

Ufton Parish Council Meeting – 2nd June 2026

District Councillor Report - Susan Ostrander

Headlines:

1. SWLP – again
2. Rural Crime Advisers
3. District Council Performance Update

1. South Warwickshire Local Plan

Over the past five years Stratford and Warwick District Councils have been preparing the South Warwickshire Local Plan, which will guide housing, employment and infrastructure development across the area up to 2050.

The Government has required South Warwickshire to accommodate around 54,000 new homes, together with significant employment land, as part of national housing targets. For Stratford District this equates to approximately 28,000 homes over the next 25 years. Whatever individual views may be on these targets, local authorities are required to plan for them and demonstrate how they will be delivered.

The approach taken by the Administration has been to work constructively within this framework rather than pursue lengthy disputes over housing numbers. Experience elsewhere has shown that where plans are absent or delayed, speculative development is more likely to be approved on appeal, often without the supporting infrastructure that local communities expect.

The intention of the Local Plan is therefore to direct development to locations where growth can support investment in roads, schools, healthcare, drainage, employment opportunities and community facilities, whilst seeking to protect the wider character and environment of the district.

The current draft plan proposes:

- A major new settlement at Long Marston, with around 4,500 homes planned by 2050 and potential for further growth beyond that date.
- Growth around Stratford-upon-Avon, Bidford, Henley-in-Arden, Wellesbourne and Southam.
- Higher environmental standards, including net zero principles for new development.
- Provision for affordable housing, custom and self-build housing, employment land and traveller accommodation.
- Associated infrastructure improvements to support expanding communities.

For our immediate area, the current draft contains no proposals for new settlements in the locations previously identified as options F1, F2 and F3 during earlier consultations.

An important part of the strategy is the proposed Western Relief Road linking the A46 to the B4632 near Clifford Chambers. The proposed route could improve connectivity to Long Marston

and the south of Stratford, reduce traffic pressures within Stratford itself and create opportunities for wider environmental improvements. The route also seeks to safeguard the former railway alignment should rail reinstatement become viable in the future. Given the scale and likely cost of the scheme, delivery is not expected before approximately 2035.

I attended one of the Town and Parish Council briefing sessions held in May and found it very informative. The draft Regulation 19 version of the Plan was subsequently considered by the Joint Cabinet Committee of Stratford and Warwick District Councils on 28 May. Following that meeting, Members concluded that whilst there remains broad support for the overall direction of the Plan and the need to maintain progress towards adoption, the current draft is not yet ready to proceed directly to public consultation.

A number of significant issues require further work, including:

- The amount of housing headroom included above the Government's standard housing requirement (additional housing allocated above the minimum requirement to provide flexibility if some sites do not come forward as planned).
- The viability of the Plan, particularly the deliverability of affordable housing requirements.
- The design of the Stratford Western Relief Road and the associated highway modelling.
- The integration of sites likely to receive planning permission to restore the five-year housing land supply and avoid any double counting.
- The detailed plans for settlements and Strategic Growth Areas.

As a result, the current draft will be considered by both Councils at extraordinary meetings in June. Further work will then be undertaken throughout the month, with final decisions expected in mid-July before the Plan is published for consultation. Consultation is expected to take place during July, August and into September.

This timetable is not ideal, but it is currently the only realistic route to meeting the Government's requirement to submit the Plan by 31 December 2026. Failure to meet that deadline could require preparation of a replacement plan under the Government's revised planning framework, resulting in delays, reduced local influence over the outcome and potentially higher development requirements.

There will inevitably be differing views on aspects of the Plan, particularly in communities affected by proposed development allocations. Concerns regarding infrastructure, traffic and impacts on local character are understandable and will continue to form an important part of the discussion as the Plan progresses. I will continue to work with colleagues to ensure that the final Plan is robust, deliverable and reflects the interests of local communities as far as possible within the framework set by national planning policy.

2. Rural Crime Advisor Service Update

As a predominantly rural ward with many farms, isolated properties and agricultural businesses, issues relating to rural crime and community safety remain particularly important locally.

The joint Rural Crime Advisor programme funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire and Stratford District Council has continued to expand over the past year, with

record numbers of residents, landowners and businesses across South Warwickshire receiving practical crime prevention advice and support.

During 2025/26, the service supported 780 people, focusing on preventative measures to help rural communities improve security, protect property and reduce opportunities for crime.

Key outcomes over the past year included:

- A 73% increase in engagement at crime prevention events.
- Residential crime prevention referrals increasing by more than 350%.
- A 47% increase in loans of security equipment.

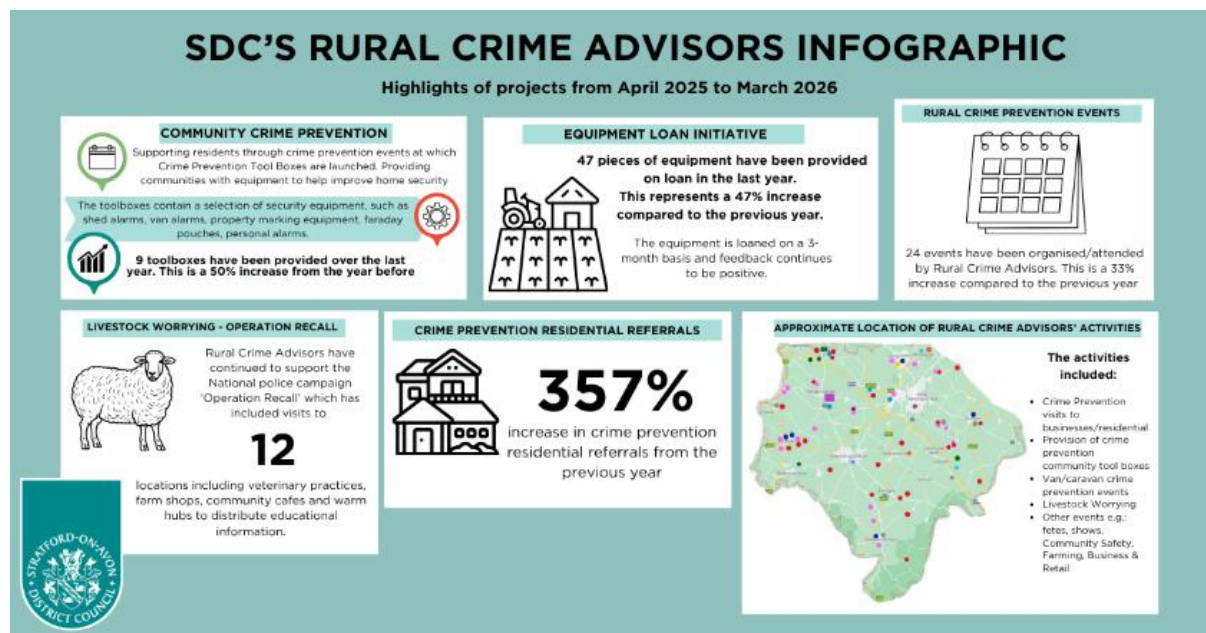
Additional support through the Shared Prosperity Fund enabled the Rural Crime Advisors, Rebecca Jenkins and Alison Packer, to expand their work significantly across the district.

The service provides practical advice and reassurance on a range of issues including home and farm security, vehicle-related crime, livestock worrying and environmental crime. Increased demand for home visits reflects growing awareness of the support available and the willingness of residents to take proactive steps to improve security.

This work is particularly valuable in rural communities such as ours, where farms, equipment, vehicles and isolated properties can be especially vulnerable and where residents may feel distant from mainstream services.

The programme remains an important part of wider community safety work within Stratford District, helping ensure rural communities receive practical support tailored to local needs.

The infographic below summarises the activities and achievements of the Rural Crime Advisor service between April 2025 and March 2026



3. Stratford District Council Performance Update

At its meeting on 1 June, the District Council's Cabinet considered the Council's Annual Performance Report for 2025/26. The report reviewed progress against the Council Plan and highlighted delivery across a wide range of services and priorities over the past year.

The report showed strong progress against the Council's priorities. Of the 58 priority actions contained within the Council Plan, 67% were fully achieved during the year, with a further 7% completed and continuing into future delivery. Progress was reported across a number of key areas, including housing, community wellbeing, economic development and environmental sustainability.

Achievements during the year included:

- The launch of a new District Council website to improve access to services and information.
- Delivery of health screening initiatives to support early diagnosis and improve health outcomes.
- Hosting a major business conference attended by more than 200 organisations, helping to support economic growth across the district.
- Introduction of community grant funding to support local projects and facilities.
- Provision of warm homes support and wider cost-of-living assistance for residents facing financial hardship.

The report also highlighted progress on the Council's environmental commitments through delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan, with the majority of planned actions either completed or underway, including a range of nature recovery initiatives.

In addition, the Council reported good progress in delivering its Housing Strategy, supporting vulnerable residents through targeted programmes and partnership working, strengthening engagement with Town and Parish Councils, and continuing work on major strategic projects such as the South Warwickshire Local Plan.

Cabinet also considered a number of other items, including:

- An interim policy position statement relating to the status of Core Strategy policies and Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- The draft Local Enforcement Plan.
- The Annual Safeguarding Report and the Council's role within local safeguarding partnerships.
- The proposed sale of Orchard House at the Greig Centre to Alcester Day Care.

Overall, the report presented a positive picture of service delivery and progress against the Council's objectives during 2025/26, whilst recognising that a number of longer-term projects and priorities will continue into the coming year.