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## Warwickshire County Council

### Feldon Division report

July 25

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#### Council issues

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As I have previously advised, the County Council has seen a significant change in political balance following the elections on 1<sup>st</sup> May with the largest party now Reform.

There continues to be limited policy direction from the new Cabinet and so we still look to see what policies and what changes are being proposed. However the scope for significant change is limited in a number of areas because areas such as adult and family social care, together 87% of the budget, and education is proscribed in national legislation and therefore must still be delivered.

Areas of more discretion include highway expenditure, fire and rescue, although WFRS is subject to national inspection, and support for the local economy.

Clearly the change in leadership may well have implications for the direction of travel in relation to the Government's aspirations for unitary authorities.

Most recently the Leader of WCC, appointed at the Annual meeting of the Council, Cllr Rob Howard retired from that role on health grounds and so temporarily the Deputy Leader was acting as Leader until an election for a new Leader took place at the full Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> July. The acting leader, Cllr George Finch, Reform UK, was proposed by Reform UK to be their candidate to take on as Leader.

There were three other candidates for the role, one from each of the three other largest political groups. After two knockout rounds, excluded the Green Party candidate, Cllr J Chilvers and the Conservative Party candidate, Cllr A Warwick, the final contest was between the Reform UK candidate and the Liberal candidate, Cllr J Roodhouse.

As the Rainbow Coalition of LD, Green and Labour members made it clear they did not wish to include the Conservative Group in their coalition, the Conservative Group were not in a position to support Cllr Roodhouse. The Conservative Group therefore abstained. Owing to the absence of both a LD and an independent Clouncillor, the Coalition did not have a majority with only 23 councillors vv 23 members of the Refoirm UK Group, all of whom were present. The resulting draw meant that the Chair, Cllr E Harris, (Reform UK), after expressing concern about his position, cast his Chair's vote in favour of Cllr Finch. Cllr Finch was therefore elected Leader.

Following the election Reform UK proposed that the largest three parties should, as allowed in law and in line with the practice in many other local authorities proposed that the Council should appoint political advisers to the Reform UK, LD and Conservative groups. The vote went to 23 votes for and 23 against, so again the

Chairman had the casting vote and supported the proposal. Reform did not indicate how the appointments cost would be met from the Council budget.

Later in the meeting, there were three notices of motions tabled by opposition parties. The first, to maintain the Climate Change Emergency proposed by the Green Party, with a friendly amendment from the Conservative party, was opposed by Reform UK, but the motion was carried by 32 voted to 22 with one Reform UK abstention. The remaining two, an LD motion, with a friendly amendment from the Conservative party, and a Labour motion were passed unanimously.

Some of you may be aware of a recently reported difference of opinion between the Chief Executive and the former interim Leader of the Council.

It is important to understand that officers and, in particular, senior officers have delegated authority over a wide range of issues. To change those authorities requires a decision of Council and is not within the remit of any individual councillor, or minority party. Comments made to the press from national members of the party, about the suppression of democracy, are inappropriate.

The Government had deferred the very significant challenges about the SEND programmes and funding indicating that the current methodology will be extended for a further year specifically it provides little medium-term clarity about SEND deficits beyond confirming the extension of the Statutory Override until 2027/28.

Councils are promised reform via a Schools White Paper and more about support with deficits and financial pressures via the Local Government Finance Settlement expected in November.

Reform UK made no policy announcements at the Council meeting.

## **HS2**

We watch with interest the impact of a new management team at HS2.

We have had no material update on the 24 month closure of Stoneton Lane, Wormleighton other than it will regrettably be going ahead. The Claydon bridge is nearing completion which will require road closures to allow the new bridge to be tied into the network of local roads. We await dates.

The closure of the A423 at Ladbroke, for tie-in works for the new road bridge is scheduled for later this summer but the timescale has been reduced from a long term closure of up to ten weeks, to a shorter period, by building a temporary by-pass.

## **Highways**

Following the departure of Scott Tomkins, as Director of Highways, last year, the role was filled by David Ayton Hill, Director of Economy and Place since Scott's departure on an interim basis. The Council has now appointed a permanent replacement Richard Fenwick from the beginning of this month. Richard was recruited from Lincolnshire County Council.

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I have already had a number of Teams meeting with Richard to discuss the local infrastructure. Shail Chohan, remains as head of County Highways.

Changes to some of the teams have already been implemented.

The County Council has approved a 4.99% increase in Council tax, comprising 2.99% increase in general services plus a 2% increase in the adult social care surcharge.

	Base Budget	Additional Investment	Budget Reductions	Funding Source	Total
	£'m	£'m	£'m	£'m	£'m
Children and Families	107.5	8.8	( 1.6)		114.7
Education Services	192.6	2.2	( 0.2)		194.5
Economy and Place	23.8	0.5	( 0.7)		23.5
Environment, Planning and Transport	72.6	9.0	( 1.5)		80.1
Fire and Rescue	26.6	0.5	( 0.2)		26.9
Strategic Infrastructure & Climate Change	1.5	-	( 0.0)		1.4
Health and Care Commissioning	8.8	0.3	( 1.3)		7.9
Public Health	25.0	0.6	( 0.4)		25.3
Social Care and Support	215.8	46.8	( 12.5)		250.2
Enabling Services	27.3	2.1	( 0.4)		28.9
Finance	9.2	0.3	( 0.4)		9.1
Strategy, Planning and Governance	6.2	0.2	( 0.1)		6.3
Workforce and Local Services	11.2	0.2	( 0.3)		11.1
Corporate Services – spending	44.0	11.6	( 2.2)		53.5
	772.2	83.1	( 21.8)		833.5
Corporate Services - schools and funding	( 182.8)	-		( 230.1)	( 412.9)
Subtotal	589.4	83.1	( 21.8)		420.7
Contributions to/(from) reserves:-					
Earmarked Reserves	( 1.0)				( 1.0)
General Reserves				( 4.8)	( 4.8)
	588.4	83.1	( 21.8)	( 4.8)	414.8

The overall spend for the Council in 2025/26 is budgeted to be £414.8 million. This compares to a budget of £386.7 million in 2024/25. The largest element of the budget remains social care and support which is £250.2 million (24/25 £225.0 million) or 59%.

## **The Devolution Whitepaper**

WCC has responded to the Devolution white paper indicating that WCC are prepared to work with Central Government to look at options to move forward with the Government's agenda for devolution. The Government has made it clear it is their intention that all two-tier authorities will disappear and will be replaced by single tier unitary authorities over the next three years. The minimum number of residents per authority will be 500,000.

The Council's initial response of an outline proposal of what that newly devolved authority might look like was submitted as required by the 21<sup>st</sup> March with a more detailed proposal to be delivered by Nov 25.

As noted previously, the unitary authorities would then become part of a wider area combined authority. Warwickshire is currently an associate, but not a full, member of the West Midlands Combined Authority

## **Division issues**

I attended the WCC Regulatory Committee to consider the two planning applications for the Biffa site IVC site at Ufton.

After presentations were made the Committee raised questions, replicated my and the Parish's concerns, about smell and flies and, to the frustration of Biffa's head of planning, WCC deferred the decision on both applications until after a site visit has been arranged and further investigation of the issue of smell and flies.

The FRM, the Flooding Team, along with Jeff Hobday are continuing to review the flooding issues at both Willow Grove LI, and Station Road, Fenny Compton.

I am awaiting an update on the timescales for both drainage issues from the FRM team.

My Highways delegated budget is available for any highways work, unlikely to be funded by WCC through normal programmes.

The first window for the Members discretionary grant fund has closed but I have not received details of applications.

**Christopher**

### **Harbury Lane Junction scheme highlighted at awards (X and Facebook)**

The project to improve the safety of an identified accident spot in Leamington Spa has been acclaimed as being among the best examples of civil engineering by the Chartered Institution of Highways.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6283/harbury-lane-junction-scheme-among-schemes-highlighted-at-prestigious-awards>



### **Summer outdoor fire safety (X and Facebook)**

To help enjoy the warm weather and reduce the risk of outdoor fires this summer, Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service has shared some key tips.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6431/stay-fire-safe-outdoors-this-summer>



### **Best Bar None Awards ceremony (X and Facebook)**

Bars and pubs in Leamington Spa and Warwick have received accreditation and won awards in recognition of their track record on safety, training, management, and customer service.

Find out more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6430/cheers-top-warwick-district-pubs-and-venues-celebrated-at-best-bar-none-awards-ceremony>



National Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month (X and Facebook)

A series of free community roadshow events are being held in Warwickshire in June to mark national Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller History Month.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6429/warwickshire-marks-national-gypsy-roma-and-traveller-history-month-with-community-events>



Drowning Prevention Week 2025 (X and Facebook)

New data from Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service has revealed that July sees the highest number of water-related incidents in Warwickshire.

Find out more about staying safe around open water:

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6426/drowning-prevention-week-2025-equipping-young-people-and-enhancing-water-safety>



### **Brighter nights at Victoria Park (X and Facebook)**

Young skaters celebrate new lighting at Victoria Park skate park, Leamington Spa, installed after their determined approach to demonstrate the need to improve safety in the area.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6424/brighter-nights-at-victoria-park-following-request-from-young-people>

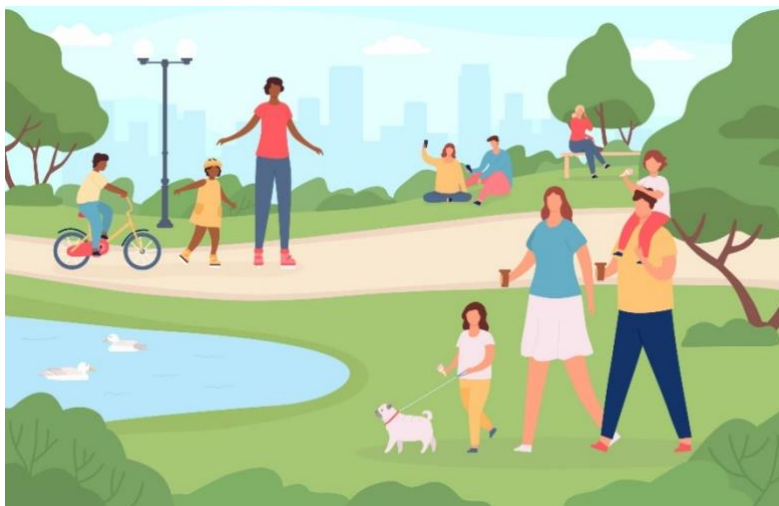


### **Healthy and happy summer 2025 (X and Facebook)**

Eating well and moving more benefits family members of all ages to maintain an active lifestyle and sustain good physical and mental health and we have plenty of places to explore and ideas and information to keep people on the right track.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6432/support-for-warwickshire-families-to-stay-healthy-and-happy-this-summer>



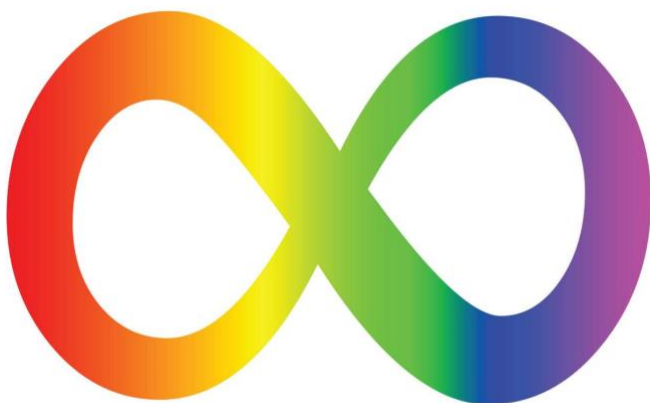


**Help shape Autism support in Coventry and Warwickshire (X and Facebook)**

People with experience of autism services in Coventry and Warwickshire are being asked to share their views.

Find out more and have your say:

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6434/help-shape-the-future-of-autism-support-in-coventry-and-warwickshire->



**Child Friendly Trail now open at Pooley Country Park (X and Facebook)**

Families visiting Pooley Country Park this summer can enjoy a brand-new Child Friendly Trail – free to take part in and designed to help little adventurers explore the park in a fun and interactive way.

Discover more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6435/new-child-friendly-trail-now-open-at-pooley-country-park>





### **Have your say on local transport services (X and Facebook)**

Warwickshire County Council is calling on residents to have their say in the 2025 National Highways and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey, which began rolling out from 6 June 2025.

Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6436/warwickshire-resident-invited-to-have-their-say-on-local-transport-services>



### **Innovative drainage system introduced in Warwick (X and Facebook)**

An innovative sustainable drainage system is being implemented as part of the A452 Myton/Queensway roundabouts improvement scheme.

Find out more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6437/innovative-sustainable-drainage-system-introduced-in-warwick-to-help-prevent-future-flooding->



### **Solicitor recognised for significant contribution (X and Facebook)**

**Peter Endall, a Senior Solicitor at WCC has been recognised in the prestigious Lawyers in Local Government Awards 2025 for his dedication and expertise over 34 years in his role within the law sector.**

**Read more: <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/6438/warwickshire-county-council-solicitor-recognised-for-significant-contribution-to-local-government>**

