

Chief's Intro

Thank you for all your very positive and constructive comments we have received following the issue of the first Parish Newsletter. Below are examples of quotes:-

“Congratulations to everyone on the first edition of Parish Talk”.

“Most worthwhile”.

“A great initiative”.

“Well done to all, this looks good”.

“I've just read the latest edition of Parish Talk. My immediate reaction is that it is misnamed - it should be District Talk.....”

It would be valuable if Parish Talk detailed significant issues and events at parish level”.

Editor's note – we had to start somewhere and hopefully there will be more 2-way involvement in future issues- that's why we have started this newsletter! We have had some ideas for future articles and some parishes have said they will contribute and write articles in the future, but couldn't manage the deadline this time around. We want this to be as much your newsletter as it is ours, so if you have anything you would like us to share with other parishes let us know by email corporate.communications@stratford-dc.gov.uk.

It is always good to receive feedback good and bad! If we don't know your views, how can we do anything about it?

June is a critical month for the District Council as we have our CPA inspection by the Audit Commission. One of our ambitions is to achieve excellence. We have been trying to improve rapidly since our last inspection in 2004 to ensure we give our public the services and Council they deserve. Community priorities are being addressed through the Corporate Strategy, which is leading to better outcomes, which residents are recognising.

We are on our way for a 'Cleaner, Greener, Safer Road to Excellence, and hope we can work with Parishes to achieve this too.

Regards



Paul Lankester, Chief Executive





Election News

[Link to elections results](#)

[Link to new Executive structure](#)

It barely seems possible that a month has passed since the District and Parish Council elections. Firstly I apologise to any of the Parishes involved for the events on election night. As you may have read in the local media or even have been there, the Stratford District count was suspended due to the length of time the count was taking by using the pilot electronic counting system. Without getting too technical (because I am not sure I understand it either!) the technology was so sensitive, it was picking up large amount of ballots 'for adjudication' that all needed to be viewed separately on screen. Out of necessity the machines had to be very accurate and were set up to detect any extra marks on the ballot papers. The system was similar to that used for checking passport applications by the passport office. It meant any extra marks including paper folds - mainly from the postal votes - were sent for adjudication.

I decided to abandon the District Count in the early hours of Friday morning after discussing the matter with party agents and decided to resume with a manual count in the morning.

There was nothing wrong with the electronic counting machines and these types of machines are highly efficient, where there are multiple candidate elections and the district parishes were counted using these machines, with very quick results.

We were able to declare one District ward, Bidford & Salford and one Warwick District Ward, Leek Wootton and all four parishes using the machinery.

There had been numerous demonstrations and testings of the machines but we were unable to predict what happened on the night. We are making a full report to the DCA on the problems encountered during this pilot.

Lastly I would like to thank all my staff, who remained professional throughout these proceedings and were quick to rally round to provide the necessary support needed for a manual count the next day. And for all those that remained at base to keep the Council running when others were absent - dedication indeed.

After the elections the current political make up of the Council is:

Conservative - 37 councillors
Liberal Democrats - 14 councillors
Independents - 2 councillors

Comprehensive Performance Assessment - CPA

What is CPA?

CPA is an independent assessment of every council, carried out by the Audit Commission. Back in 2004 the District Council was categorised as 'weak'.

The new CPA exam is tougher, focussing on:-

- understanding the customer
- recognising diversity
- partnership working
- what difference we are making to the community (outcomes and impacts)

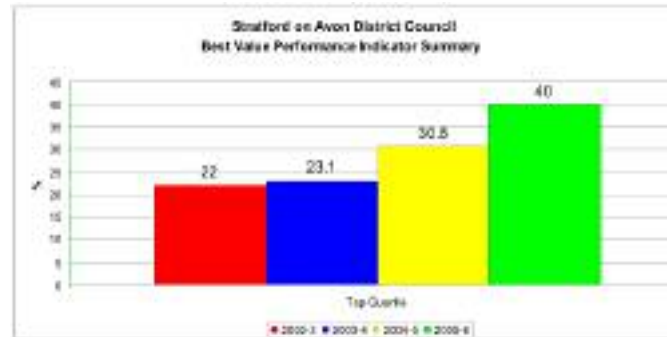
A better CPA results means less inspections, more capacity, improved reputation and we regain our ability to trade our services.

Going from 'Weak' to our target of 'Good' will be a major achievement but the Council has changed a lot in the last three years.

We have sent our [self-assessment](#) document to the Audit Commission. This follows a set format designed by the Audit Commission and answers the CPA theme questions on Ambition, Prioritisation, Capacity, Performance Management and Achievement & Improvement. To find out more about the Audit Commission inspection visit www.auditcommission.gov.uk and click on the section for District Councils.

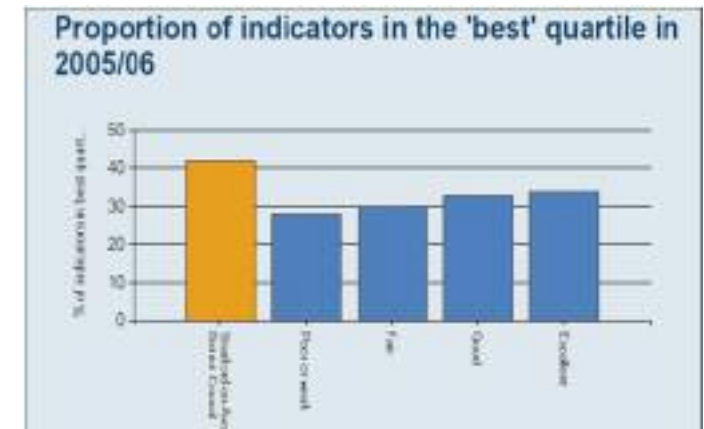
What has been achieved in priorities and services?

- Our Corporate Strategy is being delivered and achieved.
- The Council's Improvement Plan is being delivered.
- Customer Satisfaction has improved (Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) & Best Value Satisfaction Survey (BVSS) results are evidence of that in all services, especially priority areas across the Council as a whole (bucking the national trend). [GRAPH 1](#)

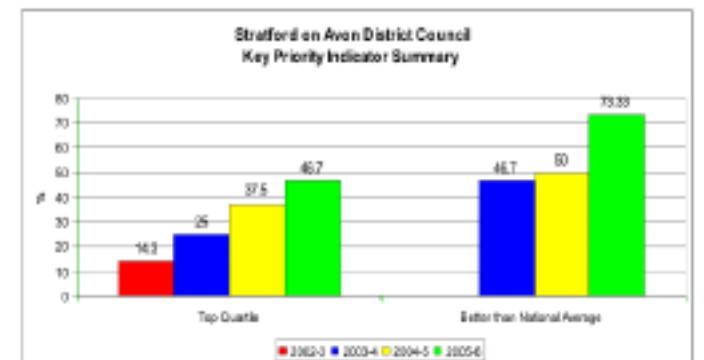


GRAPH 1

- Best Value Performance Indicator's (BVPI) improved year on year and now better than 'excellent' councils. [GRAPHS 1 & 2](#)
- KPI's – almost half in top quartile and three-quarters above national average. [GRAPH 3](#)



GRAPH 2



GRAPH 3

Corporate Strategy Priorities

What we've achieved for Safer & Healthier Communities

Crime

- Cut crime by 0.8%
- Installed CCTV in Wellesbourne
- Obtained British Standard Award for CCTV
- Achieved 13 Safer Car Park awards
- 66% of residents agreed 'the Council is working to make the area safer'
- 90.6% feel safe when outside during the day (up 6.4%)
- 57.5% feel safe when outside after dark (up 8%)
- Anti-social behavior reduced in all categories

Health & Leisure

- 976 people stopped smoking
- Achieved various awards for 'No Smoking Day' campaigns
- 42 businesses helped to achieve National Clean Air Awards, plus Silver awards for Council buildings
- Built/refurbished all leisure centres in last 3 years
- Achieved 5 QUEST awards (one for each leisure centre and 1 for sports development)
- 20% increase in number of people taking part in leisure activities
- Customer satisfaction with leisure has increased to 62% (up 9%)

What we've achieved for Sustainable Communities

Climate Change & Recycling

- Improved energy efficiency in homes by 26.13% - highest rate in Coventry, Warwickshire and Worcestershire
- Recycled 40% of household waste
- 8/10 people use recycling box
- 2 out of 3 use green bin
- Customer satisfaction with doorstep recycling increased to 84% (up 1%)

Housing

- 253 affordable homes since 2005
- 'Good' service with 'promising prospects for improvement' – AC inspection of service
- No homeless families in B&B for more than 1 week
- Reduced spending on homelessness and B&B from £350,000 to £37,000 over 3 years
- Customer satisfaction for housing increased to 71.9% (up 3.3%)

What we've achieved for Inclusive Communities

Access to services

- Progressing plans for one-stop-shop in Southam
- Introduced FLAME - a travelling one-stop-shop
- Achieved national E-gov award for Warwickshire Direct partnership for shared services
- 100% of Council services are available electronically
- Achieved regional 'centre of excellence' status for Digital Challenge
- All Council buildings are DDA compliant

Inclusive society

- Set up Youth Council to give young people a say
- Helped 177 residents obtain benefits totalling £204,000. Recently worked with Warwickshire Welfare Rights to secure over £1m of extra benefit for local residents
- Introduced Community Links 'door-to-door' transport scheme for elderly or infirm, supporting 10,345 passenger journeys

As you can see we are delivering our priorities on the things that matter most to our residents.

We are making a real difference to lives of people within our communities.

How to get involved

The District Council is here to provide good services for residents and visitors and it is important that these closely match what individuals and people within our communities need. To do this, we listen very carefully to what they tell us and their views and comments help shape the services the Council provides and the way they are delivered. This is how you can become better informed and get involved in helping us to run the Council.

Obtaining information about what the Council is doing

- Website - contains regularly updated information about the work of the Your Council, including details about meetings and recent news, visit www.stratford.gov.uk
- Council publications & leaflets – Your Council produces many publications that contain a wealth of useful information. These are available online, and at our offices.
- Meetings - come and see democracy in action – for further information and the calendar of meetings, contact the Committee Team on 01789 260216 or visit the website.
- Local news media - listen to local radio and read the local press.
- Talk to Your Local Councillor - to find out how to contact them, call 01789 260218 or look at our website. Many Councillors hold local surgeries.

Get Involved

- Vote at every Election - residents directly elect all of our Councillors and they are accountable to you.
- Tell us what you think about our services - write, e-mail or telephone us. On our website you have a direct link to the Leader, just click “Ask the Leader”.
- Ask questions at our meetings - We have Area Community Committees and Area Planning Committees that meet in places around the District. For further details contact 01789 260216.
- Use our Complaints, Compliments and Comments procedure - whilst we try very hard, we do not always get things right, so tell us. Equally tell us what you do like and let us have your ideas. Leaflets are available in Council Offices, libraries and on-line.
- Surveys - Please complete and return any customer surveys that we send to you. This gives Your Council a very clear indication of what residents think generally about the Council’s services.
- Citizens Panel - made up of around 1,200 residents that are changed regularly.

- Feed your views into our Overview & Scrutiny Committees - these are two of the Council’s bodies that drive forward continual improvement. If you have any suggestions about improving services or doing things better, please contact the Council 01789 260802 or e-mail these to Strategic Director, Dave Nash, dave.nash@stratford-dc.gov.uk
- Stand for Election - if you are interested in becoming a Councillor, contact the Elections Office 01789 260209.

The Council works closely in partnership with many other organisations and agencies, such as the NHS and the County Council, delivering services to District residents. As such, the Council has a lot of influence over how services generally are delivered to you and your involvement can contribute to this bigger picture.

Member Development and Training

Training and development is important within any organisation to ensure that people have the necessary skills to perform their jobs well. Also, it helps to ensure that there is continual improvement in what is being achieved.

The Council is fully committed to this and this is reflected by its signing-up to the West Midlands Members' Development Charter. This Charter is something that is focussed specifically upon giving District Councillors the skills to represent their communities effectively and manage the running of the Council.

This has involved a range of training initiatives being delivered to Councillors including such things as chairing meetings, the new laws on licensing and dealing with planning applications.

The Council recognises that its Councillors, as elected representatives from within the District, need to be properly supported in their often difficult and complex job. Training is extended to Parish Councils where possible and the Parish Liaison meetings have provided a useful forum for this training.

This investment in training will promote the Council's ambition to provide the highest standards in decision-making and services delivery to residents of the District who deserve the best.

What's on guide around the Parishes

Saturday 23 and 24 June - afternoons Harbury Open Garden Walkabout

More than 20 houses, some small, some grand!
For more information, email: clerk@harbury-parish.co.uk

Sunday 1 July – Sunday 19 August Stratford Poetry Festival

in various Stratford-upon-Avon venues

Most summer Sundays - and now a few extra days during the week. For more information call (01789) 204016 or visit the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust website at: <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/content/view/414/414/>

Saturday 4 August - 2pm Avon Dassett Village Fete, Lower Field Avon Dassett

Amongst the attractions for this years fete there will be the ever popular 'Fun Dog Show' and back by popular demand 'Kineton Quackers' and 'Napton Water Buffalo'. There will also be a licensed bar, teas and cakes, childrens rides, tombola, face painting, wellie wanging, skittles, coconut shy, jousting ride, books, brick-a brack, antiques, jewellery, classic cars, plants, Grand Raffle, crafts and lots more. Entrance and parking are free. Donations welcomed. For more information please contact Jill Burgess, email: jburgess22@tiscali.co.uk

Helping us

Do you have a local village fete or carnival? If you do please let us know by contacting Beth Nicholson in Corporate Communications on 01789 260104 or email beth.nicholson@stratford-dc.gov.uk



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 9 July 2007, the next issue is due in August 2007.

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