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# Warrington Worldwide

Issue No. 289 January 2024 FREE EVERY MONTH

**Panto stomps  
its way to town!**

**Page 3**



Picture: John Hopkins



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# Editor's Comment

**I'M sure almost everyone was relieved to see an end to the bin strike after eleven long weeks.**

Hopefully unlike me, most of you remembered to put your bins out for collection!

It was quite remarkable after nearly three months of "dither and delay" – the Union's words not mine, the dispute was resolved within a matter of hours of new council leader Cllr Hans Mundry, himself a Unite Union member, taking control as new leader of the council.

I'm sure plenty of groundwork was done in the build up to the dispute being resolved, but some rumblings from within the council from other disgruntled employees, suggest it is still not a totally happy ship.

We are told the dispute was resolved with no extra cost to the council, following a national pay award and improved local contracts and working conditions. Let's hope this is the case as financial conditions at the town hall are still in dire straits, with £1.8b debt and other losses in the pipeline.

The ongoing cost of living crisis post the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on many investment portfolios as those with our own pension portfolios will be experiencing first hand.

It is easy to blame the council when things go wrong but they have to be accountable for what they do with public and borrowed

money.

Let's hope the new leadership team and the new year bring new ways of tackling the cost-of-living crisis head on – and while we as a country are not officially in a recession, I am sure many of us are feeling like we are living in the middle of one.

As ever, as a community, it is more important than ever that we all work together in a positive way as possible, while supporting those most in need.

Here at **Warrington-Worldwide**, as we enter our 25th year of providing free, independent community news in print and online, we will continue to do our best to provide a balanced news service and support our town the



New council leader cllr Hans Mundry



best we can.

We will always remain impartial and recognise good work when it is done, while also endeavouring to represent the views and concerns of our readership.

To do this we need the support of the business community we actively promote and support while we proudly continue to fly the flag for Warrington well into the new year and beyond.

While I understand it is tough times for many, we must all work together to face the challenges on the rocky road ahead.

Happy New Year to all our loyal readers and supporters – together we will get through these difficult times. THANKYOU for your ongoing support – we couldn't do what we do without you.

**Deadline for the  
February issue of  
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is January 16**

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# Giant-sized family panto stomping its way to Parr Hall

**WARRINGTON** Parr Hall will be celebrating the festive season in style with a giant of a panto this January.

The historic venue, run by the charity Culture Warrington, has once again teamed up with Tony Peers Ltd to present family favourite Jack and the Beanstalk.

The magical story, suitable for all ages, will be at Warrington venue in Palmyra Square between Friday, 5 January, and Sunday, 14 January, and tickets are on sale now.

With all the costumes, comedy,

catchy songs and calamities these traditional pantos have become renowned for, families are invited to find out what happens when Jack gets in big trouble with his mother for selling their hapless cow for a handful of beans.

Join our unlikely hero on the adventure of a lifetime when the beans start to grow...and grow...and grow.

Chris Persoglio, Executive



Director of Culture Warrington, said: "We can't wait to open our doors in January to welcome hundreds of families to Parr Hall for this annual and ever popular winter warmer."

"We've got 10 shows throughout the run, not to mention the performances we do for schools, and we really throw everything into it. The panto is always one of our highlights of the year because of the way it brings everyone together and creates such a warm atmosphere at our venue."

"For many youngsters, it is their first experience of the theatre which is something we never take for granted and makes the panto even more special. And given the tough times we are all going through at the moment, Jack and the Beanstalk's themes of making the best of bad situations, seizing opportunity and overcoming adversity are particularly relevant."

Tony Peers and his team have been entertaining families for decades with a tried and true format of fun, laughter and a happily ever after that has kids and adults alike glued to their seats.

The full cast has now been announced with Lucy Summers starring as Jack Trott and Milkshake presenter Amy Thompson returning by popular demand as Jill Crumble.

They will be joined by the panto's director Frank Simms as

Fleshcreep, Kyle White as King Crumble, Mark Newell as Dame Trott, Sara Nelson as Fairy Sweet Pea and Daniel Dean as Silly Billy.

Tony, who has worked in show business since 1969, added: "I'm delighted to have the opportunity to return once again to produce this year's pantomime, Jack and the Beanstalk, at Parr Hall. I would also like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year."

Tickets are from just £11. Visit <https://parrhall.culturewarrington.org/whats-on/jack-the-beanstalk> or call the Box Office on 01925 442345.



## 2023 Christmas & New Year Bus Services

Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> December	Normal Service (School days)
Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup> December	
Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> December	
Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup> December	
Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> December	
Saturday 23 <sup>rd</sup> December	Normal Saturday Service
Sunday 24 <sup>th</sup> December	Sunday Service with earlier finishes at around 19:30
Monday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	No Service
Tuesday 26 <sup>th</sup> December	
Wednesday 27 <sup>th</sup> December	Saturday Service with additional CAT5/X5 journeys and service 96
Thursday 28 <sup>th</sup> December	
Friday 29 <sup>th</sup> December	
Saturday 30 <sup>th</sup> December	Normal Saturday Service
Sunday 31 <sup>st</sup> December	Sunday Service with earlier finishes at around 19:30
Monday 1 <sup>st</sup> January	No Service
Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> January	Normal Service (school day timetables)



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## Tribute to a man dedicated to the safety of children



Maz Rowley and four of her five children with the new parking signs outside Beamont Primary

**WARRINGTON** school maintenance officer **Ste Rowley** was dedicated to the safety of children as they travelled to and from school every day.

The much-loved figure, who tragically died in an accident on the M62 in March, spent lots of time at the beginning and end of each school day monitoring parking outside Warrington Primary Academy Trust (WPAT) schools – especially Beamont Primary.

Now Ste's family have made a donation to the school in his memory. Widow Maz and his children have given the school a set of parking signs that will help to deter motorists from parking outside the school.

The community pulled together for Ste's family in the wake of his death, raising thousands of pounds so that the dedicated dad could be given a fitting send-off.

Maz Rowley said: "We, as a

family, decided to use the remaining money from donations after Ste's death to put towards something that was meaningful to him.

"Ste was very passionate about the safety of the children around all of his schools, but especially Beamont! The parking on the yellow zigzags outside school was his worst pet hate and he would spend lots of time outside monitoring the parking before and after school.

"We thought that the best way to use this money was to put it towards something Ste was very passionate about. We chose to purchase the little parking people in the hope that it would help to keep the children of the school safe – just as Ste wanted!"

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# Chamber of Commerce set for new home

**AFTER nearly a quarter of a century at the International Business Centre, Warrington Chamber of Commerce is moving to a new home.**

From the start of the new year the Chamber will be based at The Base on Dallam Lane, closer to the town centre and being part of the new

business community already based in the premises.

The IBC has been home to over 50 SMEs since it opened in 1999,

however there is now a variety of business centres across the town to continue this support in the future.

Stephen Fitzsimons (below), Chief Executive of Warrington Chamber commented "The International Business Centre (IBC) has been our home for nearly 25 years and during this time, over 50 tenants received support from ourselves, Business Link and UK Trade & Investment.

"The IBC is evolving, so it's now time for the Chamber to move on, and we're really looking forward

to being part of a new business community at the Base.

"We already host events at the town's premier business centre with Warrington & Co and the Business Exchange so it seemed like the natural destination for us.

"Several of our members are based there and we'll be supporting many more as they help to make Warrington the best place for business in the north of England."

For more details about the Chamber and how to join visit [www.warrington-chamber.co.uk](http://www.warrington-chamber.co.uk)



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# Planning for the New Year

by John Laverick - Warrington & Co

**So here we are again, the start of a new year. As usual I will be looking forward optimistically to what we can build upon what was achieved last year.**

We now have a stable Local Plan, our main planning document against which we can deliver some good developments that help bring greater prosperity to a wider range of people within Warrington. These developments can take a wide variety of forms, but can be seen in the achievements of last year – whether that is the delivery of homes directly through Incrementum giving highly efficient and relatively low cost homes at a time when cost of living is becoming increasingly trying or in the shape of a new bus depot and bus fleet that will enable reliable and low emission transport or to the impacts of people who find themselves without a home or in need of a job.

This demand will continue, but there is one area that I think will be a focus for the new year and that is how we take advantage of Warrington's assets in order to drive growth. We have seen an increase in the for offices and that combined with the concentration of skill, in particular in the nuclear and technology sectors are areas to push as a coherent plan. I was particularly pleased to see the agreement that MoltexFLEX

reached during COP28, really highlighting skills, knowledge and experience we have in Warrington and that it is world class.

I think that label could be applied to a range of engineering and technology companies and if we can start to align this depth with our current advantages in terms of location and the opportunities thrown up by major new rail infrastructure between Liverpool and Manchester, through Warrington Bank Quay, potentially connecting an airport or two we will start to attract greater attention. How attractive that proposition will be to an industrial and office sector that needs to work on a world stage, clearly hits home when we present our case to Government Ministers and investors alike and we can be clear on the positive offer and benefits for Warrington and how the economic and regenerative impact would also make a more compelling case for the initial investment in rail. What we need to do next is to understand how the £12bn will work.

As always we will need to put this into a relatively compact borough and town centre and we continue

to progress work for the First and Last Mile, enabling an integration with developments and buses and public transport and walking and cycling as well as parks and greenspace.

This overall picture is really where Warrington Means Business will operate, trying to tie the opportunities together into a standalone document, not an easy task with so many moving parts but it will be a plan nonetheless.

We have seen further recent endorsements of the plan as it has been enacted to date with top class restaurant operators such as Yum Cha opening in Time Square before Christmas, and I hope we can instil

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John Laverick  
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the same sort of confidence in other investors either in the Town Centre or in the wider Borough.



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## Divorce Column

By Peter Wilkinson  
Divorce Lawyer at Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

**Q.** My husband and I have been married for 5 years but we lived together for 15 years before we married. He says we've not been married very long so I'm not entitled to very much from him, but this doesn't seem fair when we've spent such a long time together. Where do I stand on this?

**A.** Whenever the court has to determine a fair financial settlement on divorce there are a number of matters it must take into account and the length of marriage is one such matter. Although pre-marriage cohabitation is before marriage, where the cohabitation has seamlessly transitioned into marriage then typically the court will treat it as on a par with marriage and therefore count it towards the length of marriage. This means that the court would likely treat your case as on a par with a 20 year marriage, which is a long time, and depending on exactly what's in the 'pot' this could make a significant difference to what a fair financial settlement is.

**Q.** My partner and I are splitting up after being together for 19 years. We never married because he always said he didn't see the point; that we didn't need a piece of paper to prove that we loved each other. We own our house together but nothing else joint. He has a good job with a good income, some savings and quite valuable pension provision, whereas I earn only minimum wage, have no savings to speak of and no pension provision at all. My friends say that we've been together so long that we are common law husband and wife so it doesn't matter that we're not actually married but I've seen somewhere that this might not be correct?

**A.** Unfortunately your friends have got it wrong. There is no such thing as common law husband and wife; it's a myth. You're either married (or in a civil partnership) or you're not and when you're not and you split up then the law is different. You are entitled to a share of the value of the house because you own it jointly but because you're really just 2 adults living together in a relationship which doesn't actually have any legal status then you are not entitled to any of his savings or to any maintenance from him for yourself and you're not entitled to any share of his pension assets.

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# Council reveals how they brought bin strikes to an end



**WARRINGTON Borough Council has revealed details of how they brought the bin strikes to an end with no lump sum paid to refuse workers to return to work.**

New leader of the council Hans Mundry, who sat down with officers and union officials following his appointment, says negotiations primarily focused on improved terms and conditions for refuse workers, including conversion of agency to permanent posts, including 17 new staff to enhance the council waste teams.

He says the resolution has been achieved with no additional costs for the council and improved terms and conditions for staff following the agreed national pay awards.

Following the strike action that began in October, Warrington Borough Council (WBC) finally resolved its industrial dispute with Unite the Union.

The dispute, stemming from the national pay award, saw refuse workers at local authorities across the country, including Warrington, engaging in strike action, something that the council has no powers to negotiate on.

Once the national pay talks had concluded, Cllr Mundry, the newly elected leader of the council, sat down with officers and union officials to negotiate an end to the strike action.

The negotiations primarily focused on improvements to terms and conditions for the refuse workers, including a job evaluation scheme, the conversion of agency posts to permanent, including 17 new staff positions to enhance council waste teams, Christmas 2024 working arrangements and the consideration of a laundry allowance.

Workers were on strike for a total of 35 days starting in October. As part of the agreement WBC refuse

employees were not paid a lump sum to return to work, instead, there were fewer striking days deducted from their overall pay.

The remaining salary cost savings accrued during the strike action will now go towards cleanup operations including skips, highways management costs, temporary waste facilities and the additional staff offered permanent employment.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Mundry said: "I'm happy to announce that we have been able to find a resolution and bring the strike action to an end."

"Our town has had tough few weeks. It's been difficult for us all, and I sympathise with all our residents and businesses who have struggled whilst their bins have not been emptied."

"I want to put on record my thanks to everyone in the community who came together to help their neighbours and friends."

"I'm pleased we have been able to find a solution that will see our staff return to work and our bin collections resume."

"As a local authority and an employer, we are always looking to improve terms and conditions for our staff, however, we must also manage stretched budgets after 13 years of Conservative austerity that has cut our local services to the bone."

"This resolution does both, there are no additional costs for the Council and we have improved the terms and conditions of our refuse workers."

"We are now looking forward, returning services to normal as soon as possible."







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## Belong achieves gold standard for end-of-life care



**BELONG Warrington has achieved full marks for its Gold Standards Framework assessment, earning the dementia specialist the Quality Hallmark Award for demonstrating best practice in end of life and palliative care.**

Assessors from the national organisation responsible for training and quality standards in the sector praised the not-for-profit group's 'village living' model as conducive to high care standards and helping to promote the independence of people as much as possible. Belong Warrington's activities provision, focus on exercise and falls prevention awareness, and its ongoing relationship with the UK's largest music therapy charity, Nordoff and Robbins, were amongst the examples of strengths highlighted.

The report commended 'clearly dedicated staff' who work alongside families to prepare for the final stages of life, prioritising dignity, compassion and a person-centred approach. Family communication and Belong's in-house Admiral Nurse were also cited as key indicators in the appraisal which

summarised: 'whole team support for residents and families at end of life, from housekeeping team to reception and all care staff.'

Sue Goldsmith, Belong's chief operating officer, said: "Dealing with the subject of death is often still taboo, but we recognise how imperative it is that we support customers to experience a good death. This starts with being able to open channels of communication, both with residents and their families, to prepare well for end of life. Providing exceptional care that meets people's preferences is never more important than at this difficult time."

"We are therefore pleased to be reaccredited with a GSF Quality Hallmark Award, which serves as testament to the hard work and dedication of our team who have perhaps one of the most challenging but rewarding of jobs."

## B's Dementia-Friendly Café



B's Dementia Café, in Belong Warrington, offers a warm and welcoming space where families, friends and carers of people living with dementia can come together with their loved ones over a lovely cup of tea or coffee and cake!



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B's Café is hosted by a Belong Admiral Nurse (a registered nurse with specialist expertise in dementia care), in conjunction with the village Experience team, who help facilitate opportunities for verbal and nonverbal communication, for example, through music, art, exercise or dance.

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## Adult Enrolment Evening

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> January, 5.00pm - 8.00pm**

Join us to find out more about our range of courses and have all your questions about returning to education as an adult student answered. This is a great opportunity to learn more about the flexibility of our courses, the various funding options available and even enrol on your chosen course.

Learn more and register at: **wvr.ac.uk/enrolmentevening**.

**WVR.AC.UK/ADULT**

**01925 494 494**

\*Terms & conditions apply.



# College invests in a sustainable future with the installation of solar panels

**IN line with the College's vision, mission and values to operate sustainably, Warrington & Vale College has recently taken a huge step by investing in solar panels which have now been installed at the Warrington campus.**

This pivotal step shows the college's serious commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and securing a cleaner, more sustainable energy source. The benefits of solar panels are many, from the production of clean, renewable energy to vastly reducing carbon emissions. By beginning the transition to solar

energy, Warrington & Vale Royal College is making a substantial contribution to a greener future for both the town and its students.

Each year the solar panels are projected to produce an impressive 352, 296 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity for the college, resulting in the reduction of 75.2 tonnes of carbon emissions. The solar

panels will generate 30% of the college's electrical consumption, making a long-lasting and impactful difference. This not only aligns with the college's commitment to sustainability but sets an example for other local organisations to follow and join the college in making Warrington #OneStepGreener.

The move to green energy is not the only step the college is taking to be more sustainable. Already, a long list of smaller actions has been taken, such as installing LED lights across campus, sending all waste to a recycling facility and installing solar films to buildings – to name just a few. More recently, the college made an even bigger stride toward sustainability and bode farewell to its hundred-page long

prospectus. This year, 16-18-year-old prospective students have access to a fully-digital prospectus, a bold move that has already saved a staggering 124 trees.

Michelle Seeley, the college's Deputy Principal of Finance & Resources and Chair of the Sustainability Committee, says: "I'm really pleased that we have been able to make this investment into our campus. This move not only aligns with our commitment to environmental responsibility but also marks a significant step toward a more sustainable and energy-efficient future for our college."

To learn more about Warrington & Vale Royal College's commitment to sustainability and see regular solar panel progress updates, visit: [wvr.ac.uk/about/sustainability](http://wvr.ac.uk/about/sustainability)



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# Seriously injured father earns new career after achieving first-class degree

**A Warrington dad who lost his career after damaging his back has transformed his life with a First-Class degree from the University of Salford.**

Matthew Livesey used to play rugby until he suffered two ruptured discs at the bottom of his spine. He needed six hours of surgery to even be able to walk again and was left unable to continue with his career as a manager in retail. Further subsequent operations including having a spinal cord stimulator fitted. The injury means he has severe nerve damage and chronic pain that will have to be managed for the rest of his life.

With four children to provide for, he needed to find a new career. So he decided to start a degree in Computer Networking at Salford and after three years of hard work has now graduated with a First Class Degree and has already

found a job in his chosen field.

Matthew said: "It was my dream to get a first, I'm so proud of myself for dealing with everything and still coming out with that. My wife has been my rock through it all."

"Going back to uni after so long was daunting enough but on top of everything else, with my family and my injury was tough at times. When the accident happened my legs were numb and I couldn't walk. There was no way I could carry on it retail."

"The biggest hurdle was the mental side of recovery. It was a delayed reaction, you begin to realise what you've been through. I suffered from depression and anxiety. But the staff were so

supportive, I can't thank the lecturers and staff enough."

Thanks for his degree Matthew has already landed a job with Phoenix Medical Supplies, working in their IT department.

Matthew added: "Coming to Salford has got me exactly what I wanted and I now have a work life balance that I'll be able to cope with for the rest of my life."

Faiz Jathwa, Matthew's tutor at Salford, said: "Matthew's journey is truly inspiring, a testament to

his resilience and determination. Confronted with significant health challenges, he navigated adversity with unwavering resolve.

"His triumphant achievement of a First Class (Hons) in Computer Networking reflects not only his academic achievements but also his extraordinary perseverance. Matthew's story is a beacon of motivation for us all, showcasing the incredible outcomes that stem from a resilient and determined mindset."



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# £financially yours

By David Watkinson

## A happy and prosperous New Year, everyone!

As promised, we did not spoil your Xmas by talking taxation. However, it is something that we all must face, so here it comes.

The Chancellor presented his Autumn Statement in November and he either confirmed or announced what we would all be facing after the beginning of April.

The main points that affect the majority of us have already been widely discussed and include:

- Another year of frozen personal tax allowances and tax bands
- No change in the rates of income tax, but
- A reduction of 2% in the rate of National Insurance contributions
- No change in the rates of VAT

During his speech the Chancellor made a great deal of the overall effect of changes in Income Tax and National Insurance since 2010, saying that a worker on today's average income would be paying less tax now

than a worker in 2010.

At first sight this cannot be argued against. The personal allowance in 2010 was £6,475 and the lower limit at which National Insurance starts being paid (the "primary" threshold) was £5,720. If these had increased in line with prices then they would be about £11,350 and £10,000 in 2024, compared with the actual proposed level of both of them at £12,570. However, it is not that simple.

Firstly, compared with 2010 the reduction in the rate of National Insurance is not 2%! In 2010 the rate of National Insurance paid by employees was 11%, and had been increased since then by 1% to 12%. Therefore, the reduction to 10% is a reversal of this 1% increase plus an actual reduction of 1%

Secondly, average wages have fallen in real terms since 2010. It is not an easy calculation to build this into the comparison, but most sources suggest a reduction in wage of between 3% and 4%. However, it does mean at the least that the tax and

national insurance savings are not as large in real terms than the simple calculation suggests.

However, the main group of people who have suffered significantly since 2010 are pensioners. Many years ago people above state pension age received an "Age Allowance" which was at the level of the basic state pension age plus the normal personal allowance. This meant that the basic state pension was, effectively, free of tax, and a pensioner could receive additional income from investments or private pensions free of tax up to the normal personal allowance. This link was broken by Margaret Thatcher who increased the age allowance by a lower amount, starting a process of effectively reducing its value. This process was completed when the age allowance was frozen in 2013 until the personal allowance reached the same level.

In addition, they do not pay National Insurance and, therefore, do not benefit from any proposed reduction in this.



Thomas Coyne and Stuart Barr

The effect of the above is that a person above state pension age could have earned a total income of £9,490 in 2010 before paying tax, compared to the £6,475 allowance for people below state pension age. Had this increased in line with inflation then in 2024 it would be £16,600, compared to the actual proposed level of £12,570. This is a reduction of over £4,000, meaning that a pensioner with additional income and paying basic rate tax could be paying up to £800 a year more in tax!

Projecting forward to 2028, when the current freeze in the personal allowance will end, it is anticipated that the personal allowance will be eaten up entirely by the personal allowance, meaning that all income over and above the basic state pension will be taxable. This will include any earnings related state pension, as well as any income from private pensions.

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**Please note that these ideas are intended to inform rather than advise and you should always obtain professional advice before taking any action.**

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# Rylands rename home ground The Hive Arena in new sponsorship deal



**WARRINGTON Rylands home ground at Gorse Lane has been renamed The Hive Arena following a new sponsorship deal with the town centre destination venue development.**

The club announced the partnership with The HIVE WA1 saying "As of today Gorse Lane will be renamed The Hive Arena in a new deal that sees the town's latest destination venue become the main sponsor of the ground."

The Hive WA1 is a multi-purpose environment located in the heart of Warrington town centre. It is a development of one of Warrington's iconic buildings, the former TJ Hughes site. The Hive WA1 is a thriving community and one-stop destination that feeds the functional requirements of our lives. It provides extensive leisure and

social activities, office and cultural amenities.

The Hive WA1 is a brand-new boutique shopping mall that aims to bring business to Warrington and help expand the town centre. It is set to open in the former TJ Hughes store on Sankey Street and will feature 8 stores. The Hive WA1 also includes a brand-new boutique hotel experience that is set to open its doors in 2025.

Club Director Andy Hibbert said: "We would like to say a huge thank you to Neil Trainer and the team for enabling this new partnership to become reality."

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