

County Councillor report Butlers Marston Parish Council Meeting 27th July 2023

West Midlands Combined Authority

There has been talk of a West Midlands Combined Authority but it will not be going ahead this year.

A key part of this process would include a public consultation across the West Midlands and Warwickshire, along with the compilation of evidence to underpin a decision. It has now become ever clearer that it is not possible to undertake the consultation as the timeline constraints were far too short.

Warwickshire County Council launches a Social Fabric Fund

An innovative new fund that will invest in the power of communities has been given the green light by Warwickshire County Council.

The £2.5m Warwickshire Social Fabric Fund will provide a route to explore the development of local projects and initiatives that will have a positive impact on communities. The fund will look to allocate resources across the county to areas where they can have the most impact. This new fund will help tackle inequalities across the county. More information about the Social Fabric Fund is available on the Heart of England Community Foundation website: www.heartofenglandcf.co.uk/warwickshire-county-council-social-fabric-fund/

New Community Autism Support Service

Autistic people in Coventry and Warwickshire, or those awaiting a diagnosis, are now able to access improved support through the all-age autism support service. Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/4231/new-community-autism-support-service-launches-to-support-people-across-coventry-and-warwickshire>

Utility bill support

Warwickshire residents struggling to pay their utility bills can look to the county council for support.

Find out more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/4248/utility-bill-support-from-warwickshire-county-council>

This July, embrace sustainability and be a part of the movement to reduce single use plastics

Residents are urged to ditch the single use as part of Warwickshire County Council's support for the Plastic Free July campaign. Plastic pollution is a real problem that affects our environment, our health and wellbeing and contributes to carbon emissions: Over 2 million plastic bags are used every minute worldwide and the average time that a plastic bag is used in its lifetime before being discarded is 12 minutes; One million plastic bottles are bought every minute worldwide; 32% of all plastic packaging produced finds its way to our oceans every year; You will ingest an average of 70,000 microplastics each year!

Find out more about plastic-free July 2023 on the Plastic Free Foundation website: <https://www.plasticfreejuly.org/>

Warwickshire set to take part in government programme to improve SEND services for children and young people

Warwickshire County Council is set to take part in a government programme to drive forward its commitment to improve services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Warwickshire is one of 55 local authorities participating in the Delivering Better Value (DBV) for SEND programme which has been created to identify the highest impact changes that can be made to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and to optimise the use of finances.

Applying to change schools in September

Warwickshire families who want their child to start a new school this September are being encouraged to apply now.

Find out how to apply:

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/4237/now-is-the-time-to-apply-to-change-schools-in-september>

Holiday and Food scheme

As we are rapidly approaching the school summer holidays, I wanted to provide a short update on a few elements of the Holiday Activity & Food (HAF) programme for awareness.

The HAF (Holiday and Food scheme) programme is for school aged children in full time education from reception to Year 11 (inclusive), who receive benefits related free school meals. The programme offers valuable support to families on lower incomes, giving young people the opportunity to access activities with a healthy meal provision over the main school holidays, especially for the upcoming summer holiday.

If families are in receipt of benefits-related free school meals, a request for a HAF code can still be made available via the link at www.warwickshire.gov.uk/haf. Alternatively, a member of the HAF team can also be reached through the Family Information Service helpline on 0800 408 1558 if online access is not possible. Activity listings can be found on this link, but also at the directory available through <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/directory/46/haf-summer-activities>.

If there are any questions on the HAF programme, then please get in contact via hafprogramme@warwickshire.gov.uk or through the FIS helpline on 0800 408 1558. Children aged 4-7 automatically get a free lunch, but applying for free school meals will unlock extra support, such as free activities and food during the school holidays. You can also find out more: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/education-learning/apply-free-school-meals

Disabled bus passes get more flexible

It's great news for holders of Warwickshire's disabled person's bus passes as they are set to become more flexible.

Find out what this means for pass holders:

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/4367/disabled-bus-passes-get-more-flexible-in-warwickshire>



Park and Ride in Stratford

Visitors to the beautiful market town of Stratford-upon-Avon are invited to enjoy new benefits available to users of the Stratford Park and Ride bus service and car park this summer.

From Saturday 22 July to Sunday 17 September, Warwickshire County Council is improving the Park and Ride's service offer to ensure that everyone - from dog owners and couples to families and tourist groups - can make the most of this easy and relaxing journey into Stratford-upon-Avon town centre.

From 22 July to 17 September, Stratford Park and Ride is providing a 7-day a week bus service and free all-day car parking for visitors. The car park is open daily and has more than 700 parking spaces available, including several EV charging points.

Visitors can find the car park along Bishopton Lane (CV37 0RJ) with easy access from the roundabout with the A46 and the A3400 Birmingham Road. Once onsite, there is a passenger terminal with seating, toilets available Monday to Saturday 7.30am to 12.30pm, and generous roof cover to protect visitors from the elements.

The Park and Ride bus service has been extended to finish later in the day throughout the summer holidays, with the final bus leaving Stratford to return to the car park at 19:28. Park and Ride buses run every 15 minutes for most of each day, and the journey from the car park into the town centre takes approximately 10-12 minutes.

The bus fares also provide great value for visitors, with adult return bus tickets reduced to £2 and including up to two children travelling for free, and return group bus tickets costing only £3.30 for up to five people. Dogs are also welcome on the buses provided they are well-behaved.

For those who would prefer an alternative route into town, visitors can park their car for free at Stratford Park & Ride car park this summer and enjoy a leisurely stroll or cycle into Stratford town centre using the canal towpath. This scenic route is approximately 2800m (1.75 miles) and takes around 40 minutes to reach the town centre on foot, or less than ten minutes by bike as the canal towpath features on the National Cycle Network Route 5.

Chris Mills.
Kineton and Red Horse