

**Butlers Marston Parish Council 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020**  
**County Councillor's Report**

The County Council has been extremely busy dealing with COVID-19 issues throughout Warwickshire. It appears that a second wave of Coronavirus is starting to rise. We must all follow the guidance given to us by the government.

**Covid-19 Update**

There have been outbreaks of the virus in Rugby and Nuneaton & Bedworth which I am pleased to say has been minimised in Rugby. In Nuneaton & Bedworth, officers have been able to track and trace people with positive test results. Throughout Warwickshire the percentage of children affected has been minimal and has not required any significant reduction in the provision of education.

**Unitary Authority**

I mentioned last month that Warwickshire County Council was to hold a full council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020 to debate the prospect of becoming a Unitary Authority. The meeting lasted a full day and the significant economic benefit was a feature of the debate.

The Options were:-

1. An enhanced two-tier model which would preserve the existing county council and five district and borough councils and optimise collaborations in areas of duplicated responsibility;
2. A single unitary council for Warwickshire which would see the creation of a new council, replacing the existing six, which would deliver all local government services; and
3. A two unitary model for Warwickshire which would see the creation of two new unitary councils (a North and a South) each taking responsibility for the delivery of all local authority services within their respective areas.

There was clear political support for Option 2. This decision has been forwarded to the Minister as the preferred Option for proceeding. When we receive confirmation from the Local Government Minister WCC will commence communication with interested parties. It is anticipated that this information will be provided by the government before Christmas.

**Proposed Changes to Planning Policy**

The current basic Planning Policy was established in 1947 and remained unchanged until a few years ago. The last changes reduced the number of regulations from 200 pages to 80 pages. Currently, the government wishes to increase new housing in the country. However, there are currently 100,000 new houses having planning permission that have yet to be built. The increase in housing will require revamping of most authorities Local Plans and greater emphasis on infrastructure so that extra appropriate housing can be built. Warwickshire consultation is currently taking place to be submitted to central government when completed.

**Cllr Chris Williams**  
**Member for Kineton and Red Horse Division**  
**05.10.2020**

**Butlers Marston Parish Council Meeting**  
**District Councillors report**  
**7<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**Covid cases**

The latest number of Covid-19 cases in the District as from 5<sup>th</sup> October is at a total of 721.

**Social Distancing**

Now that the restaurants and retail facilities are gradually opening, the Council is urging the residents of the District to still maintain “social distancing” wherever possible.

**Homeless and rough sleepers**

Stratford District Council have managed to re-home all of the rough sleepers in the District during the pandemic bar one who would not be re-homed but preferred to sleep in his tent

**Biffa**

The council is still receiving letters of thanks for the service that Biffa have been giving during the Covid-19 crisis. They have continued and maintained the refuse collection despite the crews in some cases being short staffed due to the pandemic

**New Cabinet Member**

As tourism plays a major part in the economy of the district of Stratford, the Leader of Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Cllr Tony Jefferson has appointed Cllr Matt Jennings (Henley-in-Arden Ward Member) as Tourism and Economic Development Portfolio Holder on Stratford-on-Avon District Council’s Cabinet.

This is a new post on The Cabinet effective immediately and is designed to help lead the Council’s response to the economic impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Cllr Matt Jennings has been a District Councillor since May 2019 and is currently a member of the Audit and Standards Committee and Planning Committee A.

Cllr Jennings has lived in the District since 2017 and runs a small project management and IT business. In his spare time Cllr Jennings enjoys kickboxing and taekwondo.

## Scam alert: COVID-19 Council Tax reduction email

Officials from Stratford-on-Avon District are warning residents, following reports of an email hitting inboxes claiming to be from GOV.UK, offering a Council Tax reduction.

The email is covered in the branding of the UK Government and is signed off by the 'Government Digital Service Team'. It invites recipients to click on a link to 'Claim your Council Tax Reduction Now' and when opened takes the resident to a website which has the same look-and-feel as the GOV.UK website and asks for personal details such as name, address and banking details.

**This message and website are fraudulent. Anyone who enters their details are at great risk of losing money.**

*"The key is to stay alert – if something looks too good to be true, then chances are it's a scam. And if you're in any doubt then be sure to contact the District Council."*

### **How to avoid scams**

**Stop:** Take a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.

**Challenge:** Could it be fake? It's okay to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

**Protect:** Contact your bank immediately if you think you have fallen for a scam and report it to Action Fraud.

The District Council has no legal power to suspend the collection of Council Tax and must collect Council Tax, unless or until Central Government change this. We do completely understand the pressure many households now find themselves under but there are options available to help individual households.

Additional support may be available for families, already in receipt of council tax support and experiencing financial difficulties, depending on their individual circumstances.

Also most residents pay their Council Tax over 10 months but they are entitled to extend their Council Tax instalments from 10 to 12 months, reducing the monthly payments by paying over a longer period for no extra charge or by taking their two-month Council Tax 'holiday' now instead of in February and March next year.

*If you do need assistance with your Council Tax payments please call the District Council on 01789 267575.*

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has received funding of £660,000 from the Government, as part of the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, to help those residents who receive Local Council Tax Support. This funding is targeted at benefit recipients classed as '*working-age*' who qualify for Local Council Tax Support. Those residents who are in receipt of Local Council Tax Support, this year, have received a one-off discount of up to £150, which the District Council has apply directly onto their Council Tax Account, meaning the total amount of Council Tax they need to pay will automatically be reduced by up to £150 and adjustments have been made automatically to those accounts that qualify.

If you have any queries regarding this please contact the Benefit Team by email at: [benefits.sdc@stratford-dc.gov.uk](mailto:benefits.sdc@stratford-dc.gov.uk)

**To date (end of May):** The District Council has paid a total of £526,636.42 to 3,546 cases.

## **JOINT NEWS RELEASE FROM DISTRICT AND BOROUGH COUNCIL LEADERS: WARWICKSHIRE UNITARY AUTHORITIES REPORT**

**Monday, 21 September 2020**

The five district and borough councils in Warwickshire believe that the future of local government in the county should be shaped by the views of residents, businesses, community groups, town, and parish councils.

An independent assessment of options for the biggest re-organisation of local government across the county in almost 50 years has been completed by Deloitte.

Their expert report will be used as the basis for these important initial public consultations.

The report was commissioned by the five District and Borough Councils in the county ahead of a Government White Paper on reform which is expected in the coming months. The Councils have agreed to seek the public's views before formulating proposals for change once the White Paper has been published.

Deloitte found that creating two councils – north and south – would be the best way to provide better value for money, higher quality services focused on their communities. Two Unitary Councils would also foster stronger local leadership, giving clearer lines of responsibility and accountability.

The new authorities would replace the current two-tier system in the county, where the county council is responsible for certain services such as highways, transport and social care, and the five borough and district councils are responsible for others such as planning, waste collection and leisure.

Views will be sought on options for the county, including the recommended option of creating a new Unitary Council which covers the Boroughs of North Warwickshire, Nuneaton & Bedworth and Rugby, while establishing a second South Warwickshire Council covering Warwick and Stratford Districts.

Although the report, commissioned by the five councils, found having a single authority for the whole of Warwickshire would save marginally more money overall, different levels of Council Tax could remove those savings, would 'diminish local leadership' and would harm the quality of service provision locally.

While the two new unitary authorities would be separate, the report also recommended collaborative working for services such as children's care and waste disposal, as well as becoming full members of the West Midlands Combined Authority for higher-level strategic economic development and transport.

Crucially, the report found the county's clear north-south divide in terms of the economy, health needs and demographics means having two unitary authorities would represent better value for money than having one authority controlling the whole of

the county, saving more than £25 million a year in taxpayers money, compared to the current system.

In a joint statement, the five Leaders said: “This is about giving our residents great value, great quality local government services, fit for the next fifty years and best able to meet whatever challenges may lie ahead for our communities.

“All local authorities are under financial pressure already, and COVID-19 has only made the situation tougher.

“Saving our taxpayers money while delivering high quality, modern local government services is of the utmost importance. We are keen to carefully consider all the options to achieve this goal and look forward to having a meaningful discussion with those who live and work in the county about the future. If that means reorganising our two-tier system, then we will support that.

“Although having one authority for the whole of the county may initially save the most money, the report makes it crystal clear the needs of Warwick and Stratford’s residents are very different to those in the north of the county and, therefore, creating two unitary authorities could well be the best option for all.

“The county is quite unusual in the sense that the north is clearly distinct from the south in all sorts of ways.

“We need to make sure we are focussing the right services on the right people.

“This report is clear that having two separate authorities will deliver the best outcome to our residents while saving money, but we now want to test that with residents and businesses as this conversation continues.

“Publishing this report widely means that there can be informed discussion amongst residents and councils at all levels. This will help secure the best solution for the county and its residents.”

The District and Borough Council Leaders are:

Tony Jefferson, SDC

Andrew Day, WDC

Julie Jackson, NBBC

David Wright, NWBC

Seb Lowe, RBC

## **New Chairman for Stratford District Council**

On Wednesday 16 September Stratford-on-Avon District Council held its Annual Council Meeting where Councillor Christopher Kettle handed over the chain of office after an unprecedented two and a half years in the post to Councillor Tony Dixon. During his two terms of office Councillor Christopher Kettle (Bishops Itchington) raised around £3,500 for his Chairman’s charities, Young Minds, The Brain Tumour Trust, Shipston Home Nursing and the Warwickshire & Northamptonshire Air Ambulance.

Councillor Tony Dixon (Tanworth-in-Arden) has chosen The Shakespeare Hospice as his Chairman’s charity for the year.

Cllr Edward Fitter (Quinton) was elected Vice-Chairman for the year.

The 2020 Annual Council Meeting, scheduled for May was postponed due to COVID-19.

Cllr Dixon was first elected Chairman of Stratford-on-Avon District Council between 2005 to 2006.