hub that celebrates both the town's rich heritage and vibrant culture. We are thrilled to see the website go live and can't wait to watch it become an essential resource for visitors, residents, and businesses alike."

Judith Lathe-Cook, Curator of the Contemporary Arts Festival Discover:Gather:Give said: "This project is close to my heart because small, local events deserve a proper spotlight. As Stratford's unifying website, it brings communities together in one place to share everything from artist-led workshops and exhibitions to clubs, music and sport. As an arts curator, I love that it gives both residents and visitors a trusted hub where they can discover and plan what's on well in advance"

The Stratford town website project forms part the Warwickshire UKSPF programme. It is delivered by Stratford-upon-Avon BID on behalf of Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwickshire County Council.

To receive updates via the website's newsletter visit www.stratforduponavon.org.uk



Supporting business at the heart of Stratford-on-Avon's economic ambitions

Supporting businesses and creating the conditions for sustainable growth are at the heart of Stratford-on-Avon's economic ambitions, a conference in the town heard.

Around 200 businesses attended the Stratford Business Conference, which was organised by Stratford-on-Avon District Council in partnership with Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub Group at the Crowne Plaza Stratford-upon-Avon.

As part of the district's plan for growth, it was revealed free pre-planning advice is to be given to small businesses from April by Stratford-on-Avon District Council to maximise growth in Stratford District.

Cllr George Cowcher, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development at Stratford-on-Avon District Council, said the Council was focused on small and medium sized businesses who are the backbone of the area's economy. He said: *"There is a thriving and friendly business community in the area and it is important we drive growth and ambition across the Stratford District."*

"We want to maximise opportunities for businesses and create a sustainable environment for entrepreneurs to grow. We are putting the economy at the forefront of everything we are doing. In the Stratford District, we have leading companies and a myriad of smaller businesses that are doing great work. This is an area where we can create wealth collectively. There are challenges but if we work closely together, we can overcome these."

"The Stratford Business Conference is a perfect example of coming together to share ideas and grow networks. It was a really successful morning with inspirational speakers and hopefully we can repeat something similar in the future."

Doug King, owner of Yelo Enterprises and Coventry City FC, was among a range of speakers who spoke at the Stratford Business Conference to small and medium-sized businesses from Stratford District.

He said: *"The West Midlands is a fantastic area. You can get everywhere from here, particularly to London and the North quickly. Most of our customers are within an hour and a half of our business so our location is really important."*

"We provide high-quality employment to our employees who live locally and there are great universities here too. I think this area has a huge amount going for it and it's up to us as businesses to grow in this area and create businesses which people want to join. The West Midlands has a huge vibrancy and huge networks which draw people to our area"

Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce President Sandra Godley OBE hosted the free event.

Will Grocott and Eve Baker from GTI Systems and Simon Hood and Charlene Mitchell-Hood from Sooper Books captivated the audience with their stories.

Cllr Cowcher and John Careford, Head of Development at Stratford-on-Avon District Council, highlighted the support that is available for SMEs.



There were also presentations from Tracey Sherratt from the British Business Bank who outlined funding opportunities and how to become investment-ready, and William Tse, Employment, Strategy and Commissioning Manager from Warwickshire Skills Hub, who outlined the support available to build the right skills within a business.

The event finished with questions from the audience which were answered by a panel of experts including Corin Crane, Chief Executive of the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, and Rob Harrison, Chair for West Midlands Federation of Small Businesses.

Craig Humphrey, CEO of CW Growth Hub Group, added: *"It was a very well attended event, which emphasises the importance of business support and the ambition of Stratford District's SME community. Our team were delighted to have been asked to help with organising the conference, and it was a great opportunity for SMEs to network with peers and support providers."*

If you know of any business or entrepreneur in the Stratford-on-Avon District interested in finding out about what support and funding is available, please go to www.stratford.gov.uk/business



Waterside Upmarket wins best large outdoor market award

Waterside Upmarket in Stratford-upon-Avon has won Best Large Outdoor Market award at the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) One Day Conference 2026.

The popular market has over 90 high-quality stalls every Sunday and Bank Holiday (March to December) and takes place against the stunning backdrop of the River Avon and the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. The market is run in partnership with LSD Promotions Ltd and celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2025.

Cllr Lorraine Grocott, Portfolio Holder for Environmental and Neighbourhood Services, said: *"This national recognition is a fantastic achievement for Stratford-upon-Avon. Our market is a vibrant showcase of local enterprise and community spirit, and winning Best Large Outdoor Market is a testament to the traders, officers and partners who make it thrive!"*

Siobhan Noake, Communications and Engagement Manager at LSD Promotions, said: *"We are incredibly proud to see Waterside Upmarket recognised on a national stage. This award is a true reflection of the passion, resilience and creativity of our traders, and the strength of our partnership with Stratford-on-Avon District Council. For over 30 years, Waterside has been more than a market. It's been a centre for local business, creativity and community, and this recognition is a wonderful way to celebrate that legacy while looking ahead to an exciting future."*



Need HELP... with the survey for your Plan?

A personalised consultation service is available, totally independent from the Parish, Town or Neighbourhood Plan process in your area.

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- > Anonymity assured
- > Work carried out to Market Research Society guidelines

Satisfied clients include Parish Councils from both within and outside Stratford-on-Avon District.



Feedback received includes:

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"Again thanks to you and your staff for a professional job - and lots of patience!"

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 01789 260118

 simon.purfield@stratford-dc.gov.uk

 www.stratford.gov.uk



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting updates

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) has been busy, having held six meetings since the last update was provided in November of 2025.

5 November 2025

On 5 November 2025, the Committee held an extraordinary meeting (ie a meeting in addition to those set in the calendar of meetings at the start of the municipal year) in order to consider a report regarding the Council's final submission proposal to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for the future of local government in Warwickshire.

Members asked questions regarding implications for other local public organisations such as Integrated Care Boards and Police, disaggregation of county council services, the Council's public engagement exercise, budgets, the reports submitted as evidence and other reports composed by the District and County Councils' Networks.

The Committee made recommendations for more emphasis to be made regarding certain points in the Council's final submission but was ultimately supportive of the two-unitary proposal. The Council approved the submission on **17 November 2025**.

All minutes, agendas and meeting dates can be viewed on the [Council's website](#), and all livestreams and recordings are available on the [Council's YouTube channel](#).

26 November 2025

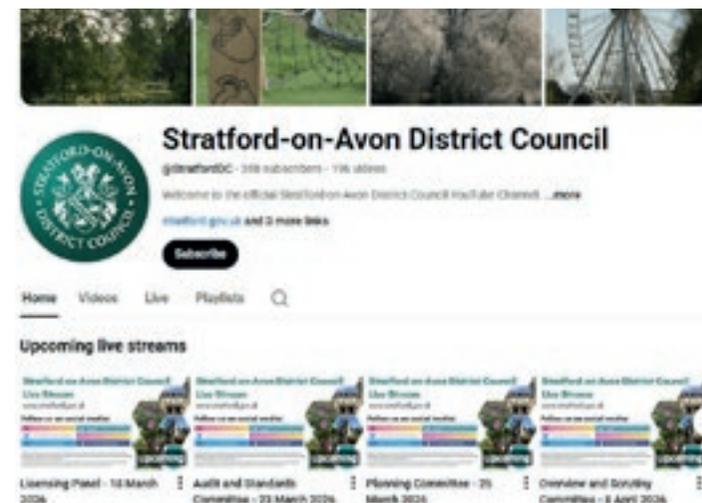
It was back to regularly scheduled programming on **26 November**. The Committee received its annual update on the South Warwickshire Community Safety Partnership, in line with its legal responsibility "to review and scrutinise the performance of other public bodies and partnerships in the District, with a specific obligation on crime and disorder and serious violence duties". The Committee will be fulfilling these duties again when it meets with the Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner and officers from Warwickshire Police on 8 April 2026.

The Committee rounded off November with an update on future proposed renewable energy projects, and consideration of the following Cabinet items:

- Notice of Motion - Support re-allocation of some new housing from Stratford-on-Avon District to Coventry;
- Electric Vehicle Charge Point Installation Proposals;
- Delivering Local Needs/Local Choice Rural Housing;
- Quarter 2/Performance Monitoring Report 2025-26; and
- Delivery of Climate Change Adaptation Audit Programme.

15 December 2025

Another extraordinary meeting was held on **15 December**, but this time to consider a report of the Joint Cabinet Committee of Stratford-on-Avon and Warwick District Councils. The report sought to revise the timetable for the South Warwickshire Local Plan. The OSC asked for specific further updates and information, both for members and the wider public, and recommended that a formal communications plan be created in relation to the Plan.



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting updates

- continued

14 January 2026

The OSC kicked off 2026 with a presentation from the Head of the Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART) at Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council on **14 January**. The HEART service utilises government funding allocated to the District Council to deliver home adaptations. There had been an increase in uptake, and the current year's funding had already been spent. The Cabinet was being asked to allocate an additional £250,000, and the OSC was in favour of this.

The Committee also considered Cabinet reports on the Housing Allocations Scheme, ahead of a public consultation on proposed changes to the Council's policy, and Renewable Power Generation, setting out an alternative to the previously considered Stratford Hydro Power project involving solar carports in Council-owned carparks.

All minutes, agendas and meeting dates can be viewed on the [Council's website](#), and all livestreams and recordings are available on the [Council's YouTube channel](#).

4 February 2026

With all the additional meetings, the Committee kept things relatively brief on **4 February** to less than ninety minutes, focusing on the Council's final budget to be considered by Council on **23 February** following public consultation and the findings of the Budget Task and Finish Group.

19 February 2026

Finally, the **19 February** saw one more extraordinary meeting, at which the OSC considered the Introduction of a Second Homes Premium and the Final Settlement Medium Term Financial Statement for the 2026/27 Budget.

Local government reorganisation updates have continued to be provided at each meeting. The Government's consultation on future options for Warwickshire is now live until 26 March 2026 - [please click here to respond](#).



Stratford District Council meetings

All minutes, agendas and meeting dates can be viewed on the [Council's website](#), and all livestreams and recordings are available on the [Council's YouTube channel](#).

Date	Time	Meeting
Wednesday 8 April	10.00am	Overview and Scrutiny
Wednesday 8 April	6.00pm	Planning
Monday 13 April	10.00am	The Cabinet
Monday 13 April	2.00pm	Extraordinary Council
Monday 20 April	2.00pm	Council
Wednesday 22 April	6.00pm	Planning
Wednesday 6 May	6.00pm	Planning
Wednesday 13 May	11.00am	Annual Council
Wednesday 20 May	6.00pm	Planning
Wednesday 27 May	10.00am	Overview and Scrutiny
Monday 1 June	10.00am	The Cabinet
Wednesday 3 June	6.00pm	Planning
Wednesday 17 June	6.00pm	Planning
Tuesday 30 June	4.00pm	Climate Change Panel

