



## Warwickshire County Council

### Councillor's annual report for 2025/26 for the Feldon Division

Whilst there has been some headlines about the change in political control at the County Council following the May 25 elections, the everyday task carried out by Councillors and County Officers has continued unchanged.

The County Council provides a wide range of services, from those that effect most residents, some on a day to day basis, to other services, particularly supporting those in need, which do not hit the headlines, until something goes wrong, but absorb significant resources in both staff time and finance.

The overall annual budget for the Council, agreed on 17<sup>th</sup> February 26, was for expenditure of £702 million for the year 2026/27.

The biggest area of expenditure is in adult social care, budgeted at £274 million, followed by care for children and families at £132 million, together being £406 million or 58% of the overall annual budget. Much of social care support is mandated in law and is demand led, with the Council having little opportunity to reduce demand.

Cost management is therefore limited to better and more efficient service delivery. However, the challenge is exacerbated by the very individual nature of the support needed.

The third largest area of expenditure is school transport. Along with some subsidised bus services, the overall cost of transport services is £70.4m.

Expenditure on those areas affecting the majority of residents, such as the Fire and Rescue service - £27.8m, Public Health - £28.8m, Highways - £17.8m and Waste management - £22.1m, total £96.5m.

Whilst every resident has their own idea of expenditure priorities, balancing the budget is extremely challenging trying to meet the competing demands the Council faces, not least given the continuing and growing demand, for those statutory services, the Council provides.

#### **Cllrs Discretionary budget**

On of the ways of alleviating some of the challenges, for small parish led improvements, is through the use of my Highways Discretionary budget.



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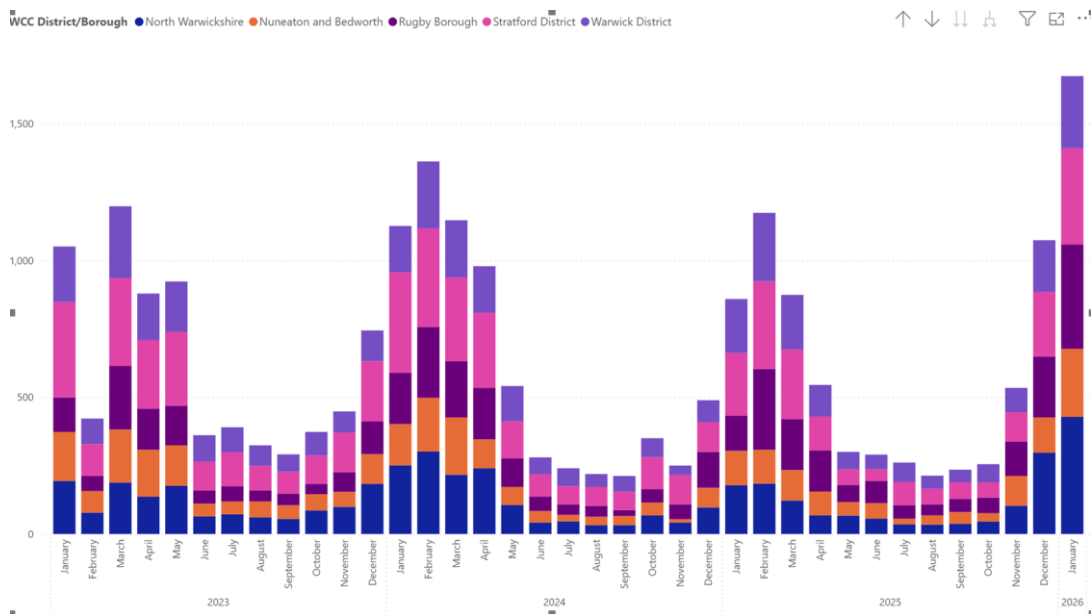
Over the past twelve months works have either been completed or submitted to officers for approval in Bishops Itchington, Farnborough, Fenny Compton, Harbury, Long Itchington and Priors Marston. Schemes currently waiting to be started include the widening of the existing footpath alongside Station Road, Fenny Compton and addressing flooding opposite the Church in Long Itchington.

I have also submitted bids from the HS2 Highways Safety Fund for a number of different sites across the Division. The decision on the allocation of the remaining monies in this fund have yet to be made.

An area of concern for many residents has been the number of potholes on the road network, particularly over the past four months.

The combination of the continual and heavy rain interspersed with short periods of freezing conditions, the snow ploughs were mounted for the first time in seven years, has caused severe damage to the road network.

The number of potholes reported in Jan 26 has been the highest of any month over the past three years, see below. Whilst some of these public reports are duplicates of the same defects, the increase in the number of potholes on the highway network is real. In response to this, WCC has increased its gang resource to 15 gangs in the north of the county and 14 gangs in the south, on site, with 2 tonnes of tarmac per day, working weekends and extra hours.



Other than highway and footpath repairs, one of the other key areas that has been addressed on the highway affected by surface water flooding.

Significant improvements were made to drainage in Fenny Compton, where a key culvert crossing Station Road was found to be blocked resulting in flooding across the road. In Long Itchington, the flood risk team undertook an investigation of flooding off the Marton Road, where they found that a major culvert had been blocked by a developer installing a post for a new boundary fence. After many months, the developer accepted responsibility and dug up and removed the post repairing the culvert. This led to an immediate improvement.



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Over the summer, I identified that the gully cleaning program had, for operational reasons, been changed, impacting mostly rural villages, from a significant proportion of gullies being cleaned once every two years, to once every three years. As a result, as part of the annual budget negotiations for 26/27, I put forward an amendment to the budget, that was accepted, to provide an extra £180,000 to reinstate the previous two yearly program across the County.

One of the repeated concerns from residents has been road closures by utility companies. Clearly when a water main bursts, it needs to be repaired as soon as possible, not least to prevent the risk of flooding to neighbouring properties. However, the delays, after the initial problem has been resolved, cause frustration to residents and passing motorists. I have challenged Severn Trent a number of times to improve the speed of reinstatement and reduce lengthy, and sometimes inappropriate, diversions for drivers.

HS2 and its constructions have become a major part of the lives of those residents living in affected villages, which, in the Feldon Division, includes most villages, from Long Itchington in the North, to Wormleighton, Priors Hardwick and Priors Marston. I meet with managers of both BBV, for north of Southam, and EKFB, south to the County boundary, on a regular basis to raise concerns of residents and seek to mitigate the impact of the works on residents' daily lives. Our MP, Sir Jeremy Wright is kept fully briefed on those concerns and, working with Councillors, regularly contacts construction companies as well.

Clearly the track has to be completed, and there will be disruption, but meeting with the new Chief Executive of HS2, Mark Wild, in December, and subsequently one of his deputies, he is now aware of the impact on communities and has indicated a wish to try to reduce that impact where possible. I have also met with the HS2 Construction Commissioner and raised the same concerns.

Helping residents with their personal cases is confidential and so I will not share individual cases but they include SEND support, access to schools, and school places, transport to schools and access to social care.

In addition, I chair the Warwickshire Local Government Pension Scheme Investment Committee, and from that role, I was elected in September to chair the Joint Committee of the 18 LGPS pension schemes that are part of the Border to Coast Pooling Partnership, the fund manager for those schemes. Border to Coast now manage the investment funds of approximately 2 million LGPS members, across those 18 authorities.

It has been a busy year supporting eleven parishes and I endeavour and will continue to attend as many Parish Council meetings every month as possible working with Parish and District Councillors.

Regards

**Christopher Kettle**