



## Taking a fresh look at local government in South Warwickshire

The Stratford on Avon District Council Cabinet met informally with the Executive from Warwick District Council to explore ways to work together for the benefit of the people of South Warwickshire and indeed the wider County.

The purpose of these discussions was to consider the best way for our local government to evolve for the benefit of our residents ahead of an expected white paper in relation to devolution scheduled to be released by government later this year.

We already have successful experience of working together, through the South Warwickshire Health Improvement Partnership; the South Warwickshire Crime reduction partnership and Shakespeare's England, our destination management organisation which we jointly founded to promote our local tourism offer around the World. The two authorities share a number of characteristics and a large proportion of our residents live in one authority area and travel to work in the other.

As we look to the future of our communities across South Warwickshire now is the time to capture the lessons learnt from the current COVID crisis and review the way our Councils could better meet the needs of our residents, taking advantage of new opportunities that are emerging for our communities and businesses.

Local government is playing a significant role in positively addressing the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on our way of life. Supporting our businesses and communities as we adjust during this period of uncertainty, has required our Councils to embrace changes to the way we work.

Like so many other organisations at this time, our Councils are looking to be more agile and efficient, to address the emerging economic challenges and capitalising on the issues around the climate emergency, all the while providing the best possible services to you. There are also a number of opportunities which could be developed quickly including jointly procuring contracts; addressing a number of vacancies at senior officer level that could lead to the possibility of sharing posts across the two management teams, as well as the possibility of producing a joint Core Strategy / Local Plan for our communities to secure long-term benefits.

These initial discussions are at an early stage and would need to be subject to formal decisions at both authorities. However, our discussions will hopefully pave the way for a wider dialogue with other local government partners with the view of forming a common position for debate with central government as the anticipated devolution white paper comes forward, which is expected in the Autumn.

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