

District Councillor Report

Upper Lighthorne Annual Parish Council Meeting

18th May 2023

2022/23 has been a challenging for SDC but has remained successful. Although the merger between Warwick District Council and Stratford District Council didn't materialise it has resulted in cost savings. Benefits identified: Financial savings of £500k (as a one-off saving) have been recognised with joint technical expertise specialisms coming from each Council. A joint waste contract has shown financial savings at an estimated at £300k. Corporate services, a financial saving of £150k recurring. The new 123+ waste collection service in collaboration with WDC started in August 2022 across South Warwickshire for residents in Stratford-on-Avon District. The introduction of the service had a few teething problems but has been proved to be very effective and is now one of the most successful food waste recycling districts in the UK.

Warwick and Stratford-on-Avon District Councils met on 7th December to consider the recommendation for an Issues and Options consultation on the South Warwickshire Local Plan. The consultation ran from 9 January – 20 February 2023. The SWLP can be viewed on the Stratford District Council Website.

Approximately 850 jobs were created or safeguarded in the District as part of a £1.2m government funding scheme to help business with their post-Covid recovery plans. The District Council Collaborated with the CWLEP Growth Hub to identify companies in a wide variety of sectors that wanted to accelerate their expansion plans. 703 jobs were safeguarded and 133 jobs created and helped many of our residents on means-tested benefits received payments as part of a £37 billion government package to help families with cost-of-living pressures.

Over 44,700 households across Stratford-on-Avon District were helped with the Council Tax Rebate Scheme – the £150 non-repayable rebate for households in England in Council Tax bands A to D. Stratford-on-Avon District Council paid out over £5.74million in the Government provided grant. Stratford-on-Avon District Council also paid out over £4.26m to 28,445 eligible households for the £150 Council Tax energy rebate.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council made £50,000 available to support lower income households who are struggling to pay energy bills this winter. The Council partnered with Act on Energy

Households with children benefited from up to £500 and households without children up to £300. Act on Energy made the payment directly to the household's energy supplier. The energy price Guarantee was brought in on 1 October to help with energy costs. The Energy Price Guarantee will now run until April 2023.

The population of Stratford-on-Avon District was estimated by the census to be 134,700. The population of the district is estimated to have grown by 11.8%. The district still has an aging population as people still aspire to live in the district of Stratford. This has put a strain on our local GP practices.

It was predicted that the tourist and hospitality business would now be back to the pre-pandemic levels of 2019 but this has not materialised resulting in a loss of car parking revenues for SDC and lower footfalls for the retail businesses in the district. Added to this, many more people are now working from home, which has influenced the food and café outlets.

Even though SDC has lost revenue in a few sectors, Stratford District Council made it a priority in helping as many of the residents and businesses who needed support in these unprecedented times by making grants/rebates available and are laying the foundation for economic growth. The work of the Council has supported the local economy and has paid £73 million in sustaining over 7,000 businesses through 13 different Covid Grant Schemes and reliefs. SDC received £1.227 million in additional resources grant to provide support to businesses.

In Summary, although it has been a tough year for all concerned, Stratford District Council is still in a very good financial position by being prudent with their decision making whilst not sacrificing their main frontline services

Chris Mills

District Councillor

