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## Village Hall Murders!

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# Editor's Opinion



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**AS feared Warrington Council Tax payers will be paying more for less in the year ahead, following the decision by the Labour controlled council to implement a 7.48 per cent increase, while cutting services.**

This is despite additional emergency funding from the Government to plug a projected budget gap of £178.9 million over the next four years (2026/27-2029/30).

This severe financial challenge stems from failed commercial investments, rising service demands, and £1.4b debt, leading to the 7.48% council tax increase for 2026-27.

At the same time Labour councillors have pushed through allowance increases, which you can imagine have gone down like a lead balloon.

Opposition councillors opposed the proposed increases, with some refusing to take the extra money.

Having watched developments with interest I have been left wondering who is actually running Warrington Borough Council now - the elected councillors, the senior officers or the Government envoys? I suspect the latter.

While the Labour leadership have said there will be no "fire sale" that is exactly what appears to be happening, with the jewel in the investment crown, Birchwood Park, already pretty much a done deal.

Various services are also facing uncertain futures, including libraries and leisure centres, with everything under review as the council desperately attempts to live within its means.

In the real world living within your means, should mean paying yourself accordingly, but in local Government and the public sector this isn't reality - and we wonder why the financial state of the country is in such a mess.

Thankfully one thing that doesn't look set to go under the hammer is the Grade I Listed Warrington Town Hall.

The fact council leader Cllr. Hans Mundry felt it necessary to issue a statement, saying there were no current plans to sell the building, means it must have been considered - what next the Golden Gates?



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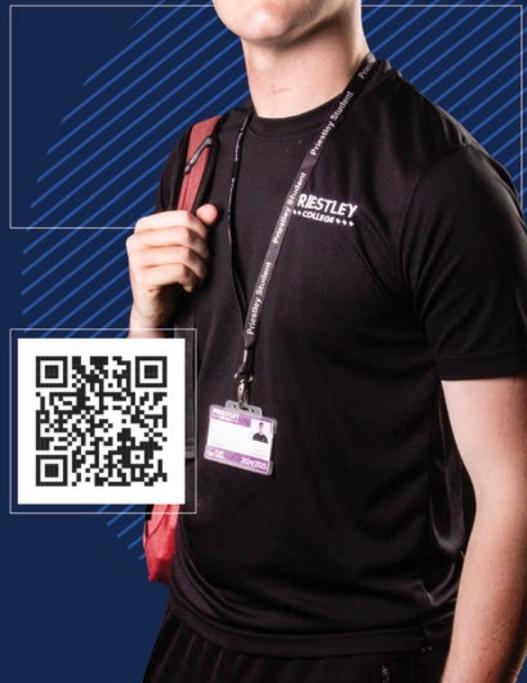
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# Dream comes true as young mum opens photography studio

**A young mum has overcome adversity to launch her own photography studio in Warrington, specialising in taking photographs of families and young children, making a dream come true.**

Maddy May, aged 23 and a mum of two children under five, has launched Bluebelle & Bloom Photography on the Palatine Industrial Estate off Wilderspool Causeway, WA4 6QQ.

Maddy, who originally comes from down South, reached out to **Warrington Worldwide**, saying: "I would love to share my story to show you just how important supporting small businesses are and why you should never give up on your goals – even when it feels the world is against you!"

"I started the studio after



struggling to find work that realistically fits around having young children. Like many parents, I found it almost impossible to balance traditional jobs with childcare, so I decided to build something myself that allowed me to do something I love while still being present for my kids.

"I've always been a creative person and knew it was a career path I was going to take one way or another. I began working in childcare at 16 (as I love working with children) and shortly after was living independently until I was able to get my first home at 18, I was trying to find my way in the world from a very young age. Those experiences shaped a lot of who I am today.

"My studio offers a wide range of sessions, including family portraits, children, maternity and newborn photography, but I also love offering sessions people don't always think of when it comes to a studio – things like pet portraits, birthdays, engagement shoots and professional headshots. The possibilities are endless! I like to bring all visions to life. My acting background also helps when working with people who need

headshots for creative industries.

"Starting the business wasn't easy and I built it completely on my own, despite a lot of people telling me it wasn't possible.

"Within just a few months I completed a King's Trust business course, which normally takes years, and received a small amount of funding that helped me secure the deposit for my studio – this was the only way I could get any form of money to get started and I was adamant I was going to achieve

this.

"After many sleepless nights getting everything ready, I collected the keys in June and officially opened in September 2025 and is something I am very proud of myself for.

"Now my goal is simply to grow the studio and show other people that building something for yourself is possible, even when things feel stacked against you.

For more details, visit [bluebelleandbloom.co.uk](http://bluebelleandbloom.co.uk)

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# Care Home supports Warrington Foodbank

Residents and staff at Arplemere care home, operated by Crystal Care Collection have once again demonstrated their commitment to supporting the local community with a recent visit to Warrington Foodbank.

Members of the Arplemere team delivered a basket filled with food donations to the foodbank, helping to support individuals and families across Warrington.

The team was welcomed by Jay, a dedicated volunteer who works at the foodbank twice a week.

During the visit, Jay gave the staff a tour of the foodbank's warehouse, where donations are sorted and organised. Shelves were stocked with essential items including pasta, tinned food, toiletries, sanitary products and many other everyday necessities that are distributed to those in need.

Jay explained, "The majority of contributions come from the local community, everyday working-class people like me and you who help each other out in order to provide food and products to those who need it."

"We see around 60 families daily who come to our distribution centre seeking help. There is no shame in asking for help. In fact, people should be proud - we all need help sometime in our lives."

Laura Aspin, the General Manager at Arplemere, Fortress Boulevard, Great Sankey, added, "At Arplemere, we believe in giving back and supporting our

neighbours wherever we can, and we are proud to play a part in helping such a vital service continue its work."

You can find out more about community initiatives at Arplemere during the home's weekly Wine-Down Wednesday event, where all are welcome to join residents from 14:00 for a relaxing afternoon of wine and cheese. Other refreshments are available.



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# New Business Awards event to celebrate 150 years of Warrington Chamber and the Wolves!

**TO celebrate the 150th anniversary of Warrington Chamber of Commerce, plans are underway to relaunch the Warrington Business Awards under a new brand.**

Warrington Business Awards Plus will take place at the Halliwell Jones Stadium on Thursday, October 15 and be open to all businesses in and around the Warrington area.

The event will also help celebrate 150 years of Warrington Wolves, who are key members of the Chamber and the local business community.

It follows on from the successful rebrand of the historic Chamber of Commerce as Warrington Chamber Plus following a merger with the Warrington Business Exchange.

With more than 300 members it is the largest and longest established business group in the town.

Chamber Chief Executive Stephen Fitzsimons said: "The Warrington Business Awards have existed in various guises over the

years and the previous organisers put on a great event in 2022.

"We have rebranded and relaunched a new Warrington Chamber Plus and our directors felt now was the right time to recognise the great achievements of businesses in and around our town who do so much to support the local economy and community.

"It is also a fantastic opportunity to celebrate 150 years of the Chamber and Warrington Wolves."

"This will be a community event open to all.

Various sponsorship opportunities and how to enter will be announced in the coming weeks," added Stephen.

There will be 10 titles up for grabs. For further information or interest in the event please email [Business.Awards@warringtonchamberplus.co.uk](mailto:Business.Awards@warringtonchamberplus.co.uk)

4. Business Man of the Year  
5. Business Woman of the Year  
6. Young Person / Apprentice/  
Student of the Year

7. Outstanding Achievement  
8. Charity of the Year  
9. Lifetime Achievement Award  
10. Employer of the Year

## Mum launches safety products business after being inspired by young son



INSPIRED by her young son's rare bleeding condition, a Warrington mum has launched her own business designing wearable safety products for children and vulnerable adults, such as wristbands and tags that clip to clothing, bags, lunch boxes and more.

Using QR and NFC technology, one scan or tap brings up emergency contact information and medical information should that person need help. Potentially lifesaving critical info.

Boosted by a special Business Accelerator grant of £500 from Warrington Chamber Plus, the online [www.SafeandSnappy.com](http://www.SafeandSnappy.com) business is the brainchild of Woolson mum Becky Dutton-Geraghty, whose son Bobby has a rare bleeding condition, severe haemophilia type A.

Becky said, "I can't always be with him, so in the event of an emergency, I wanted a product that could speak for him when I couldn't.

"I built the software so people can set up accounts and edit their emergency and medical info at any time. Keeping it up to date and relevant, unlike engraved products. Bobby's medication amount depends on his weight... so I wanted a product I could update anywhere, anytime.

She currently has three product lines.

"Scan me if I'm lost" (perfect for everyday families on busy days out, travel, holidays, or non-verbal or SEND kids. Also great for dementia adults, aimed at reuniting them more quickly.

"Scan in a medical emergency" (perfect for kids and adults with medical conditions, so people can access what to do in an emergency, where their medication is kept, how to administer it and emergency contacts)

"Scan for my 'can't eat' list of food allergies. (Perfect for kids going to tea at other people's houses or adults every day. List their can't eat list and where their Epi pen is kept etc)

To help with her launch, Becky is offering Warrington Worldwide readers a special 20% off with code WW20 if they want to buy any products from [www.SafeandSnappy.com](http://www.SafeandSnappy.com)

Meanwhile, she has also started a pilot project inside a Warrington school, designing a system for keeping children safe on school trips.

If you are thinking of starting a business or have a new business less than six months old, you can apply for a Business Accelerator grant.

For more details visit [www.warrington-chamber.co.uk/news/enterprise-accelerator/](http://www.warrington-chamber.co.uk/news/enterprise-accelerator/)

**Warrington  
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2. SME of the Year  
3. Entrepreneur of the Year

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# From Warrington to London to Germany - Covering plenty of ground

By Laurence Barrow

**It has certainly been a month of covering plenty of ground, both in business and in the community. From Warrington to Germany and soon down to London, it has been a busy and rewarding few weeks with plenty happening across a number of areas.**

On the football side, things remain really positive at Warrington Rylands. We have reached the semi final of the Liverpool Senior Cup where we will face Everton, which should be a fantastic occasion for the club. At the same time we currently sit in the play off positions in the league, so the run in to the end of the season is shaping up to be an exciting one with some important games ahead.

One of the real highlights recently was a brilliant away trip to Whitby where more than 100 supporters travelled to get behind the team. Experiences like that really show the strength of the club and the community around it. Seeing fans enjoying the journey together and supporting the team home and away says a lot about the direction the club is moving in.

From a business perspective it has been a very productive period. We have had some excellent meetings across the education sector focusing on renewable technology and

ways to help schools and colleges move towards more efficient and sustainable buildings. Being involved in developing case studies and future projects that support greener infrastructure is something we are really proud to be part of.

A particular highlight was a visit to the huge Light + Building exhibition at Messe Frankfurt in Germany. It is one of the largest events of its kind and it was a fantastic opportunity to spend time with both existing and new suppliers while exploring the latest technology in LED lighting, automation systems and building management solutions. Trips like this are invaluable when it comes to bringing new ideas and innovation back to our clients.

Looking ahead we will also be travelling down to London to continue discussions around a national facilities management partnership. It is an exciting opportunity that could see us expanding our services across a major retail portfolio and

strengthening relationships on a national level.

Alongside the business activity there has also been plenty happening within the community. Preparations continue for our charity golf day in support of North West Cancer Research at Mere Golf Club on July 10, which is coming together really well. We are also organising a fantastic behind the scenes visit to a very well known watch company where we will be taking clients along in support of the charity.

I am also really proud to be working with Birchwood High School this month, helping with mock interviews and speaking to students about career opportunities and how they can get into the industry. Supporting young people locally and sharing real world experience

is something I am always passionate about.

We are also very excited for the upcoming High Sheriff Awards where we have been shortlisted for Business Excellence and Enterprise. It is a real honour to be recognised and we are very much looking forward to what should be a fantastic evening celebrating businesses making a positive impact across the region.

With plenty happening across business, football and the community, the next few months are shaping up to be just as busy and exciting.



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# College secures Savoy Educational Trust grant

**WARRINGTON & Vale Royal College is delighted to announce that it has secured grant funding from the Savoy Educational Trust to support significant upgrades to its Hospitality & Catering facilities.**

The investment will enable the college to modernise its training kitchens, enhancing the delivery of Hospitality & Catering courses and ensuring students gain experience that reflects current industry standards. More than 160 students study Hospitality & Catering at the college each year and will benefit directly from the improvements.

The funding will provide a wide range of new, industry standard equipment, including a new Rational iCombi Pro oven, fryers, a portable induction hob, and a sous vide alongside essential professional tools such as pans, scales, and utensils. These upgrades will allow students to develop their skills using equipment commonly found in professional kitchens, strengthening their technical ability, creativity, and confidence.

By aligning training more closely with employer expectations, the project will enhance students' readiness for employment within a competitive sector. Access to modern tools and up to date industry practices will support students to build both technical and

transferable skills, improving their long-term career prospects.

The investment will also play an important role in widening access to high quality vocational training. These upgraded facilities will ensure that all students have equal access to industry relevant resources and opportunities, regardless of their background. The project is expected to deliver long term benefits by raising aspirations, enhancing employability, and supporting community regeneration through improved access to skills and training. This marks an important step forward in ensuring they are fully prepared for successful careers within the hospitality industry.



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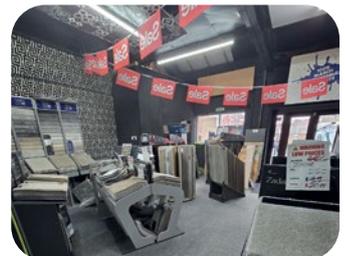
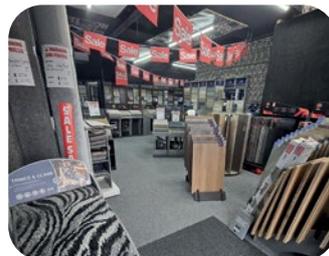
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# “Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders”, a killer of a comedy!

**Tickets are now available for The Bridgewater Players performance of “Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders” by Derek Webb and directed by Jen Aldred.**

In April, the Bridgewater Players Drama Society will be putting on another exciting show, a murder mystery comedy written by Derek Webb, “Agatha Crusty and the Village Hall Murders”. Set in All Saints Village Church Hall, Agatha Crusty (pronounced ‘Croosty’) is visiting her cousin Alice, but is caught up in all the drama of several murders which take place. The murder victims

seem to be church hall committee members, which to Agatha’s mind, is no coincidence. Then in comes, the not-so-astute, Detective Inspector Twigg, who is quick to accuse everyone without real evidence. It falls to Agatha to unpick clues and decipher red herrings, in order to find out who the real murderer is.

This show is a real comedic farce with quirky characters, including

a flirtatious vicar, a down-to-earth caretaker, and a no-nonsense chair of the village hall committee, as well as aristocratic brother and sister (played by the same actress). As with all of the Bridgewater Players shows, there is a mixture of the familiar cast, with the addition of new members. The role of Agatha Crusty is to be performed by veteran actress, Karen Hewitt who has played many leading characters in their shows, including Lady Bracknell, Sister George and Sheila from ‘Sheila’s Island’.

Based in Thelwall, the society was initially formed by six people in November 1951 in Lymm. So this year is their 75th anniversary year. This show’s director, Jen Aldred,

explains: “We are so excited to have achieved 75 years as a society. To celebrate, as well as this comedy, we are also performing in the Lymm Festival in June with a play written by our chairperson, Kath Buckley, and we have lots of great shows planned for our “75th Anniversary Season” starting in November!”

Show dates are Thursday 23rd to Saturday 25th April. Tickets for the show can be purchased online at [www.bwplayers.co.uk/tickets](http://www.bwplayers.co.uk/tickets). Price is £9 plus booking fee online, and £10 on the door. Pre-booking is recommended as tickets are already selling. Performed at Thelwall Parish Hall, Bell Lane, WA4 2SX. Free parking is available.

**Agatha Crusty AND THE VILLAGE HALL MURDERS**  
By Derek Webb

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Picture: Colin Drinkwater at Jorube Portrait Photography



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# Huge year ahead for local band The Winachi Tribe

**LEAD singer Liam Croker is predicting a huge year ahead for Warrington-based band WINACHI (The Winachi Tribe), much of it based around their hometown.**

It includes a big hometown single launch at the new music venue 'BRICKHAUS' (was FC2) on April 25th and headlining at 'Warrington Music Festival' on June 6th in the Old Market Place at Golden Square.

They will also be special guests to another local band, Starsailor at the Old Market Place on July 25th. Then, on August 1st, they are performing at Cheshire Festival at Capesthorpe Hall.

The band has been busy building their profile and following since

2018 when they did two tours of L.A / California including opening for The Charlatans in Downtown Los Angeles at a sold-out Teragram Ballroom and also performing two live sessions for equipment company Behringer at their HQ in Hollywood.

In 2019, they recorded their debut album 'Sympathy For The Future' at Earthstar Creation Centre at Venice Beach, L.A with legendary producer John X (David Bowie, The Rolling Stones). A European tour of France and Italy followed.

They then released their own clothing/trainer lines, securing endorsement through Italian fashion brand 'Pantofola d'Oro' and U.K Skateboard Company 'Liberalis'.

In 2022, they filmed the video for 'Heaven In Hell', the first single from their album in Los Angeles. The video featured producer John X & Frankie Clarke (daughter of Gilby Clarke from Guns N' Roses).

The same year they headlined the red carpet awards show 'International Singer Songwriters Association' in Atlanta, Georgia, at the Byers Theatre, picking up 'Best International Band' & 'Best International Video' (for single Funky But Chic).

The following year saw the release of their debut album 'Sympathy For The Future' (the initial release was delayed due to lockdown). They

did the album launch at 'Moovin Festival' in Manchester. The album has gone on to receive rave reviews and major airplay on BBC 6 Music, BBC Introducing and win 'Best International Album' at the 2024 'International Singer Songwriter Awards' in Atlanta, Georgia.

In 2024/25 they signed publishing deals with 'Inside Baseball Music Publishing' (U.K) & 'AYO Music Group' (U.S).

Then in 2025 they started working officially with Liberalis Media on launching their new collaborative WINACHI X Liberalis Clothing Line. They entered Manchester Recording Studios with Grammy-nominated producer Dave Pemberton (The Prodigy, Groove Armada) to start work on our second album 'Coming Up For Air'.

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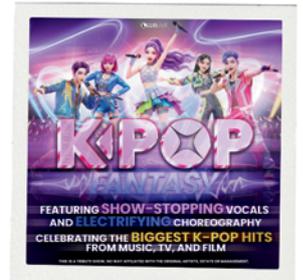


## WHAT'S ON SPRING - SUMMER 2026

- Fri 17 Apr** - Luther Live and Velvet Voices
- Sat 18 Apr** - Fleetwood Bac + Roxette UK
- Sun 19 Apr** - Scott Bennett - Stuff
- Thu 23 Apr** - Man in the Mirror
- Fri 24 Apr** - Al Murray - All You Need Is Guv **Sold Out**
- Sun 26 Apr** - K-POP Fantasy
- Sat 2 May** - The Comedy Store
- Fri 8 May** - Hindley Street Country Club **Sold Out**
- Sat 16 May** - The Dualers
- Sat 23 May** - Tom Stade - Naughty by Nature
- Sat 30 May** - Gareth Gates - Boyband in the Buff
- Fri 5 Jun** - The Bon Jovi Experience
- Sat 13 Jun** - The Comedy Store
- Fri 19 Jun** - The Proclaimers **Sold Out**
- Sat 27 Jun** - David Gray **Sold Out**
- Sat 4 Jul** - The Comedy Store
- Sat 11 Jul** - Nik Kershaw
- Sun 12 Jul** - The Makings of a Murderer
- Wed 29 Jul** - Tommy Emmanuel CGP

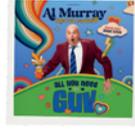
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## How Hypnotherapy helped Max reclaim his life

As a Solution Focused Hypnotherapist, I have the privilege of supporting people through many different challenges. I have worked with clients seeking help for issues such as anxiety, phobias, weight management, migraines, IBS, depression, skin conditions, pain management, endometriosis, sleep difficulties, cancer support and confidence building. While their concerns may differ, each person arrives with one powerful thing in common: the decision that they are ready for change.

Choosing to make a change in your life takes courage. It can feel daunting to reach out for support, and I deeply respect the bravery it takes for clients to take that first step. Being trusted to guide someone through that process is something I never take for granted. In many cases, the journey toward positive change becomes one of the most empowering decisions a person makes for themselves.

One client who particularly stayed with me was a 17-year-old boy called Max, who had been diagnosed with chronic spontaneous idiopathic urticaria. His symptoms were so severe that the condition had become completely debilitating. He had

been forced to leave sixth form college, stop playing football and withdraw from spending time with his friends. Even sleep had become almost impossible because the symptoms were so intense and distressing. In many ways, the condition had turned his own home into a kind of prison.

During one of our early conversations, I asked whether the sensation felt similar to prickly heat - I remembered experiencing that myself once while on holiday. Max explained that it was far more severe. He described it as feeling like boiling water being poured over his skin from head to toe. Hearing that description made it clear just how overwhelming and distressing the experience must have been.

At the start of our work together, I wasn't entirely sure how much hypnotherapy would be able to help with such a challenging condition. However, one of the reassuring aspects of the approach I use is that it carries no harmful side effects. Because of that, I felt confident that while we explored ways to support Max, the process itself would be safe and certainly would not make his situation worse.

At the start of each session, Max would share what had gone well since we last met. Our focus was always on his strengths - what he could already do and how life might look if he felt even slightly better. Over just two months of weekly sessions, the small changes he put in place gradually moved him closer to the future he wanted.

By session seven, Max arrived with exciting news: he felt cured. For the first time in eight months, he had slept through the night without his skin condition disturbing him. As the sessions helped his nervous system recognise that he was safe, his body was able to rest and reset, and his symptoms began to fade naturally.

A couple of months after our final session, Max messaged to say he had started an apprenticeship and passed his driving test. It was wonderful to see him moving forward and achieving his goals.

If you're curious about how hypnotherapy could help you or someone you know, I offer a complimentary discovery call to explore whether this approach might support you. Get in touch via my website or email to begin your journey.



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# 240 affordable homes planned for six-storey development on former DW Sports site

**PLANS for 240 affordable homes in two six-storey buildings on the site of the former DW Sports site in Warrington town centre have been submitted to the borough council.**

The 100 per cent affordable housing is proposed for Academy Way, to the south east of the Time Square area will also include an amenity garden, cycle and bin storage and other associated works.

Habiko, the affordable homes partnership between Pension Insurance Corporation (PIC), Muse and Homes England, has submitted the proposals.

Owned by Warrington Borough Council, Academy Way has been identified as a strategic location for new affordable housing, benefiting from strong public transport links, walkable routes and proximity to a vibrant town centre. The proposals comprise two six-storey apartment buildings delivering 240 new 1- and 2-bed affordable apartments, arranged around a central landscaped courtyard for residents to enjoy.

The plans will provide low-energy, low-carbon homes for rent, close to shops, amenities and services that will support the growing neighbourhood. Designed by AHR Architects, with landscape design by Gillespies, the proposals have been shaped through recent community conversations to ensure they respond to local priorities and aspirations.

Launched in late 2024, Habiko focuses on delivering low-carbon, low-energy affordable homes for rent. The homes will be built across England in areas of high demand for this type of housing, in accessible locations close to employment opportunities and designed to help residents save money on their energy bills.

Joel Chandler, senior development manager at Muse, said: "We're pleased to be bringing Academy Way forward as part of our commitment to delivering affordable, sustainable homes for rent where they're needed most. The opportunity at Warrington will help address the growing demand for quality housing, and our team is focused on creating a development that not only meets this need but also makes a positive contribution to the local community and its future growth."

The application marks the first Habiko scheme to be submitted for approval, kickstarting the partnership's plans to develop a target of 3,000 affordable and sustainable homes across the country over the next 12 years.

Global interdisciplinary consultancy Stantec supported Habiko in preparing the application.

Greg Dickson, Stantec's regional practice lead for planning in Northern England, said: "These plans are very much in line with our focus on delivering positive impacts for communities. We're proud to have played a key role in shaping this sustainable, affordable, highly connected, and future-focused development, which

will turn a derelict site into vibrant new homes."

Academy Way, Warrington, will be a car-free development by virtue of the site's sustainable town centre location. The project seeks to help boost the local economy through job creation and new skills to support green innovation.



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## Divorce Column

By Peter Wilkinson  
Divorce Lawyer at Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

### Divorce and Dementia: A Complex and Sensitive Situation

It is estimated that around one million people in the UK are currently living with dementia, and this number is expected to rise.

Dementia is an umbrella term. Common symptoms include memory loss, confusion, communication difficulties, changes in mood or personality and problems with reasoning or decision-making. These changes can have a profound impact on families and relationships.

For many couples a dementia diagnosis brings challenges that can test even the strongest and longest of marriages. The decision to end a marriage is never an easy one, even in ordinary circumstances. When dementia is involved the situation can become particularly complex, raising difficult emotional, ethical and legal considerations.

One of the key legal issues in these situations is the question of litigation capacity. That is, whether a person is able to understand the nature of legal proceedings and give instructions to a solicitor in relation to them. This is not the same as general mental capacity. It is more specific than that. Some individuals in the earlier stages of dementia may still have the capacity to participate in divorce and financial remedy proceedings whereas others may not.

If a person lacks litigation capacity the divorce can still proceed, but additional safeguards must be put in place. For instance, a litigation friend must be appointed to conduct the proceedings on that person's behalf. This might be a trusted family member or friend, or in some cases, the Official Solicitor.

There are also important financial considerations. Dementia can lead to significant care needs, perhaps including the cost of residential care, and these factors will be relevant when financial matters ancillary to divorce are considered.

Cases involving dementia require careful handling and sensitivity. Anyone considering divorce where their spouse is living with dementia should seek legal advice at an early stage to ensure the correct procedures are followed and that the interests of all involved are properly protected.

For expert advice and assistance regarding divorce and related matters please get in touch – whatever your circumstances we have the experience and expertise to advise, guide and support you.

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## New group set up to safeguard the future of Walking Day



**A new group has been created to ensure the long-term sustainability of Warrington Walking Day, with the cash-strapped borough council no longer able to fund and organise the event, which dates back to 1873.**

In light of the significant financial pressures it is facing, Warrington Borough Council is no longer able to fund and organise the event. However, recognising its importance as a valued faith event with a long-standing significance for many within the community, the council has facilitated the creation of a new group tasked with protecting and evolving the event for future generations.

Comprising church leaders, community members and council officers, the Walking Day Representative Group will focus on long-term planning to ensure Walking Day, which started in 1873 as a distraction to the Newton Races, remains a staple of the local calendar.

Key priorities include:

- Celebrating and preserving the heritage of Walking Day while highlighting its significance to Warrington's heritage and identity.
- Connecting more effectively with the wider community to create an accessible and welcoming event which is reflective of today's context.
- Making the event more meaningful for young people and those who have not previously participated.

The group has agreed that,

given the short timeframe, it will not be possible for churches to raise sufficient funds for a full-scale event this year, with the event due to take place at the beginning of July.

Instead, the town will host a special Walking Day Heritage Event on Saturday, 4 July, from 10 am to 3 pm at Bank Park – a move away from the traditional Friday.

Supported by the council and funded through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), this one-off gathering will serve as a bridge to the future. It will be a multi-denominational celebration, with readings, prayers and hymns, church and school bands performing and traditional banners carried and displayed.

A social media campaign will promote the heritage of Walking Day, encouraging people to share stories, photographs and videos of their memories.

The event aims to re-engage past participants while introducing the tradition to new residents. By highlighting the significance of Walking Day to Warrington's identity, the group intends to use this year as an opportunity to honour the legacy of Warrington Walking Day while considering its future direction in a changing community context.



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# New MRI scanner now onsite at Antrobus clinic

By Dr Nav Ijaz BMBS, MRCP UK, MRCPG, Chief Clinical Officer myGP Clinic

**Most of the time we doctors have focused on treating disease after symptoms appear. Recently, there has been a growing shift toward preventing illness earlier and identifying problems long before they become serious.**

This approach is sometimes called Medicine 3.0 and it focuses on proactive care rather than reactive treatment. Imaging technology such as MRI scanning, is starting to play an important role in that shift.

## What is an MRI scan and how does it work?

Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), is a type of medical scan that uses powerful magnets and radio waves to produce very detailed images of the inside of the body. Unlike X rays or CT scans, MRI does not use radiation.

Inside the scanner there is a strong magnetic field. This magnetic field interacts with hydrogen atoms in the body. Since the human body is largely made of water, it contains a huge number of hydrogen atoms. The MRI machine detects those responses and the result is a very clear view of structures such as the brain, spine, joints, muscles and many internal organs.

## Why MRI is useful in preventative medicine?

Preventative medicine is about identifying disease earlier, ideally before symptoms develop. MRI is particularly helpful here because it can detect subtle structural changes that might not yet be causing

symptoms.

For example MRI can identify early joint wear and tear, spinal disc problems, certain neurological conditions and tissue abnormalities at a stage when treatment options are often simpler and more effective. In some cases it can reveal findings that allow lifestyle changes or monitoring rather than waiting until a condition becomes advanced.

Within a primary care setting this can be particularly powerful. Traditionally patients might wait weeks or months for referral based imaging. Having MRI available within the clinic (such as the one at the myGP antrobus site) allows faster investigation when concerns arise and helps clinicians make better informed decisions earlier.

## Some limitations and drawbacks

While MRI is a powerful diagnostic tool, it is not perfect and it is important to recognise its limitations.

One issue is that MRI can sometimes identify incidental findings. These are abnormalities that may never cause symptoms or problems but once detected they can lead to further investigations and anxiety. This is why it is important to discuss scans with your doctor.

It is important to note that certain types of metal implants, pacemakers or other electronic devices can be affected by the magnetic field. Patients are always screened carefully before entering the scanner to make sure it is safe for them.

The scan itself is painless but for some the scanner can feel enclosed. To combat this the scanner at our site is shorter to avoid the claustrophobic feeling. Most scans take between 20 and 45 minutes depending on what is being examined.

Finally, not everyone needs an MRI. Sometimes ultrasound, X ray or clinical assessment alone provides the necessary answer. Incidentally, we also offer the former at myGP clinic.

## Primary care MRI

We at myGP clinic recognise the shift to preventative medicine and as such have introduced onsite ultrasound and MRI at our Antrobus clinic. Rather than going to hospital, our members can come to a less daunting, more comfortable location to have their scans.

For patients this means fewer delays between consultation and investigation. For our doctors it means better information to guide early intervention and preventative strategies.

Preventative medicine is not about scanning everyone for

everything. It is about using the right tools at the right time

MRI scanning is one of those tools and its presence within myGP clinic represents an important step toward a more proactive model of healthcare.



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# Council backs proposals to increase number of councillors and wards in the borough

**WARRINGTON Borough Council is backing proposals to increase the number of councillors in the town from 58-61 and the number of wards in the borough from 22-24 in response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's consultation.**

Warrington Borough Council has approved its formal response to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) as part of the ongoing electoral review of the borough.

The review – covering council size, ward boundaries, ward names and representation levels – will shape electoral arrangements to be implemented for the May 2028 local elections.

The council currently has 58 councillors representing residents across the borough. In response to the LGBCE electoral review consultation, the council's submission proposes a revised warding pattern designed to improve electoral equality, better reflect local communities, and ensure effective and convenient local government.

The LGBCE criteria indicate a need to increase the number of councillors from 58 to 61 to maintain equitable representation across all wards.

As well as recommending a further three councillors, the proposal also seeks to increase the number of wards from 22 to 24, with the creation of separate wards for Bewsey and Dallam and Bank Quay and the Town Centre.

Additionally, the proposal includes revised south Warrington wards closely aligned with Parish Council boundaries, to reflect planned and future housing development, which will in turn see the town's local population grow.

Some practical changes are also proposed, including Westbrook Centre being moved into the ward of Westbrook and Callands as well as changes to the names of wards to ensure more areas of the borough are represented.

Leader of the Council, Cllr Hans Mundry, said: "These recommendations aim to ensure that our residents are fairly and equitably represented across the borough – which is an important cross-party issue – as our population continues to grow.

"While our submission is built upon robust local data and clear evidence of Warrington's changing landscape, it is ultimately up to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to determine the final structure for Warrington. We await the outcome of their consultation process."

One of the first to respond to the proposals was Lymm South Cllr. Graham Gowland, after the plans were formally considered at an

Extraordinary Council Meeting.

For Lymm, the proposals confirm a continuation of two dedicated wards—Lymm North and Lymm South, each represented by two councillors. The changes are designed to reflect community identity, manage population growth, and ensure fair representation as the village continues to expand.

Cllr Gowland welcomed the proposals, noting that they reflect the suggestions he has put forward throughout the review process.

"These proposals keep Lymm's identity intact while correcting long-standing issues caused by outdated boundaries," he said. "I'm pleased that the submission reflects the case I've made for a clearer, more coherent map for our village."

A key feature of the new layout is that the proposed Lymm wards would now align fully with the Tatton parliamentary boundary, removing the split arrangements that have previously caused confusion for residents.

"Aligning the Lymm wards with the Tatton boundary is a sensible and overdue improvement," Cllr Gowland added. "It means residents will have a more consistent and understandable set of boundaries across local and national representation."

The council's proposal in full shows representation across central, east, south and west Warrington:

Central

- Bank Quay & Town Centre – 2
- Bewsey & Dallam – 2
- Fairfield & Howley – 3
- Latchford West – 3
- Latchford East – 2
- Orford – 3
- Orford North & Poplars – 3

East

- Birchwood – 3
- Culcheth, Glazebury & Croft – 3
- Padgate, Paddington & Bruche – 2
- Poulton & Fearnhead – 3
- Rixton & Woolston – 3

South

- Appleton North – 2
- Appleton South, Hatton & Stretton – 2
- Grappenhall & Thelwall – 3
- Lymm North – 2
- Lymm South – 2
- Stockton Heath & Walton – 2

West

- Burtonwood & Winwick – 2
- Chapelford & Old Hall – 3
- Great Sankey North & Whittle Hall – 3
- Great Sankey South & Sankey Bridges – 3
- Penketh & Cuedley – 3
- Westbrook & Callands – 2

Draft recommendations will be published by the LGBCE in June 2026, followed by a further consultation, with final recommendations due in December 2026.

## Ukrainian artist delivers popular workshops

TALENTED Ukrainian artist Yaroslav Yasenev held his first-ever oil painting workshop in the UK at the Old School, Fairfield, Warrington.

Yaroslav has been in the UK for about two years, but he has been teaching his love of art for over twelve years in Ukraine. Painting is in his DNA and now he is spreading his knowledge and skills in Warrington through Seasons Art Warrington classes at Warrington Sports Club in Walton.

A few weeks ago, he held his first exhibition of paintings in the Lymm 'Art Gallery' along with potter and comedian Jonny Vegas, who was showcasing some of his ceramics seen in a recent TV documentary.

Yaroslav has staged two workshops. The first was on the theme of flowers in a vase, whilst the second was spread over two days, featuring yachts moored in a harbour at night.

Yaro began his classes with a brief introduction about the history of art and the differences between oil and acrylic. He is proficient in all art mediums, and his love and passion clearly came over during these two sessions and into his students' hearts.

He admitted that he was as nervous starting this new venture which brought back memories of the nerves he had experienced when he started teaching twelve years ago as a newly qualified Master of Arts postgraduate.

His grasp of English is very good, and he has a very great sense of humour. English is one of his four languages. He thanked everyone

for the warm welcome that he has experienced in the town which has been extended to his wife and young son, as well as other Ukrainians, especially in Culcheth and Lymm.

Geoff Settle, one of his students, said: "Yaro is a very talented painter and teacher, and his work is now sold internationally in the USA and European markets. I call him the 'Maestro', and he has developed everybody's skills and techniques through demonstration and individual coaching when required. I learnt my watercolour painting from Penketh artist Sue Cartwright, but she has retired. The new classes have come along just at the right time for me.

"Yaro told me that his father has received three medals from the Pope as well as the Ukrainian state. He told me that his father tried to discourage him at first because a career in art was difficult and financially fraught. His dad even told him to take up accountancy because it paid well.

"This was a trick, to test his son by making him angry and it worked very well because he has been a professional artist ever since and works very hard to succeed. My father was a Chartered Accountant and wanted me to follow him. I think it's a dad's thing. Art is in Yaro's family DNA; his father is about to open his umpteenth exhibition in the Ukraine, whilst his mother is staging her workshops."

Yaro will be having his first one-man exhibition at the Art Gallery in Lymm in May, date to be announced but very well worth a visit and a treat.



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*Spotlight on Local History with James Balme*

# When Time Team came to town in search of the Romans

**It was in the summer of 1998 when I first became interested in the possibility that the Romans had once occupied land close to Rixton and Warburton sometime between the 1st to 4th century AD.**

After searching many old maps and place names I decided to seek permission from local farmers to search the fields by simply fieldwalking looking for any clues that may have remained in the plough-soil. For the next eight years I carried on walking the fields and during that time I started to find sherds of Roman pottery and other pieces of evidence that pointed strongly to Roman activity. This allowed me to narrow down the search area over time until I finally pinpointed the exact area of Roman activity and what seemed to have once been a Roman settlement. Now I was starting to regularly unearth Roman metalwork in the form of brooches and coinage including a small hoard of Roman silver Republican coins. These would later be identified as coinage used to pay Roman soldiers. But it was in the year 2000 whilst searching another field close to where the supposed settlement lay that the most important find was to be made.

On a lovely sunny spring day whilst searching the field I noticed something reflecting the sunlight in my direction. I wandered over and couldn't believe what I was seeing for

in front of me laying on the surface of the ploughed soil was a large silver bracelet in the form of a snake. I immediately reported my find to the museum and it was confirmed that it was indeed a Roman snake bracelet. This was a high-status object and along with the Roman brooches and silver coinage it was clear that I had located a previously unknown Roman settlement not shown any maps available at the time.

Following on from my discoveries I went on to make many appearances on local BBC and ITV television stations to talk about my finds. In 2001 BBC1 made a documentary with me about the work as I was doing in the area and the wonderful finds I was unearthing. Following on from this I carried on unearthing more evidence of Roman activity and interest from the archaeological fraternity grew stronger. A year later I worked with the former Manchester University archaeological unit to carry out a two-week excavation at the site where more evidence was found in the form of Roman ditches.

But in 2006 I was to receive a phone call from Channel 4's 'Time Team' to ask if they could come

and excavate the site and make an episode with me for the 2007 series. I agreed that it would be a great idea. In early September Sir Tony Robinson and the Time Team arrived in the village. We held a pre-excavation meeting at the former Lymm hotel the evening before we started filming. The three day dig was a fantastic experience and a Time Team record was broken for the largest trenches ever dug during a Time Team dig! The episode entitled 'No stone Unturned' was first broadcast on Channel 4 in March 2007 and has gone on to be included as one of the all-time classic episodes with over one million views and is still being broadcast to this day on the Time

Team youtube channel.

You can view exclusive 'behind the scenes' footage of Time Team shot by myself during excavations by simply visiting my history channel [youtube.com/@tvpresenter4history](https://www.youtube.com/@tvpresenter4history) and going to the Time Team playlist.



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# All library services under review as opposition issue "Save our Libraries" rally cry



**ALL library services in Warrington are currently under review as opposition Lib Dem Cllrs. on Warrington Borough Council issued a "Save our Libraries" rally cry.**

The Liberal Democrat group has issued a statement warning that Warrington's libraries must not be hollowed out following concerns about proposed cuts to the borough's library service.

Speaking during the budget debate at Full Council recently, Cllr Sharon Harris said that while libraries are valued community spaces, they cannot simply be turned into community centres run by volunteers.

Westbrook Library was recently under threat of closure to save money but after a successful campaign by local residents, is now run by volunteers, supported by LiveWire libraries.

Cllr Harris said, "Libraries are vital community spaces that provide access to knowledge, learning and professional support. But they are not community centres. A library service relies on trained librarians whose skills help residents access information, develop literacy and support education."

Her comments come amid fears that significant cuts to the library budget could lead to a model where council-run services are replaced with volunteer-led facilities.

The Liberal Democrats say that replacing professional staff with volunteers risks hollowing out the service and reducing what libraries can offer residents.

Cllr Harris added: "Volunteers play an important role in supporting local services, but they should not be used as a substitute for trained librarians. If we lose that professional expertise, we lose the very heart of what a library is."

"We have previously campaigned to protect library services in Warrington. In 2017, residents successfully fought proposals to close local libraries. I was Chair of the Working Group

that saved Stockton Heath Library at that time. If the council attempts to weaken or effectively close libraries again, the Liberal Democrats will stand with residents and fight to protect them. Any residents who feel passionately about this, please feel free to contact me CllrSharon.Harris@warrington.gov.uk."

Councillor Jean Flaherty, Cabinet Member for Communities, Culture and Heritage, commented: "As the council faces the realities of implementing the savings necessary to deliver a balanced budget and live within our means, all our services are under review."

"We all value our library services and the importance of the professional librarians in delivering that service to our residents. What is under consideration is how we deliver a better service to our residents within the budget available to us."

"Where community involvement is appropriate and available, we will work together in partnership with volunteers to provide the very best service within the budget available to us."



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## Making Tax Digital for Income Tax: Key questions as the start date approaches

### A major change to the self assessment system

With the start of Making Tax Digital for Income Tax (MTD for ITSA) now upon us, HMRC has been clarifying several practical questions around how the system will operate. From the use of bridging software to what happens if income drops below the reporting threshold, a number of areas still require explanation as taxpayers prepare for the new regime beginning on 6 April 2026.

MTD for Income Tax represents one of the most significant changes to the UK self assessment system in decades. For the first time, many sole traders, landlords and self-employed individuals will be required to keep digital records and submit quarterly updates to HMRC rather than relying solely on a single annual tax return. The initial rollout will apply to individuals whose qualifying income from self-employment or property exceeds £50,000, based on figures reported in their 2024-25 self assessment tax return. HMRC estimates that approximately 864,000 taxpayers will fall into this first group and says that letters have already been issued to notify those affected.

### Registration and preparing for the new system

HMRC has encouraged affected

taxpayers to register for MTD before 6 April 2026 so that their details can be transferred to the new service and reporting systems prepared in advance. Although this is not a strict legal deadline, registering early is strongly recommended. Both HMRC and software providers require time to ensure their systems are operating correctly, and taxpayers will also need to ensure that their chosen software is set up and working properly before the first quarterly submission deadline arrives.

To comply with MTD requirements, taxpayers must keep digital records and submit updates using MTD-compatible software. HMRC has confirmed that bridging software will be permitted, allowing taxpayers who keep records in spreadsheets to connect those records digitally to HMRC's system for submission. However, HMRC has made it clear that its preference is for taxpayers to use fully integrated accounting software that records transactions digitally from the outset rather than relying on spreadsheets and bridging tools.

### Understanding quarterly reporting

One of the most noticeable changes under MTD will be the introduction of quarterly reporting, something that many taxpayers who are used to annual reporting will need time to adapt

to. The first quarterly update will cover the period 6 April to 5 July 2026, with a filing deadline of 7 August 2026. These submissions will summarise income and expenses for the quarter and must be reported separately for each trade or property business where applicable.

It is important to note that these quarterly submissions do not replace the existing self assessment tax return. Taxpayers will still need to submit their annual return in the normal way. For example, the tax return for the 2025-26 tax year will still be due by 31 January 2027, meaning that MTD introduces additional reporting obligations rather than replacing the current system entirely.

### Income thresholds and when MTD applies

A common point of confusion concerns how the income thresholds operate. HMRC has confirmed that eligibility for MTD is determined using the previous year's self assessment tax return, not the taxpayer's income during the current year. This means that if a taxpayer's income exceeds the £50,000 threshold part way through a tax year, they will not normally need to join MTD until the following tax year, allowing them to complete the current year using the traditional self assessment process.

The threshold will gradually



Thomas Coyne and Stuart Barr

expand over time as HMRC rolls out the system more widely. Individuals with qualifying income above £30,000 will be required to join from April 2027, while those with income exceeding £20,000 will join from April 2028.

### A soft landing for the first year

Recognising that the move to quarterly reporting represents a significant change for many taxpayers, HMRC has indicated that the first year of MTD will effectively operate as a soft landing period. Penalties for late quarterly submissions will initially be waived to allow taxpayers time to adjust to the new requirements.

From April 2027, however, the full compliance regime will apply using HMRC's points-based penalty system.

While the aim of MTD is to modernise the tax system and provide more up-to-date information for both taxpayers and HMRC, the transition will inevitably require changes in working practices for many individuals. Ensuring that digital record-keeping systems are in place early, and that software is functioning correctly, will be essential in helping taxpayers adapt smoothly to this next stage of digital taxation.

**WatkinsonBlack** have considerable experience in all areas of taxation and business services. This includes providing a very cost-effective **payroll bureau service**, as well as assisting to ensure compliance with the latest **Making Tax Digital** legislation. If you are **employed or self-employed** either as a sole trader, partnership or limited company and want to arrange a **no-obligation initial meeting on any taxation or accounting matter** then please contact us by telephone on **01925 413210** or by e-mail to **info@watkinsonblack.com**. 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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# Death of former Wire player and coach Kevin Ashcroft



**FORMER Warrington Rugby League legend Kevin Ashcroft sadly passed away on Monday 2nd March at the age of 81.**

Ashcroft served Warrington with great distinction as a player and as a coach. As the Warrington hooker, he scored the first try at Wembley as the Wire beat Featherstone Rovers 24-9 in May 1974 to win the Challenge Cup.

As the Warrington coach, he guided the Wire to a comprehensive 16-0 victory over St Helens in the 1982 Lancashire Cup final at Central Park. The following season, he masterminded Warrington's rise to third place in the Championship.

Born in Newton-le-Willows in 1944, Ashcroft began his professional career with Dewsbury and Rochdale Hornets before linking up with Alex Murphy at Leigh in 1967. The pair then shared in Leigh's finest hour, the 1971 Challenge Cup

final victory over red-hot favourites Leeds.

Five days later, Murphy took charge at Warrington but did not achieve sustained success until he signed Ashcroft for £7,000 in the summer of 1972 and made him vice-captain. Warrington won the League Leaders' Shield in 1972/73 but had no luck in the cup competitions. All that changed the following season as Warrington collected the Captain Morgan Trophy, the Player's No6 Trophy, the Challenge Cup and the Club Championship. He also served as Warrington coach from 1982-84.

His 18-year playing career took in five clubs and almost 600 appearances, including nine for Great Britain and four for Lancashire.

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