Ufton Parish Council – 2nd September 2025

District Councillor Report – Susan Ostrander

Headlines:

1. Local Government Reorganisation – Have your say
2. HS2 Road Closures
3. 5 Year Housing Land Supply
4. SDC Silver Award – supporting our Armed Services

1. Local Government Reorganisation – What It Means for Us

The Government has announced the biggest reorganisation of councils in 50 years – but worryingly, it has done so without any independent analysis, proper consultation, or clear plans for funding. Local councils are on the front line of supporting our communities, so it's vital that changes are well thought through.

The **White Paper** launched just before Christmas took many by surprise but attempts to reorganise local government are not new – this is the fourth time different Governments have tried. Most councils across England are now unitaries (including our neighbour, Solihull).

The new **English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill** gives the Secretary of State powers to impose new structures on councils, whether or not local residents and councils agree. That means we either wait to be told what to do – or we seize this rare opportunity to shape the future in a way that works best for Warwickshire.

Changing council structures will inevitably come with costs, which Government should acknowledge and support. Independent research (see Deloitte's report below) carried out by the Warwickshire District Councils shows that the costs and savings are broadly the same whether Warwickshire has:

- **One large unitary council** covering the whole county (population approx. 617,000), or
- **Two smaller unitaries**, with Stratford and Warwick joining together as a South Warwickshire council (population approx. 295,000).

One of the big concerns is how key services such as adult social care would be managed. A recent IMPOWER study found no link between council size and performance in social care. Bigger councils don't necessarily deliver better or more efficient services.

For Stratford-on-Avon District, the **two-unitary model** is the preferred option. We already work closely with Warwick District Council, sharing services such as waste collection and

joint planning through the South Warwickshire Local Plan. A smaller unitary would mean lower councillor-to-resident ratios, closer decision-making, and services that feel less remote.

Local Government Reorganisation will affect every aspect of daily life – from bins and housing to social care, leisure and planning – so it is essential that the views of residents are central to the decision.

Have your say: A public consultation is running **to 14 September 2025**.

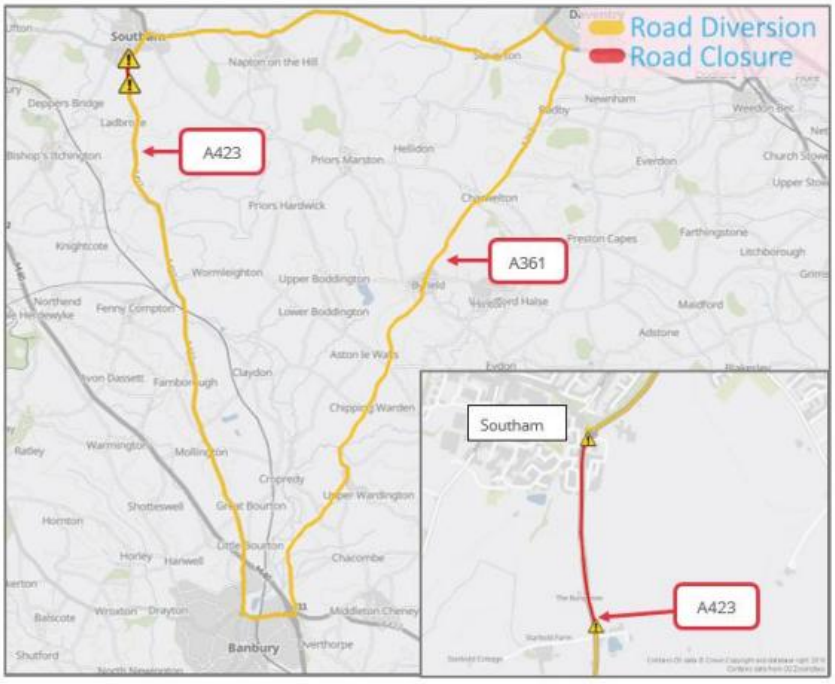
- Read more: *Shaping the Future of our Councils* - Reshaping our Councils for the future of Warwickshire
- Full Deloitte's evaluation: Warwickshire County Council
- Complete the questionnaire online: www.shapingourcouncils.co.uk/get-involved/
- Request a paper copy by calling **01789 267575**

The decisions made now will shape our services for decades to come. Local democracy should be just that – local. Please take the time to share your views.

2. HS2 Road Closures

There will be A423 closures between Ladbroke and Southam during September. This is to complete the installation of a short bypass around the new bridge construction, which is currently being built next to the A423, which will take traffic over the HS2 railway line.

- A423 between Ladbroke and Southam will be closed from 8pm on Friday 5 September to 6am on Monday 22 September 2025. Posted detour:



On opening, the A423 road will have a reduced speed limit of 30mph, in both directions, between Southam to Ladbroke. The bypass will significantly reduce the need for extended closures in this area and will be in operation until the completion of the A423 bridge, expected later in 2026. The disruption whilst regrettable, is less bad than it might have been due to the intervention of councillors and council officers in putting pressure on HS2 and the contractors who intended much longer closures.

The long-scheduled closure of the road between the Fenny Compton Wharf and Priors Hardwick is still due for 'late summer' and will last for up to two years, but it is expected to be further delayed. District and County councillors continues to press for constructive meetings with HS2 and the contractors.

3. Five Year Housing Land Supply

Stratford-on-Avon District Council has released an interim update to its Five-Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) position, reflecting recent changes to national planning policy and a significant increase in Local Housing Need (LHN).

Following the Government's revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and an updated methodology for calculating LHN introduced late last year, the District Council's annual housing requirement has risen from 730 to 1,126 homes per annum.

In response, the District Council has reassessed its housing land supply assumptions, particularly regarding delivery expectations from key sites.

Despite these adjustments, and some challenges from developers, the District Council believes that it continues to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, with the updated position showing a supply equivalent to 5.06 years. This ensures that the Core Strategy retains full weight in the determination of planning applications. The effect of the validity of the Core Strategy is important in ensuring that all applications conform with planning policy and prevent unsuitable developments.
For further details: Five Year Housing Supply | Stratford-on-Avon District Council

4. Silver Award from Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme

And lastly, some good news! Stratford-on-Avon District Council has been presented with the Silver Award from the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS).The prestigious award recognises employers who have actively demonstrated support for the Armed Forces community by implementing policies to help them.

To achieve the Silver award, organisations must proactively demonstrate that the Armed Forces community is not unfairly disadvantaged as part of their recruitment policies.

They must also actively ensure their workforce is aware of their positive policies towards the defence community and understand issues for reservists, veterans, cadet force adult volunteers, and spouses and partners of those serving in the Armed Forces.