

# Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday 7 February 2024  
Time: 2.00 pm  
Venue: Committee Room 2, Shire Hall

## Membership

Councillor Jeff Clarke (Chair)  
Councillor Jonathan Chilvers (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Sarah Feeney  
Councillor Jenny Fradgley  
Councillor Peter Gilbert  
Councillor Dave Humphreys  
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher  
Councillor Daren Pemberton  
Councillor Mejar Singh  
Councillor Andrew Wright

Items on the agenda: -

## 1. General

### (1) Apologies

### (2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

### (3) Chair's Announcements

### (4) Minutes of Previous Meeting

5 - 14

To receive the minutes of the committee meeting held on 15 November 2023.

## 2. Public Speaking

## 3. Questions to Portfolio Holder

15 - 16

Up to 30 minutes of the meeting is available for members of the Committee to put questions to the Portfolio Holders on any matters relevant to the remit of this Committee.

### (1) Economic Development Update

17 - 32

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|---|---------|
| <b>4. Futures and State of Warwickshire</b>   | 33 - 38 |
| The Committee is invited to review and comment on the Futures and State of Warwickshire report. |         |
| <b>5. Communities OSC Work Programme</b>  | 39 - 42 |
| <b>6. Urgent Items</b>  |         |

**Monica Fogarty**  
Chief Executive  
Warwickshire County Council  
Shire Hall, Warwick

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### Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Members are required to register their disclosable pecuniary interests within 28 days of their election of appointment to the Council. Any changes to matters registered or new matters that require to be registered must be notified to the Monitoring Officer as soon as practicable after they arise.

A member attending a meeting where a matter arises in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest must (unless they have a dispensation):

- Declare the interest if they have not already registered it
- Not participate in any discussion or vote
- Leave the meeting room until the matter has been dealt with
- Give written notice of any unregistered interest to the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting

Non-pecuniary interests relevant to the agenda should be declared at the commencement of the meeting.

The public reports referred to are available on the Warwickshire Web  
<https://democracy.warwickshire.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1>

### Public Speaking

Any member of the public who is resident or working in Warwickshire, or who is in receipt of services from the Council, may speak at the meeting for up to three minutes on any matter within the remit of the Committee. This can be in the form of a statement or a question. If you wish to speak please notify Democratic Services in writing at least two working days before the meeting. You should give your name and address and the subject upon which you wish to speak. Full details of the public speaking scheme are set out in the Council's Standing Orders.

### COVID-19 Pandemic

Any member or officer of the Council or any person attending this meeting must inform Democratic Services if within a week of the meeting they discover they have COVID-19 or have been in close proximity to anyone found to have COVID-19.

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# Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 15 November 2023

## Minutes

### Attendance

#### Committee Members

Councillor Jeff Clarke (Chair)  
Councillor Jenny Fradgley  
Councillor Peter Gilbert  
Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher  
Councillor Daren Pemberton  
Councillor Andrew Wright  
Councillor Marian Humphreys  
Councillor Jackie D'Arcy

#### Other Members

Councillor Martin Watson (Portfolio Holder for Economy)  
Councillor Jan Matecki (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning)  
Councillor Heather Timms (Portfolio Holder for Environment, Climate and Culture)  
Councillor Andy Crump (Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Communities)  
Councillor Tim Sinclair

#### Officers

Mark Ryder, Executive Director for Communities  
Steve Smith, Director for Strategic Infrastructure and Climate Change  
Shail Chohan, Head of County Highways  
Isobel Woods, Head of Economy and Skills  
Tristan Hall, Delivery Lead - Projects and Programme Management  
Claire Naidoo, Performance Analysis  
Nicole Conway, Democratic Services Officer  
Paul Spencer, Senior Democratic Services Officer

#### Others Present

Andy Mitchell (Press)

## **1. General**

### **(1) Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Dave Humphreys and Councillor Sarah Feeney; Councillor Marian Humphreys and Councillor Jackie D'Arcy were present as substitutes.

Apologies were also received from Councillor Jonathan Chilvers, Councillor Pete Gilbert, and Councillor Mejar Singh

### **(2) Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

None disclosed.

### **(3) Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed Andy Mitchell from the press and notified all present that the meeting was being webcast.

### **(4) Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record by the Committee.

## **2. Public Speaking**

None.

## **3. Questions to Portfolio Holder**

The Chair asked Councillor Matecki (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) to hold a meeting with the Chair and residents of Long Shoot in relation to the proposed Hinkley to Nuneaton cycle route. Councillor Matecki agreed to this meeting and advised that they will need to work out a way to have all residents included. The Chair agreed to this.

### **(1) Economic Development Update**

Isobel Woods (Head of Economy and Skills) highlighted the following points from the Economic Update Report:

- The latest round of digital and creative funding had closed, having attracted interest from around the county, it had now progressed to the award stage with funds being allocated to businesses.
- Performance had been good across the three pillars of the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund (WRIF), including improved traction for the Business Investment and Growth (BIG) Fund.
- A range of new Business Support packages had been launched following collaboration

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with district and borough councils on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). These programmes were launched on the week that commenced 27 November 2023, providing total funding of £2.8m. The aim is to support 500 businesses and create and protect 400 jobs. The programmes were projected to save approximately 12,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas. This was linked to a new inclusive sustainable programme funded by the Department for Energy, Science and Net Zero (DESNZ) in conjunction with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) enabling better access for businesses to grants and energy audits.

- The Fair Chance Programme had been launched in September 2023, providing practical advice to businesses on approaches to support workforce inclusivity and diversity. To date, the scheme had identified 27 live vacancies. The Council will continue to work with businesses to promote the service.
- The Warwickshire Careers Hub launched in September 2023 having been transferred to the Council following the closure of the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP). Three advisors support schools and Further Education colleges with career advice.
- Since its launch in early 2023, the Supported Employment Service had supported 26 individuals into paid work and will continue.
- The Future Skills Fund had recently been established to provide dedicated support to businesses in emerging sectors.
- Investment into the Warwickshire Business Centres is underway with the refurbishment of communal areas for tenants and reception areas to attract new tenants. A recent 10% uplift in rents was noted with expected rental income to be c.£500,000 from the centres.
- Innovation Launchpad funding had been awarded to both Warwickshire and Coventry to support the provision of immersive and creative technology to generate funds to drive innovation and technological development. The initiative was launched in October 2023 and is set to run until March 2024 (although it is expected that the project would continue to be supported independently for a further two years beyond the original funding).
- Warwickshire Place and Partnership - partnership discussions have taken place between Warwick District Council and Warwick Town Council to look at a future master plan for Warwick town centre. The Coventry and Warwickshire Foodie Awards 2023 had been held with 60% nominations from Warwickshire covering all areas of the food industry with three Warwickshire winners on the night.

Members discussed the following points:

- Councillor M Humphreys asked if there were a list of schools the advisors would attend or did schools need to request a visit? Isobel Woods (Head of Economy and Skills) replied that the Hub was launched in September 2023 with three advisers looking at how to outreach across the county. Isobel Woods advised that the question would be investigated, and she would come back with a reply. The Chair requested that the reply be sent to all members. Mark Ryder (Executive Director for Communities) added that being an Academy was not a barrier to accessing this programme.
- In response to the Chair, Isobel Woods replied that Warwickshire County Council would like to support local businesses across the centres and work with those who identify concerns. However, there is a need to ensure that there is a balance. Reviews have been underway to bring rents in line with commercial rent rates. The

Council is committed to working closely with businesses to ensure they are resilient and sustainable, keeping in mind that it is a public resource that has been provided. Business tenants are also provided support via Business Support advisors and other services.

In response to Councillor Fradgley, Mark Ryder (Executive Director for Communities) reassured members that any businesses who were under pressure due to any of the changes or reviews have been encouraged and welcomed to contact the Council for discussions and there have been some businesses who have already engaged the Council. If any members are approached by businesses who are in difficulty, they should be referred to the Economy & Skills team.

Mark Ryder continued discussing business' movement at the Hub stating that the Council was seeing a higher proportion of businesses staying longer than originally planned. Councillor Watson (Portfolio Holder for Economy) added that the business centres had been set up for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) and some rental agreements originally set up were unfavourable for the Council and a poor return on public finances therefore a review needed to be completed, and for some of those there was a higher increase. However, it was important that the centres had turned over as it is fostering development and progression of these businesses.

Councillor Pemberton made comment and requested that officers look at an offer to support both businesses that were wanting to grow and move on in addition to one for those businesses who were stable and content to stay the way they are, with the understanding that the Council is in a unique position to support these businesses and assist the local economy. The Chair agreed and advised that was a point well-made and the Council needs to find a way of accommodating those businesses. Mark Ryder (Executive Director for Communities) also commented stating that the Council needed to do more to recognise the balance that not all businesses are on the same growth trajectory. Much of the support that the Council offers with its programmes is around growth and diversity. The Growth Hub is there to offer support to these businesses.

The Chair added that he welcomed investments to stimulate growth and development of these new centres but would like to remind officers to keep existing buildings maintained.

## **(2) EDS Update**

Tristan Hall (Delivery Lead - Project and Programme Management) made the following points on the EDS Dashboard:

- Avon Mill. This project had progressed well. The Department of Transport (DfT) had previously agreed to fund a large portion of this, and a recent funding announcement means that an even greater proportion of the Council's anticipated capital costs will now be DfT funded. The development of a public engagement plan prior to the planning application has moved forward. The planning application has continued to progress. Flood modelling was submitted to the Environment Agency (EA) for review and comment. The conclusion of the flood modelling and agreement with the EA remains the largest current risk to commencing the construction work on programme. Warwickshire County Council continues to engage with the EA around this.



- A47 Hinckley Road Scheme (Long Shoot). This scheme had made progress however it had been recognised that further engagement with members and other stakeholders is required.
- St Johns Road. Due to the high number of works in progress in the Warwick and Leamington Spa area further negotiation on road space to get onto the network needs to be undertaken and this is impacting our ability to commence construction works. The design has progressed well and a budget redevelopment plan to include inflation has been recommended.
- Bermuda Connectivity. Positive news was reported with the new bridge open to pedestrians and cyclists, with vehicular traffic to be introduced by early next calendar year.
- Greenman Crossroads. This scheme had been in development for a long period of time. This project was in the final stages of completion however there were some concerns around the signage aspects. This last part of the project needs to be pushed through as quickly as possible to bring it to conclusion.

The following questions and comments were submitted, with responses provided as indicated:

In response to Councillor M Humphreys, who asked a question regarding Greenman crossroads, Councillor Matecki (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) agreed that signage had been an issue. However more signage had been put in place not only at the junction but also in the lead up to the junction giving motorists advanced warning. Councillor Watson (Portfolio Holder for Economy) added that this had been a great scheme however it had not been completed fully with remedial works required. The Chair agreed that signage needed to be updated and fixed as soon as possible.

In response to Councillor D'Arcy, who asked about when a public inquiry in Shall Hall 2024 would be advertised. Tristan Hall advised that he would take the question away and report back to the Committee at a later date with a response.

Councillor M Humphreys commented on the Eastboro Way pedestrian crossing. The Chair asked for clarification and questioned if there were any planned light installation on the Eastboro Way/Crow Hill junction rather than just a pedestrian crossing. Tristan Hall advised he would investigate this and would report back to the Committee.

Councillor Fradgley commented that Phase 2 of Birmingham Road was due to start soon and requested that Phase 3 commenced right after Phase 2's completion without a long gap in between the two. The road was unsafe and dangerous to cyclists. Councillor Tim Sinclair endorsed Councillor Fradgley's comment and remarked that this work was essential and needed to be implemented quickly and/or impressive roadworks needed to be undertaken. Tristan Hall acknowledged the points. The ultimate decision maker was the network management team with input from the various project sponsors. He was making the case to those who made the decision bearing in mind that there were lots of different areas that needed consulting for this to be done. Mark Ryder (Executive director for Communities) also commented, adding that he was happy to engage with network management.

#### 4. Delegated Budget Schemes

Shail Chohan (Head of County Highways) introduced this item, drawing out key aspects of the report.:

##### Updates to members

- A monthly spreadsheet has been sent to all members including scheme details. A new, member specific spreadsheet, has now been created to allow members to see details specific to schemes, making it clearer to understand. Improvement on the information around finance has made it clearer about what funds have been used and what remains available.
- Appendix 2 details a draft of a “shopping list” which contains the estimated costs of common, delegated budget items. This should assist members in the early estimations of what scheme costs.
- Progression had been made on the Highways Communities Action Fund. This is a website in the build phase and has not been launched yet. It is a match funding scheme allowing Parishes and other groups to bid for up to 50% of funding for repairs to Highways improvement works locally.
- County Highways have worked with Balfour Beatty to identify a dedicated resource to deal solely with Delegated Budgets to improve communication, planning and programme dates.

Shail Chohan confirmed that the County Highways team produced a shopping list (shown at appendix 2 of the report) with recommendations that members work with their highway area surveyors in the final quarter of each financial year to confirm what they would like delivered the following year. In May 2024 a list of the requests will be sent to the contractor allowing them to pre-plan and programme works, allowing them to start the works much earlier.

Shail Chohan referred members to Appendix 1 of the report which details the increase in delivery of schemes over the last four years and the forecast to continue that increasing trend.

Councillor Jan Matecki stated that members needed to be more focused on what they could and could not have. There had been complaints and issues with some members not engaging enough and others over engaging which had impacted on officer time. Hopefully the shopping list will free up officer time and give an idea of funding requirements. Funds have to be allocated in the year they were requested. There would be some changes which would help these projects to be delivered within the required time frame.

Councillor Pemberton referred to the shopping list, requesting that his comments be noted in the minutes. He stated that there needed to be more coherence between officers and members, and better communication. There needed to be a clearer outline of what was going to be delivered, when and how it was going to be delivered to the taxpayers, who were the customers. He asked how the Council was going to be smarter at doing this and be more integrated? Councillor Pemberton considered he could not be the only member experiencing this and the officers were being hindered in doing a better job by this system.

In response to Councillor Pemberton, Councillor Matecki (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) stated that the shopping list would assist with managing delivery and expectations. The shopping list would outline the costs involved before it was sent to officers. Not every scheme

would be approved however a reason would be sent back if this is the case. The Council was looking at a more can-do approach with members.

Mark Ryder (Executive Director for Communities) acknowledged that there had been issues with the scheme and that these had been listened to. He acknowledged that the Council was the end user and had to be looking across the whole service. Changes had been implemented since 2020 and the delivery of schemes had increase immensely. With the implementation being led by the Portfolio Holder of Transport and Planning. Mark Ryder reiterated that concerns had being listened to and there would be areas to improve on.

Councillor Fradgley commented on the shopping list saying it would be very useful. Shail Chohan (Head of County Highways) added that he would take the information back to his team for investigation and would come back with further information. Councillor Matecki (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) offered his support to members experiencing any delays with projects and would liaise with the relevant officers.

In response to Councillor Wright, Shail Chohan advised that much of the work taken on by Balfour Beatty had been sub-contracted out. The price of the work would remain the same regardless of what Balfour Beatty paid their sub-contractor. Only a small minority of jobs would have price changes. Councillor Wright was not convinced the pricing was competitive. Shail Chohan replied stating that the tender had been completed in 2016 following standard procurement rules. He offered to speak with the councillor directly on the matter.

Councillor M Humphreys commented that the crossing at Birchwood school was still on hold. Mark Ryder (Executive Director for Communities) would investigate and reply directly to the councillor.

Councillor Watson (Portfolio Holder for Economy) agreed that the shopping list was very useful. He noted that VAS (vehicle activate signs) had been listed and sought clarification on whether such schemes were still provided. Shail Chohan advised that the Council could install vehicle activated signs however they had to be aligned with policy and meet certain criteria.

Councillor Sinclair asked about the differences in costs between patching and resurfacing a roadway, Shail Chohan advised that it was the technique used. Patching roads was a higher labour and resource cost than that used to resurface.

Councillor Fradgley questioned that the cost of a sign was on the shopping list but not the cost of a post. Shail Chohan replied that he would take the question away and investigate and have the extra detail added to the shopping list. A cost of a signage post would depend on where it is located as highspeed areas needed to meet certain criteria.

Councillor Matecki (Portfolio Holder for Transport and Planning) added that this was not the final draft of the shopping list, and it would be refined.

The Chair asked for clarification on the variance of costs for the same item, Councillor Matecki stated that as part of the refinement of the shopping list, some aspects would be modified to make them easier to understand. Shail Chohan added that the final shopping list would include a more detailed description with photos of each scheme type, making it easier to understand the works involved.

The Chair questioned the timeline of getting projects delivered. Being able to advise residents on the time frame was important. Councillor Matecki agreed with the comment made. A solution was being investigated which would offer members notification of where projects were up to. Councillor Matecki advised that the shopping list might also include an indication of timeframes to help manage expectations.

The Chair closed the discussion saying that this would be appreciated by Members and the public.

The Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted:

- 1) The progress made against agreed proposals set out in the June 2020 Cabinet paper on the new Delegated Budget Scheme Process.
- 2) The current process for delivery of Delegated Budget Schemes.
- 3) The proposed new guidelines for Delegated Budget Schemes and next steps.

## **5. Quarter 2 Integrated Performance Report**

Mark Ryder (Executive Director for Communities) introduced this item highlighting key sections of the report and performance against the 28 key business measures which were detailed in appendices to the report.

In Appendix 1, Mark Ryder highlighted the positive improvement of adult survivors of domestic abuse leaving the support service. A notable concern was the fall in Customer Satisfaction with Trading Standards.

Delivery of major infrastructure and connectivity schemes was raised. Discussions continued on home to school transport, the cost per SEND student journey and cost of mainstream student journey which had an increase since the last quarter. With an increase of students needing that service and an increase in provider and contractor cost.

Mark Ryder noted good progress in the local economy, with the Warwickshire economy remaining strong which was reflected in the percentage of employers in the key sectors and several successful foreign direct investment projects in Warwickshire. One specific item that was pointed out was climate change in household waste and recycling which was over the 50% target which had increased since the last quarter.

Mark Ryder referred to Finance with revenue forecasting showing significant challenges. The home to school transport budget had moved to the Communities directorate from Education and had a considerable influence on the in-year overspend.

In response to Councillor M Humphreys who requested clarification on the figures, Mark Ryder stated that it was clustering all indicators into one number. It was a glimpse of the Council's overall performance. In response to Councillor Humphreys supplementary question, he reminded of the duty to present a balanced budget.

In response to Councillor Watson, Mark Ryder advised that having Home to School Transport moved into the Communities remit did not create the overspend, that was already present. In response to Councillor Watson's further question, Mark Ryder advised that the Council needed to gain clarity on what information it was being compared to against other authorities. Further

investigation was needed in this area and further detail would be reported back to the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In response to Councillor Singh Pandher, Steve Smith (Director for Strategic Infrastructure and Climate Change) stated that tree planting made up a large part of the Climate Change Plan. The Council would need to source land for the trees to be planted. It owned a nursery which was progressing well, and many more trees would need to be planted to meet the target. Steve Smith advised that updates would be reported to future Committee meetings.

In response to Councillor D'Arcy, Steve Smith advised that the Council was working very closely with Warwick District Council on the Tree Planting schemes.

The Committee noted the Quarter 2 Integrated Performance Report.

## **6. Communities OSC Work Programme**

The Committee noted its work programme, with the Chair requesting any additional items either at this meeting, or the subsequent Chair and Spokes meeting.

## **7. Urgent Items**

None.

The meeting rose at 15:19

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Chair

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## Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7 February 2024

### Questions to Cabinet and Portfolio Holders

#### Recommendation

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the forthcoming Cabinet and Portfolio Holder decisions relevant to its remit, asking questions and considering areas for further scrutiny, where appropriate.

#### 1.0 Cabinet and Portfolio Holder Decisions

1.1 The decisions relevant to the remit of the Committee are listed below. Members are encouraged to seek updates on decisions and identify topics for pre-decision scrutiny. They are also encouraged to submit questions to Democratic Services two working days before the meeting, in order that an informed response may be given. The responsible Portfolio Holders have been invited to the meeting to answer questions from the Committee.

1.2 The list was last updated from the Forward Plan on **30 January 2024**.

Decision Title	Description	Date	Decision Maker
WRIF Bids for Approval – February 2024	WRIF bids for approval – February 2024	15 February 2024	Cabinet
County Highways Review of Licenced Activities and Charges	Report to consider the County Highways Review of licenced activities and associated charges	15 February 2024	Cabinet
Warwickshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan	Report to recommend approval of the Warwickshire Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, following consultation on draft version in 2022	15 February 2024	Cabinet
EV Parking Policy	Paper to approve an addition to parking policy which provides for on-street electric vehicle (EV) parking to be backed with a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO), making it EV-only while the vehicle is charging.	5 March 2024	Cabinet
WRIF Bids for Approval – March 2024	WRIF bids for approval – March 2024	5 March 2024	Cabinet
WRIF Bids for Approval – April 2024	WRIF bids for approval – April 2024	11 April 2024	Cabinet
A47 The Longshoot - Active Travel Scheme	Construction of approximately 1.5km of cycling infrastructure on the A47 The Longshoot, between Eastboro Way and A5.	2 July 2024	Portfolio Holder Decision

## 2.0 Background Papers

None

	Name	Contact details
<b>Report Author</b>	Nicole Conway, Democratic Services Officer	<u><a href="mailto:nicoleconway@warwickshire.gov.uk">nicoleconway@warwickshire.gov.uk</a></u>
<b>Director</b>	Sarah Duxbury, Director of Governance and Policy	<u><a href="mailto:sarahduxbury@warwickshire.gov.uk">sarahduxbury@warwickshire.gov.uk</a></u>



## **Communities O&S – February 2024**

### **Economic Development Update**

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**The following briefing note provides an update to the Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee on recent economic development activity in Warwickshire.**

**It covers work undertaken by County Council officers and partners across a range of services as well as other key pieces of relevant news and information.**

### **CONTENTS**

- 1. Economic Overview**
- 2. Business & Economy Support**
- 3. Employability & Skills Support**
- 4. Warwickshire Business Centres**
- 5. Sector Development and Inward Investment**
- 6. Warwickshire Place and Partnerships**

**Appendix 1: Business News – Major business headlines from around Warwickshire**

**Appendix 2: Schools engaged with Warwickshire's Career Hub**

### **HEADLINES/ KEY SUMMARY POINTS**

- The overall economic outlook is flat with no enduring growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2023. The services sector is growing, while production and construction sectors slowed. A continuing lower rate of inflation has contributed to a small rise in real wages recently. Unemployment in Warwickshire has flattened, and it remains low compared to the rates for the West Midlands and Great Britain.
- The activity around skills and employment delivered through Warwickshire Skills Hub is going from strength to strength. The Fair Chance Job portal went live in September now receives 28 vacancies a week and has 58 employers signed up. The Careers Hub has connected with 52 school and the Supported Employment programme, who will be celebrating its first birthday in February, has supported 44 residents in to paid employment.
- Coventry and Warwickshire FDI have been acknowledged in the rankings of the Financial Times announcements due out later in February

## 1. ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

### National Overview

**Gross Domestic Product:** monthly real GDP is estimated to have grown in November 2023 by 0.3% after a fall of 0.3% in October. Quarterly GDP for Q3 2023 was estimated to have decreased at -0.1%, and to be 1.4% above its pre-coronavirus levels (2019). Quarterly GDP for Q2 2023 has been revised down from +0.2% to no growth, with overall growth remaining essentially flat since January 2023.

**Services output** - the services sector rose by 0.4% on a monthly basis in November 2023 and was the main contributor to growth. However, the services sector is estimated to show no growth in the 3 months to November. Information & Communication was the main contributor to growth on a monthly basis. Human health & social work activities, and education were the largest contribution to growth on a 3-month basis. Customer-facing services grew by 0.6% in November however remain 5.8% below pre-pandemic levels.

**Production output** - grew by 0.3% in November 2023 after falling by 1.3% in October 2023. with manufacturing being the largest contributor, increasing 0.4%. Overall production output fell at -1.5% in the 3 months to November 2023, with manufacturing again being the driver at -1.9%.

**Construction output** decreased at -0.2% in August 2023, after a fall of -0.4% in October 2023. On the three months to November 2023 growth was -0.6%. The decrease in November 2023 was driven by a decrease of -2.0% in new work, with repair and maintenance increasing by 2.1%.

**CPI inflation** rose by 4.0% in the 12 months to December 2023, the same rate as in December 2022. The largest downward contributions to the CPI rates came from food and non-alcoholic beverages. The largest upward pressure was from alcohol and tobacco. The annual rate of inflation in food prices was 8.0% in December 2023, with a monthly rate of 0.5%. Motor still remained 10.8% below December 2022 prices on average.

- The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) maintained **interest rates** at **5.25%** on its last meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
- **Average weekly earnings** excluding bonuses were £623 in November 2023 up from £588 in November 2022. In real terms (adjusted for CPIH inflation), regular pay rose 1.4% on an annual basis for September to November 2023.
- **Employment** – early estimates are that there were 30.2 million people were in PAYE employment in December 2023 (flash estimate), an annual rise of 306,000 people or 1.0%. The three-month employment rate (Jun-Aug 2023) was 75.8%, up 0.1 percentage points from the previous quarter and 0.8 percentage points lower than before the pandemic.
- **Unemployment** - the UK unemployment rate was estimated to be 4.2% in the 3-months September-December 2023, the same as June-August 2023. These numbers are based on the ONS Labour Force Survey, which is diverging from PAYE and other direct sources of employment statistics.

- **The value of sterling** increased 4.1% from 1.22 US\$ in October 2022 to 1.27 US\$ in December 2023, after falling to its lowest value of 1.07 in September 2022. The most recent high was 1.31 US\$ in July 2023.

### Local Overview

- The **Warwickshire unemployment rate (aged 16-64)** has levelled off at 3.3% in the year Oct 2022-Sep 2023 which is the same as in the year Jul 2022-Jun 2023. The local unemployment rate remains low compared to the equivalent rate of 3.7% for Great Britain and 4.5% for the West Midlands region.

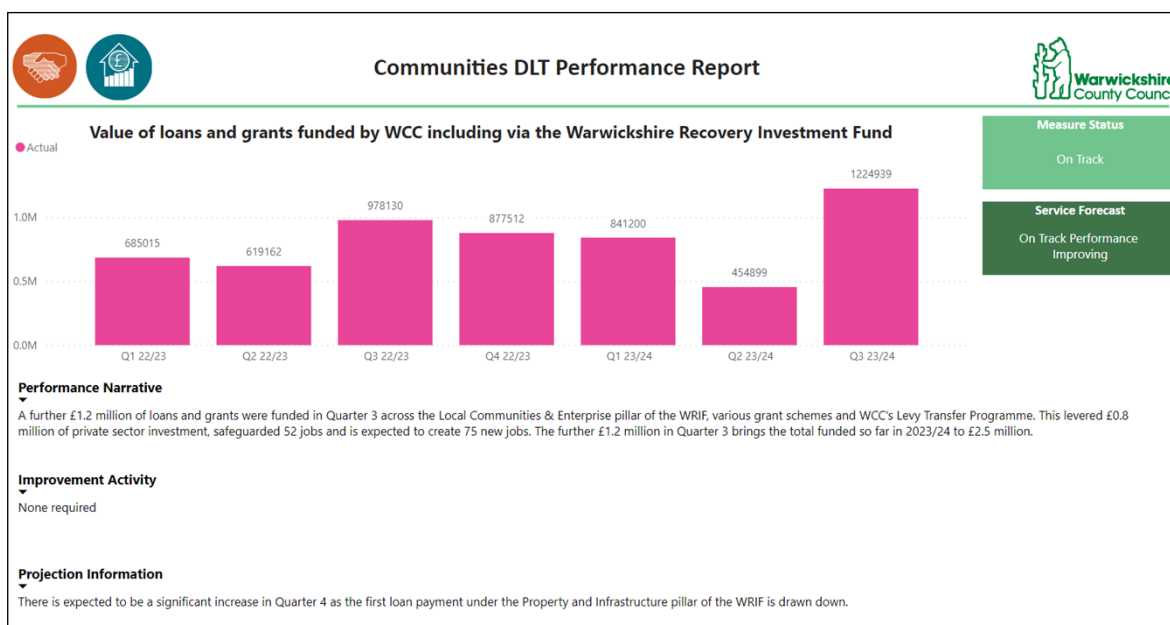
Many economic updates can be found in the [State of Warwickshire Dashboard](#) developed by WCC’s Business Intelligence team.

## 2. BUSINESS & ECONOMY SUPPORT

### Access to Finance

#### Overall Performance

WCC provided a further £1,224,939 of loans and grants during 2023/ 2024 Q3 across a range of programmes including the Local & Communities Enterprise (LCE) pillar of the Warwickshire Recovery and Investment Fund, the Apprenticeship Levy and a number of grant schemes.



This is the highest value funded by WCC in any quarter which is expected to be exceeded in 2023/ 2024 Q4 when the first loan payment under the Property and Infrastructure Fund of the WRIF is drawn down.

Overall performance for this financial year 23/24 is

- Funding support from WCC is £2,521,038.
- Levered over £2.8 million of private sector investment.
- Safeguarded 106 jobs.
- Created 55 new jobs, with a further 160 new jobs expected to be created in future years.
- The Apprenticeship Levy has also supported 98 apprenticeship opportunities in 2023/ 2024

As part of the Access to Finance offer are the Local Communities and Enterprise Fund (LCE) and Digital Creative Recovery Fund.

- **Local Communities and Enterprise Fund (Part of the Warwickshire Recovery Investment Fund)**

The LCE pillar of the WRIF, managed by Coventry and Warwickshire Reinvestment Trust on behalf of WCC, continues to attract high levels of interest. Quarter 3 showed a significant increase in businesses drawing down approved loans compared to quarter 2.

A further 12 loans worth £857,616 have been provided since reporting in November 2023 to Communities O&S, bringing the total loans approved to-date to 42. And worth £2,343,816.00. The LCE fund continues to lever significant private sector investment; £2,359,537.00 across all loans to-date. The current pipeline includes 21 small businesses with an estimated combined loan value of £968,000.

To register an interest, for enquiries or to refer a business, visit [www.wrif.co.uk](http://www.wrif.co.uk) or [www.cwrt.uk.com/wrif-lce-fund](http://www.cwrt.uk.com/wrif-lce-fund)

- **Digital Creative Recovery Fund**

The Digital Creative recovery fund – Round 2 fund ran during October to December 2023. It was open to small and micro businesses in the digital creative sector who have been in business for a minimum of three years. It had been designed for businesses that are already looking to raise finance to grow but are facing challenges in securing private sector investment, or those accelerating activities to put them in a position to raise additional finance and offered match funded grants between £10,000 to £30,000.

Round 2 received 17 applications, of which 12 applications were awarded grant funding totalling £310,854.63. To date £115,719.96 (37%) has already been awarded with the remaining £195,134.96 expected to be claimed within this financial year.

Along with the financial support, there are a range of outputs including:

- Accelerated financial growth included increased turnover
- Job Creation
- New product or service to market

An evaluation of the fund and programme will be undertaken shortly to highlight the impact and benefits arising from the programme and lessons learned. Officers will use this to take into consideration for any future support or funding.

For more information about WCC's Digital Creative Co-Investment Fund, Stacy O'Connor ([stacyoconnor@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:stacyoconnor@warwickshire.gov.uk)).

## **Business Support Programmes**

### **Business Growth Warwickshire Programme**

The Business Growth Warwickshire Programme – which has been commissioned by Warwickshire County Council on behalf of the six local authorities in the county and which was launched at the end of November 2023 – is already seeing strong interest from businesses. So far just under **300 businesses across all areas** of the county have been engaged and **22 business assists** have already been completed.

Business Growth Warwickshire includes six support programmes: Start-Up, Business Resilience and Growth, Business Ready – High Growth and Innovation, Business Energy Advice Service, Manufacturing Growth and Project Warwickshire (for the visitor economy and hospitality sectors). The £4.6 million programme is funded by UK Government (through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund via the five District and Borough Councils and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero) and Warwickshire County Council. Delivery is through a range of specialist delivery organisations.

Business Growth Warwickshire is expected to engage over 2,000 businesses before March 2025, more than 500 of which will receive intensive, tailored support.

For more information, visit [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ukspf](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ukspf) or contact Matthew Epps in the Business & Economy team ([matthewepps@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:matthewepps@warwickshire.gov.uk)).

## **3. EMPLOYABILITY & SKILLS SUPPORT**

### **Fair Chance Employer Programme**

The Fair Chance Jobs portal launched in September 2023 and has been well received by employers as a dedicated space to recruit in an inclusive way. Businesses sign up and make a pledge to be a Fair Chance Employer, this unlocks a variety of support tools within the programme including workshops to promote the importance of inclusivity and a diverse workforce by supporting hiring managers to utilise innovative recruitment & on-boarding techniques to support new recruits with supportive needs.

To date we have **58 employers signed** up to the programme and **28 live vacancies posted each week** on the jobs portal.

Working with a range of partners including Warwickshire Supported Employment Service, DWP, WCC leaving care team and our network of employability providers. There has been a steady increase in users since its launch and data indicates there are now **220 people actively** using the portal to look for work.

### **Warwickshire Supported Employment Service**

Working with a range of employers including those who have pledged to be a Fair Chance Employer, the supported employment service helps customers with learning difficulties in to paid employment. The service, first launched in February 2023, is approach its first year and has to date achieved:

- 319 referrals from various partners, sharing details of customers looking to go in to work. The referrals come from parents and carers, the learning disability team, sixth form/colleges, the jobcentre plus and Jobs 22.
- Conducted 7 industry tours, showcasing careers in hospitality, warehouse and logistics and ICT.
- Supported 12 customers into work with a Fair Chance Employer. 5 of the roles offered were created to through job design.
- 44 Customers are in paid work of this 16 are working independently and 28 are receiving in work support from our employment support advisor.
- 4 of our customers go into apprenticeships.

### **Future Skills Fund**

The Warwickshire Skills Hub business support team have successfully launched the Future apprenticeships fund aimed at supporting industry as it evolves with new and emerging technologies including low carbon agenda such as vehicle electrification, battery technology & digital skills. The fund has been shaped with several strands to build a modular training support package for businesses to access appropriate support. The fund has received a positive response from industry and applications for support have been received within a week of the launch.

The fund will create annual county-wide Future Apprenticeships & Skills Fairs to enable businesses to recruit people into apprenticeships and paid employment opportunities & enable people explore in work training opportunities to support career development.

- **New Direction 50+** - People who are aged 50+ will be supported to undertake apprenticeships to re-skill and re-train to update their skill set to ensure continued employment & skills development opportunities. Businesses will be able to apply for funding to support associated apprenticeship training costs and additional funding is available for short courses and training not included

in traditional apprenticeship training in the form of the **50+ Skills investment fund**.

- **Future Apprenticeships Salary Support Programme** - Businesses are also able to access salary support to assist in creating new employment opportunities for apprentices to undertake training for new and emerging technologies to build their future workforce.

This is alongside the recently recruited Business Skills Support Advisor who is working with business to undertake skills reviews and gather intelligence to support the future skills conversation and to lead on creating industry round tables.

The round table discussion bring together industry experts together with colleges, universities and training providers to analyse current provision and the skills needs of the future workforce. These conversations will support the development of clear skills development pathways for industry and be valuable for training institutions in shaping training offer tailored to local demand. Warwickshire businesses have responded positively and are keen to engage and help shape this agenda. They have also expressed support to engage with schools to make our Warwickshire young people aware of the opportunities available for them as they look at their post 16 options.

To date two roundtable discussions have taken place, one Construction and another in Games Development Sectors. There are plans to work across a range of sectors.

### **Apprenticeship Levy Transfer Programme**

The WCC Levy transfer programme continues to be well received by employers to support them to access WCC levy funds to cover apprenticeships training costs. Within this year WCC have pledged £702 595 of levy funds to 51 businesses creating opportunities for 81 apprentices across the county.

Businesses have also benefited from the **Apprenticeship Progression Programme**. The programme incentivises employers to continue to invest in skills by progressing them onto further apprenticeship qualifications to support the needs of the business. This fund has supported businesses to progress 15 different apprentices via this grant. The sectors were varied from the Care Sector to Hospitality, Beauty, Maintenance and Security and Protective Services and mainly supported level 2 to level 3 progression routes.

### **The Warwickshire Careers Hub**

Since coming in to WCC in September 2023, the Careers Hub is now well established within the Skills Hub. The relationship has help increase the employer engagement and has been instrumental in securing WCC first Cornerstone Employers. Following an event lead in Autumn, WCC is supporting 7 employers become Cornerstone Employers with further interest from other including, EON Energy, BAM Construction, Sertec, Mecalac, CILT, Rebellion Development, HS2, Lisi Aerospace and Balfour Beatty Living.

The number of schools who have joined the Careers Hub is now at 52 schools across Warwickshire. Appendix 2 shows a list of the schools in Warwickshire.

The Enterprise Coordinators have collectively undertaken 89 visits to schools/colleges since September and are helping career's leaders on their career programmes, supporting them meet the Gatsby Benchmarks and promoting their events to employers and providers. Alongside these visit Enterprise Coordinators have attended student mock interview days, CV workshops, delivered training to students to enable them to become careers ambassadors and introducing a new enterprise competition for our SEND schools.

The Gatsby Benchmarks is a framework that defines what world class careers provision in education looks like. All of WCC schools and colleges complete a self-assessment tool at the end of each term, that produces a report showing how well they are meeting each of the 8 Benchmarks out of 100%. Our baseline data showed that our schools/colleges were averaging at 5.79. At the end of term 1 there has been significant progress and WCC is now averaging at 6.04, against a national average score of 5.5.

The Careers Hub has also been successful in securing further funding for a Teacher Encounter Project/experience of the workplace fund. The funding will support a number of Fair Chance Employers to host site visits for teaching staff to experience future career opportunities from a number of key sectors across Warwickshire. This project will create a series of interactions with employers, an opportunity for teachers to take part in site tours and collaboratively create teaching resources.

Acknowledging the increasing levels of young people with SEND finding it challenging to transition from education into employment, the focus is to work with SEND schools and careers leaders who support a high number of SEND students. The upskilling and educating our SEND teachers to experience first-hand will be invaluable, allowing them to understand the key skills and personal attributes employers look for when recruiting.

### **Multiply Fund – New Projects**

Warwickshire County Council has announced two more Multiply projects with more expected to follow, after two calls for projects were made in the second half of 2023. North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College has been awarded £200,000 to support employees whose first language is not English to learn 'the language of match whereas Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber Training has been awarded £96,000 to deliver 'Work in Numbers' which will target the numeracy skills deficit in the county through vocationally tailored learning in a variety of key sectors.

These are the latest projects in Warwickshire to be funded by the Government's Multiply Fund which is managed by Warwickshire County Council. Others include projects delivered by WCC's Adult and Community Learning, Coventry and Warwickshire Co-operative Development Agency (CWEDA) and PET-Xi. Multiply has so far supported 1718 people in Warwickshire to improve their numeracy skills.



For more information about Multiply and the support available in Warwickshire, visit: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/multiply](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/multiply) or contact Claire Williams in the Business & Economy team ([clairewilliams@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:clairewilliams@warwickshire.gov.uk)).

## **4. WARWICKSHIRE BUSINESS CENTRES**

### **Redevelopment of estate**

The new reception areas to all buildings have been completed. This gives a strong professional first impression to current and potential customers as well as their clients and suppliers. This has also helped improved working environments for staff and increased personal and data security. Customer feedback to these improvements have been very positive. The improvements have supported the approach to align the centres with a stronger commercial offer and we are seeing improvements in rental income.

### **Partnership working and stakeholder engagement.**

With the communal areas and meeting rooms it has enable the centres to have an offer for both internal and external customers. We are working with districts to host business support events with colleagues from Warwickshire Skills Hub to do a roadshow around our centres. There are not only great opportunities for potential new customers to visit our centres and see the improvements we have made but add significant value to current tenants by bringing a wide range of business support to them on their doorstep.

## **5. SECTOR DEVELOPMENT AND INWARD INVESTMENT**

### **Coventry and Warwickshire chosen for Government funding to drive tech innovation**

Following a competitive process which saw over 40 national applications, Warwickshire and Coventry have been chosen as one of 10 pilot programmes to create 10 innovation launchpads in the UK. Coventry & Warwickshire region will receive up to £7.5m of new investment to drive local innovation and business growth, building on the region's existing strengths in video game development.

Round 1 of this competition will see £2m of funding for projects locally, with applicants being notified of their success by mid February. A second call for projects is expected to be announced in early May.

### **Tech UK to hold a 'Supercharging Investment in Gaming' roundtable in Leamington on 27 February.**

Part of Tech UK's Supercharging Investment series, it will bring together 15-20 participants from industry (tech, gaming and finance), Government (local and national), academia, and regional organisations to address the challenges holding back investment in the emerging technologies underpinning the UK's games industry. Previous events in the series have focused on quantum and space.

### **Global Investment Summit (GIS)**

The bi-annual UK Global Investment Summit took place in November hosted by the Prime Minister at Hampton Court Palace with visitors made up of CEOs and investors from around the world. As part of the promotion for this and for use going forwards, the UK Government with the Department for Business & Trade updated the Global Investment Atlas. Invest Warwickshire successfully pitched a new proposition for inclusion titled 'Immersive and Connected Technologies for Future Mobility in Coventry & Warwickshire. This will sit alongside previous submissions for Net Zero Transport Technologies, Connected and Automated Technologies and Video Games in the Warwickshire and Coventry area.

<https://www.great.gov.uk/international/content/investment/opportunities/connected-and-immersive-technologies-for-future-mobility-in-coventry-and-warwickshire/>

### **Events Round-up – Automotive & Future Mobility**

Invest Warwickshire attended a number of events and conferences with a relevance for the Automotive and Future Mobility sector. These included the Advanced Engineering Show, The EV Show, Motorcycle Live and the MCI (Motorcycle Industry Association) Conference. Warwickshire and the UK is once again an important centre for two-wheeled vehicle design, development and manufacture. We'll be attending the Future Propulsion Conference next month. These are important opportunities to network with the sector, pick up new inward investment enquiries and to promote ours and partner services to SMEs.

### **FDI Awards 2024**

FDI Intelligence, part of the Financial Times Group, will shortly publish its annual results for their flagship publication of the fDi 'European Cities & Regions of the Future' rankings, which is published every February and benchmarks European cities and regions according to their economic, financial, and business strengths. Invest Coventry & Warwickshire have again been recognised in the rankings, with an improved placing for 'FDI Strategy'. The results will be published on 15<sup>th</sup> February that we will share through our communication channels.

## **5. WARWICKSHIRE PLACES AND PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Seasonal Place Promotion and Marketing**

Warwickshire Christmas 2023 equipped participating towns and local, independent businesses with high quality seasonal images and inspiration to lever social media engagement during a critical trading season for Warwickshire High Streets.

Over the course of the campaign, 1 November – 24 December, 437 social media posts and stories were shared, securing a reach of 24,884 (up around 1,000 per cent on equivalent period in Sept/Oct, up 260 per cent from last year) and resulting in overall social media statistics, showing:

- REACH: 26,559 VISITS: 1,719 NEW LIKES/FOLLOWERS: 131.

Analysis of the campaign shows that business participation was key, getting businesses on board before the campaign also helped engagement - those businesses also used the hashtag #WarwickshireChristmas more readily and organic campaign growth resulted in non-participating businesses joining on tagging and use of the #warwickshirechristmas too. Santa based posts, especially early on, were strong in terms of reach and shares and these images have been made available for people to use in their own campaigns.

### **Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPS)**

An independent review of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), led by the Chair of Visit England (VE), was published 20th July 2022. These recommendations were enacted by central government and the landscape of the visitor economy has changed to allow for a strategic support mechanism for regions / larger areas called LVEPS. All local authorities in Coventry and Warwickshire have been working together with Shakespeare's England, Visit Coventry and Visit Northern Warwickshire to explore how a wider partnership approach could support, grow and deliver a world class visitor economy for the region. Visit England (VE) and Visit Britain (VB) have been working closely with our LVEP during this process and will continue as the future governance and direction is agreed.

## **APPENDIX 1: BUSINESS NEWS**

### **Major business headlines from around Warwickshire**

#### **Digital Creative Sector**

##### **Cab Engine announces new partnership with TGI Fridays**

Alcester-based Cab Engine, a digital transformation studio, has announced a new strategic partnership with iconic American-inspired restaurant brand TGI Fridays, to manage its paid search and paid social channels whilst also advising on the direction of SEO across the entire estate.

<https://thebusinessmagazine.co.uk/companies/cab-engine-announces-new-partnership-with-tgi-fridays/>

##### **Government rolls out new tax credits for British film, TV and video games**

The UK Government has introduced a new tax credit system for the creative industries. The new Audio-Visual Expenditure Credit and Video Games Expenditure Credit will provide greater tax reliefs than the previous system to businesses across the country, including Children's TV, animated TV/ film and high-end film/TV and video game productions.

<https://thebusinessmagazine.co.uk/corporate-finance/government-launches-new-tax-credits-for-british-film-tv-and-video-game-makers/>

#### **Automotive/ Future Mobility Sector**

##### **UKBIC lands £38m funding to upgrade capabilities**

The UK Battery Industrialisation Centre (UKBIC) based at Baginton near Coventry Airport, has secured a further £38m in funding to upgrade the facility's scale-up capabilities. The funding is principally for UKBIC's innovative flexible scale-up line, and builds upon the £36m already committed by Faraday Battery Challenge in May. The announcement follows the inclusion of Coventry Airport and sites adjoining it as part of the West Midlands Investment Zone, which seeks to attract further battery supply chain R&D and manufacturing into the Coventry & Warwickshire area.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/ukbic-lands-38m-funding-to-upgrade-capabilities>

##### **Bridge of Weir leather opens design studio in Warwick**

Bridge of Weir, which supplies fine automotive leather supplier to some of the world's most-respected luxury car brands, has opened a new "advanced" design studio in Warwick at the design consultancy Callum.

Operating as a design 'skunk works' in the heart of the UK automotive industry, Bridge of Weir wants to accelerate and expand the capabilities of leather as an automotive interior material – and to bring those developments closer to current customers, including Jaguar Land Rover, Aston Martin, Polestar and McLaren, as well as new customers.

<https://thebusinessmagazine.co.uk/companies/bridge-of-weir-leather-opens-design-studio-in-warwick/>

## **UK 'back in the game' after one million vehicles produced in 2023**

UK vehicle production in 2023 hit one million units for the first time since pre-Covid 2019, with multi-billion-pound EV investment from major car makers pushing the UK “back in the game”, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT).

<https://www.autocar.co.uk/car-news/business-manufacturing/uk-back-game-after-one-million-vehicles-produced-2023>

## **Tourism and Visitor Economy**

### **Figures show growth for south Warwickshire's tourism scene**

South Warwickshire’s tourism industry is on track to return to pre-pandemic visitor levels and spending in 2023, according to new figures. Around 9.9 million day and overnight trips were made to south Warwickshire in 2022, resulting in £625 million being spent in the region. This represents increases of 25 per cent and 53 per cent respectively when compared to 2021.

<https://thebusinessmagazine.co.uk/lifestyle/new-figures-show-growth-for-south-warwickshires-tourism-scene/>

### **New Hotel at Dallas Burston Polo Club to be managed by Focus Hotels**

Hotel management company Focus Hotels Management has secured the management contract for the Polo Club Hotel – a forthcoming development at the 200-acre Dallas Burston Polo Club near Southam in Warwickshire.

<https://thebusinessmagazine.co.uk/property/new-hotel-at-dallas-burston-polo-club-to-be-managed-by-focus-hotels/>

## **Other Business News**

### **Lift off for Apollo industrial scheme at Ansty Technology Park**

Work is underway on the expansion of a landmark business park that will deliver more than 850,000 sq ft of new industrial space at Ansty Technology Park. Four new speculative units are being constructed as part of the second phase of development at Apollo, Ansty Park near Coventry.

The park is already home to Cadent, Fanuc, LEVC, MTC and Meggitt, and the first phase Apollo I and II have attracted a couple of local manufacturing business.

<https://thebusinessmagazine.co.uk/property/lift-off-for-apollo-logistics-scheme-at-coventrys-ansty-park/>

### **Industrial compressor manufacturer enters administration**

Industrial compressor technology business Lontra has ceased trading and appointed administrators with 45 jobs lost. A buyer is being sought for the company's assets.

Lontra, based in Napton, with a manufacturing facility in Doncaster, had developed a new blade compressor technology demonstrated a number of innovation and environmental benefits.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/yorkshire/industrial-compressor-manufacturer-enters-administration>

### **New Nuneaton Industrial Campus completes**

Glencar has completed construction on the final warehouse at a one million sq ft industrial campus in Nuneaton. The company has handed over 771,000 sq ft for pan-European and industrial development company Baytree Logistics Developments and its customer global logistics provider Rhenus Warehousing Solutions UK. Baytree Nuneaton, known as the 'Rhenus Campus', comprises two warehouses of 210,000 and 771,00 sq ft on 64 acres, on the local plan site allocation known as Faultlands Farm.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/logistics-campus-final-warehouse-completes>

### **Recruitment giant merges with IT specialist**

Pertemps Network Group, a Warwickshire-headquartered recruitment giant with a turnover in excess of £1bn, has merged with an IT specialist which has been trading for almost 50 years. IT recruitment firm Parity serves clients across the UK, Ireland and a number of other European countries. Rebranded as Parity Network, it becomes part of a £1bn specialist recruitment network, which is a long-term investor in the company.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/recruitment-giant-merges-with-it-specialist>

### **Box Ltd in North Warwickshire in Administration**

Dordon based online tech retailer Box Ltd which employed more than 100 people has fallen into administration. The business began trading 27 years ago and prior to the appointment of administrators, the company had an annual turnover of £76m and employed 107 people. Trading operations will not continue during the administration process, and the majority of staff have been made redundant with immediate effect.

<https://www.insidermedia.com/news/midlands/jobs-lost-as-online-retailer-appoints-administrators>

### **Manufacturers say UK is getting more competitive**

More than half of Britain's manufacturers are now viewing the UK as a more competitive place to locate their activities, compared to just 31 per cent one year ago. While less than one-fifth believe the UK is not a competitive place in which to manufacture. These findings come from Make UK and PwC's Executive Survey 2024, published in January, which polled more than two hundred senior manufacturing executives.

<https://thebusinessmagazine.co.uk/manufacturing-engineering/manufacturers-say-uk-is-getting-more-competitive/>

### **Study finds some local authorities 'Better Equipped to Host SMEs'**

Businesses in the West Midlands are struggling more than in any other area. The research, conducted by Qardus, an ethical funding platform, analysed data from the ONS to determine where SMEs are thriving and where they are struggling. The analysis was based on six different factors, including the following: The Active Enterprise Change between 2021-2023, the change in the count of births of new enterprises 2020-2022, the change in the count of deaths of new enterprises 2020-2022, the change of high growth enterprises per 1,000, and the survival rate of SMEs across 3-5 years.

<https://londonlovesbusiness.com/businesses-in-the-west-midlands-are-struggling-more-than-in-any-other-area/>

**APPENDIX 2 – Schools engaged with Warwickshire Careers Hub**

Exhall Grange Specialist School	Rugby High School
Evergreen School	Alcester Grammar School
Studley High School	Alcester Academy
Stratford Girls' Grammar School	Stratford Upon Avon School
Shipston High School	King Edward VI School
Oak Wood Secondary School	St Benedict's Catholic High School
Discovery Academy	Venture Academy
Lawrence Sheriff School	Quest Academy
North Leamington School	Welcombe Hills School
Southam College	Kenilworth School and Sixth Form
Kineton High School	Stratford College
Trinity Catholic School	Campion School
Warwickshire College Group	The Avon Valley School and Performing Arts College
Etone	Bilton School
Brooke School	Henley In Arden School
Hartshill	Myton School
Aylesford School	The Coleshill School
Ash Green	Woodlands
Higham Lane	Ashlawn School
Rugby Free Secondary School	TQEA
St Thomas More	Nicholas Chamberlaine
Nuneaton Academy	Harris CoE
George Eliot	Houlton School - to join
The Warwickshire Academy - New	Oakley School - to join
King VI college	
Kingsbury	
Polesworth	
NWSLC	



## Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7 February 2024

### Warwickshire Futures – looking ahead to 2030/40

#### Recommendation(s)

That the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

1. Notes the trends and themes highlighted in the 'Warwickshire Futures 2030/40' and 'Warwickshire in 2030 and beyond' reports and considers how they may relate to ongoing and future policy development.
2. Considers the Committee's current work programme in light of the Warwickshire Futures work.

#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Warwickshire Futures introduces an exciting new capability to the County Council for 2024.
- 1.2 Conducted in Summer/Autumn 2023, the exercise brings together thinking, best practice and research from across the sector, together with the insight and intelligence from our own teams and services, to give a long-term view of some of the large-scale challenges and opportunities for Warwickshire, and Warwickshire County Council, into 2030/40 and grouped into five main themes:
  - Societal change
  - Community and health
  - Jobs, economy and technology
  - Environment, climate and infrastructure
  - Transport and travel

Five priority issues have also been identified, which are detailed in 4.4.
- 1.3 Similar exercises are conducted at national and regional level and so the intention of introducing Warwickshire Futures is to provide a specific view for the County and the Council.
- 1.4 In doing so, the aim is to build a perspective on the long term, stretching past current challenges and decisions, whilst helping to ensure these are made in the context of anticipated future trends and policy direction.

- 1.5 This allows for a consideration both of future challenges, but also opportunities, giving Members and Officers the platform to consider future policy in the context of the long term.
- 1.6 This is the first time that a document such as this has been developed within the Council and it should be emphasised that the Futures work is not a precise science and nor does it present a definitive position.
- 1.7 This exercise is intended to:
- Provide a snapshot in time, giving a flavour of some of the key issues and trends on the horizon.
  - Create a lens on the long-term future challenges and opportunities based on this snapshot in time.
  - Link these themes and make them real for the County Council in the context of Warwickshire.
  - Create a holistic resource that can be continuously updated and regularly reviewed as part of the business planning cycle.
- 1.8 There is a high level of uncertainty at the local, national and global level at the current time. Futures work is therefore indicative and open to debate and interpretation in terms of what this means for the near term as well as the longer term. As stated above, it is not a precise science and provides scenarios and options, rather than definitive outcomes.
- 1.9 In terms of actions, there are no immediate actions required, but it is hoped that the Futures work will provide the Committee with a greater insight into future trends and challenges, and the opportunity to consider this in the context of the Committee's future work programme.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 There are no direct financial implications arising as a result of this report. However, specific themes and trends discussed within the report will be likely to have their own potential financial consequences.

## **3. Environmental Implications**

- 3.1 Whilst there are no direct environmental implications arising as a result of this report, environmental changes are themselves a major theme. As such, the exercise highlights the importance of considering environmental implications when making policy decisions in the near, medium and longer term.

## **4. Supporting Information**

- 4.1 The Futures exercise is made up of two main products:

- “Warwickshire in 2030 and beyond”, a report from Business Intelligence which takes a data-lead approach to examine potential future changes across the county.
- “Warwickshire Futures 2030/40”, a detailed briefing produced by the Corporate Policy team that uses national data, research, and best practice examples to provide a long-term view of the policy landscape and impacts on the work of the Council.

Each of these products are provided in **Appendices 1 and 2** to this report.

4.2 In reaching this point the material and messages have been shared and tested with Strategy Network, Senior Leadership Forum and Corporate Board to ensure they provided a rounded and balanced view across all service areas.

4.3 We have identified five priority issues that are likely to have significant impact across the organisation into 2030/40 and beyond. There is a natural synergy between these themes and with the priorities and the areas of focus set out in the Council Plan 2022-27. However, it should be noted that the Futures work extends beyond this and touches more on long term, mega-trends and therefore there is not an exact match.

4.4 These five priority issues are:

- Demographic shifts
- Global economic and political uncertainty
- Climate change
- Artificial Intelligence
- Inequalities between groups and places

4.5 The 5 themes and full list of areas of analysis are set out below:

Societal changes	Community & Health	Jobs, economy & technology	Environment, climate and infrastructure	Transport & travel
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographic shifts</li> <li>• Global economic and political uncertainty</li> <li>• Deglobalisation</li> <li>• Changing footfall patterns in town centres</li> <li>• Inequalities within and between groups and places</li> <li>• Shifting urban/rural living patterns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce challenges</li> <li>• Political engagement</li> <li>• Public trust</li> <li>• Future of devolution deals and combined authorities</li> <li>• Long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic</li> <li>• Emerging health issues</li> <li>• Mental health and loneliness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital connectivity</li> <li>• Local energy sources</li> <li>• Sustainable local economy</li> <li>• Artificial intelligence</li> <li>• Future skills</li> <li>• Future of workspaces</li> <li>• Skills gap, reskilling and future employment</li> <li>• Town centre regeneration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public support for environmental policies</li> <li>• Evolving national government policy</li> <li>• Climate change</li> <li>• Alternative fuels (inc. electric charging infrastructure)</li> <li>• Housing pressure (green and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel and transport demand</li> <li>• Connectivity</li> <li>• Energy vectors (power sources)</li> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Transport infrastructure</li> <li>• Active travel</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing living situations</li> <li>• Ongoing impact of pandemic on educational outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governance of health and social care</li> </ul>		right type)	
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The emerging themes and trends identified of being of particular significance to the Communities OSC are the following. Full descriptions can be found within the full report in Appendix 1.

- Evolving environmental policy and public support – we will need to consider how to continue the Council’s strong environmental record alongside short-term priorities and maintain flexibility to respond to national policy.
- Equipping Warwickshire residents with future skills, including considering the skills gap, reskilling and future employment e.g. in the green economy.
- Transport demand, connectivity/infrastructure, autonomy, active transport, energy sources. Considering projected increases in road traffic, infrastructure development for future travel e.g. electric vehicles, and increasing public interest in active travel.
- Urban regeneration, including town centres, urban/rural living patterns, and future workspaces. How can we make innovative uses of town centre space, supporting vibrant communities across the county?

4.6 These themes will be drawn out in more detail as a presentation to the Committee.

## 5. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 5.1 Following consideration of the reports across all Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the following activity is planned:
- Integration of the Futures tool into the business planning cycle, with a 6-monthly update based on input from service leads.
  - Integration into the monthly Policy Bites publication, managed by the Graduate Management Trainees within the Corporate Policy and Strategy team.
  - Access for all staff and Members to the key products via the Intranet.

## Appendices

1. [Warwickshire Futures 2030/40](#)
2. [Warwickshire in 2030 and beyond, Business Intelligence report](#)

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): N/A – county-wide matter

Other members:

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## Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme

Date of next report	Item	Report detail
Page 39	Standing items Questions to Cabinet Portfolio Holders	The Committee may put questions to the Cabinet Portfolio Holders on issues within their remit. The report will set out the forthcoming items listed in the Council's published Forward Plan relevant to the Committee.
	Economic Development Update	To receive an update on economic development in Warwickshire. This has expanded from the previous Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP) update at the request of the Chair and Spokespersons.  To be a briefing note to be sent to the Committee Members rather than an agenda item (allowing members to raise any issue/ ask questions at the Committee should they wish).
	EDS Dashboard  (To be received every other meeting- Apr24, Sept24, Nov24)	A table on all cycling, walking, train and road developments in Warwickshire and their progress
	Transport Scheme Evaluation (to be received every other meeting or quarterly – update dependent)	A mini report showing completed schemes and lessons learnt from them.  This will start from mid-2024
7 February 2024	Futures and State of Warwickshire	A presentation of Warwickshire futures exercise, looking at the themes and challenges that will influence WCC and Warwickshire between now and 2040.
10 April 2024	Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) Update	An update on the approved policy on the management of future deployment of Vehicle Activated Signs and potential removal of non-operational, non-beneficial VAS
10 April 2024	EV Rollout Progress Update	An update on the progress of EV charging points rollout

April/June 2024	20mph Limits Update	An update on 20mph limits in Warwickshire and their progress
June 2024	Year End Integrated Performance Report 2023/24	Year End Integrated Performance Report 2023/24
TBC Summer 2024	Results of the Average Speed Camera pilot	The results of the average speed camera rollout following the report received in November 2022
TBC	Severn Trent	To receive an update from Severn Trent about roadworks, network management and a general update.

### Items for future work programming and review

Item	Description
<b>Planning</b>	
Capital programme	How managed/ overall picture of schemes (Note Resources & Fire and Rescue are also getting regular update on capital slippage).
Bermuda Connectivity	(post-implementation) A report on the Bermuda project
<b>Economy</b>	
Strategic Investment	To monitor WCCs investment in priority road safety schemes across Warwickshire targeted at reducing the numbers killed or seriously injured on our roads. This includes monitoring investment in local highways priorities, spending on LED streetlights and investment in safer routes to schools.



<b>Community Cohesion</b>	
KSIs and Speed Limits	To review the Council's speed limit and speed camera policies.
Population statistics	To review to population growth in Warwickshire in relation to housing developments (briefing note)
A46 Strategic Link Road Outline Business Case	This report presents the Outline Business Case for the proposed new A46 travel corridor. For submission to the Department for Transport.
<b>Sustainable Transport</b>	
Cycling Liaison Group Report	A report from the CLG regarding cycling updates in Warwickshire and the benefits to the environment and tourism
NUCKLE Update	An update on the NUCKLE line when progress has been made

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