Council

12 October 2026

Title: **State of the District**

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Portfolio Holder/ Lead Member: **Councillor S Juned**

Summary

The State of the District needs to be assessed by the Council. This report summarises the events of the past year, along with an outline of future proposals. It also provides information on the current economic, social and environmental profile of the District.

Recommendation

That the State of the Stratford-on-Avon District be noted and the issues raised are considered as part of the budget-making process for 2027/28.

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1. Background/Information

1.1.1 Stratford-on-Avon District Council's Constitution stipulates that the Council will debate the State of the District at the Council Meeting in the autumn.

1.1.2 The Constitution states that the Leader will decide the form of the debate.

1.1.3 The results of the debate will be:

a) disseminated as widely as possible within the community;

b) considered by the Leader in proposing the Budget and Policy Framework to the Council for 2027/28; and

c) considered in the shaping of the Council's future policies and strategies.

1.2 ***2026 Approach***

1.2.1 The report contains the current State of the District in terms of data and contains information from different sources. It covers many different areas from health to the economy, not all of which Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) can influence. It is important to note that the figures included in the report are from the most recent data available, and reference to events happening at the Council refer to the year ending 31 March 2026 for the most part. Desk research has been undertaken using a variety of information sources.

1.2.2 **Appendix 1** contains a summary of the State of the District in the form of an infographic.

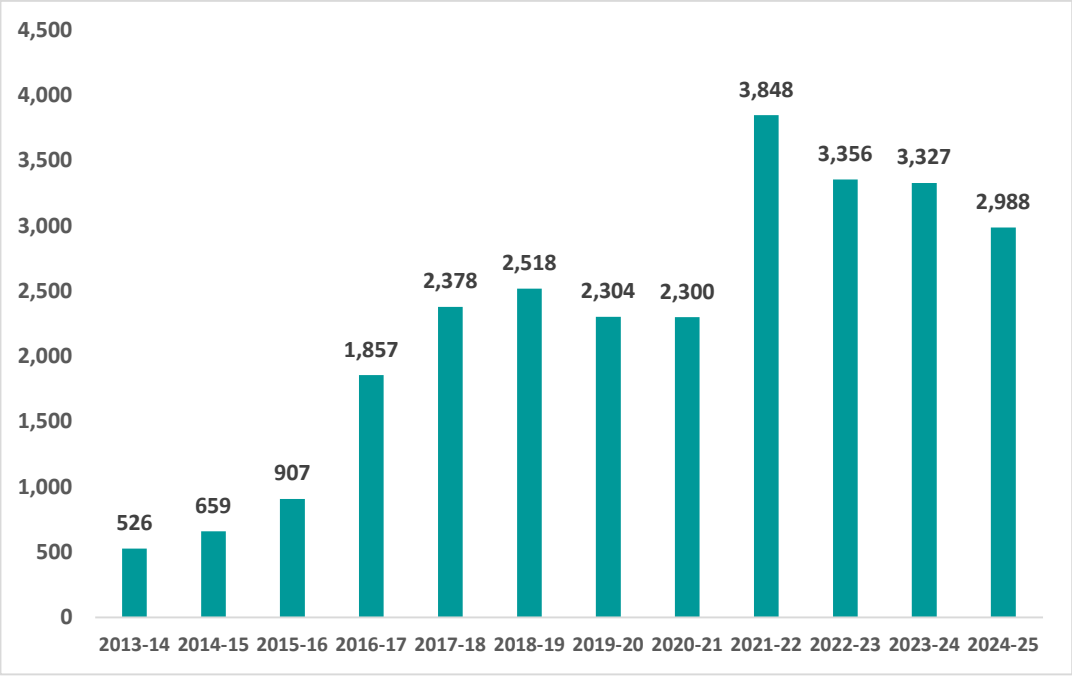
1.3 *Population*

Key Facts	
Population Estimate mid-2025	148,800
Median Age	47.9 years
Density	152 people per km²

Population Size and Profile

1.4.1 According to the most recent population estimate by ONS the population of Stratford-on-Avon District in mid-2025 was 148,800.[1] (This year the ONS have provided a band – or 'confidence interval' – within which they are 95% sure that the District's population falls. For 2025, this is between 144,300 and 153,300 people. So while 148,800 is the estimate, the ONS are confident the true number lies within that band.)

Figure 1: Population increases each year

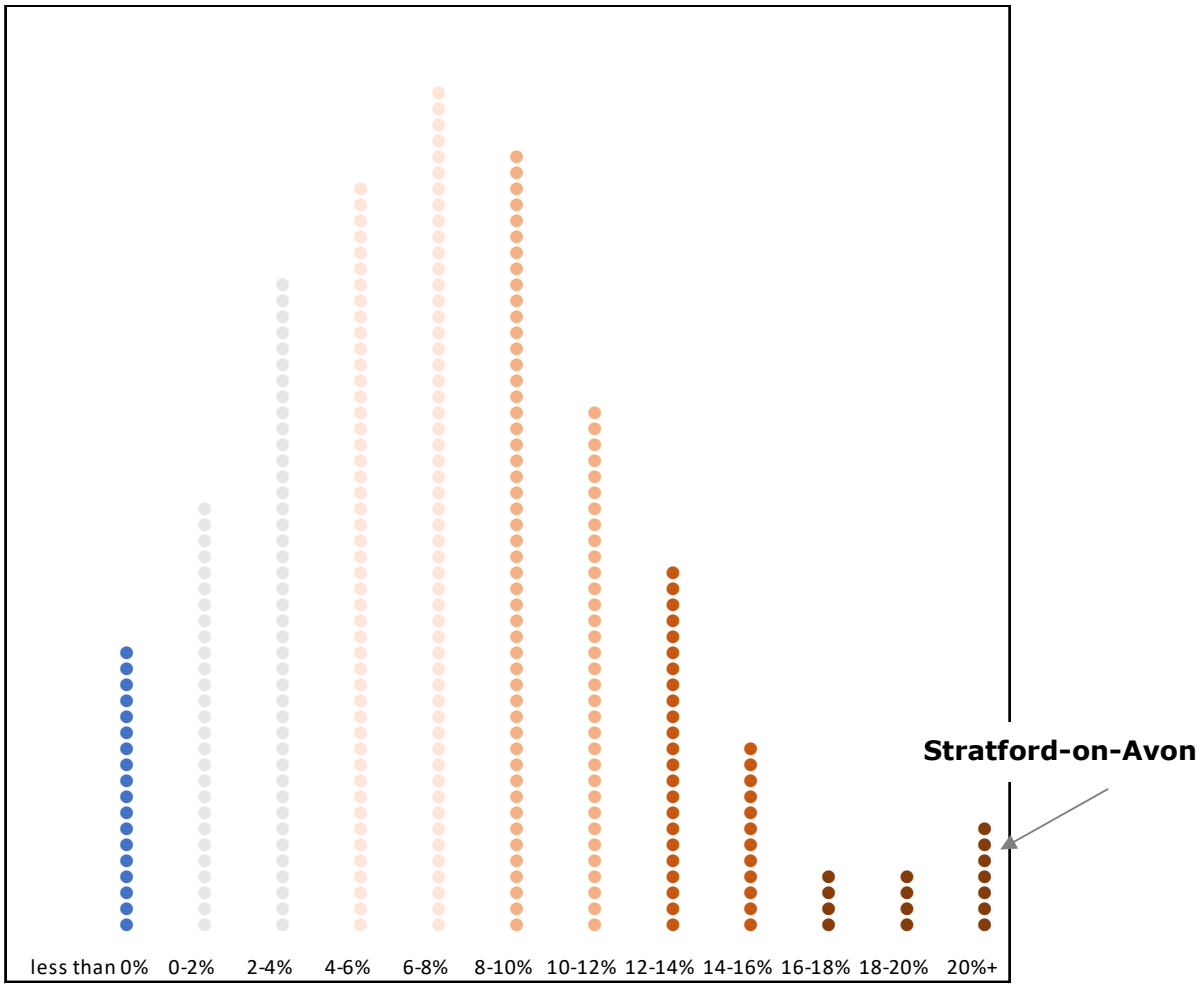


1.4.2 The population of Stratford-on-Avon District is estimated to have increased by 1.8% from mid-2024 to mid-2025. This places the district in the 10% fastest growing districts of England and Wales.[2]

1.4.3 Stratford-on-Avon saw the 4th highest population growth out of all local authorities in England and Wales in the period 2015-25, with a growth of 21.10%. Tewkesbury and South Derbyshire were higher, with growth of 21.28% and 22.28% respectively; City of London saw a growth of 103.85% but from a very small starting population of 7,668.

1.4.4 Stratford's real terms population growth over that ten year period was just under 26,000. This was the 40th largest growth of 318 authorities in England and Wales.

Figure 2: Where our District sits compared to other authorities in terms of estimated % change in population from 2015-2025



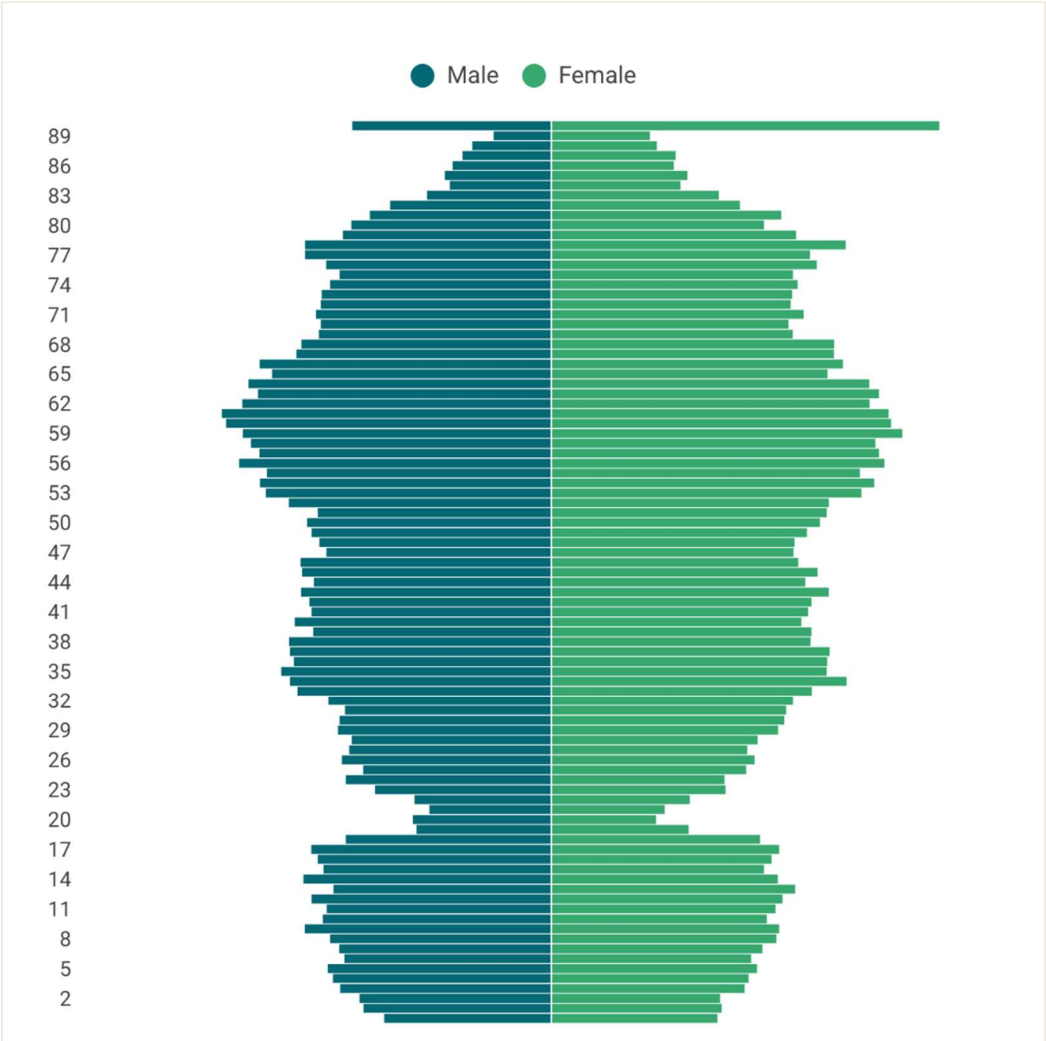
1.4.5 The area of Stratford-on-Avon District is 978km², therefore population density mid-2025 was estimated to be 152 people per km², a rise of 2 people per km^2 on last year. This still places SDC in the 20% least densely populated local authorities[3].

1.4.6 Figure 3 shows the estimated demographic breakdown of the District population mid-2025[4]. We can see that the population is weighted towards those over the age of 50 years as they make up 48% total population. (Please note that all persons aged 90 years or above are shown grouped, while all other ages are shown separately – hence the large bar at the top representing all ages over 90 years).

1.4.7 The over-65s make up 26% our District's population, whereas across England the 65+ population accounts for just 19%.

1.4.8 The median age of the District in mid-2025 was 47.9 years, while the England and Wales median average age was 40.7 years[5]. This places SDC at 49th oldest authority for median age population, out of 318 authorities across England and Wales, and sixth highest in the West Midlands after Malvern Hills District Council (51.3 years), Staffordshire Moorlands (50.4 years), Herefordshire (49.4 years), Shropshire (49.4 years) and South Staffordshire (48.0 years). The oldest authority is North Norfolk, with a median age of 56.5 years.

Figure 3: Population estimate mid-2025: breakdown by age and sex



1.5 *Population Projections*

1.5.1 The most recent population projections were published by ONS in August 2025 and show the potential population growth from 2022 to 2032. This projection shows that the population could grow to 162,678 by 2032, representing an increase of 17.4%.[6]

1.6 *Housing*

1.6.1 *Key facts*

Housing Facts	
Number of dwellings	68,396
Median house price	£370,000
Owner occupied	72.7%
Number of new dwellings	903

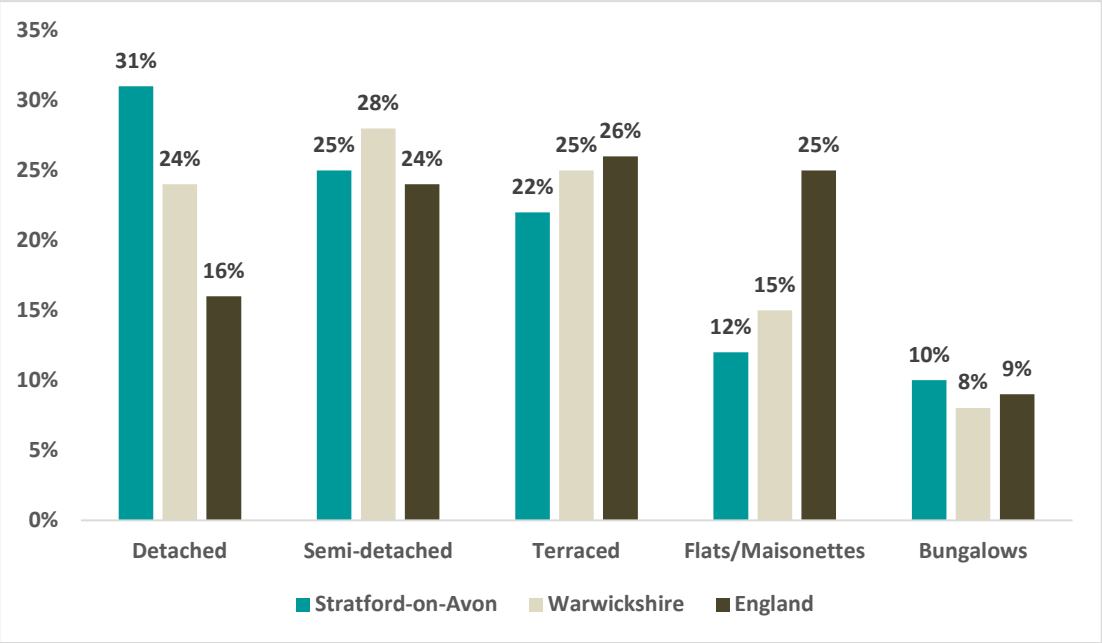
1.7 *Number of Dwellings*

1.7.1 According to the Valuation Office list, there were an estimated 68,396 dwellings in the District at the end of March 2025[7].

1.7.2 Of these, the ONS estimate that in 2023, 40.7% were owned outright, 32% owned with a mortgage or loan, 14.1% privately rented and 13.2% socially rented[8].

1.7.3 The housing stock available does not follow the same pattern as Warwickshire or England, as seen in Figure 4. Stratford-on-Avon has far more detached houses and far fewer and flats/maisonettes than the Warwickshire or English average.

Figure 4: Comparison of breakdown of house types, March 2024



1.8 *House Prices*

1.8.1 When looking at house sale prices and rental costs, we use the median rather than the mean average. This is because the mean can be distorted by the very high sale and rental prices at the upper end of the market, which would lead to a less representative average. The median is preferred, particularly when looking at trends over time and ratio of prices to earnings.

1.8.2 The median house price for the District was £370,000 in the year to end- September 2025, which represents an increase of £10,0000 from September 2024. The 2025 median was 17% above the Warwickshire median of £315,000, and 23% above the England median of £300,000.[9]

1.8.3 The median house price in the District was £102,000 (38%) higher than the median ten years prior in September 2015.

1.8.4 The median house price increase between 2015 and 2025 across all England and Wales authorities was 45%; Stratford-on-Avon therefore saw below-average median house price growth, falling in the bottom quarter of all authorities, and the lowest growth in the West Midlands alongside Solihull. The highest median house price growth over the same period across England and Wales was 86%, seen in Leicester.

1.8.5 The lower quartile house price for the District in the year to end-September 2025 was £278,000 (25% of houses were below this price, 75% above). This is higher than the lower quartile for England of £204,995 and that for Warwickshire of £232,702.[10]

1.8.6 Figure 5 and Table 1 shows the median house prices for different house types within the District and the median average for Warwickshire and England[11].

1.8.7 The median detached price in Stratford-on-Avon is 17% higher than the Warwickshire median detached price and 24% higher than that for England.

1.8.8 The median semi-detached price in Stratford-on-Avon is 13% above the Warwickshire median and 18% above the England median.

1.8.9 The median terraced house price in Stratford-on-Avon is 10% above the Warwickshire and 11% above the England median average.

Figure 5: Median house prices for different house types

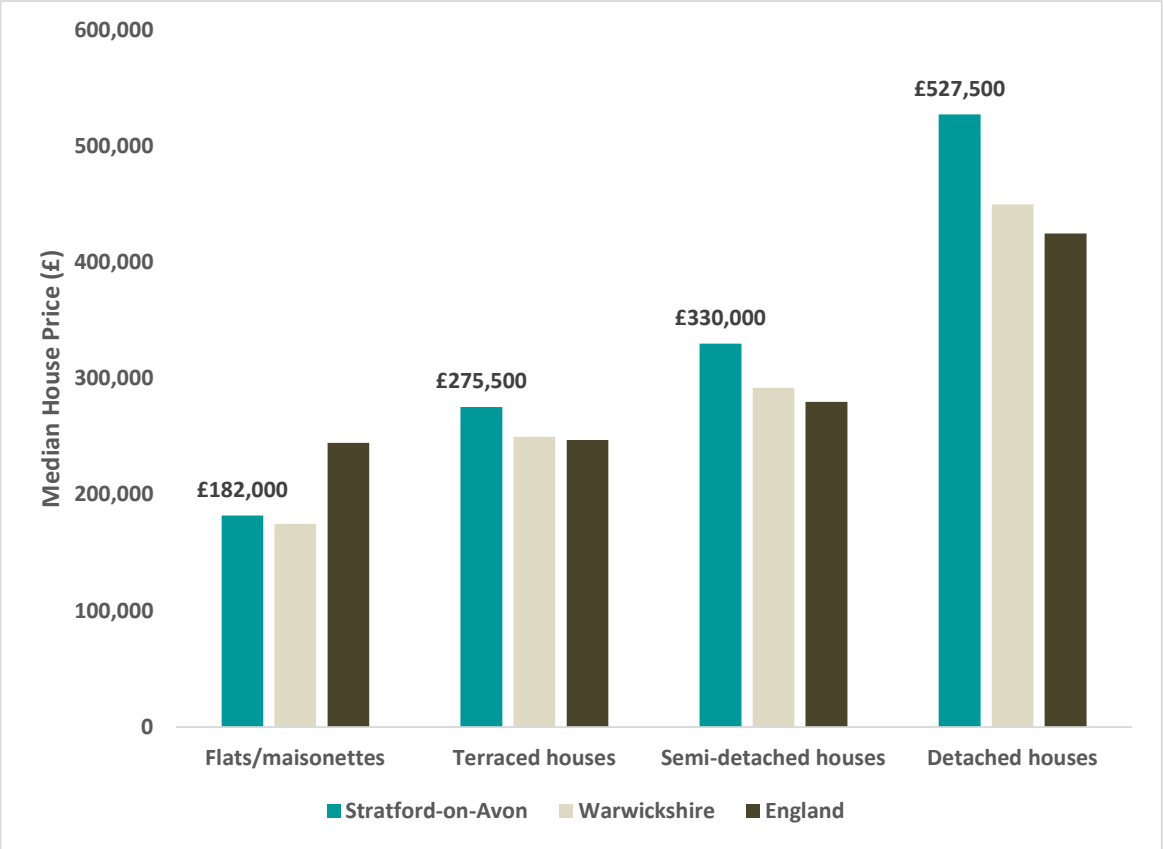


Table 1: Median house prices for different house types

	Stratford-on-Avon	Warwickshire	England
Flats/Maisonettes	£182,000	£175,000	£244,700
Terraced	£275,500	£250,000	£247,000
Semi-Detached	£330,000	£292,000	£279,995
Detached	£527,500	£450,000	£425,000
Overall average	£370,000	£315,000	£300,000

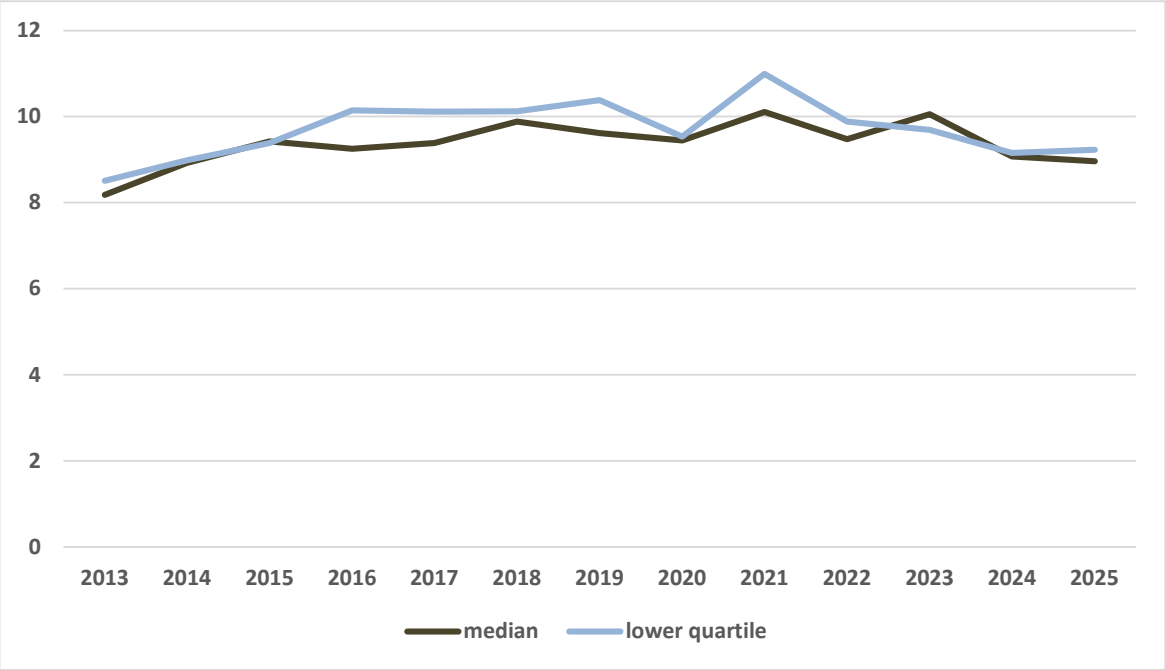
1.9 *Ratio of House Prices to Earnings*

1.9.1 The median house price to median earnings ratio in the District stood at 8.96 in 2025[12]. Our District has the 3rd highest ratio in the West Midlands region: Malvern Hills has the highest ratio of 9.17 while Wychavon's was 9.04. By comparison, the median house price to earnings ratio for Warwickshire as a whole was 7.50, and for England it was 7.64.

1.9.2 The lower quartile house price to lower quartile earnings ratio for the District was 9.23 in 2025[13]. This is substantially higher than the Warwickshire lower quartile ratio of 7.76 and England's ratio of 6.99.

1.9.3 Figure 6 below shows that once again the ratio of lower quartile prices to earnings has overtaken that for the median, meaning that people on lower wages are once again being impacted to a greater extent by higher house prices.

Figure 6: Change in the median and lower quartile price to earnings ratio over time.



1.10 ***Rents***

1.10.1 The way ONS publishes the 'average' monthly private rent has changed: they no longer produce a median or lower quartile rent, instead moving to a 'geometric mean' rent. This means that data from previous State of the District reports will not be comparable. In this section below, the term 'average' refers to the geometric mean.

1.10.2 The average overall monthly private rent payable in the District in the year to end-May 2026 was £1,135. This was the 3rd highest rent across the West Midlands, with Solihull and Warwick higher at £1,260 and £1,238 respectively.[14]

1.10.3 Figure 7 shows the average monthly rents for different property types as of June 2026.

Figure 7: Average rents for different sized properties, May 2026



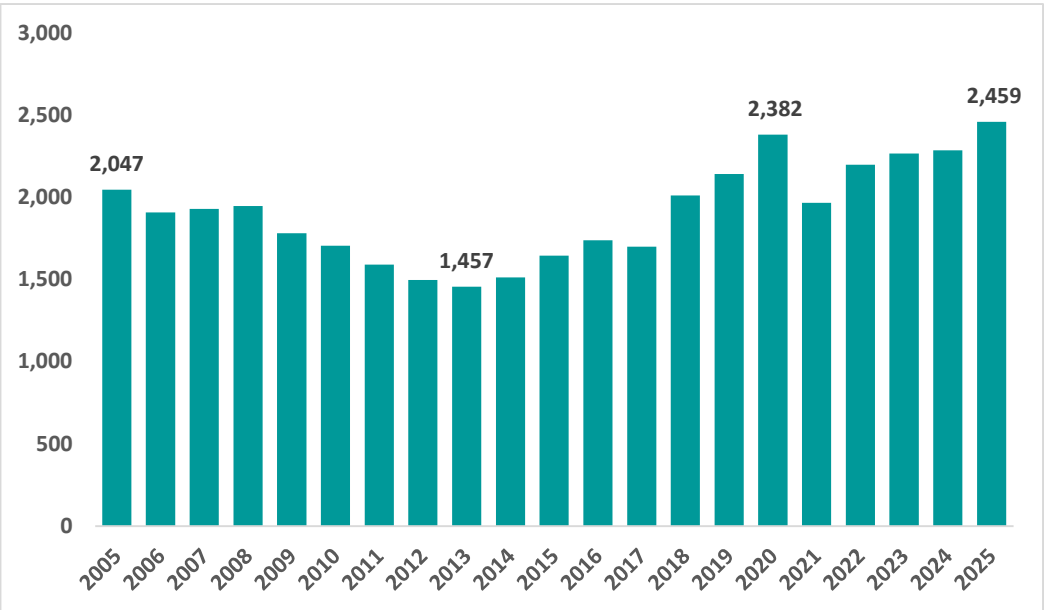
1.11 ***Housing Occupancy***

1.11.1 Approximately 2,469 dwellings (Figure 8) were thought to be vacant across the District in October 2025, the highest number seen over the past 20 years, and higher than the previous high in 2020.[15]

1.11.2 1,181 (48%) of all vacant properties were classed as 'long-term vacant'.

1.11.3 217 (9%) of all vacant properties were owned by a Private Registered Provider (Housing Association), of these, 98 (or 45% total vacant properties owned by a Private Registered Provider) were classed as 'not available for letting'.

Figure 8: Number of vacant properties across the District 2005-2025

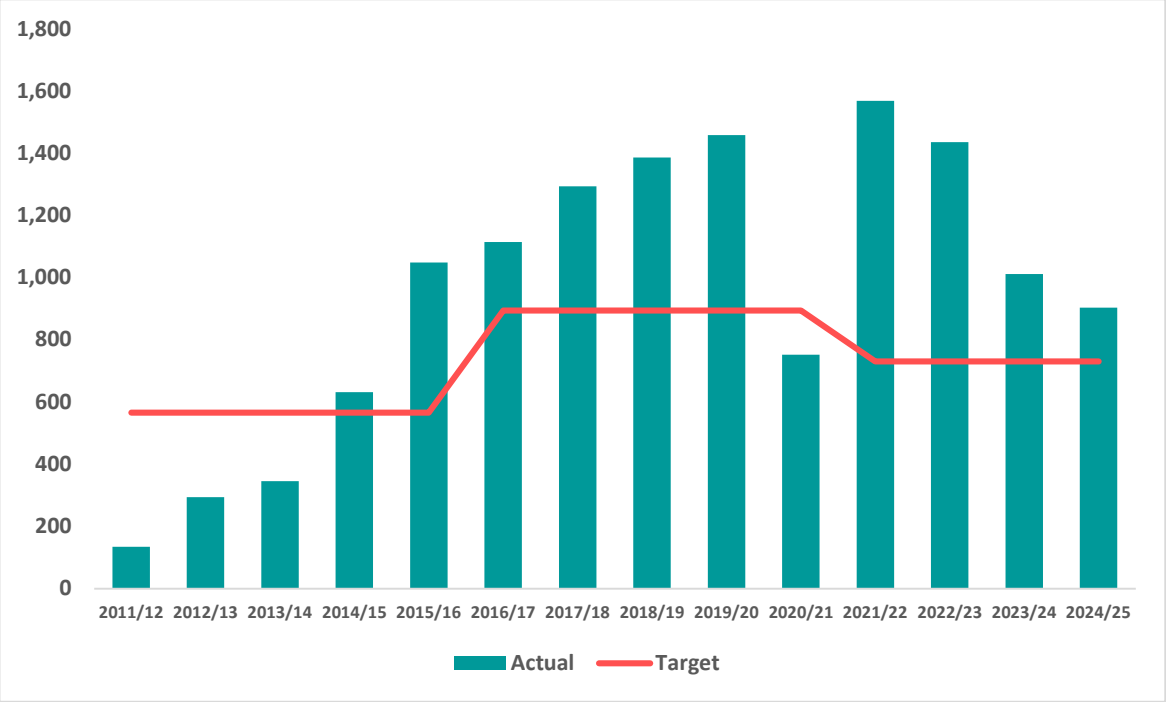


1.12 ***House Building***

1.12.1 A total net of 903 new dwellings was added to the housing stock in 2024/25[16]. This represented 124% of the target for total new dwelling completions in 2024/25, 173 over the target of 730 (see Figure 9). The target housing requirement is set by the District Core Strategy, based on an objective assessment of housing needs for the Coventry and Warwickshire Housing Market Area. This identified a need for 14,600 new homes within our District over a 20-year period, 2011-2031, with the majority of these needed to house people moving into the District due to assumptions about an increase in the numbers of jobs over that same period.

1.12.2 Our District had the 10th highest number of net completions out of 164 district authorities in 2024-25[17]. South Cambridgeshire and Tewkesbury had the two highest figures with 1,735 and 1,433 net completions respectively. The mean average was 494.

Figure 9: Number of actual new homes completed vs target, 2011/12-2024/25.



1.12.3 Figure 10 shows the net dwelling completions per settlement type over the past ten years[18]. There has been a definite change over this time in where new dwellings are being built. Until last year, main rural centres comprising Alcester, Bidford-on-Avon, Henley-in-Arden, Kineton, Shipston-on-Stour, Southam, Studley and Wellesbourne, had seen the greatest proportion of new homes. However, just as in 2023/24, new settlements this year accounted for nearly four in ten of all net completions.

1.12.4 Figure 11 shows the size of new dwellings completed over the past ten years (some new builds are unaccounted for as size is unknown)[19]. In 2024/25 two and three bed homes made up 72% of completions with known size, with four+ beds and one-bed homes accounting for approximately 14% each.

Figure 10: Location of new dwelling completions 2011 onwards

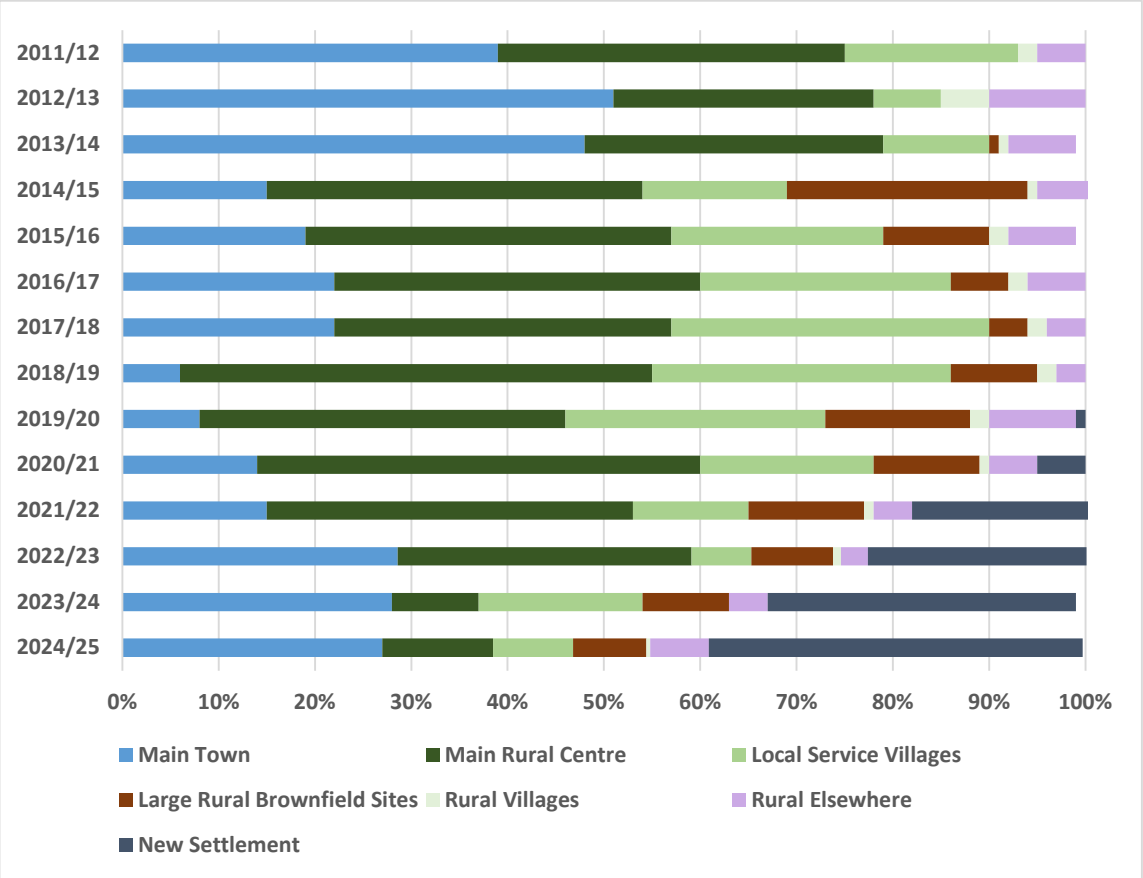
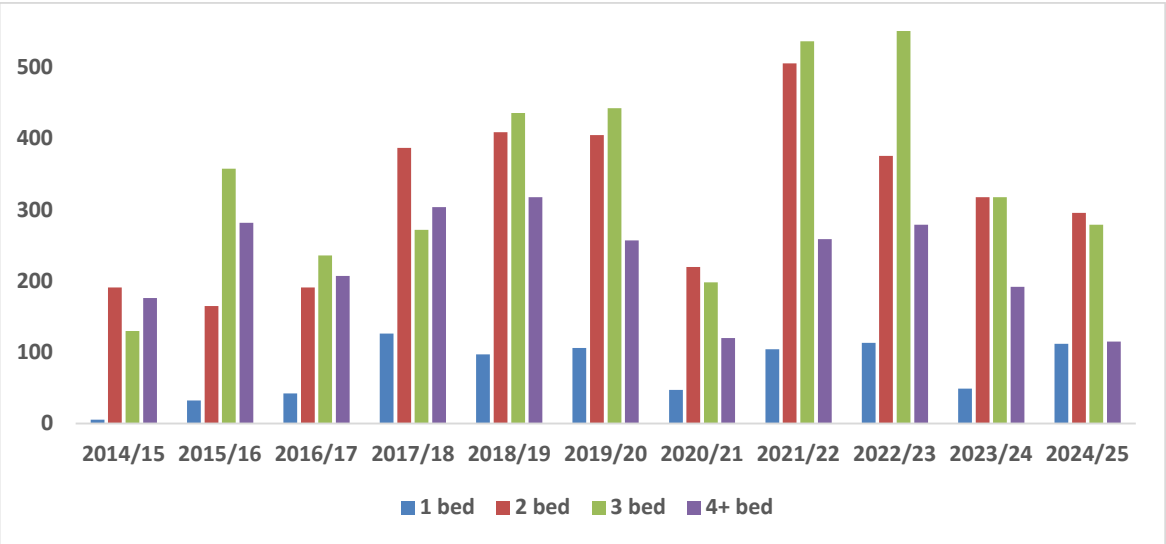


Figure 11: Size of new dwelling completions since 2012/13



1.13 ***Affordable Housing***

1.13.1 Affordable Housing is defined by the National Planning Policy Framework (which sets out the government's planning policies for England and how it is expected to be applied) as housing for eligible households whose needs are not met by the market[20]. As such it encompasses a number of different schemes and ways of buying/renting a property to live in. These include Social Rent; Affordable Rent; Build to Rent and Rent to Buy; Discount Market homes; First Homes; Shared Ownership; and Shared equity.

1.13.2 Discount market homes are homes sold for a discount of *at least* 20% below local market value. Affordable houses for rent are where the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent or is *at least* 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable).[21]

1.13.3 Affordable housing is usually provided as a proportion of homes (i.e. 35% as set out in the Core Strategy) on eligible general housing sites (also known as s106 sites) but can also be delivered through affordable housing schemes. 'Low cost' market homes, whilst may arguably be actually more affordable, do not fall within the NPPF definition.

1.13.4 Affordable housing has made up an average of 33% of all new dwellings completed since 2012[22]. In 2024/25, affordable housing made up 42% of net completed dwellings, corresponding to 379 out of a total of 903 net completions (see Figure 13).

Figure 12: Number of net new dwellings completed which are affordable vs not affordable



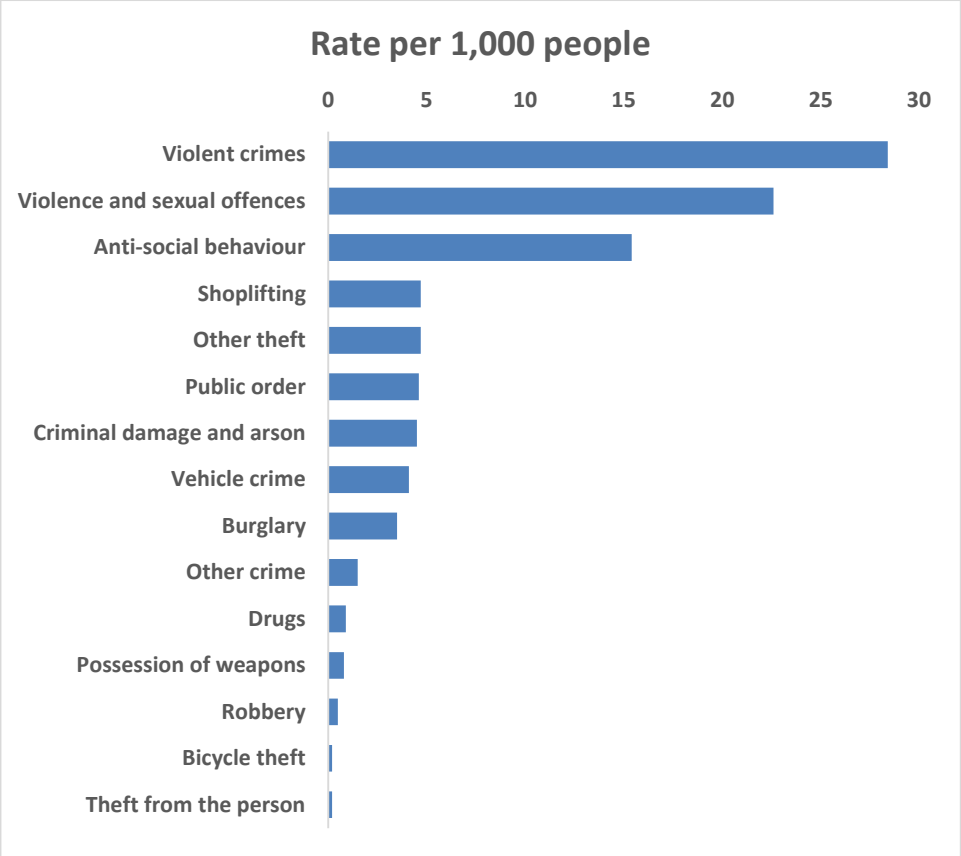
1.14 *Crime*

1.14.1 *Recorded Crimes*

1.14.2 The total number of recorded crimes in the District in the year to end-June 2026 was 9,196. This reflects a slight fall on the previous year. This equates to a rate of 62 crimes per 1,000 people and is higher than the Warwickshire average of 57 crimes per 1,000 people.

1.14.3 The most prevalent crimes in the District were violent and sexual offences, with a rate of 22.6 per 1,000 people, which is the same as last year. This is lower than the same rate across Warwickshire (24.0) and England (30.4).

Figure 13: Crime rates for different offences, year to end-June 26



1.15 *Employment and Qualifications*

1.15.1 *Employment*

1.15.2 Please note that the following employment statistics were taken from ONS via their Annual Population Survey. ONS has been under pressure recently due to the unreliability of their surveys, particularly those relating to employment and labour. Therefore, the data below should be read with caution.

1.15.3 In March 2026, there were approximately 62,500 'economically active' people aged between 16 and 64 years. This represents 79% of the total population aged between 16-64 years who live in the District[23]. The remaining 21% population aged between 16-64 years were classed as 'economically inactive' i.e. not in work or looking for work, due to retirement, being a student, being too sick to work or some other reason.

1.15.4 Of the economically active population, 61,800 were classed as in employment, either as an employee or self-employed.

1.15.5 79% of people in employment were classed as employees, while 21% were classed as self-employed.

1.15.6 Males were more likely to be economically active and more likely to be self-employed than females: 84% of males versus 75% of females aged 16-64 years were economically active; 15% males versus 13% females in employment were classed as self-employed. The rates of self-employment for both men and women seen in the District are much higher than those for Warwickshire or Great Britain as a whole.

1.16 ***Unemployment Benefit Claims***

1.16.1 In July 2025 there were 1,685 residents claiming unemployment benefit in the District[24]. This was quite evenly split between males and females.

1.16.2 Younger adults had a higher rate of claiming unemployment benefit than headline rate, and this year's rate was up on the previous year: 3.1% of all those aged 18-24 years (3.3% those aged 18-21 years) in the District claimed benefit compared to 2.6% those aged 25-49 and 1.5% those aged 50+.

1.17 ***Earnings – Residents***

1.17.1 Earnings are estimated by ONS using the Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings survey. Response to this survey has been deteriorating consistently since Covid; consequently, ONS estimates are less and less reliable. However, until they develop a replacement method of estimating earnings, this is the sole method we have to understand the average wages within our District.

1.17.2 The median gross weekly earnings in 2024 for full time workers <u>who live in the District</u> (not necessarily working in the District) was £817.60[25]. This was higher than the average for the West Midlands at £731.00, and that for Great Britain at £766.60.

1.17.3 The weekly median for full time men was £957.30 while that for full time women was £715.10. Women's weekly median pay is therefore 75% that of men.

1.17.4 The median hourly wage for full time males living in the District was £24.81 while that for full time females was £19.17.

1.18 ***Earnings – Those who work in the District***

1.18.1 The median gross weekly earnings in 2025 for full time workers who worked within the District (not necessarily living in the District) was £956.80[26]. This is above the median average for the West Midlands (£730.40) and that for Great Britain (£766.60).

1.18.2 The median weekly earnings for a full-time male worker in the District was £1,007.10, while that for a female was £759.80, meaning that females working in the District earned 75% the amount that males earned.

1.18.3 The median hourly wage for full-time males working in the District was £26.70, while that of full-time females was £20.45.

1.19 ***Qualifications***

1.19.1 As of December 2025, 56% of adults aged 16-64 years in the District possessed an NVQ4 qualification or higher (NVQ4 is equivalent to an HNC, NVQ6 is equivalent to an undergraduate degree, NVQ3 is equivalent to A Level)[27]. The average for GB is 97%, while for West Midlands it is 44%.

1.20 ***Apprenticeships***

1.20.1 Stratford-on-Avon saw 740 apprenticeship starts in 2024/5. This places the District 22nd out of 30 local authorities across West Midlands.

1.20.2 These apprenticeships included 140 Intermediate (level 2, equivalent to 4/5 GCSE's), 260 Advanced (level 3, equivalent to 2 A levels) and 340 Higher apprenticeships (equivalent to levels 4-7, Foundation degree/HND or degree level).

1.21 ***Jobs by Industry***

1.21.1 In 2024 there were 74,000 employee jobs[28]. 53,000 were full-time and 22,000 were part-time.

1.21.2 Table 2 shows the breakdown of the number of jobs in our District in 2024 by industry sector[29], not including those performed by people classed as self-employed.

1.21.3 Professional, Scientific and Technical was the largest sector in terms of jobs 21.1% total jobs in the District. The wholesale and retail trade/repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles followed accounting or 13.2% jobs.

1.21.4 Tourism-related jobs are an important part of the District services sector. According to the 2024 Tourism Economic Impact assessment, there were 9,385 tourism-related jobs in the District, accounting for approximately 17% of all jobs in the District.

Table 2: Number of employee jobs within Stratford-on-Avon District by industry, 2023 (green shows growth on 2022, pink shows decline)

	No. jobs 2024	***%***	***No. jobs 2023***
Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and waste	1500	*1.9%*	*1,565*
Manufacturing	6,000	*7.9%*	*6,000*
Construction	2,500	*3.3%*	*3,000*
Wholesale and retail trade	10,000	*13.5%*	*10,000*
Transportation and Storage	1,500	*2.0%*	*1,250*
Accommodation and Food service	9,000	*11.8%*	*8,000*
Information and communication	3,500	*4.6%*	*3,000*
Financial and insurance	3,500	*4.6%*	*3,500*
Real estate	1,250	*1.6%*	*1,250*
Professional, scientific and technical	16,000	*21.1%*	*16,000*
Administrative and support services	6,000	*7.9%*	*7,000*
Public administration and defence	1,000	*1.3%*	*900*
Education	4,500	*5.9%*	*5,000*
Health and social work	6,000	*7.9%*	*5,000*
Arts, entertainment and other recreation	2,250	*3.0%*	*3,000*
Other services	1,750	*2.3%*	*1,750*

1.22 *Business and Economy*

1.22.1 *Productivity: Gross Value Added (GVA)*

1.22.2 In 2024 there were 74,000 employee jobs. 53,000 were full-time and 22,000 were part-time.

1.22.3 Table 3 shows the breakdown of £GVA by industry sector and per job[30].

1.22.4 Manufacturing was down £483m on 2023. GVA has now re-classified sectors in the same way that jobs did previously, accounting for some of the reduction as some GVA has been re-assigned to Professional, Scientific and Technical; however this does not account for all the reduction, with approximately £200m not accounted for by the transition.

1.22.5 Most other sectors saw modest rises on GVA for 2023, all except for Agriculture, forestry and fishing, Construction, Finance and insurance activities and Arts, entertainment and recreation.

1.22.6 The greatest rise was seen in Real estate activities, up £122m comprising £59 increase in 'Owner-occupier's imputed rental' and £63m rise in other real estate activities.

1.22.7 Accommodation and food service saw a £21m rise.

Table 3: Breakdown of £GVA by industry 2024

Sector	GVA 2024		GVA per job
	GVA £m	%	
Agriculture, mining, electricity, gas, water and	111	*1.92%*	**£74,000**
Manufacturing	1,135	*19.67%*	**£189,167**
Construction	289	*5.01%*	**£115,600**
Wholesale and retail trade	492	*8.53%*	**£49,200**
Transportation and Storage	64	*1.11%*	**£42,667**
Accommodation and Food service	254	*4.40%*	**£28,222**
Information and communication	225	*3.90%*	**£64,286**
Financial and insurance	161	*2.79%*	**£46,000**
Real estate	1,091	*18.90%*	**£872,800**
Professional, scientific and technical	654	*11.33%*	**£40,875**
Administrative and support services	387	*6.71%*	**£64,500**
Public administration and defence	89	*1.54%*	**£89,000**
Education	232	*4.02%*	**£51,556**
Health and social work	242	*4.19%*	**£40,333**
Arts, entertainment and other recreation	75	*1.30%*	**£33,333**
Other services	190	*3.29%*	**£108,571**

1.23 *Business Numbers*

1.23.1 In December 2025, the number of businesses in the District stood at 8,135[31]. 90.1% of these were classed as micro-businesses (0-9 employees), with a further 8.3% being small (10-49 employees). There were 110 medium businesses (50-249 employees), down 10 on 2024; and there were 20 large businesses (over 250 employees), up 5 on 2024.

1.23.2 The break-down of businesses by size for Warwickshire and England as a whole can be seen in Table 4 below. Stratford-on-Avon has proportionally more micro businesses and fewer small-medium-large businesses than seen across Warwickshire or England.

Table 4: Number of businesses by size

Size	Stratford-on-Avon		Warwickshire		England	
	Count	*%*	*Count*	*%*	*Count*	*%*
Large (250+)	20	*0.2*	125	*0.5*	10,120	*0.4*
Medium (50-249)	110	*1.4*	415	*1.6*	38,510	*1.6*
Small (10-49)	675	*8.3*	2,300	*8.8*	206,875	*8.7*
Micro (0-9)	7,330	*90.1*	23,445	*89.2*	2,121,110	*89.2*
Total	**8,135**	***100***	**26,285**	***100***	**2,376,615**	***100***

1.23.3 The business density ratio for the District was 574 per 10,000 people, using population estimates and business counts from 2025. This was the highest density in the West Midlands; Herefordshire was second with a density of 563 per 10,000 population.

1.23.4 Figure 16 shows the business survival rates as of 2024 for Stratford-on-Avon compared to the Warwickshire and English average[32]. Generally businesses had a much better chance of survival in our District compared to the county and national average; however, there does appear to be an anomaly in terms of the 3-years survival rate i.e. businesses started in 2021, where it appears that those businesses were much less likely to survive to 2024 than ones elsewhere.

1.23.5 In 2021, there were 1,260 business starts, a number far in excess of the norm, as can be seen in table 5 below. This means that the surprisingly low 3-year survival rate in 2024 is due to the much greater rate of business births in 2021 that exacerbated a difficult and competitive environment which ultimately led to business failure three years later.

Figure 14: Business survival rates 2024

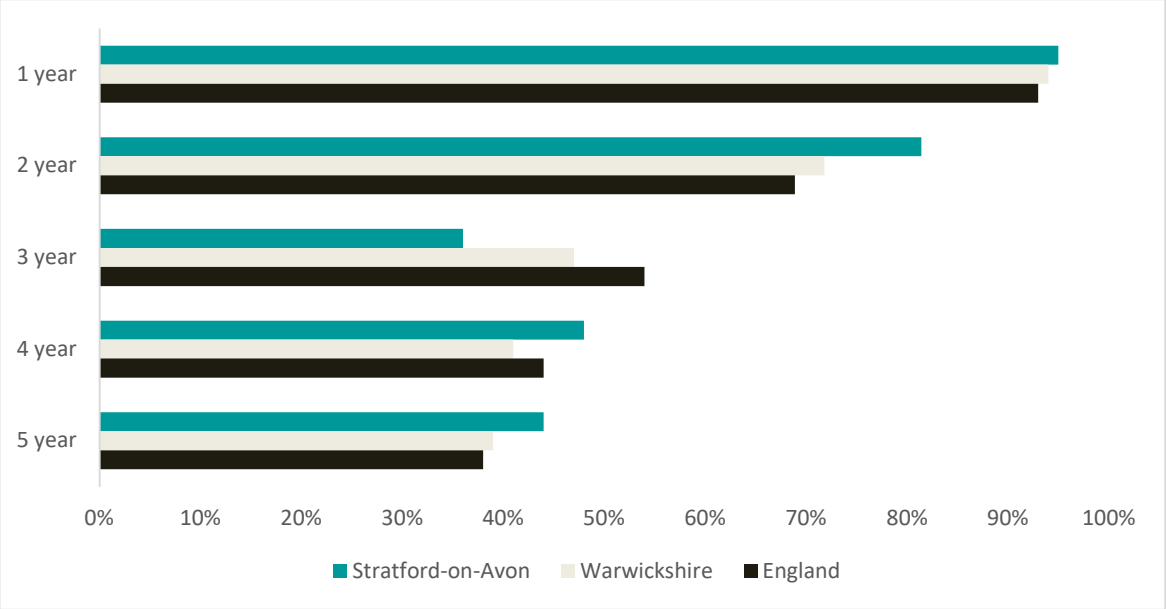


Table 5: Number of business births 2019-2024

Year	Business births
2019	695
2020	725
2021	1,260
2022	1,050
2023	755
2024	725

1.24 *Businesses by Industry*

1.24.1 Table 6 shows the number of businesses within each industry sector in the District in 2024, and the proportion of total businesses which each sector accounts for, along with the Warwickshire and England averages[33].

1.24.2 The largest number of businesses in the District were within the professional, scientific and technical services industry, accounting for just over 19% of all businesses, a higher proportion than the Warwickshire and England averages.

1.24.3 Agriculture, forestry and fishing accounted for just over 9% all business, a significantly higher proportion than either the Warwickshire average (5.3%) or national average (3.8%).

Table 6: Number and Proportion of businesses by industry sector 2025

Sector	SOA	SOA	Warks	England
	Count	***%***	*%*	*%*
1: Agriculture, forestry & fishing (A)	740	*9.10%*	*5.29%*	*3.84%*
2: Mining, quarrying & utilities (B)	0	*0.00%*	*0.02%*	*0.04%*
3: Manufacturing (C)	425	*5.22%*	*5.61%*	*4.69%*
4: Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning (D)	5	*0.06%*	*0.27%*	*0.22%*
5: Water supply; sewerage, waste management etc (E)	25	*0.31%*	*0.32%*	*0.32%*
6: Construction (F)	965	*11.86%*	*11.98%*	*14.14%*
7: Wholesale/retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (G)	1,030	*12.66%*	*13.85%*	*14.51%*
8: Transport & storage (inc. postal) (H)	165	*2.03%*	*5.23%*	*4.24%*
9: Accommodation & food services (I)	465	*5.72%*	*5.80%*	*6.21%*
10: Information & communication (J)	465	*5.72%*	*6.91%*	*7.31%*
11: Financial & insurance (K)	135	*1.66%*	*1.71%*	*2.15%*
12: Property (L)	430	*5.29%*	*4.79%*	*4.61%*
13: Professional, scientific & technical (M)	1,575	*19.36%*	*17.56%*	*15.87%*
14: Business administration & support services (N)	705	*8.67%*	*8.29%*	*8.36%*
15: Public administration & defence (O)	60	*0.74%*	*0.46%*	*0.31%*
16: Education (P)	155	*1.91%*	*1.88%*	*1.88%*
17: Health (Q)	245	*3.01%*	*3.71%*	*4.32%*
18: Arts, entertainment and recreation (R)	240	*2.95%*	*2.38%*	*2.82%*
19: Other service activities (S)	295	*3.63%*	*3.94%*	*4.19%*

1.25 ***Health***

1.25.1 ***Overview***

1.25.2 People in Stratford-on-Avon District are generally in better health than average. Life expectancy in 2025 was 85.5 years for women (Warwickshire = 84.0y; England = 83.8y) and for men it was 82.0years (Warwickshire = 80.3y; England = 80.0y)[34].

1.26 ***Disease, Death and Injury***

1.26.1 Mortality rates for cancer, respiratory disease, circulatory disease and stroke are much lower in the District than the West Midlands' average[35].

1.26.2 In 2024/5 61% of adults in the District were classed as overweight or obese, compared to 67.6% across the West Midlands and 64.6% across England[36].

1.26.3 In 2024/5, 21.10% of Reception-aged children (4-5 years) were classed as overweight or obese compared to 22.06% in England; this had risen to 30.1% by Year 6 (10-11 years) compared to 35.9% in England.[37]

1.26.4 In 2024, 67.1% of adults said that they were active for 150 minutes or more minutes per week compared to 64.6% across England.[38]

1.26.5 Child hospital admissions (aged 0-14 years) caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries were 72 per 10,000 children, which was above than the English and West Midlands average of 69.[39]

1.26.6 The rate of dementia diagnosis in 2026 was 52%. This is the estimated percentage of people with dementia who are actually diagnosed with it: in other words, 52% people with dementia in the District received a diagnosis, meaning that 48% people who have dementia are undiagnosed. This is under the West Midlands average rate of 64%, and one of the worst rates in the region.[40]

1.26.7 Suicide rates were lower than those across the West Midlands and nationally over the period 2022-24: 8.6 per 100,000 people in our District compared to 10.5 in West Midlands and 10.9 across England.[41]

1.27 ***Poverty/Cost of Living Crisis***

1.27.1 **Risk Factors for Poverty**

1.27.2 There are several indicators which can mean that an individual is at risk of living in poverty. They include, but are not restricted to:

- Living in fuel poverty
- Receiving unemployment or low-income benefits
- Families with dependent children, particularly single parent families
- Renting privately (in conjunction with another of the above).

1.28 ***Fuel Poverty***

1.28.1 11.2% of households in the District were in fuel poverty according to the latest data for 2024, compared to 12.8% in the West Midlands and 9.9% in England.[42]

1.28.2 This is a further fall back from a high of 16.5% in 2022.

1.28.3 There was huge variation across the District in the proportion of households in fuel poverty, ranging from 19% in Ladbroke & Priors LSOA to 4.7% in Southam East.

1.29 ***Claimant Counts***

1.29.1 In June 2026, there were 10,663 people claiming Universal Credit in the District, of which 4,974 were in employment[43].

1.29.2 Stratford Hathaway ward had the highest number of claimants at 675, while Tanworth in Arden had the fewest claimants at 87.

1.29.3 Stratford Shottery ward had the highest proportion of claimants in employment, at 57% all claimants being in employment.

Table 7: Universal Claimants – total, number & % in employment

Ward	No. of people on Universal Credit (February 26)	No. of people in employment on UC (July 25)	% UC claimants in employment (July 24)
Alcester East	473	203	*43%*
Alcester West	170	95	*56%*
Bidford East	317	141	*44%*
Bidford West	279	151	*54%*
Bishop's Itchington, Fenny Compton & Napton	440	232	*53%*
Brailes & Compton	162	80	*49%*
Claverdon & Snitterfield	122	52	*43%*
Gaydon, Kineton & Upper Lighthorne	500	224	*45%*
Harbury	326	159	*49%*
Henley-in-Arden	243	109	*45%*
Kinwarton	175	73	*42%*
Long Marston	313	152	*49%*
Quinton	392	193	*49%*
Salford Priors & Alcester Rural	237	110	*46%*
Shipston North	332	165	*50%*
Shipston South	109	55	*50%*
Southam East, Central & Stockton	167	81	*49%*
Southam North & Long Itchington	219	102	*47%*
Southam South	298	150	*50%*
Southam West	283	123	*43%*
Stratford Avenue	463	233	*50%*
Stratford Bishopton	261	121	*46%*
Stratford Clopton	391	158	*40%*
Stratford Guildhall & Bridgetown	190	89	*47%*

Ward	No. of people on Universal Credit (February 26)	No. of people in employment on UC (July 25)	% UC claimants in employment (July 24)
Stratford Hathaway	675	307	*45%*
Stratford Orchard Hill	299	142	*47%*
Stratford Shottery	247	141	*57%*
Stratford Tiddington	195	100	*51%*
Stratford Welcombe	323	127	*39%*
Studley North	217	94	*43%*
Studley South	344	161	*47%*
Tanworth-in-Arden	87	36	*41%*
Tredington	207	103	*50%*
Tysoe	141	57	*40%*
Welford-on-Avon	183	85	*46%*
Wellesbourne East & Rural	241	116	*48%*
Wellesbourne North & Rural	213	97	*46%*
Wellesbourne South	249	117	*47%*
Wootton Wawen	180	69	*38%*

1.30 Achievements/Key Events During 2025/26

1.30.1 The key document that provides the strategic direction for the activities of Stratford-on-Avon District Council is the Council Plan. The Council Plan 2023-27 was approved by Council in December 2023.

1.30.2 Following the approval of the Council Plan the budget for 2025/26 was prepared to assist with the delivery of the overall objectives and a series of specific actions were prepared. At the meeting of The Cabinet on 7 April 2025 the Council Plan action plan for 2025/26 was approved. The monitoring of the action plan is undertaken using the Council's agreed performance management arrangements.

1.30.3 The vision and priorities of included within the Council Plan is as follows:

We are an ambitious, fair, inclusive, and responsible organisation which will put our communities at the heart of everything we do.

The Council will be recognised as a leader for supporting the health and wellbeing of our residents, protecting our environment, delivering sustainability, and innovation.

By proactively working with our partners the Council will strive to deliver cohesive communities that are well built, in the right place and served by appropriate infrastructure.

The Council will support existing business to thrive and seek to attract new businesses to create valued jobs and opportunities.



1.30.4 The Council Plan continues to be the document that identifies the strategic direction for the Council. The action plan relating to the implementation of the Council Plan was considered throughout the year, this led to the annual performance review as part of the overall Performance Management Framework for 2025/26 being presented to the Cabinet on 2 June 2025.

1.30.5 In March 2024, the Council invited the Local Government Association to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) for the Council. The last review had been undertaken in 2017. This was followed up with a positive revisit from the review team in January 2025. It is not envisaged that there will be any further Corporate Peer Challenge for the Council ahead of local government reorganisation.

1.30.6 On 16 December 2024 the government published the English Devolution White Paper. This White paper identified the direction of travel from government in devolving powers from central to more local government through newly established Strategic Authorities. The White Paper also announced the biggest reform of Local Government in a generation. The Government has determined that through local government reorganisation they wish to replace the remaining 21 County Council and 164 District and Borough Councils with newly established unitary councils.

1.30.7 On 5 February 2025, the Council received a formal invitation from the then Minister of State for Local Government and Devolution, to develop proposals for the reorganisation of local government within Warwickshire.

1.30.8 The Council actively engaged in developing proposals for local government reorganisation during 2025/26. The Council worked in collaboration with Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC), North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) and Warwick District Council (WDC) on proposals. Initially the Council at the meeting held on 17 March 2025 agreed the "interim plan" for local government reorganisation which was submitted to government on 21 March 2025. The Council received feedback on this interim plan on 3 June 2025 which was then helpful in assisting the Council to develop its final proposals.

1.30.9 As part of development of options Stratford-on-Avon District Council led an engagement exercise on behalf of ourselves, NBBC, NWBC and WDC. The exercise was commissioned through Opinion Research Services. In addition, further support was provided from Deloitte's and Peopletoo services which was considered in the proposals.

1.30.10 At an Extraordinary Meeting of Council held on 17 November 2025, the Council resolved:

That Stratford-on-Avon District Council supports the two-unitary proposal for future local government within Warwickshire, made up as follows:

- *North Warwickshire Unitary – based on the current borough council boundaries of North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and Rugby Borough Council; and*
- *South Warwickshire Unitary – based on the current district council boundaries of Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council;*

1.30.11 At this meeting the Council also approved the Deloitte business case which was presented to the meeting supporting the two-unitary proposals. This business case was also approved Council and was also approved by NBBC, NWBC and WDC. The business case was subsequently submitted as the formal response to the invitation for local government reorganisation in our area on 28 November 2025.

1.30.12 Following submission of the proposals, government undertook a formal consultation on two options for local government reorganisation within Warwickshire, these being proposals from the County Council and Rugby Borough Council for a single unitary Warwickshire, alongside the proposals from Stratford-on-Avon District Council and the other three district and borough councils for a two unitary Warwickshire. The consultation exercise was undertaken between 5 February 2026 and 26 March 2026. There were 2,120 responses to the consultation exercise, the result of which was as follows:

- 68% agreed with the two-unitary proposals for Warwickshire
- 24% disagreed with the two-unitary proposals for Warwickshire
- 30% agreed with the single-unitary proposals for Warwickshire

1.30.13 The Council did receive the decision from central government on 16 July 2026 that the two-unitary proposals for Warwickshire would be implemented. However, on 7 September 2026, government have asked that local authorities "***to cease work on implementing the decisions that were announced in July.***" This pause is to allow for a rapid review of the decisions to be undertaken, it is not known at this stage as to when this review will be completed.

1.30.14 In relation to the Council's finances this continues to be a challenging period. The Council did receive a multi-year financial settlement with the announcement of the Fair Funding Review 2.0. This review the first year of which covers 2026/27 was incorporated into the budget setting process approved by Council in February 2026.

1.30.15 Whilst it is welcomed to receive a multi-year settlement which assists with the production of the Council's 5-year Medium Term Financial Plan the results of the review have seen a significant reduction in the revenue support grant for the Council which is £7.943m in 2026/27, reducing to £3.317m by 2028/29.

1.30.16 The Council is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for, and used economically, efficiently and effectively.

1.30.17 The Council also has a duty under the *Local Government Act 1999* to make arrangements to secure continuous improvements in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

1.30.18 The Annual Government Statement identifies the framework that comprises the systems, processes, culture and values, by which the Council is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to, engages with and leads the community. It enables the Council to monitor the achievement of its strategic priorities and to consider whether those priorities have led to the delivery of appropriate, cost-effective services.

1.30.19 The roles and responsibilities of the executive, non-executive, scrutiny and officer functions, along with the delegations from The Cabinet and the Council are set out in the Constitution. In addition, there are member role profiles and an officer/member protocol that sets out the respective responsibilities and relationships of officers and members. The Constitution is kept under regular review, overseen by the Audit and Standards Committee and the document is fully reviewed every three years. A revised Leader's Statement has been developed which summarises all of the executive delegations which are currently in place.

1.30.20 A risk management framework is reviewed annually which is supported by the County Council. The provision of such advice is now built into the service level agreement for audit services. Operational risks form part of the service plans, and high-level risks are identified in the strategic risk register, which is periodically reviewed by the Management Team.

1.30.21 2025/26 saw the following achievements:

Communities, Leisure & Wellbeing

- REC Play Area Refurbishment (£250,000 investment)
  - Inclusive play equipment and sensory play area
  - Forest and River themed design
  - New picnic area and seating
  - Paddling pool improvements and water play features
  - Landscaping improvements, sandpit restoration and toilet upgrades
  - Car park and crossing improvements
- Free memberships at leisure centres for people living with Parkinson's
- Free swimming lessons for people living with dementia
- Subsidised health screening programme with the Graham Fulford Charitable Trust
  - 1,137 health tests completed
  - 663 men screened
  - 156 GP referrals
  - 3 confirmed cancer diagnoses identified
  - Diabetes and cholesterol testing delivered across the district
- New £350,000 Community Grant Scheme commemorating the 80th anniversary of VE and VJ Days
- Residents raised £1,000 for Eco Work-Shop CIC (Chair's Charity) through the Council mobile app

Climate Action, Environment & Sustainability

- Stratford-on-Avon District Council is England's top recycling area with a 63.9% household recycling rate
- Third round of the Community Climate and Nature Fund supporting six local projects:
  - Solar panels and battery storage
  - Woodland restoration and tree planting
  - Pollinator habitats and biodiversity projects
  - LED lighting upgrades
  - Air source heat pump installations
- Adoption of the Climate and Nature Recovery Strategy
- Ranked second best in Warwickshire for climate action
- Warm Homes Local Grant launched to improve energy efficiency and reduce household bills
- More than 110 homes upgraded through HUG2
  - Loft insulation
  - Cavity wall insulation
  - High heat retention heating systems

    - Solar PV installations
- E-cargo bike initiative supporting NHS community staff visits
- £100,000 Climate Change Adaptation Scheme supporting local organisations to increase resilience
- Green Flag Award for Bancroft Gardens

Community Safety, Public Protection & Public Health

- Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) addressing alcohol-related anti-social behaviour
- CCTV system awarded British Standard Accreditation for the 18th consecutive year
- Virtual reality knife crime prevention programme delivered to more than seven schools and colleges
- Loudmouth Theatre domestic abuse awareness programme
    - Reached 1,945 secondary pupils
    - Reached 931 primary pupils
- Over 95% of food businesses achieved top hygiene ratings

Economic Growth, Town Centres & Business Support

- Waterside Upmarket crowned Best Large Outdoor Open Market 2026
- More than 200 SMEs attended the Stratford Business Conference

Organisational Excellence & Recognition

- Ministry of Defence Silver Employer Recognition Scheme Award
- Community Safety Team national award shortlist
- Land Charges Services awarded Gold Standard

Digital Transformation & Effective Governance

- New Council website launched, developed entirely in-house at no cost
- New Council mobile phone app

1.30.22 We continue to develop our relationships at a regional level, where we play a full role as non-constituent members of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

1.30.22 It should be noted, however, that the mayor of the WMCA has made it clear that, under the devolution agenda, he does not see Warwickshire becoming a full member of the combined authority.

The remaining options available to Warwickshire in relation to the development of a Strategic Authority (SA) required for devolution to be either a stand-alone Warwickshire SA, or to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities such as Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Staffordshire or Northamptonshire.

1.30.23 During 2025/26 work has progressed in partnership with the WMCA in relation to development of proposals for the Gateway site in Stratford upon Avon. This site has now been secured and the Cabinet agreed resources for the demolition and clearance of the Council's interests in the site to enable wider development to be taken forward.

1.31 ***Key Issues and Targets***

1.31.1 As previously mentioned, the key document that provides the strategic direction for the activities of Stratford-on-Avon District Council is the Council Plan. The Council Plan 2023-27 was approved by Council in December 2023. At the end of Year 2 (2025-2026) progress included the following.

Priority 1 –We Will Live By

- Be a transparent Council, fostering the levels of trust and understanding of responsibilities between the Council and the Public.
- Making the best decisions in the public interest.
- Holding ourselves and others providing public services to account more effectively for the benefit of the communities served.

Progress 2025/26:

- A refreshed View magazine was distributed in mid-January 2026.
- Submission by the Council made on local government reorganisation in November 2025.
- Planning Service restructured in Autumn 2025.
- Licensing Policy Review completed and approved by the Council.
- The Outside Bodies Working Group reported their findings to ASC and Council in February 2026.
- The Council continued to set an Annual Training Plan for elected members through the Member Development Working Group.

Priority 2 – We Will Deliver By

- To improve access to Council services to those throughout the District.
- To improve the effectiveness of the Council through innovation, engaging with our peers to improve service delivery.
- To support the quality of our service by being a local employer of choice.

- Increase and protect green spaces which positively affect nature recovery.
- Be a Local Authority leader in the reduction of our own Carbon Footprint.
- Build the relationship and proactively foster partnership working with others to influence areas where the Council cannot deliver success alone.
- Support those most in need from inequality.
- Make the most of Stratford-on-Avon District's rich cultural heritage as a national and international tourist destination.

Progress 2025/26:

- Established a series of screening sessions to identify diseases/impairment's
- Worked continued on the Growing Opportunities Plan.
- Reviewed the IndieGo DRT provision and recommended the future approach.
- Digital strategy began implementation, including the new website launched in March 2026.
- Parish Forums took place.
- Implementation of the revised Staff Strategy action plan began.
- 10,000 trees planted via two schemes.
- Work continued on whether the Bridgetown Community Woodland and Meadowland areas can be designated a Local Nature Reserve.
- Green Flag awarded for the Bancroft Gardens.
- Delivery of the Climate Change and Nature Strategy Action Plan.
- Feasibility study conducted for the introduction of a hydro-electric turbine on the River Avon.
- The Council continued to develop the South Warwickshire Local Plan.
- Business Conference held in February 2026.
- Establishment across South Place of an ECO4 (Flex) scheme to provide long-term condition related home improvements.
- Continued implementation of the Housing Strategy Action Plan.
- Targets approved for the Council's Single Equality scheme.
- Establishment of a Warm Homes Local Grant scheme.
- Pledge on number of migrant scheme households the Council will work to successfully relocate and integrate to Stratford District agreed.
- Continued work on the development of the Gateway site.

Priority 3 – We Will Influence By

- To improve the range and quality of social infrastructure e.g. town centres, health and social care, education, housing and transport within the District.
- To reduce crime and anti-social behaviour through the Community Safety Partnership.
- To enable those living and working in the District to live more environmentally sustainable lifestyles.
- Facilitate more opportunities for residents to use alternative modes of transport.
- Ensure that development is meeting local needs, attractive, environmentally sustainable and fit for purpose.
- To increase the levels of valued employment and training.
- To support Parish Councils for the benefit of communities.
- To support opportunities for our residents to develop skills for the future.

Progress 2025/26:

- Community grants scheme undertaken.
- Recreation Ground Play Area completed in March 2026.
- The development of Evesham Place was almost completed.
- Study completed and published exploring the potential of a bypass at Stratford-upon-Avon.
- Community Infrastructure Levy approved and underway.
- Significant progress in the action plan supporting the South Warwickshire Economic Strategy.
- Implemented the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2025/26.
- Air Quality Strategy approved.
- Appraisal of opportunities for commercial partnership deployment of electric vehicle charges in SDC car parks.
- All communal properties assessed for recycling and food waste capacity.
- Bi monthly sampling checks continue to take place at Sherbourne Materials Recycling Facility (MRF). A contamination prevention project has been developed and is now underway.
- Review of the district's conservation area assessments has begun.
- Allocation of monies under the communities element of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- A programme of work established for the Council's Parish and Town Council Liaison Officer.

- The Council made available relevant training courses to Town and Parish Councils.

2 Options available to Council

2.1 To note the report or to request further information.

3 Evidence Base

3.1 All the evidence is contained within the report.

4 Consultation and Members' Comments

4.1 Comments from the Leader of the Council are contained within this report.

5 Implications of the Proposal

5.1 ***Legal Implications***

5.1.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

5.2 ***Financial***

5.2.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

5.3 ***Council Plan***

5.3.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

5.4 ***Environmental/Climate Change Implications***

5.4.1 There are no environmental or climate change implications arising from this report.

5.5 ***Analysis of the effects on Equality***

5.5.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

5.6 ***Data Protection***

5.6.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

5.7 ***Health and Wellbeing***

5.7.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

5.8 ***Human Resources/Staffing***

5.8.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

6 Risk Assessment

6.1 The evidence provided in this report, either through insight or public opinion, must be considered in the decision-making processes, when setting the budget and formulating strategy/policies. This report has therefore been produced to support and inform local decision-making and the setting of priorities.

7 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation

7.1 The report outlines the past year's actions and future proposals for 2026/27.

Councillor Susan Juned
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Background papers:

None.

Supporting documents:

Information sources as referenced below.

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[34] Public Health England - Fingertips

Local Authority Health Profiles - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care

[35] LGInform

An Overview of Health and Wellbeing in Your Area | LG Inform (local.gov.uk)

[36] LGInform

An Overview of Health and Wellbeing in Your Area | LG Inform (local.gov.uk)

[37] LGInform

An Overview of Health and Wellbeing in Your Area | LG Inform (local.gov.uk)

[38] LGInform

An Overview of Health and Wellbeing in Your Area | LG Inform (local.gov.uk)

[39] LGInform

An Overview of Health and Wellbeing in Your Area | LG Inform (local.gov.uk)

[40] Public Health England – Fingertips

Local Authority Health Profiles - Data | Fingertips | Department of Health and Social Care

[41] Office for Health Improvements and Disparities - Fingertips

Public Health Outcomes Framework - Data - OHID (phe.org.uk)

[42] Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2026 (2024 data) - GOV.UK

[43] Department for Work and Pensions – Stat-Xplore

Form A1

INITIAL SCREENING FOR STRATEGIES/POLICIES/FUNCTIONS FOR EQUALITIES RELEVANCE TO ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION, PROMOTE EQUALITY AND FOSTER GOOD RELATIONS

1. Please provide a summary of the proposal (including any legislation/guidance if relevant)

State of the District Report 2026

1. Tick **all** of the coloured boxes appropriately depending on degree of relevance/priority to each of the equality strands set out below following an assessment of the **OVERALL IMPACT DESCRIPTORS.**

Business Unit/ Services:	**Relevance/Risk to Equalities**																										
State the Function/ Policy /Service/ Strategy being assessed:	Gender			Race			Disability			Sexual Orientation			Religion/Belief			Age			Gender Reassignment			Pregnancy/ Maternity			Marriage/Civil Partnership (only for staff)		
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓			✓	

OVERALL IMPACT DESCRIPTORS

The following descriptors are designed to help the assessor understand the potential equalities implications of the decision/proposal.

	Low or no relevance/priority (Green)	**Medium relevance/priority (Orange)**	**High relevance/priority (RED)**
LEGAL	Complaint/ initial challenge - may be easily resolved	Internal investigation following a number of complaints/ challenges	High level challenge resulting in Judicial Review / Ombudsman Complaint following unresolved complaints/ challenges
FINANCIAL	Little or no additional financial implication as a result of the decision/ proposal	Medium level financial implications - internal legal costs & internal resources	High or even severe financial impact - External legal advice and internal resources

	Low or no relevance/priority (Green)	Medium relevance/priority (Orange)	High relevance/priority (RED)
PEOPLE	No or Low or level of impact on isolation, quality of life, achievement, access to services. Unlikely to result in harm or injury. Mitigating actions are sufficient	Significant quality of life issues i.e. Achievement, access to services. Minor to significant levels of harm, injury. mistreatment or abuse OR, low level of impact that is possible or likely to occur with over 500 people potentially affected	Serious Quality of Life issues i.e. Where isolation increases or vulnerability is greatly affected as a result. Death, Injury and/or serious mistreatment or abuse of an individual for whom the Council has a responsibility OR, a medium level of impact that is likely to occur with over 500 people potentially affected
REPUTATION	Little or no impact outside of the Council	Some negative local media reporting	High levels of negative front page reports/ National attention and media coverage

3. **If low or no relevance please complete the Equalities Section in the applicable Committee Report.**

4. **If Medium or High relevance/priority please complete the Equality Impact Assessment form (to be attached to the Committee Report as an Appendix).**