

Ufton Parish Council – 3rd February 2026

District Councillor Report – Susan Ostrander

Headlines (a lot of consultations this month):

1. Budget Consultation, Proposals and Council Tax – **deadline 3rd Feb!!**
2. Social Housing Allocations Policy - Consultation
3. Enforcement Policy - Consultation
4. Climate Change & Biodiversity: update on work done since 2023

1. Proposed Stratford-on-Avon District Council Budget 2026/27 – Public Consultation

You are invited to provide their views on Stratford-on-Avon District Council’s proposed budget for 2026/27, which includes a set of growth proposals aimed at meeting statutory obligations, strengthening organisational capacity, supporting vulnerable communities, and progressing key strategic priorities.

The District Council’s Cabinet approved public consultation on the proposals for 2026/27 to 2030/31 at its meeting on Monday 19 January. Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to have their say via the online survey:

Budget consultation (deadline 3 February 2026):

<https://online1.snapsurveys.com/budgetconsultation2026>

Following consultation, feedback will be considered by the Cabinet on Monday 9 February and then by Full Council on 23 February for final approval.

Despite the planned Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in April 2028, the Council will maintain existing budgeting arrangements for 2026/27.

This budget continues the Council’s commitment to support our most vulnerable residents and rural communities. There are additional opportunities for young people, children and families. Economic development is championed, and the Council maintains its focus on tackling climate change.

Key Proposed Budget Items

Scheme	Funding / Notes
Gateway Clearance & Development	£1,500,000 (one-off) – site clearance and temporary car parking works
South Warwickshire Place Partnership Board	£20,000 (one-off) – local health inequality priorities
Procurement Officer	£42,000 (ongoing) – Procurement Act 2023 workload

Scheme	Funding / Notes
Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Capacity	£1,000,000 (one-off) – temporary Legal, Finance & HR staff
Climate Change Fund	£500,000 (one-off) – fifth consecutive year of funding
Shakespeare's England	£25,000 (over 2 years) – continued support until new arrangements
Neighbourhood Development Plans	£100,000 (over 3 years) – support for up to 10 plans per year
Biodiversity Net Gain	£31,000 (ongoing) – statutory reporting duties
Housing Land Supply	£500,000 (one-off) – increased planning application workload
Upper Lighthorne Parenting Project	£20,000 (one-off) – family wellbeing support
VASA Volunteer Driver Scheme	£12,000 (3 years) – transport for older/mobility-impaired residents
Veterans Healthcare & Development Officer	£8,000 (2 years) – veterans support services
Communities & Social Inclusion Enabler	£24,000 (2026/27), then £59,000 ongoing – social cohesion work
Private Sector Compliance & Support Officer	£39,000 first year, £40,000 ongoing – temporary accommodation compliance
Youth Work Catalyst Project	£41,000 (over 3 years) – youth engagement/anti-social behaviour
Private Sector Housing Officer	£52,000 (2 years) – compliance, energy efficiency, empty homes
Revenues System Lead	£52,000 (2 years) – Civica platform management
Welfare Officer	£47,000 (2 years) – support to avoid unmanageable debt
Housing to Rent	£1,000,000 (one-off) – additional social housing units
Cost of Living Crisis Mitigation Fund	£250,000 (one-off) – combined with £250,000 rollover to £500,000
Legal Team	£97,000 (ongoing) – litigation lawyers and paralegals (shared with Warwick DC)
Community Safety Team Leader	£57,000 (2 years) – community safety operations

Scheme	Funding / Notes
Prevent Officer	£6,000 (2 years) – partnership Prevent duties
Rural Crime Advisors	£52,000 (ongoing) – Crime & Disorder Act responsibilities
Maintenance Officer	£47,000 (ongoing) – in-house building and asset maintenance

Council Tax Proposal

The budget includes a **2.99% increase** in Council Tax for 2026/27, equivalent to just 42p per month for the average Band D household. The proposed Band D rate would be £174.17.

Stratford District Council continues to be a low-taxing authority, ranked *18th lowest* out of 164 district councils in 2025/26.

2.. Social Housing Allocations Policy – Public Consultation

Stratford District Council (SDC) is currently consulting on a new Housing Allocations Policy, which will determine how social housing is allocated across the District in future.

The Council is developing a new policy because the existing Home Choice Plus partnership, which SDC currently shares with Bromsgrove District Council and Wyre Forest District Council, is due to end in Spring/Summer 2026. As a result, each council is required to adopt its own local allocations policy. Stratford-on-Avon's new policy will be known as the Stratford-on-Avon Home Choice Policy.

Since the current partnership and policy were introduced, there have been significant changes in housing legislation and in the wider housing landscape. Although the District has successfully delivered new affordable homes in recent years, demand for social housing continues to far exceed supply. The proposed new policy is intended to better reflect local need, respond to changes in law and guidance, and follow good practice in allocating homes to those in the greatest need. Some of the proposed changes may affect households currently on the housing register.

What this means locally:

For residents in our towns and villages, this policy will influence who qualifies for social housing, how priority is assessed, and how available homes are allocated. It is particularly relevant for people on the current housing register, those considering applying for social housing, and organisations that support residents with housing needs. Local feedback will help ensure the policy reflects the actual pressures faced in our communities, including affordability, availability of suitable homes, and the needs of rural areas.

The consultation is open from 20 January 2026 until 4pm on 3 March 2026, and residents, applicants, housing providers, voluntary organisations and other stakeholders are encouraged to take part.

- Online consultation survey:
<https://online1.snapsurveys.com/Interview/9e1154a1-f019-460f-8c22-dbc8328348b6>
- Draft Stratford-on-Avon Home Choice Policy:
<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/214234/name/Appendix%203%20Draft%20Allocation%20Policy.pdf>
- Summary of proposed changes:
<https://www.stratford.gov.uk/doc/214232/name/Appendix%201%20Summary%20of%20changes%20.pdf>

In addition to the online consultation, the District Council is holding a drop-in consultation event where residents can speak directly with officers and ask questions about the proposed policy:

- Tuesday 10 February 2026, 12:30pm–2:00pm
Fred Winter Centre, 41 Guild Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6QY
Booking is required and can be made here:
<https://outlook.office.com/book/SDCSocialHousingAllocationsPolicyDropInSessions@stratford-dc.gov.uk/?ismsaljsauthenabled=true>

All responses received will be reviewed and considered before the policy is finalised and presented to Cabinet in Spring 2026, ahead of adoption later in the year alongside a new choice-based lettings system.

Parish Councillors may wish to share details of this consultation with residents, particularly those who may be affected by social housing allocation policies. I have already put details of this on the Ufton FB page.

3. Local Enforcement Plan Consultation

f you attended the Parish Forum you can probably skip this one.....

Stratford District Council is consulting on a new Local Enforcement Plan (LEP), which sets out how planning enforcement cases are prioritised and handled across the District. Enforcement is a contentious area of planning and undoubtedly as councillors you will have encountered both its strengths and deficiencies (although I fear more of the latter than the former!).

As the local planning authority, the District Council is responsible for investigating breaches of planning control, including unauthorised building works, failure to comply with planning conditions, and unauthorised changes of use. While enforcement action is discretionary, formal action may be taken where serious breaches are identified and a negotiated resolution cannot be achieved. The Council's approach aims to be proportionate, timely and consistent.

The Local Enforcement Plan plays an important role in clarifying how enforcement resources are used, with a particular focus on the most significant breaches that cause planning harm. The draft plan has recently been updated following a workshop with District Councillors and now includes clearer guidance on prioritisation, as well as circumstances where investigations may not proceed, such as where there is insufficient evidence or no demonstrable planning harm.

The draft plan is currently out for public consultation, and residents and Parish Councils are encouraged to comment. This is particularly relevant to rural communities, where enforcement issues can have a significant local impact and where clarity around process and priorities is important. I have posted information about this on Ufton FB page for residents to have their say.

Comments can be submitted online at:

<https://online1.snapsurveys.com/localenforcement>

The consultation closes at **12 noon on 4 March 2026**. All responses will be reviewed before the final Local Enforcement Plan is adopted.

4. Climate Change & Biodiversity – Update on Work Done Since 2023

Since 2023 there has been an immense amount of activity on climate change and biodiversity support right across the Council and not limited solely to work carried out by the climate change team. Every department has to consider climate change and biodiversity as part of their decision-making. We have a projects team who work with our climate change officers as well as with other departments.

Since 2023 the following projects have been carried out:

- Three rounds of the Community Climate and Nature Fund have funded 29 projects that have enabled local residents and town and parish councils to deliver energy efficiency in community owned buildings and improve biodiversity and nature in communities. Full details of the projects are on the SDC website.
- Switched the refuse collection to HVO fuel (which is fully accredited to ensure a sustainable supply chain)
- Installed solar panels on two out of five leisure centres. We are installing solar panels on a further two at present. An external grant was used for part of the Stratford Leisure Centre delivery but has been topped up by the Council to enable further work.
- Delivered three rounds of the Free Trees for Farmers scheme. These are monitored by the Heart of England Forest and the Rural Hub. Also worked with the Heart of England Forest to deliver the Trees Call to Action project
- Introduced electric vehicles into the SDC Street Scene fleet.
- Worked in partnership with other councils to open the Sherborne Recycling Centre which has contributed to SDC being the third best council in England for recycling. Launched a kerbside coffee pod collection and recycling service.
- Appointed a new Grounds Maintenance contractor who use peat free compost, biofuel in equipment and mowers, and limits the use of herbicides in line with best practice issued by the Wildlife Trust
- Awarded £625,000 of UK Shared Prosperity Funding to establish an automotive electric vehicle training academy at Stratford College
- Allocated £20,000 to deliver the Wilder Communities project, working in partnership with the Wildlife Trust

- Offered £50,000 of funding through the Free Trees for Town and Parish Council project.
- Secured Cabinet approval to deliver a climate change adaptation audit project, which will see community organisations and independent businesses be offered grant funding to work with an external partner to develop Climate Resilience Action Plans, and be given the funding to deliver the contents of the audits.
- Produced a feasibility report showing the demand for EVs across the District and secured Cabinet approval for an approach which will allow these charge points to be installed.
- Worked in partnership with the County Council to deliver the Warwickshire Business Energy Advice Scheme grants
- Completed the designation of a new Nature Reserve.
- In the Budget for 2026 there is a sum of money of £1.6m made available to fund solar panels and batteries on the Stratford Leisure Centre car park. This will be linked to electric vehicle charge points.
- The SDC Housing Team have worked to distribute government grants to enable the retrofit of homes, reducing energy bills and carbon emissions. They do so in close collaboration with Act on Energy and Housing Associations.

Act on Energy was set up as an energy efficiency advice charity by SDC in 1999 and SDC continues to support and collaborate with the charity to enable householders to seek advice on energy efficiency and address fuel poverty.