

Welcome to the first issue of the Parish Talk

an electronic newsletter from Stratford-on-Avon District Council

We have responded to feedback that it is vitally important to keep Parishes up to date with news from the District Council and other sources. We hope that this e-newsletter will be a forum for you to put forward your views too. It is our way of keeping you abreast of issues. At the same time let us know what you would like to hear from us.

This first edition concentrates on this year's elections, the District Council's priorities and recent achievements, as well as providing an update on national changes to the Councillors' Code of Conduct. We hope that it is of use to you.

If you have any topics you would like to see in the future please email beverley.hemming@stratford-dc.gov.uk in our Corporate Communications Team or call her on **01789 260105**.

Parish Talk will be published bi-monthly.



Paul Lankester
Chief Executive



On 3 May 53 candidates will be contesting 17 seats at Stratford-on-Avon District Council elections along with 17 parish and town councils.

Please follow the link for election and candidate information - link for election and candidate information - <http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/elections.cfm>

Please note that you can also use this link on the election night to track the election results.

Polling on 3 May will be carried out at 82 stations around the District, with hours of polling being 7.00am to 10.00pm.

The current political standings of Stratford-on-Avon District Council's 53 seats are: Conservatives 30 seats; Liberal Democrats 18 seats; Independents 3 seats; and 2 vacancies – these by-elections also take place on 3 May and are included in the 18 elections mentioned above.

Once more this year, Stratford-on-Avon District Council is participating in an electoral pilot and this year in partnership with Warwick District Council. We submitted a joint application to the Department of Constitutional Affairs (DCA) which was approved.

The Returning Officers will use electronic scanning technology to count ballot papers for these elections and will work together to utilise shared counting venues covering the combined area of the two authorities. The wards of Southam and Fenny Compton will be counted at Leamington Town Hall together with the parishes of Avon Dassett, Ladbroke and Napton-on-the-Hill. The counting technology is being provided by Software A.G. and Dominion Voting.

The DCA will be looking to Stratford and Warwick to provide further evidence about the benefits of automating the counting process and in particular this pilot scheme will enable the DCA to assess the processes and potential economies of scale available where authorities combine to carry out the counting of ballot papers.

The pilot scheme, which was undertaken last year, provided a valuable insight into how the new legislation enacted this year will work. Changes as to how postal ballot papers and voting at polling stations will be notices by all taking part in the election. For further details, please look at the election section on the Stratford DC website at: <http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/elections.cfm>



Comprehensive Performance Assessment

All district and county councils are subject to a Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). This assessment is undertaken by the Audit Commission and is part of the Government's drive to modernise local government. CPA aims to assess the quality of the services and community leadership we provide, and that we look to improve our performance. A great part of the assessment focuses on how Stratford has made and continues to make a difference to local communities.

In 2004 we were assessed as a 'weak' Council and now we have asked for a re-inspection, which takes place in June. The Council is very different today from 3 years ago. We have improved on many aspects of service performance with 40% of our Performance Indicators in the top quartile and improving satisfaction rates with services and the Council overall, although we recognise we still want to do even better.

Timetable for CPA

<i>Mid-end March</i>	<i>Consultation on Self-assessment Document Collate all evidence Prepare all case-studies</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>Executive to approve Self-assessment document</i>
<i>End April</i>	<i>Submit Self-assessment Document</i>
<i>May</i>	<i>Partnership event Tour of the Stratford-on-Avon District for the inspectors</i>
<i>End May/early June</i>	<i>Chief Executive's Chats Political Group Briefings Interview Briefings</i>
<i>Mid June</i>	<i>Week of inspection</i>

For further information visit or website at <http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/council-129.cfm>

Priorities & achievements

The District Council has a Corporate Strategy with 3 aims and 15 priorities.

Whilst we are busy trying to ensure the above targets are achieved, work is ongoing to develop a new Corporate Strategy for 2008-2012. We want to adopt the Strategy in the summer so we can make sure targets we want to achieve in 2008/09 can be properly resourced in our budget. Soon we will be consulting specifically on this new strategy. We hope you will let us know what you think of the proposed vision and outcomes we want to achieve for local people.



Aim 1	Aim 2	Aim 3
<p>The development of safer and healthier communities</p>	<p>The development of sustainable communities</p>	<p>The creation of inclusive communities</p>
<p><i>Work with partners to cut the total number of recorded crimes by 15% by April 2008</i></p>	<p><i>Improve the energy efficiency of homes in the District by 28%</i></p>	<p><i>Subject to partnership working, open a one-stop shop in Southam and identify locations for others across the District by April 2008</i></p>
<p><i>Implement two suitable CCTV schemes by April 2008</i> <i>Installed in Wellesbourne</i></p>	<p><i>Recycle or compost 40% of household waste collected by April 2008</i></p>	<p><i>Provide electronic access to 100% of Council services by 31 December 2005 – ACHIEVED</i></p>
<p><i>Work with partners to help 1,500 residents quit smoking by April 2008</i> <i>973 quitters to date</i></p>	<p><i>To promote World Class Stratford, guiding new development through an Urban Design Framework.</i></p>	<p><i>Set up a Youth Council by April 2006 – ACHIEVED</i></p>
<p><i>Work with partners to develop a Wellesbourne leisure can community facility by April 2008 (subject to a feasibility study)</i></p>	<p><i>Complete 50% of the projects on the Waterfront Masterplan in Stratford</i></p>	<p><i>Help an additional 250 residents obtain means tested benefits by April 2008</i> <i>To date 172 people have been helped</i></p>
	<p><i>Provide 250 new affordable homes across the District by April 2008</i> <i>237 homes currently</i></p>	<p><i>Develop a coherent social transport strategy by the end of March 2006 and support at least 25,000 passenger journeys per year by April 2008</i></p>
	<p><i>Have no homeless families in Bed & Breakfast accommodation by April 2007 - ACHIEVED</i></p>	

Maintaining High Standards of Conduct

Your Council is committed to promoting the highest standards of personal conduct and behaviour, and ensuring that Councillors are accountable for their actions. It is important that everyone can have full confidence in the people who are their democratically elected representatives.

As you probably are aware, all District and Parish councillors within Stratford District have signed up to Code of Conduct which, if broken, can result in a complaint being made about them to the national Standards Board. Some complaints are then referred to Stratford District Council's Standards and Ethics Committee who will hear formally the allegations of misconduct and, where appropriate, impose a penalty upon a councillor, which could include suspension.

The need to promote high standards is considered so important that the Council has a Monitoring Officer whose role is to assist in investigating complaints and work with the Standards and Ethics Committee to educate and train councillors on avoiding pitfalls. The emphasis is on helping councillors fulfil their difficult roles. This Committee has spent the last year working on a number of initiatives. These have included a review of the Council's whistle-blowing policy, the introduction of rules for relationships between staff and councillors, reviewing the council's complaints procedure and providing effective training. The success of these initiatives is borne-out in the fact that there has only been two complaints last year considered by the Committee.

However, if you have cause for concern about the behaviour of a member of a District or Parish Council, you should contact **Liz Mansfield, Assistant to the Monitoring Officer**, on **01789 260603**.

Alternatively, you can make a complaint directly to the Standards Board: Contact www.standardsboard.co.uk



Parish get-togethers - Parish liaisons

We have regular evening meetings with Parish & Town Council Chairman and Clerks Liaison meetings. Agendas and Minutes are sent by post to all Parishes and are available electronically if required. Please contact **Alan Sheepy** at alan.sheepy@stratford-dc.gov.uk or telephone **01789 260216**.

One request Parishes did make is to have a contact list of officers in the Council. We duly obliged and have been inundated with requests for more copies. Please contact **Beth Nicholson** in the Corporate Communications Team on **01789 260104** or email beth.nicholson@stratford-dc.gov.uk if you require more copies. When the Parish pages of Stratford-on-Avon District Council's website have been established we will provide this information there too.



Big Lottery Funding

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has been allocated £200,000 by the Big Lottery Fund and this money will be spent on improving the quality and quantity of children's and young people's play opportunities throughout our District. To secure funds we are developing a Play Strategy and need your help to identify projects. For more information, or to have your say by filling out the District Council's survey on the matter, please contact **Chris Wood** by email at chris.wood@stratford-dc.gov.uk or telephone **01789 260640**.

Local Area Agreements

Stratford-on-Avon District Council places great emphasis on partnership working where there is a business case and value is added by this form of working. We are delighted that we have received national awards for our partnerships.

Some years ago all councils had to set up a partnership in this areas to develop a community plan – the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). In Stratford, we call the LSP the Stratford District Partnership. The structure of the LSP has been reviewed and revised as part of the preparations for Warwickshire Local Area Agreement, which was introduced at the start of April 2007.

The Council has undertaken a review of outside bodies to ensure that it only engages with those that contribute and add value towards the Council's objectives, has undertaken a review of partnership working and revised its policy approach.

Meetings - when & where

The District Council, being the Local Planning Authority, hold the District's planning Committees, Parish Councils are encouraged to come to speak at the planning Committees about plans affecting their parishes.

Dates, venues and times of the East and West Area Planning Committees for the next 2 months are listed opposite.

East Area Planning Committee from 05 April 2007 to 15 June 2007

Date	Time	Venue
17 April	18:00	HRI Wellesbourne
8 May	18:00	HRI Wellesbourne
5 June	18:00	HRI Wellesbourne

West Area Planning Committee from 05 April 2007 to 15 June 2007

Date	Time	Venue
19 April	14:00	Elizabeth House
26 April	18:00	Elizabeth House
17 May	18:00	Elizabeth House
14 June	18:00	Elizabeth House

For information on past or future meeting of the District Council, visit our website at: <http://www.stratford.gov.uk/council/meetings.cfm> where you will find information on the District's Area Community Committees, which meet every three months to discuss issues relating to specific areas of the District or call **Committee Services** on **01789 260217**.

Area Community Committees venues to be confirmed

Date	Time	Area
21 June	18:00	Avon
26 June	18:00	Dassett
5 July	18:00	Arden
10 July	18.00	Stour

Can you help?

We publish the Your Review the Council's newsletter 3 times a year which is delivered to every resident in the District.



Do you have local distribution outlets or methods that we could 'tap' into? If so please contact **Beth Nicholson** in the Corporate Communications Team on **01789 260104** or email beth.nicholson@stratford-dc.gov.uk.

Also in each issue we publish a what's on guide - if you have any events in your area let us know we'd be happy to publish details.



Have you found this useful?

Let us have your feedback email corporate.communications@stratford-dc.gov.uk.

If you have any suggestions for items in this newsletter, please contact Corporate Communications by 5 May 2007, the next issue is due in June 2007.

Designed by Design & Print tel 01789 260740 email design@stratford-dc.gov.uk