

# Page WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Warwick District Council held at Shire Hall, Warwick, on Wednesday 18 December 2024, at 6.00pm.

**PRESENT:** Councillor Margrave (Chairman); Councillors Adkins, Aizlewood, Armstrong, Boad, Browne, Chilvers, Collins, Cron, Davison, Day, K Dickson, R Dickson, Dray, Falp, B Gifford, Gorman, Hales, D Harrison, Kenedy, King, Kohler, Luckhurst, Matecki, Melrose, Milton, Payne, Phillips, Roberts, Rosu, Sinnott, Syson, Tangri, Williams, C Wightman, P Wightman and Yellapragada.

## 57. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barton, Billiald, Davidson, C Gifford, Redford, and Russell.

## 58. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

## 59. **Minutes**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 November 2024 were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Councillor Phillips raised a Point of Order requesting that action points that were mentioned during Council meetings were enforced through a formal action list. This included answers from Portfolio Holders which were deferred for further information and to be communicated in written form after the meeting. The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer explained that this would be included in the Summary of Decisions document which would be published the day after the Council meeting.

Responses to questions following the 27 November 2024 Council meeting were appended at Appendix A to the minutes.

## 60. **Communications & Announcements**

The Chairman stated that he had attended four functions since the previous Council meeting on 27 November 2024.

The Chairman reminded Members that the use of Shire Hall for meetings was temporary during building works at the Town Hall. As Councillor Billiald had been providing regular updates in her statements to Council, Members were aware these works were progressing and on track for completion early in the New Year, 2025.

The Chairman confirmed that officers were working on arrangements to move meetings back to Town Hall. It was possible that the 18 December 2024 Council meeting would be the last one taking place at Shire Hall.

When meetings moved back, the Chairman would write to Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to thank them for their hospitality.

The Chairman stated that there was no business to consider under agenda Item 5 – Petitions.

(Councillor C Wightman arrived during this item).

## 61. **Notices of Motion**

(a) The Council considered a Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Kohler and seconded by Councillor Milton which noted that:

- “the "Climate and Nature Bill", previously presented as "Climate and Ecology Bill" and before that the "Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill", was scheduled to have its second reading in the House of Commons on 24th January 2025;
- the Climate and Nature Bill would require the UK Government to create a strategy to achieve both climate and nature targets; establish a Climate and Nature Assembly to advise the Secretary of State in creating that strategy and give duties to the Committee on Climate Change and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee regarding the strategy and targets;
- the WDC Leadership Coordinating Group issued an all-party statement supporting the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill in March 2021;
- “New Homes (Solar Generation) Bill”, colloquially known as The Sunshine Bill, was scheduled to have its second reading the week before, on 17 January 2025; and
- the Sunshine Bill had the simple aim of requiring the installation of solar panels on new homes”.

Councillors Falp, Day, Davison, Melrose, and Milton addressed the Council on this item.

### **Resolved** that

- (1) Council publicly reiterate their support for the Climate and Nature Bill;
- (2) Council publicly support the principle of mandating the inclusion of solar energy generation equipment on all new homes as proposed by the New Homes (Solar Generation) Bill;
- (3) Group Leaders write to local MPs detailing why the Council were supporting the bills and asking them to support the bills on their passage through parliament; and
- (4) Council would use Social Media channels to

encourage local businesses, organisations and residents to contact their MP to ask them to support the bills.

- (b) The Council considered an additional notice of Motion from Councillor Boad, and seconded by Councillor R Dickson, which noted that:

“Prostate Cancer UK introduced their campaign in August ‘the BOG-STANDARD CHARTER’, which was a set of guidelines designed to educate and ensure that businesses and the public sector provide men with facilities they need to dispose of incontinence waste. According to Prostate Cancer UK, as many as one in three men over 65 are estimated to have urinary incontinence in the UK. One in 20 men aged 60 and over will experience bowel incontinence. There are few facilities for men, in the District, who need to dispose of pads and other incontinence products to do so easily, safely and with dignity. Currently there is no sanitary equality for men with women”.

The Council believed that:

- it was important to make life more comfortable and dignified for those who suffered from incontinence;
- men who suffered with incontinence should feel comfortable and dignified and be able to dispose of their incontinence pads; and
- the provision of sanitary bins should be provided in all toilets that the authority manages so that waste products could be disposed of in a discreet and hygienic manner.

Councillors Adkins, D Harrison, Roberts, and R Dickson addressed the Council on this item.

**Recommended** to Cabinet that:

- (1) identify how many public facilities fell short on the ‘Men NEED Bins’ campaign;
- (2) produce a costed proposal to achieve BOG STANDARD Silver in all WDC buildings that were available to the public, including WDC staff facilities;
- (3) call upon other organisations and businesses across the District to support the ‘Men NEED Bins’, and the ‘BOG STANDARD Charter’ by providing sanitary bins for their employees and public use; and
- (4) it writes to the Districts’ MPs to ask them, if they haven’t done so already, to publicly back the ‘Boys NEED Bins’ campaign.

## 62. **Leader and Portfolio Holders' Statements**

The Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture, and Economy, Councillor Billiald sent a written statement to Councillors ahead of the meeting, set out at Appendix B to the minutes.

The Portfolio Holder for Decarbonisation, Councillor Williams, made Council aware that:

- a) the contract for solar panels on Newbold Comyn Leisure Centre was signed on Friday 13 November 2024. Work was expected to begin onsite in February 2025. 363 solar panels would be installed on the swimming pool roof, with a total installed generation capacity of 180 kilowatt peak power. This was expected to generate 146,000 kilo watts of electricity annually and reduce on site imported electricity use by up to 30%. Subject to no unforeseen problems, the solar array would be operational by April 2025;
- b) premarket engagement was underway for the low-cost loan scheme that WDC were developing to support residents across the District in decarbonising their own homes. An advert had been sent out advising suppliers of the intended project, and officers would be meeting with interested suppliers in the week commencing 20th January 2025. In consultation with the Low-Cost Low Carbon Energy Programme Board and WDC Advisory Group, the findings of this premarket engagement would inform the final design of this project; and
- c) as set out by the Portfolio Holder for Housing at the last Council meeting on 27 November 2024, appointing external specialists to provide expert advice and support for WDC's new housing developments was intended. Renowned firm Altair were appointed to support the preparation of WDC's new Housing Development Strategy. Altair would work, in parallel, with Passive House experts to advise on the approach to bringing forward major housing development sites that are in the Council's ownership. The appointment of Passive House experts would be announced later before the end of the week commencing 16 December 2024.

The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood, Councillor Roberts, reminded residents that there would be changes to bin collection dates over the Christmas period. These changes could be found on the Council's social media, website and on the Warwick District Council App. All households should have received a bin tag or leaflet.

Councillor Roberts also announced that the new bridge connecting Newbold Comyn to South Royal Leamington Spa was open which had reconnected national cycling route 41 back through the Comyn.

The Portfolio Holder for Place, Councillor King, stated that:

- a) together with Stratford-Upon-Avon District Council, a major step forward had been taken with regards to approving the preferred options document for the South Warwickshire Local Plan (SWLP). This

- would now go forward for a major public consultation in early January 2025;
- b) officers were working towards the public consultation starting on 10 January 2025. Officers would be organising both face-to-face and online sessions as part of the consultation. Officers would require support from Members with doing so. Members should specifically support with the management of expectations from the many community groups that would like more engagement;
  - c) formal comments would be sought over the eight-week consultation period, 2025 would be a year where WDC continued further and ongoing engagement with local communities as the sites being allocated were being finalised;
  - d) the process of public engagement was started by offering briefings for Parish and Town Councils which took place during the week beginning 16 December 2024;
  - e) agile applications had been appointed to work alongside WDC to provide a new Planning and Building Control Software. The additional funding that this required was supported by Members in September 2024, this included funding officer capacity to support the deployment of the system. Officers were embarking on an intensive period to design, test, and deliver the new system. The new service would deliver an improved service to WDC's customers and efficiency savings for the Council;
  - f) there had been activity around two unauthorised traveller sites within Warwick District. Enforcement and stop notices had been served on both sites. The applicant on the Henley Road Site had appealed against the non-determination of their application, and there would therefore be an enquiry in 2025. There was also an ongoing appeal against the enforcement notice for the Henley Road Site. An appeal by written representations was taking place. On the site at Back Lane, a planning application had been submitted. However, because there was important information omitted, this was yet to be validated. An appeal had also recently been submitted against the enforcement notice for the Back Lane site;
  - g) Building Control Officers had been required to undertake competency accreditation and assessment to comply with the new requirements from the Building Safety Regulator. Most WDC officers had successfully completed this. This enabled WDC to continue to offer a strong Building Control Service and had helped lead to an increase in WDC's market share for all building control work, from 72% to 80% in the last quarter (quarter four of 2024). Income from this service remained on track to meet WDC budget targets; and
  - h) along with other areas of the Council, the service area plan for Place was being prepared. The priorities for 2025/26 were focused on progressing the SWLP, delivering the new Planning and Building Control Software, and continuing to build on the foundation in the Building Control Service that had been laid.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources, Councillor Chilvers, stated that:

- a) the update on the Local Government Finance Settlement would be provided in due course as it had only been made available shortly before the Council meeting;
- b) WDC's accounts for 2021/22 and 2022/23 were signed off by external audit last week to meet the Government's backstop. This was a milestone in a long journey of bringing external audit reporting back into line with statutory deadlines which would provide assurances of the Council's financial situation to both Members and residents;
- c) the 2023/24 accounts would be signed off in February 2025 which was a necessary step to enable the Council to move forwards with rebuilding assurance with new external auditors, despite disclaimed opinions having been given; and
- d) a timetable with further key dates detailing up until 2026 would be brought to Audit and Standards committee in 2025. This timetable would set out how dates would be achieved in the coming years. Once brought to Audit and Standards Committee, it could then be published.

The Portfolio Holder for Safer, Healthier and Active Communities, Councillor Sinnott, stated that:

- a) with regards to odours in Whitnash that had been discussed at the 27 November 2024 Council meeting, WDC officers had visited the Berry Polymers site in the week commencing 9 December 2024 and were unable to detect obvious odour from the large wastewater tank. However, an odour that was associated with three smaller treatment tanks that were behind the large wastewater tank was identified. The odours and links to the wastewater treatment would continue to be investigated. Berry Polymers management were happy to support this continued investigation; and
- b) the Priory Pools Community Centre had received planning permission.

The Portfolio Holder for People and Organisational Development, Councillor Melrose, stated that:

- a) the Media Team was leading public engagement efforts, including the upcoming launch of the SWLP's Preferred Option consultation in January 2025. This initiative, supported by high-quality print, design, and video production, would ensure that everyone had the opportunity to access information and have their voices heard;
- b) WDC Christmas advertising campaign would go live on December 19, 2024, which would inform residents about changes to waste collection schedules and key Council services. This campaign would feature a range of materials, from social media posts to bin hangers, to ensure that no one was left uninformed;
- c) progress had been made in raising awareness about the introduction of plastic wrapping and packaging recycling;
- d) WDC staff had shown solidarity with vulnerable communities by supporting the "Reverse Advent Calendar" initiative for the LWS Night Shelter, collecting daily items for those in need;
- e) WDC's cost-of-living webpage had been updated to include resources like warm hubs and information on charitable activities;

- f) WDC staff had implemented a new email signature to ensure residents had access to emergency contact information during the holiday office closure;
- g) over 160 members of staff attended a recent ADHD awareness session, with further training planned on mental health and autism awareness. These initiatives reinforced WDC's commitment to championing equality, diversity, and inclusion within the Council and the wider community;
- h) a key target in WDC's Change Programme for this financial year had been surpassed. The focus was now on achieving the goals set for the next year, 2025;
- i) the transition of waste-related calls back in-house was a significant milestone which had been achieved, giving greater control and improving service delivery. The first forms had gone live with the remaining and call switchover to conclude by Friday 19 December 2024;
- j) WDC's Customer Service Team had been working on rolling out the new Customer Record Management (CRM) tool, starting with neighbourhood Waste services before expanding further. This collaboration with IT colleagues exemplified innovation and accessibility, enhancing the customer journey and advancing the digital transformation of WDC's services. The new system would ensure 24/7, year-round accessibility for all residents; and
- k) WDC remained vigilant in addressing cyber security as one of the most critical threats faced by Council's today. A recent briefing for group leaders emphasised this priority, and additional sessions for Councillors were scheduled for the new year, 2025. Safeguarding WDC's systems and community remained a key focus.

The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, Councillor Davison, stated that:

- a) at the Council meeting on 2 October 2024, a winter fuel motion was agreed which recommended five actions that had all been completed and communicated to Members. However, there was no formal record of this. This record could not be appended to the 2 October 2024 Council minutes. Instead, upon agreement with the Chairman, this record would be appended to the 18 December 2024 Council minutes (appendices C, D, E, and F);
- b) at the 27 November 2024 Council meeting, the main structural changes in the ongoing reorganisation of Council staff were detailed;
- c) the revised Portfolio Holder remits would be, as detailed at Appendix G to the Minutes, but the changes were summarised as:
  - i. Councillor Billiald Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture, and Economy.
  - ii. Councillor Williams Portfolio Holder for Decarbonisation.
  - iii. Councillor Sinnott Portfolio Holder for Safer, Healthier, and Active Communities.
  - iv. Councillor Melrose Portfolio Holder for Organisational Development;
- d) the most notable changes related to the Housing, Decarbonisation, Resources and Place Portfolio Holders working together to build or acquire new Council homes. The Development Strategy and Programme Forum, chaired by Councillor Adkins, would oversee

decisions on which housing sites to buy or build. Once agreed, the Housing Development Delivery Board, chaired by Councillor King, would check progress. Both would include Councillor Williams for the decarbonisation aspects and Councillor Chilvers regarding finance. Terms of reference would be written in the new year, 2025;

- e) Members were likely to have seen in the news Central Government's intention to abolish District Councils, like WDC, to create unitary authorities over this Parliament and the next. Members would all have different views on the wisdom or otherwise of this intention, as well as whether it would happen in Warwick District, and if so, how and when;
- f) until there was greater clarity, Cabinet was determined to continue to focus on delivering improvements for local residents. Cabinet remained committed to supporting WDC staff in their work. The implementation of these proposals was not expected in Warwick District in the short-term, when that changed, Members and WDC would be notified; and
- g) Members would have heard several of WDC's key ambitions for the coming year, including hearing views on the emerging local plan from residents and other stakeholders, continuing to decarbonise, improving the Council's finances via the change programme, streamlining waste calls, working through the housing action plan, and enhancing our vibrant, safe and healthy communities.

At the request of the Chairman the Chief Executive informed Council that a staff briefing would take place on Friday 20 December 2024 which would address concerns over changes to local government in light of the Government's English Devolution White Paper.

### 63. **Questions to the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holders**

Councillor Kohler asked the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership how likely it was that Warwickshire County Council would be submitting a letter on 10 January 2025 to Central Government to request the quickest possible unitarisation of the County.

In response, Councillor Davison explained that:

- a) himself and the Chief Executive were meeting other Leaders in Warwickshire on 19 December 2024, and he would therefore provide further updates after this;
- b) WCC would be submitting the letter if it were to be submitted, which was likely. Under a previous administration, the same sort of plans were submitted; and
- c) one suggestion was that Central Government would have a prioritisation group and would select groups that they thought would go forward. It was unknown whether Warwickshire would be in this prioritisation group, however, there was an implication in the Chief Executive's statement that Warwickshire would be. It was likely, but not definite.

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Kohler Councillor Davison explained that there was no feedback from the WMCA meeting on



devolution, and that feedback would be provided to Councillors after the meeting with other Leaders in Warwickshire.

Councillor Aizlewood sought to understand:

- what practical steps the Council were taking to ensure that local residents were engaged in discussion about the Preferred Options, rather than just being told what would happen to their communities;
- what budget had been set aside to support engagement with local communities; and
- what lessons had been learnt from the previous public consultation to make access to the technical data as easy as possible.

In response, Councillor King explained that:

- a) eight in person Roadshow events had been planned, five of which would be on Saturdays. Four Roadshows were to take place in both Warwick District and Stratford-Upon-Avon District. The roadshows would be located in the main urban areas but would be balanced across the whole area. Some venues were still to be confirmed, and once confirmed the details would be advertised. The events would commence on 25 January 2025 and would be held until 22 February 2025;
- b) the number of in-person events had increased from the previous consultation from six to eight. More events would be held on Saturdays, but not exclusively, enabling more people to attend;
- c) there would be two online public events. The first would be on 16 January 2025 and the second on 24 February 2025;
- d) there would be four online stakeholder events. One was for developers, one was for the Place Board and two were for other stakeholders. These were to take place from January through to February 2025;
- e) Stratford Town Council would be having the SWLP as an agenda item on the Parish Council and Town Council Forum meetings at the end of January 2025. WDC might look to see if there were to be a similar opportunity for them to do the same;
- f) Parish and Town Councils were being given briefings week commencing 16 December 2025. This was in addition to the documents made available across 18 locations in the area which would be advertised on the local plan website;
- g) advanced notice letters were being circulated amongst various stakeholders. Further consultation literature and press releases were to be sent out at the time of the launch;
- h) all Members should communicate these efforts to residents to encourage them to attend events and go to libraries and community centres where information would be available at all times;
- i) the above statements reflected the practical steps WDC were taking to ensure local residents were engaged in discussion. This was a serious programme of engagement which took a lot of time and effort, thus reflecting the volume of work that was being done to reach out to local residents;

- j) information would be kept up to date on the WDC website, the interactive map was being improved to make it easier to use, and frequently asked questions lists were available. This was to encourage residents that it was a live situation in which residents were actively responded to;
- k) the budget set for the engagement was difficult to measure, specific costs of the process would be provided in due course. The cost of public consultation was small as a percentage of the overall budget. The main expenses were focused on advertisement. The cost associated with creation of the interactive map and the consultation software provider was part of wider work that had been commissioned within the SWLP. The main cost associated with this would be in relation to officer time as a significant amount of officer's time would be required to deliver the public consultation; and
- l) the lessons learnt from previous consultations included supporting the public by simplifying the questions. This would make it as easy as possible for people to access. It did need to be recognised, however, that the Local Plan Preferred Options was a major document with a wide range of issues for which different groups would wish to comment.

Councillor Phillips asked the Portfolio Holder for Place that following the second call for sites, there were approximately 600 sites under consideration in the SWLP, with the preferred sites list, there were 12 potential new settlements and 12 strategic growth location options. These locations did not include many of the 600 sites that were identified in the second call for sites, would the sites not currently included new local plan would remain so and would not be supported by the new local plan if brought forward for development.

In response, Councillor King explained that this was not the case. Councillor King went on to explain that:

- a) the preferred options document identified 24 potential strategic growth locations and 12 potential new settlement locations. These provided a strong indication of where large scale strategic growth was considered best located within the plan. These areas did not directly collate with individual sites submitted; they were more groupings of submitted sites;
- b) the preferred options document did not, at this stage, provide a set of allocations for inclusion in the plan, there was more work required to get to this position;
- c) it was desirable to receive feedback from all stakeholders including residents, infrastructure providers, parishes, developers, site promoters or others. Stakeholder's feedback was to be sought throughout the consultation concerning whether the locations for strategic growth were appropriate;
- d) it had to be understood that representations might be made through the consultation that would either help to confirm thoughts on the suitability of locations or encourage consideration of locations that sat outside of the 24 potential strategic growth locations and 12 potential new settlement locations. Further evidence might also be produced

- which could influence decisions taken around the inclusion or exclusion of sites;
- e) it was inaccurate to say that other land or site previously put forward through the call for sites exercises might not ultimately be included in the plan. This suggestion would constitute a consultation that was not genuine and was misleading to the public. However, it was unlikely that supporting sites that were assessed through the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) in part A but not deemed suitable for consideration in part B would be considered;
  - f) there would be many site promoters whose sites were not included within the 36 potential locations for growth that would continue to promote their sites for inclusion in the plan. Whilst WDC would put forward a plan for consideration by the inspector, these promoters would also seek to put forward a compelling argument and evidence as to why their site should be included;
  - g) the plan would prioritise suitable brownfield sites. Going forward, further assessment would be given to brownfield sites submitted through the call for sites. Brownfield sites that were likely to be included in the plan had not been specifically set out. The inclusion of brownfield sites would depend on the suitability of the proposals put forward and matters such as neighbouring uses. There had been calls for site submissions for brownfield sites that were not specifically referenced in the preferred options plan at this stage. However, this did not mean that they were not considered for inclusion. The plans of the strategic locations were the only ones that had been presented because this was where the majority of need was required to be met; and
  - h) residents with views on the preferred options were encouraged to engage with the consultation. If residents were in support of the development strategy set out in the preferred options, this should be communicated as well as why they supported the strategy. The concerns of residents were also sought to be understood.

Councillor Phillips asked a supplementary question on how residents could be made aware that there would potentially be other sites coming forward in the future and whether there would be a further consultation for those other sites.

Councillor King agreed that this was a cause for concern. The previous answer from Councillor King addressed parts of Councillor Phillips supplementary question. This would therefore be published on the WDC website. Although, some of the information that Councillor Phillips sought to understand was laid out in the previous answer, however, the information was complex making it difficult to get specific information. This complexity also explained the assumption by residents that there were to be no other sites. Residents required further support to understand this information and avoid such assumptions. All Members and residents were encouraged to engage with the public consultation, in which questions could be answered. A broader consultation would likely be brought forward in the new year, 2025.

Councillor Hales asked the Portfolio Holder for Arts, Culture, and Economy whether Parish and Town Councils could be engaged as part of events strategies moving forwards, for example regarding a Christmas lights event being organised for Whitnash in 2025.

Councillor Davison responded on behalf of Councillor Billiald, in her absence, explained that he would make a note of such a request and ask Councillor Billiald to provide a response in due course.

Councillor Hales asked the Portfolio Holder for Place if assistance or out of hours contact details were provided to residents if there were issues relating to traveller sites during the Christmas shutdown period.

In response, Councillor King explained that this had been flagged and considered and there would be cover over the Christmas period. The help that Councillor Hales provided the last time that there was unwelcome activity relating to traveller sites was acknowledged with gratitude.

Councillor Harrison addressed the Portfolio Holder for Safer, Healthier, and Active Communities when paying recognition to the work responding to the complaints that were being received over odours associated on the Berry polymer site and pressed to get on top of the issue ahead of the warm weather returning.

In response, Councillor Sinnott explained that frustration over the issue was shared. The odours were unpleasant for many residents, which was recognised and understood by those working to resolve the issue. Council officers had been working hard to look for solutions and were placing their utmost attention on this issue. The odours were the biggest problem, and this needed to be dealt with.

Councillor Matecki sought clarification on the constitution with regards to the rules and regulations for agenda item 8 – Questions to the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holders. Councillor Matecki understood the Constitution permitted only one question per Portfolio Holder statement. The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer clarified that questions unrelated to Portfolio Holder statements were to be asked separately following questions directly related to the statements. There could be any number of questions on a statement and this was not limited to one as Councillor Matecki had previously thought. The amount of time spent on the items, the number of questions asked, and how the time was being split was being monitored.

Councillor Matecki asked the Portfolio Holder for Place a follow up question from the 27 November Council meeting where he inquired about the external inquiry into the failings of the Planning Department. Councillor King had mentioned at the 27 November 2024 Council meeting that officers were going to respond to questions from the external lawyers by 2 December 2024. Councillor Matecki therefore asked the Portfolio Holder for Place whether the officers responded by 2 December 2024 and whether the external lawyers had submitted an initial report.

In response, the Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer explained, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Place, that officers had submitted the response to questions by 2 December and the initial draft report was expected before Christmas 2024.

Councillor Matecki asked a supplementary question requesting for Members to see the draft report in confidence. The Head of Governance and Monitoring Officer explained that this would not be appropriate. All Councillors would be informed when the draft report arrived, and the complainant would also be updated on this. When the final report was published, all Councillors would see a copy of this. It would also be published on the WDC website along with the costs of the investigation.

Councillor Day addressed the Portfolio Holder for Place when stating that the purpose of a local plan was to ensure that development happened in places that the local community supported. The difficulty was that when there was not a five-year housing land supply, developers could bring forward applications for sites outside the local plan. Whilst debates were taking place around the 2025/50 local plan, the fact remained that the 2017 local plan could not presently be supported. This was material in Bishop's Tachbrook and Barford areas because this was the 20% of the District that was not within the green belt. Planning consultations were currently being received for sites outside the 2017 allocations. This could bring forward between 250 and 1000 dwellings in a ward that had already seen thousands of houses delivered within the plan. Councillor Day was therefore concerned about what WDC were doing to ensure that the current housing land supply was reestablished.

Councillor Day therefore asked the Portfolio Holder for Place:

- what action was being taken to reassess those 2017 allocated sites;
- what efforts were being taken to enable those sites to come forward;
- to get the support of the local MP to enable that to happen; and
- what reassurance could WDC provide to the residents of Bishop's Tachbrook with regards to its Parish and Ward Councillors being able to robustly challenge the opportunistic spate of housing development proposals.

In response, Councillor King explained that:

- a) the current situation was likely to remain the same for some time. The five-year housing land supply position was not going to improve overnight. There was a high likelihood of remaining in the same situation until the updated SWLP was adopted. As it got closer to the plan being submitted and it became clearer which sites WDC were supporting, then there might be a desire and ability to encourage some of the sites to come forward for applications for adoption. This would be an attempt to get in a positive five-year position earlier. These matters would be regularly reviewed by officers;
- b) in reference to support for Bishop's Tachbrook residents, following a request from Councillor Day, two senior officers had met with two

- Bishop's Tachbrook Parish Council Members to explain the five-year housing land supply issue to them. This was well received;
- c) all Members had to be aware that when planning applications (such as those to which Councillor Day referred to) came before the Council, they would need to be assessed against the development plan and other material considerations including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF tilted the balance in favour of applications for housing in areas that did not have a five-year land supply. Officers would provide Members with appropriate advice in considering planning applications and having regard of the likelihood of success of any future planning appeal;
  - d) Members should have noted that the updated NPPF placed many other locations in Warwick District at greater threat because of WDC's lack of a five-year housing land supply. For example, when considering the development of homes in the greenbelt this should not be regarded as an inappropriate development where a Council did not have a five-year housing land supply. Therefore, even green belt locations were now considerably under threat. This factor might have an impact on the locations where WDC received speculative planning applications in the future;
  - e) with regards to the steps being taken to assess that the 2017 allocated sites were not coming forward for development, officers within the Planning Policy Team were working on this. However, the priority was on the SWLP and preparing for public consultation immediately in 2025; and
  - f) the three Site Delivery Officers were working hard to do what they could to work with promoters, developers, development management and other colleagues, including those at WCC, to bring sites forward. However, Members should be aware that many of the factors that impact housing delivery were outside of WDC's control.

Councillor Day sought reassurance from the Portfolio Holder for Place that they would work closely with Matt Western MP, specifically as he had raised concerns and objections to the Chesterton Gardens site, and the Secretary of State to prevent a problem occurring rather than rectifying it afterwards. It was unsuitable to wait for the 2025/26 local plan to stop these developments happening in areas where it was not desirable.

Councillor King responded by explaining that this request would be met as he endorsed this notion. He also recognised the conflicts of opinion about the Chesterton Gardens site that Councillor Day had mentioned which had now reached some resolution.

Councillor Day addressed the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood when explaining that there had been significant challenges with car parking at Oakley Wood but there had been challenges with overnight parking/camping, particularly in the summer.

Therefore, he asked parking restrictions were planned and when they would be put into force.

In response, Councillor Roberts reassured Councillor Day that action had and was being taken. Councillor Roberts explained that:

- a) the subject was raised by a resident in September 2023. Since this point, there had been ongoing contact with this resident. The last contact was in September 2024;
- b) the resident's concern had been taken on board and therefore both the Parking Managers and Bereavement Managers had been communicated with. Both managers had not considered the concern as a major issue, however, they were aware of some campervans staying overnight and the online advertisement;
- c) enforcing the carpark at Oakley Woods was unfortunately not straightforward as it did not have a parking order on it which would allow the WDC's parking team to enforce the car park;
- d) after speaking with both managers, one option that was discussed was to install a height restrictive barrier. After investigation, this option was deemed impractical for the operation of the crematorium;
- e) as the car park did not have a parking order, it was agreed to be added to the next round of parking orders. This was a process which needed to be verified by the legal team before being sent to WCC for their Cabinet to sign off.
- f) the current set of parking orders contained 32 proposals which were going to the WCC Cabinet for approval;
- g) The 32 proposals were due to go to WCC Cabinet before the end of 2024 to go on their forward plan and to go to WCC's March Cabinet meeting;
- h) there was hope that parking orders would have gone in earlier in 2024, however, it was decided to include the fees and charges in this round as the implementation date for the new charges had moved from January to April;
- i) enforcement of Oakley Wood car park was not seen as an urgent issue amongst the 32 proposals and therefore was not put through separately. This was because little feedback had been received from the public on this subject; and
- j) if WCC Cabinet signed the enforcement of Oakley Wood car park off in March 2025, enforcement would be able to start at this point if it was needed.

Councillor Day asked a supplementary question, highlighting the issue had been raised a number of times and that a proactive step of contacting the websites that were promoting the carpark as a suitable campsite and advise them it was not appropriate.

In response, Councillor Roberts confirmed that he would ask officers to look into contacting the websites.

Councillor Boad asked the Leader Portfolio and Holder for Strategic Leadership whether they thought they should be involved as early as possible since the process could be fast moving and there were people who wished to be in a different situation than WDC.

At the request of the Chairman, the Chief Executive explained that the 10 January 2025 was not the deadline for the submission of the unitary proposal, it was about seeking a deferment of elections. The intention of the meeting on 19 December 2024 was to identify the views and proposals. A briefing for Members on the content of the Devolution White Paper might be appropriate at some point in January 2025. The Devolution White Paper had been issued as of 16 December 2024 meaning there had been a short time scale between the paper being issued and the 18 December 2024 Council meeting taking place. There were other time frames that Members should be aware of that were longer than January 2025. Councillor Davison added that:

- a) he had similar thoughts to those expressed by Councillor Boad;
- b) with regards to engagement with other Leaders and Chief Executives, they had been contacted but there had been no response. This might have been because Leaders and Chief Executives desired to wait and hear exactly what was being communicated by Central Government;
- c) all parties would not necessarily be open to negotiation;
- d) feedback would be provided after the meeting on 19 December 2024; and
- e) there was not much more that could be said at this stage.

Councillor Boad responded by stating that elections would not be postponed if a plan had not been prepared to go forward with to at least be considered. Councillor Boad therefore stressed the importance of the Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership's presence on this consideration.

In response, Councillor Davison agreed that presence was required. However, Councillor Davison understood that the regulations allowed WCC to go forward, with a request to postpone the elections, without WDC if they so wished.

Councillor Milton addressed the Portfolio Holder for Safer, Healthier, and Active Communities when explaining that there was continued chaos related to parking at Castle Farm that was detailed in the 27 November 2024 Council meeting, and sought a response to the request for a round table discussion on this matter, from him and his fellow Ward Councillors,

Councillor Sinnott felt that a response had already been provided and offered to provide some additional history on the matter.

In response, Councillor Milton clarified their question which was in relation to why a response had not been provided and when one could be expected to be received. He sought to understand when the Kenilworth St John's Ward Councillors would be able to set up the roundtable discussion that they had offered to facilitate with the Portfolio Holder for Safer, Healthier, and Active Communities, Everyone Active, and the football clubs who were all key to addressing the issue.

In response, Councillor Sinnott explained that he would follow up on this matter after speaking with officers.



Councillor Payne addressed the Portfolio Holder for Safer, Healthier, and asked whether it was possible to ask Citizens Advice South Warwickshire for a quarterly report on how well the outreach work was performing against the key performance indicators (KPIs).

In response, Councillor Sinnott explained that this would be possible. There were 12 KPIs, some of which were annual, and others were ongoing. Councillor Sinnott was keen to receive feedback to review what was working well and what was not. The outreach programme would be evidence led and address issues where there was need. This need would be dictated by both officers and Citizens Advice.

The Chairman closed the item by wishing a happy and relaxing Christmas and a healthy New Year to all Councillors, residents, and staff. Councillor Margrave offered reassurance that although it was a difficult time to receive potentially worrying news about the future of local government, Councillors would do whatever was necessary to minimise concerns in light of the Government Devolution White Paper.

#### 64. **Common Seal**

It was proposed by Councillor Davison, seconded by Councillor Melrose, and

**Resolved** that the Common Seal of Warwick District Council be affixed to such documents as it may be required for implementing decisions of the Council arrived at this day.

The Chairman closed the meeting by wishing a happy and relaxing Christmas and a healthy New Year to all Councillors, residents, and staff. Councillor Margrave offered reassurance to all officers of the Council that although it was a difficult time to receive potentially worrying news about the future of local government, Councillors would do whatever was necessary to minimise concerns in light of the Government Devolution White Paper.

(The meeting ended at 7.33pm)

CHAIRMAN  
19 February 2025

## **Response to Questions following Council on 27 November 2024:**

### **1. What is the current vision and aims for the sites?**

We recognise the importance of these sites and want to ensure we achieve the best outcomes for design, affordability and sustainability.

We have three key ambitions for these sites:

- For a significant percentage to be affordable, as part our commitment to address the national housing crisis: 40% is the minimum, but we're aiming higher.
- For these to be exemplar developments, for example, with passive house standard homes.
- For these developments to complement the local Kenilworth community.

### **2. When will proposals and timelines be shared with the community and for thorough consultation process?**

We will appoint lead consultants very soon, as we are currently undertaking the selection process. This is slightly more complex than usual as we want to ensure we have the right combination of expertise to deliver on our commitment to affordable homes and high sustainability standards. Once the consultants are appointed, probably before Christmas, we will let members know and a press release will be issued.

### **3. What are the costs per month associated with holding this capital asset on the books**

We recognise we're not as far forward with these sites as we'd like to be and we share that frustration with members and residents. The decision was taken for WDC to carry this financial cost four years ago to enable the school to complete its successful move and that it's very important that the sites are brought forward for high quality housing as soon as possible.

The monthly costs of the sites are:

- Internal Financing costs approximately £140k
- Securing the sites - £18k per month going forward

It's important for members to acknowledge, this administration inherited a hugely challenging legacy; not only the Kenilworth Swimming pool and the Kenilworth Wardens projects, - both highly complex and highly visible, but with still greater bearing on the Council, a housing compliance regulatory framework dramatically changed by the Grenfell Tower disaster. The response to this has required significant Member and Officer focus, which has meant that work on the sites has been slower than is desirable. In recent weeks we have been able to allocate additional staff time to accelerating the work on the school sites and as set out before we will bring forward a timetable that all members will be able to see.

## **Arts, Culture and Economy Portfolio Statement – Cllr Billiald**

### **Events**

Our Business Support & Events Team have just come to the end of an intensive period supporting a number of pre-Christmas events across the district, including celebrating Diwali with a new and colourful light, and four Christmas light switch-on events. There are still more smaller events through the Christmas period. It brings to an end a year when the team have supported over 160 events across the district. In the New Year the team will be starting work on an Events Strategy which will help shape our priorities for how we can use our resources to best support events to serve our communities and support local businesses.

### **Pantomime**

This year's pantomime is now well underway in the Spa Centre. There will be over 50 performances of "Beauty & the Beast" and I am pleased to report that so far we are on track for another record year, both in terms of tickets sold and in income generated. I can also confirm that, following a procurement exercise, we have entered into a new five-year contract with Imagine Theatre, our existing pantomime partner, to produce the pantomime at the Spa Centre for the next 5 years. It's therefore not too early to buy a ticket for next year's pantomime which will be "Peter Pan".

### **Pump Rooms Roof**

A contractor has been procured and we now await contracts. A letter of intent has been issued to begin enabling works. The ACE Mend draw-down has begun. We received £456,764 of £2,283,821. The next draw-down is due in January 2025. Works are pencilled in to start February 2025. The overall cost of the project is £3,118,300.00.

### **Town Hall**

The months of work on the first phase of Town Hall is now coming to an end. We have a target completion date for works of the end of February, however the committee chamber will be ready for use earlier in the month. The focus of this work, which has been supported by a grant from the Future High Streets Fund, will see the building made more adaptable and flexible for the future. Works include a new lift, improved fire safety measures which will significantly increase the capacity of the Assembly Room, new toilets on the ground floor and a better and more welcoming entrance area. We are looking to find a convenient date to offer members a tour of the works once these are completed.

I would just like to thank all of our Officers and particularly the arts and events teams who have been working extremely hard during this Festive period, supporting our communities across the District in their celebrations.

Dear Councillors,

Thank you for your recent motions submitted to Council, regarding the district's response to changes in the winter fuel allowance. I am pleased to inform you that across WDC efforts are being made to assist pensioners who may be missing out on winter fuel payments and we are doing all that we can to minimise the impact on our most vulnerable residents.

#### **Pensioners who are already known to the Council**

Within the Customer and Digital Services team, a targeted campaign is underway to contact all pensioners that we anticipate will be eligible for Pension Credits. As you will know, Pension Credits is a passport benefit to receiving the Winter Fuel Allowance, but it's advantages do not stop there. Not only does it provide extra money for low-income households overall, but it can also open numerous other benefits, such as free NHS dental treatment.

The team has used data already held by the Council for existing benefit claimants to estimate eligibility, based on what we know about their income. Through our data sharing agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions, we can see which pensioners are already in receipt of Pension Credits and which are not. From our data, we have identified the following:

- 2,646 pensions within Warwick District are known to WDC and are currently claiming Council Tax Reduction or Housing Benefit.
- 2,285 are single-person claimants, and 361 are couples.
- Of the couples, 52 are mixed age and do not qualify for Pension Credits.
- Of the remaining 2,594 pensioners, 1,312 already receive Pension Credits.
- 217 receive Savings Credits and would not qualify for Pension Credits.
- This leaves 1,065 pensioners that we have knowledge of, who are not claiming.

We anticipate that around 100 pensioners who are not currently claiming, would be eligible for Pension Credits. We have also considered Housing Revenue Account tenants and of those identified as potentially being eligible, 20 are our tenants. The monetary value of pension credits varies depending on the claimant's circumstances, but from our data, we estimate that if every potential claimant were eligible, this would release around £200,000 of unclaimed benefits.

To enact our rapid take-up campaign, Customer Services are currently telephoning all pensioners who we believe could be eligible. Once contact is made, we're informing the customer of how they can apply for pension credits directly with the DWP (which is the fastest route); either online or over the phone. Unfortunately, pension credit is not a benefit that our own advisors can administer, so they are unable to offer face-to-face support. However, this is also being facilitated via other means.

The Customer and Digital Services team have established a partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau, who already have advisors that are very familiar with the pension credit claim process. We have arranged for CAB representatives to be present in the Pump Rooms on a Thursday afternoon and where residents require more in-person support to make a claim, Customer Services staff are arranging appointments for them to meet with a CAB advisor. These meetings can take place at either the CAB offices, or at the Pump Rooms.

The first CAB sessions at the Pump Rooms took place on October 10<sup>th</sup>. Attention has not been drawn to these arrangements yet, as both Customer Services and the CAB wished to bed-in the arrangements and ensure that they work properly before raising greater awareness. The Council is very grateful to the CAB for the assistance they are providing, and the partnership we have started will offer long-term benefits to the residents of Warwick District.

Unfortunately, monitoring who successfully claims Pension Credits after our intervention is not an exact science and we can only go on data we receive back from the DWP. Typically, this can have a time lag of 3 to 4 months.

In terms of the broader claimant base who we do not believe would be immediately eligible based on income data, we still intend to reach out and urge them to check. Pension Credits has a complex set of eligibility rules and allows different factors to be considered, such as mortgage payments. This is beyond the data that we hold and as such it is impossible for us to model effectively. In these circumstances, we will be writing to each household informing them how to check their eligibility, both online, via the DWP or an advice service such as the CAB. This includes our HRA tenants who may be eligible but are not currently claiming.

Encouraging pensioners to check their eligibility independently is very important. Based on our current data, we estimate that 164 pensioners will miss out on Pension Credits by £10 or less. It is entirely possible that some of those pensioners will have other expenses which could offset the £10, which we simply do not know about.

#### [Pensioners not Already Known to the Council](#)

Unfortunately, there is very little that can be done to assist pensioners who are not already known to the Council outside of the benefits system.

The 2021 census estimated the population of Warwick to be 148,500 people and of that, 18.8% of the population were over 65, which is around 27,900. Only around 10% of this population is known to the Council through the process of claiming Housing Benefits or Council Tax reduction. For the remainder we know very little about them, making identifying and targeting extremely difficult. To try and mitigate this further, the Council's Election Team have provided Customer and Digital Services with a cut of the edited electoral roll. This doesn't specifically indicate the age of people, but it does contain a marker for those who are over 75. We are currently processing this file to remove people who are already within the benefits system, identify where couples live at the same address (so we only write to them once) and removing types of residencies which would not be eligible (such as care homes). The original file contained around 12,000 entries and we anticipate that once processing is complete, we will have around 5,000 letters to send.

Unfortunately, for those pensioners who are under 75 and are not known to us through the benefits system, we have no legitimate means of identifying where they live or who they are. This is where the Council's more generic marketing approaches must be relied upon. We will also write out to our Parish and Town Councils to encourage them to market the services both WDC and our partners can offer to assist people with making a pension credit claim and create a specific "crib sheet" for Councillors who may be contacted by residents seeking assistance.



When compared to population data sourced from the 2021 Census, shown in figure 2, it can also be seen that most of Warwick’s pensionable population live in less deprived areas. There are of course exceptions to this, such as some areas of Kenilworth and Lillington, but this trend can contribute significantly to understanding why only 10% of the pensioner population is known within the benefits system.

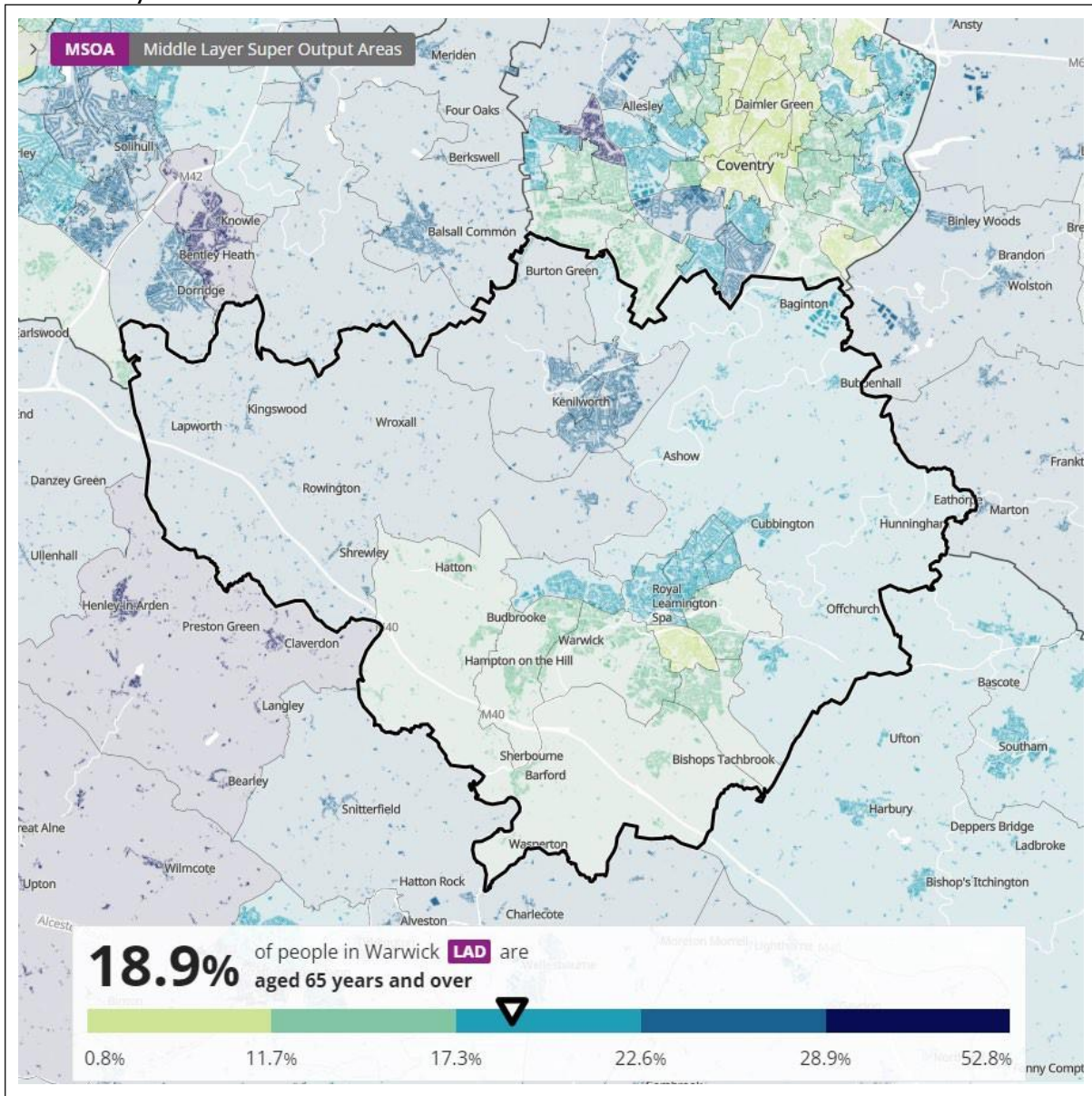
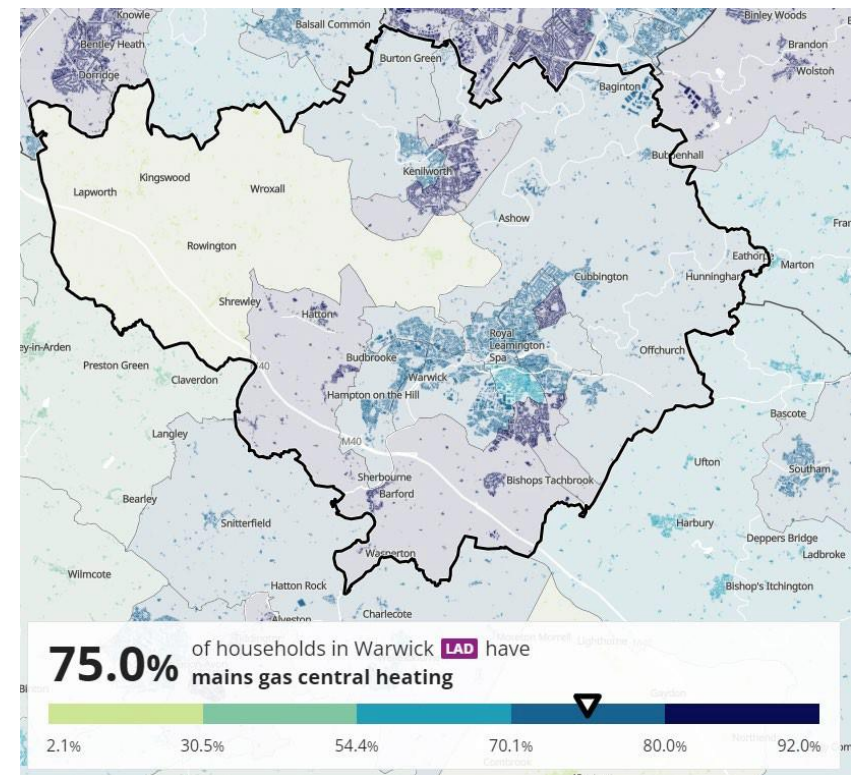
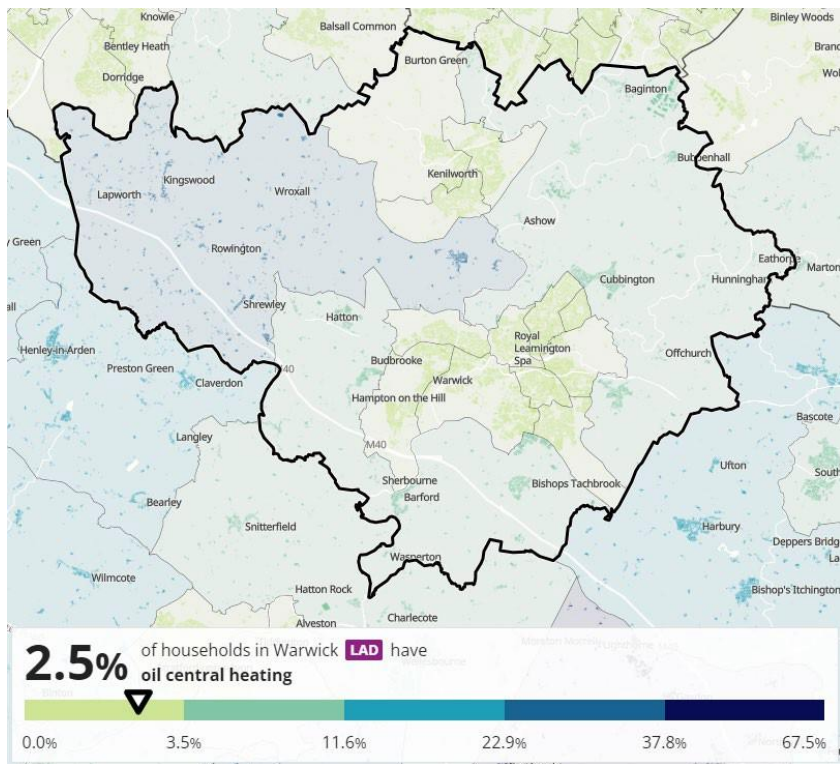


Figure 2. Population of Over 65’s within Warwick

Source:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/population/age/resident-age-3a/aged-65-years-and-over?lad=E07000222>

When considering the types of fuel used to heat homes within Warwick District, the reliance on more expensive fuels such as oil is prevalent in some areas such as Kingswood and Leek Wootton, but overall, oil as a single source of heat represents just 2.5% of households. This is shown in figure 3. Other more expensive forms of heating such as wood or bottled gas also make up a small percentage of households, at 0.2% and 1% respectively. 75% of households



**Figure 3. Household Heating by Fuel Type**

The use of oil as a means of heating is not common in most areas of Warwick, with only 2.5% of households using the fuel as a single source of heat. Most households use mains gas as their primary heat source. A notable exception to this however is the Kingswood and Leek Wootton areas, with 31.8% of rely on oil as their primary heat source. A further 37.2% of households in the area use mains or bottled gas, and 9.7% use electricity. Whist this does demonstrate that a larger proportion of households in this area are reliant on more expensive sources of heat, 62.4% of households in this area exhibit no dimensions of deprivation, and a further 30% indicate one. Dimensions of deprivation include employment, education, health and disability and households overcrowding.

Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/housing/type-of-central-heating-in-household/heating-type/mains-gas-only/>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/population/household-deprivation/hh-deprivation/household-is-not-deprived-in-any-dimension/?msoa=E02006522>



use gas as their only heat source, a further 10.5% (typically in urban areas) use electricity, and 7.7% have two or more non-renewable sources of heat.

The Council's climate change team are also currently delivering schemes such as the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) which can improve the energy efficiency of low-income households and off-gas properties. Further work is also being undertaken with Act on Energy through a Service Level Agreement to provide a Complex Caseworker to specifically work in Warwick district and assist vulnerable households with home energy as well as financial signposting support, including support to access hardship funds and writing off fuel debt. Currently, the SLA is under review and discussions have been widened to include supporting pensioners falling just above the Pension Credit threshold. This is funded via the UKSPF.

The spectre of excess winter deaths caused by the removal of the winter fuel payment is also a significant consideration. Any preventable death is a tragedy and any steps that could be taken by the Council to reduce such incidents should be pursued.

When exploring this issue further, it was considered that a large contributing factor to excess winter deaths is overall health, and in this area, Warwick is within the top 30% of all local authority areas. More than 85% of our population indicated during the 2021 census that their overall level of health was good (33.5) or very good (51.6).

Unfortunately this data is not available at any geography below district level, but the number of residents reporting very bad health (0.8) or bad health (3.0) overall is low. Whilst this is still a concern, the data indicates a lower overall risk, particularly in comparison to our neighbouring areas and the overall national picture.

Source: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/maps/choropleth/health/general-health-age-standardised/health-in-general/very-good-health/?lad=E07000222>

#### Next Steps

1. Customer and Digital Services will continue their rapid take-up campaign to encourage eligible pensioners to sign up to Pension Credits.
2. A letter will be sent out to all other known pensioners encouraging them to check their eligibility.
3. Customer and Digital Services will continue to work with the Citizens Advice Bureau to promote the help that is available to people.
4. The media team will continue with more generalised encouragement for pensions across Warwick District including those who are not known to us, to check their eligibility.
5. The Climate Change team in conjunction with Housing will continue to encourage the take up of grant funding to improve energy efficiency in both private and council properties.
6. The Climate Change team will continue to develop the SLA with Act on Energy to provide tailored advice to vulnerable households within Warwick District.
7. Contact Town and Parish Council's to ask that they engage with their communities to encourage the take up of Pension Credits and provide advice as to how they can support this.
8. The take up of pension credits will be monitored, but it must be noted that the data available to do this is reliant on a 3<sup>rd</sup> party and can lag significantly. We will also have no visibility of why a household is refused pension credits.

I trust that this information is sufficient to address the issues raised in your motions. However, should you require further information or have any questions about the steps that we are taking, please do not hesitate to let me know.



**Councillor Ian Davison  
Leader of the Council  
Member for Leamington Brunswick**

Warwick District Council  
Town Hall, Parade,  
Royal Leamington Spa CV32 4AT

The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP  
Secretary of State for Housing  
Communities and Local Government

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By email  
[angela.rayner.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:angela.rayner.mp@parliament.uk)

**web:** [www.warwickdc.gov.uk](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk)

**our ref: ID/  
your ref:**

8 January 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

Following adoption of a motion at full Council, I am writing to you as Leader of Warwick District Council to request funding for a local advertising and outreach campaign to raise awareness about Pension Credit and other benefits, targeting all pensioners who may be eligible but are not currently claiming.

Warwick District Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Warwick District sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance. An "opt out option" for those not in need of the WFP would be a more compassionate approach for the vulnerable in our society often too proud to ask for help.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest, older and most vulnerable residents, and will disproportionately impact our rural residents.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Ian Davison'.

Councillor Ian Davison  
Leader of the Council  
Member for Leamington Brunswick

**Minute 62  
Appendix E**



**Councillor Ian Davison  
Leader of the Council  
Member for Leamington Brunswick**

Warwick District Council  
Town Hall, Parade,  
Royal Leamington Spa CV32 4AT

Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer

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**web:** [www.warwickdc.gov.uk](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk)

**our ref: ID/  
your ref:**

8 January 2025

Dear Chancellor

Following adoption of a motion at full Council, I am writing to you as Leader of Warwick District Council to request a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment, and ask the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.

Warwick District Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across Warwick District sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance. An "opt out option" for those not in need of the WFP would be a more compassionate approach for the vulnerable in our society often too proud to ask for help.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest, older and most vulnerable residents, and will disproportionately impact our rural residents.

I would be grateful if you could acknowledge receipt of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Ian Davison  
Leader of the Council  
Member for Leamington Brunswick



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

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HM Treasury

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Councillor Ian Davison  
Leader of the Council  
Member for Leamington Brunswick  
Warwick District Council  
Town Hall  
Parade  
Leamington Spa  
CV32 4AT

Our ref: MC2024/90822

4 December 2024

Dear Councillor Davison,

Thank you for your letters of 22 October to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding the decision to restrict Winter Fuel Payment eligibility. I am replying as the Minister for Pensions, and I apologise for the delay.

In face of the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices, including targeting the Winter Fuel Payment, to bring the public finances back under control. This decision means that the Winter Fuel Payment will be targeted to low-income pensioners who need it.

Despite this very difficult decision, we are determined to protect the poorest pensioners and target support to those in greatest need. Winter Fuel Payments will continue to be paid to pensioner households with someone receiving Pension Credit or certain other income-related benefits. They will continue to be worth £200 for eligible households, or £300 for eligible households with someone aged over 80.

I would like to thank you for sharing the suggestion of an opt-out option regarding eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment. Linking entitlement to Pension Credit and the other qualifying income-related benefits payable to pensioners ensures that we can pay almost all eligible pensioners automatically, without the need to claim the Winter Fuel Payment.

The Government wants those eligible for Pension Credit but not currently claiming it to receive the benefits they are entitled to, including the Winter Fuel Payment. As part of this, we have started a new drive to increase take-up of Pension Credit, which is currently far too low - with a third of eligible pensioners not claiming. We know there are low-income pensioners who are not claiming Pension Credit, and we really urge those people to apply.

Claims for Pension Credit can be made online at: [www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim](http://www.gov.uk/pension-credit/how-to-claim). The service is available to use 24/7, and provides those who may struggle to make their claim alone, the flexibility to have a friend or family to support them when making their claim, at a time that is most convenient to them. Pension Credit claims can also be made through the Freephone telephone number 0800 99 1234, and there is an option to complete a paper application form.

The Government is absolutely committed to supporting pensioners and giving them the dignity and security they deserve in retirement. That is why, through our commitment to protect the Triple Lock, over 12 million pensioners will benefit. Over the course of this parliament, the yearly amount of the basic State Pension is forecast to increase by around £1,500. Protecting the Triple Lock even in the current economic climate shows our steadfast commitment to pensioners.

The Warm Home Discount scheme provides eligible low-income households across Great Britain with a £150 rebate on their electricity bill. This winter, we expect over three million households, including over one million pensioners, to benefit under the scheme.

At the Autumn Budget 2024, the Chancellor announced that £1 billion, including Barnett impact, will be invested to extend the Household Support Fund in England by a full year until 31 March 2026, on top of the six months already announced, and to maintain Discretionary Housing Payments in England and Wales. This will help struggling households facing the greatest financial hardship.

We are supporting consumers, including pensioners, through the Government's ambitious Warm Homes Plan which will transform homes across the country by making them cleaner and cheaper to run from installing new insulation to rolling out solar and heat pumps. We have committed £3.4 billion over the next 3 years towards heat decarbonisation and household energy efficiency. This includes £1.8 billion to support fuel poverty schemes, helping over 225,000 households reduce their energy bills by over £200.

Our other steps include cutting waiting times in the NHS which will help many pensioners currently waiting in pain and discomfort for treatment, and delivering the economic stability which is so crucial for pensioners.

Given the substantial pressures faced by the public finances this year and next, the Government has had to make hard choices to bring the public finances back under control.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Reynolds'.

**Emma Reynolds MP**

**Minister for Pensions**



## Membership and roles of the Cabinet 2024/January 2025

Portfolio Area Name	Portfolio Holder	Service Area(s)	Teams
<b>Arts, Culture &amp; Economy</b>	<a href="#">Councillor Ella Billiald</a>	Place, Arts and Economy Phil Clarke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enterprise</li> <li>• Economic Development &amp; Regeneration               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Business Support &amp; Events</li> <li>○ Markets</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Local Tourism</li> <li>• Arts &amp; Culture               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Town Hall</li> <li>○ Royal Spa Centre &amp; Theatre</li> <li>○ Royal Pump Rooms</li> <li>○ Art Gallery &amp; Museum</li> <li>○ Arts development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Decarbonisation</b>	<a href="#">Councillor Lowell Williams</a> <sup>i</sup>	Strategic Director Dave Barber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low Cost Low Carbon Energy Programme: council public buildings and the wider public</li> <li>• General Fund Assets Management</li> <li>• Relocation</li> <li>• Housing development and new homes programme: LCLCE aspects</li> </ul>
		Housing Lisa Barker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retrofitting and renewables on Council housing</li> </ul>
<b>Place</b>	<a href="#">Councillor Chris King</a> <sup>ii</sup>	Place, Arts and Economy Phil Clarke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building Control (Warwick &amp; Rugby)</li> <li>• Development Management               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Enforcement</li> <li>○ Land Charges</li> <li>○ Conservation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Policy &amp; Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Local Plan &amp; Planning Policy</li> <li>○ Development</li> <li>○ Major Sites Implementation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		Strategic Director Dave Barber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing development programme (delivery)</li> </ul>
<b>Safer, Healthier and Active Communities</b>	<a href="#">Councillor Jim Sinnott</a>	Community Protection Marianne Rolfe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Health &amp; Licencing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Environmental protection</li> <li>○ Food safety</li> <li>○ External Health &amp; Safety</li> <li>○ Licensing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Community Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CCTV &amp; Emergencies</li> <li>○ Community Safety</li> <li>○ Safeguarding</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Corporate Health &amp; Safety</li> <li>• Private Sector Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ HEART</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		Customer & Digital Services David Elkington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Health &amp; Wellbeing</li> </ul>
		Head of Neighbourhood Services Zoe Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sports &amp; Leisure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leisure Contracts</li> <li>○ Outdoor Sport</li> <li>○ Active Communities</li> <li>○ Business Support</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Neighbourhood</b>	<a href="#">Councillor Will Roberts</a> <sup>iii</sup>	Head of Neighbourhood Services Zoe Court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bereavement Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Oakley Wood Crematorium &amp; Cemeteries</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Contract Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Parks and Open Spaces Maintenance</li> <li>○ Off Street Parking</li> <li>○ Refuse &amp; Recycling Collections</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public Conveniences</li> <li>○ Contract Support</li> <li>○ Business Support</li> <li>○ Sherbourne Recycling Shareholder</li> <li>● Green Spaces <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public Open Spaces and Play Areas</li> <li>○ Wildlife Habitats</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
		Strategic Director Dave Barber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Biodiversity</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<a href="#">Councillor Helen Adkins</a> <sup>ivv</sup>	Housing Lisa Barker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Housing Revenue Account</li> <li>● Housing Needs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Homelessness/ Temporary Accommodation</li> <li>○ Housing Advice &amp; Allocations</li> <li>○ Rough Sleeper Initiative</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Landlord Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Building &amp; Estates Services</li> <li>○ Lifeline</li> <li>○ Fire Safety</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Retrofitting and renewables on Council housing</li> <li>● Housing Strategy (client) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Housing Development Programme</li> <li>○ New Affordable Housing</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Business Development &amp; Change, within Housing Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Regulatory Co-ordination</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Milverton Homes, Joint Ventures &amp; WDC Development (client) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Milverton Homes Shareholder</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Assets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Compliance</li> <li>○ Repairs &amp; Maintenance Facilities</li> <li>○ Technical Surveying &amp; Contractors</li> <li>○ Fire Safety &amp; Building Safety</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Asset Management Strategy</li> </ul>

		Strategic Director Dave Barber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing development programme (business cases)</li> </ul>
<b>People and Organisational Development</b>	<a href="#">Councillor Jessica Melrose</a>	Customer & Digital Services David Elkington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Application Support</li> <li>• Helpdesk &amp; Technical Support</li> <li>• Infrastructure Services</li> <li>• Geographical Information Systems (GIS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Digital Mapping Services</li> <li>◦ Local Land &amp; Property Gazetteer (LLPG)</li> <li>◦ Street Naming &amp; Numbering</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Transformation</li> <li>• Benefits &amp; Customer Services</li> </ul>
		People & Communications Tracy Dolphin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Corporate Human Resources</li> <li>◦ Employee relations</li> <li>◦ People Management</li> <li>◦ Corporate Payroll</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Learning &amp; Development</li> <li>• Equality, Diversity &amp; Inclusion</li> <li>• Marketing &amp; Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ PR &amp; Social Media</li> <li>◦ Design</li> <li>◦ Website</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Print Room</li> </ul>
<b>Resources</b>	<a href="#">Councillor Jonathan Chilvers</a> <sup>vivii</sup>	Finance Andrew Rollins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountancy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Grants &amp; Loans Systems</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Audit &amp; Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Corporate Fraud Investigation</li> <li>◦ Corporate Insurance</li> <li>◦ Internal Audit</li> <li>◦ Risk Management</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Procurement &amp; Creditors</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchequer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council Tax &amp; Business Rates</li> <li>○ Rates Collection</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Financial support of HRA, Milverton Homes and Joint Ventures</li> </ul>
		Strategic Director Dave Barber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing development programme: finance</li> </ul>
Strategic Leadership	<a href="#">Councillor Ian Davison</a>	Chief Executive Chris Elliott & Deputy Chief Executive Darren Knight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corporate strategy</li> <li>• Strategic Partnerships</li> </ul>
		Governance Services Graham Leach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information Governance</li> <li>• Civic &amp; Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public Council, Cabinet &amp; Committee Meetings</li> <li>○ Councillor Support</li> <li>○ Chairman Support</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Electoral Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Electoral Registers</li> <li>○ Public Elections &amp; Referendums</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Policy Performance &amp; Complaints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Corporate Support</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Shared Legal Service</li> </ul>
		Strategic Director Dave Barber	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Programmes <sup>viii</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Climate Emergency Action Plan</li> <li>○ Capital Projects &amp; Programme Delivery</li> <li>○ Sports Delivery Programme</li> <li>○ Town Centre Projects</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Endnotes summary:**

Shareholder	The Cabinet Member responsible for reserved matters relating to Council wholly owned or partially owned subsidiaries.	<p><b>Milverton Homes Ltd - Shareholder Board</b></p> <p><b>Development Strategy and Programme Forum</b> (To agree the approach and programme for delivery)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Housing (Chair)</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Resources</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Decarbonisation</li> </ul>
		Housing Development Delivery Board (Once programme agreed to oversee the development programme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Place (Chair)</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Resources</li> <li>• Cabinet Member for Decarbonisation</li> </ul>
Strategic Programmes	Leader of the Council will be strategic Lead. The delivery of these workstreams will be the responsibility of the relevant Cabinet member.		

**Endnotes Summary to Appendix G:**

<sup>i</sup> Member of the Milverton Homes Shareholder Board, Housing Development Strategy & Programme Forum and Housing Development Delivery Board

<sup>ii</sup> Housing Development Delivery Board Chair

<sup>iii</sup> Sherbourne Recycling Shareholder - Cabinet Member responsible for reserved matters

<sup>iv</sup> Chair of the Milverton Homes Shareholder Board and Chair Housing Development Strategy & Programme Forum

<sup>v</sup> Milverton Homes Shareholder - Cabinet Member responsible for reserved matters

<sup>vi</sup> Member of the Housing Development Strategy & Programme Forum and Housing Development Delivery Board

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<sup>vii</sup> Member of the Milverton Homes Shareholder Board

<sup>viii</sup> Leader of the Council will be strategic Lead. The delivery of these workstreams will be the responsibility with the relevant Cabinet member.