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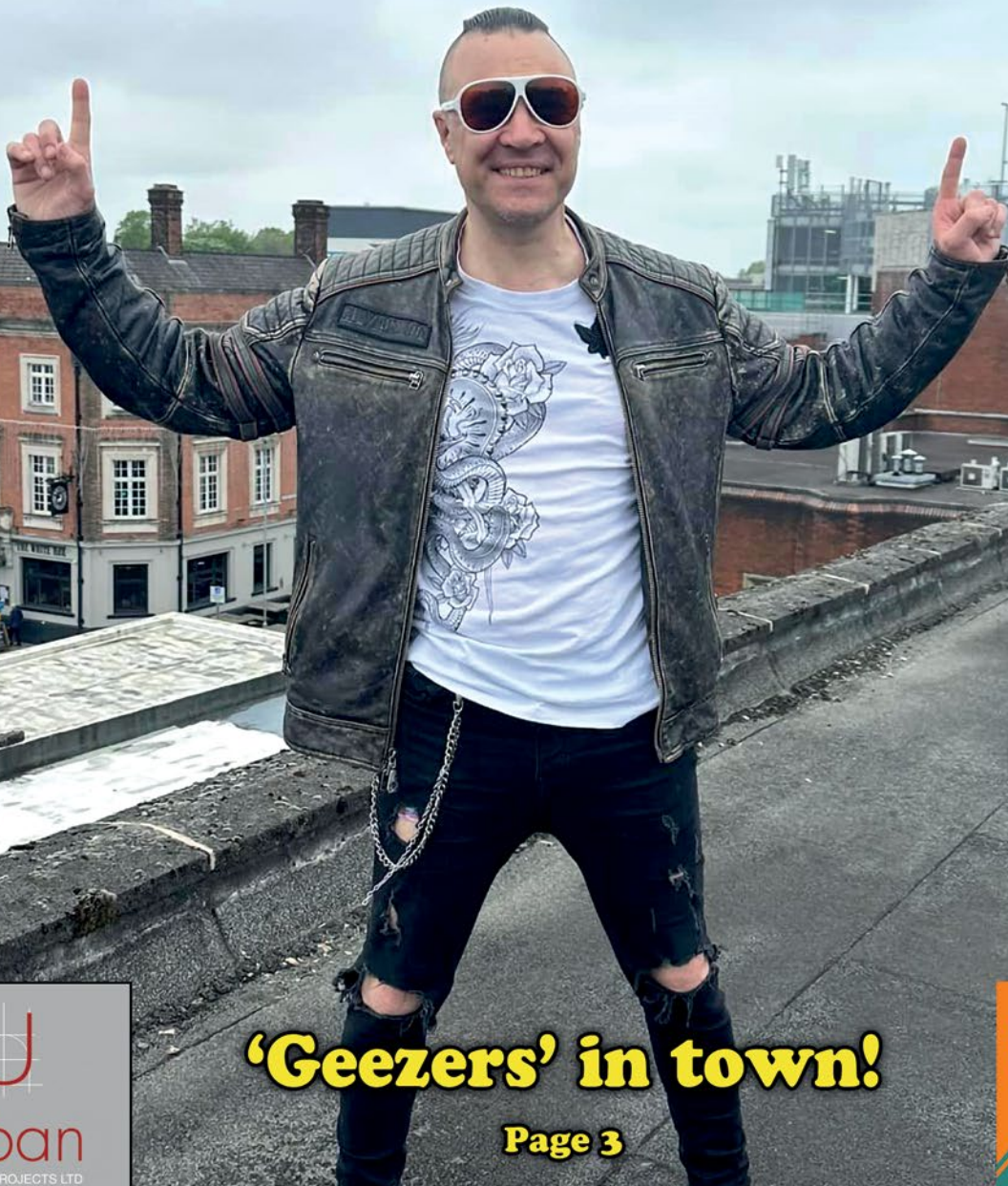
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'Geezers' in town!

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Editor's Comment

I was flabbergasted to discover that cash-strapped Warrington Borough Council, with debts approaching £2bn and facing a Government inspection into debt management, is taking several months to process council tax payments due to a backlog of work.

The fundamental of any business is to make sure you get your money in, in a timely manner, let alone providing services without generating the revenues to cover them.

A new resident moving into Warrington from Manchester contacted us expressing surprise at the lengthy delay to set up and pay his council tax after hearing about the council's level of debt.

After contacting the council to arrange payment after moving into his new property, he was told there was a backlog of up to four to five months and to "not to worry" and to just wait for the bill to arrive.

I also discovered social care payments are also being processed up to six-eight weeks in arrears due to being a "complex and sensitive financial matter."

I would suggest the borough council urgently looks at sorting out its billing arrangements, BEFORE embarking on anymore high-risk investments.

I'm assured the council is continuing to improve the Council Tax payments backlog, which continues to reduce each month and the current turnaround times for Council Tax payments is around three months, and they will prioritise

those in most need of support.

Apparently, this backlog has accumulated over the last 12-18 months as the Council's Local Taxation team has had to process a significant amount of additional energy and cost of living grant schemes.

It will be most interesting to see what the Government's Best Value Inspection throws up.

Meanwhile on a positive note congratulations to everyone at Warrington Wolves on reaching Wembley for the first time in five years - a great achievement for new Head Coach Sam Burgess.

It has set up a mouthwatering



final with the old enemy Wigan Warriors.

There's nothing quite like a Wembley final to provide a feelgood factor in the town - especially if it includes a homecoming victory parade!

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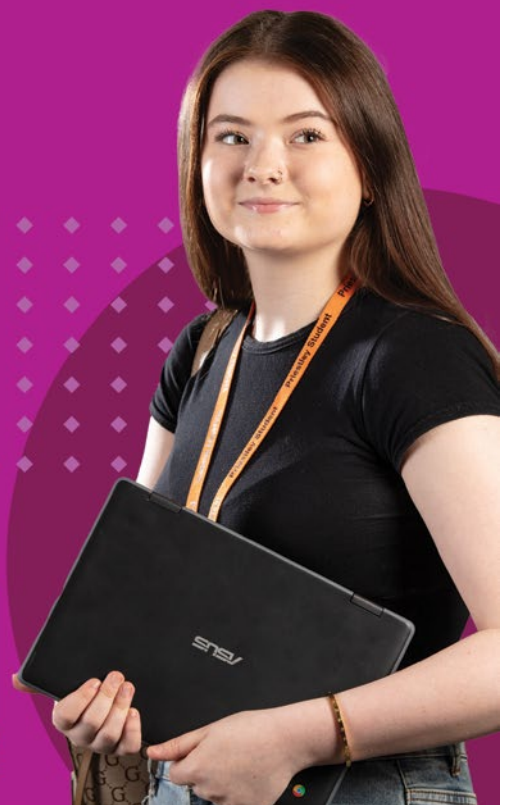
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Town provides backdrop for exciting gangster movie Geezers!

WARRINGTON is providing the backdrop for some action and danger for the latest international blockbuster gangster crime movie Geezers.

Local lad Johnny Wilson from Culcheth has been cast in this exciting production from Ciaron Davies and starring a huge international cast including Shaun Ryder and Bez from the Happy Mondays.

It's been filmed in locations including The Brass Monkey pool bar, The Hive and the old bank vault as well as in the village of Culcheth.

"We are very excited to film in Warrington," says director Ciaron Davies "as it's a stunning backdrop for our exciting action film and the local businesses have been a great help in the filming that we have done there."

Principal photography is now well underway for the new UK gangster epic, "Geezers", a high-

octane crime caper about a stolen bag of money and a war between rival gangs who want to get it. Caught in the crossfire are 'The Geezers' a bunch of wannabe criminals who have bitten off more than they can chew. With 24 hours to grab the cash, London may just go up in smoke tonight. This is a high-octane British gangster film with an international cast including Shaun Ryder and Bez (From Happy Mondays fame), Hannah Bang Bendz (Wrath of Dracula), Sean Cronin (Mission Impossible), Ciaron Davies, Ashley Hudson and Steven Woollard. Written and directed by Ciaron Davies (Grainne Uaile, 5th dimension, Magic Island).

A fast paced thrill ride packed with car chases, shootouts and compelling action scenes, Geezers is somewhere between Snatch and John Wick. Featuring a lot of tactical stunt work, martial arts and brilliantly visualised violent aesthetics, the movie is also reminiscent of Hong Kong crime films as well as working within the genre of a British gangster flick. The cast is diverse and it is the intention of the film-maker (Ciaron Davies) to create an exciting gangster film for a modern audience.

It's produced by Loose Gripp Films and distributed by High Fliers.



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MP welcomes Best Value Inspection into council's £1.85bn debt management

WARRINGTON South MP Andy Carter has welcomed a Government decision to order a Best Value Inspection into Warrington Borough Council's £1.85 billion debt.

In a statement, the Minister for Local Government, Simon Hoare MP, confirmed that the Labour-run Council is currently the most indebted unitary authority in England and will be one of several to undergo a Best Value Inspection.

Warrington Borough Council, who say they will work positively with the inspector, was recently the subject of a review by the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), whose report has concluded that the Council's large and complex series of investments, funded through borrowing, have put the Council at significant risk. The report also raises concerns with decision-making, governance and oversight at the Council.

In response to the CIPFA review, meetings with the Council, external auditor reports, and the approval and subsequent reversal of a £145 million loan agreement by the Council last July, the Government have concluded that the financial risks are too great and will now intervene to avoid significant impacts on local residents in Warrington.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has appointed a Lead Inspector to assess Warrington Borough

Council's governance and financial management. The inspection will focus on the Council's compliance with the recommendations made in the CIPFA report to control and reduce its debt levels, the impact of the Council's investments on the delivery of local services, the decision-making process in relation to the Council's finances, and the capacity and capability across the Council.

The Inspector will also consider the appropriate level of capital risk for the authority under the newly-issued statutory guidance on Best Values Standards and Intervention, which provides greater clarity to local government authorities in England on what constitutes best value, the standards expected, and a clear escalation pathway to intervene in the event of failure to uphold these standards. The Inspector's findings are due to be reported by the end of August.

Mr Carter, who just last month raised his concerns with Warrington Council's debt and called for inspectors to be sent in during Prime Minister's Questions, has welcomed this action from the Government.

He said: "I welcome this necessary announcement, I've repeatedly raised my concerns about the £1.85 billion borrowing by Labour



at the Town Hall because this level of debt puts local services at risk. It is residents who will have to finance the losses that may occur because Councillors are using public money on commercial schemes that carry significant levels of risk.

"Having had the opportunity to read both the CIPFA review and the Council's response, I'm not convinced that elected Labour Councillors understand the steps they need to take to address the concerns raised, and I've seen no evidence that they intend to deal with governance and accountability issues highlighted by Conservative Councillors. It's also very clear that the nonsense published by Liberal Democrats ahead of the local elections – which dismissed my concerns – was just that, nonsense, and the Government is now taking action.

"An independent Inspector has been appointed to review the Council's actions and set out a report to the Secretary of State in August,

and I look forward to engaging with him in the coming weeks."

A Warrington Borough Council spokesperson said: "The inspection will undoubtedly have our full cooperation, and we will work positively, openly and at pace with the inspector.

"Equally, we welcome the CIPFA review report being made public, following their review in February 2023. We have supported the report being made public since receiving the draft report in September 2023.

"While DLUHC recognises that we have taken steps to address areas for improvement, we will continue to identify any learning and further improvements that can be made as part of this inspection process.

"Finally, we would like to reassure residents and businesses that this review will not impact the valuable services that you depend upon. We will continue to make sure that our day-to-day services remain at the standard you expect and deserve."

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Birchwood Park donates £10k to local charity and confirms new community donation partner

BIRCHWOOD Park has announced its successful fundraising efforts over the last 12 months, with a total donation of £10,000 made to the Walton Lea Partnership for the second consecutive year, ending the two-year fundraising partnership with just over £20,000 raised in total.

The Walton Lea Partnership specialises in empowering young people and vulnerable adults with learning disabilities through various activities and learning opportunities. In 2023, Birchwood Park supported the charity's fundraising efforts through a series of engaging events and challenges, including the annual DuckFest and five-a-side tournament.

As the new year unfolds, Birchwood Park has voted Esther Ghey's recently established community interest company, Peace

& Mind UK, to be the Park's official donation partner for 2024.

Martin O'Rourke, Commercial Director of Birchwood Park, commented: "We're dedicated to making a meaningful impact in the local community which is why the Park team gets together to choose a local cause to support. Over the past two years, our partnership with the Walton Lea Partnership has allowed us to witness first-hand the positive changes our contributions have facilitated, and we wish them well with the hope of working

together closely in the near-future."

Peace & Mind UK is a Birchwood based community interest company founded by Esther Ghey in memory of her daughter, Brianna. Peace & Mind UK aims to support schoolchildren with their mental health, carrying forward Brianna's legacy through impactful initiatives.

Esther Ghey, founder of Peace & Mind UK, shared her thoughts: "I'm absolutely delighted that Peace & Mind UK is named Birchwood Park's donation partner for the year.

"I have been overwhelmed with the support, kindness and community that our family has received from staff across the park since Brianna was taken from us.

I'm proud to be part of the park and can't wait to get involved in the amazing challenges and competitions."

Martin O'Rourke added: "The team felt strongly about voting Peace & Mind as Birchwood Park's donation partner, as we all felt compelled to support Esther who has already raised tens of thousands for students most in need of wellbeing support. We're looking forward to driving fundraising efforts this year in Brianna's memory, via a lineup of fundraising activities already in the pipeline, to give occupants and visitors alike the opportunity to support such a good cause."

New Cycle Hub set to open in town centre

A new Cycle Hub is set to open in Warrington town centre, aimed at encouraging people to get on their bikes.

Working in partnership with Warrington Borough Council, this new cycle hub is designed to promote all things cycling in the town.

The new service, based in the railway arches on Crown Street, is

being provided by Cheshire Cycles and brings together over 40 years of cycling experience.

With plenty more to follow, keep up to date by following their facebook page Warrington Cycle Hub to see all the new things coming to Warrington this year.

Mike Carlin from Cheshire Cycles said: "There is plenty of behind the

scenes stuff going on, including our Door control system - made from the ground up and in house to work with our custom booking system.

"When a client wants to book their bike in, they can book a slot in our storage room which allows them access to the store outside our usual working hours.

"They are issued a key code which

can be used on our external key pad to open the front door."

The facility also offers sales, service, bike hire showers and training.

Funding has been provided by Warrington Borough Council through the Town Deal Fund.

For more details visit www.warringtoncyclehub.co.uk



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Warrington Means Business on track for future growth

by John Laverick - Warrington & Co

Last month I touched on the fact that we will be publishing the next version of Warrington Means Business and what its general thrust will be.

Warrington Means Business will be published later this month and available on both Warrington & Co website and Council website, but because it is such a good document and has loads of information in it, I thought I would take the opportunity to give a bit more information on the major development within it which is the potential that flows from the investment in Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR).

So what is this? Northern Powerhouse Rail is a commitment by Government that enables plans for a large scale regeneration of a significant part of the town centre and Warrington Means Business is a statement of our Growth ambitions on the back of that commitment.

The plans that will be enhanced over the next few years as we look to engage more businesses to help us deliver the ambition of a central business district ahead of NPR, capitalising on the connectivity that NPR brings. Our focus for this will be on enabling SMEs, predominantly within the centre of town, located around rail hubs to

set up and grow. While we are progressing the plan for a new community, we are mindful that we need to make the case for further enabling infrastructure and investment to Central Government to unlock these sites. This is predominantly setting out the strategic case for leveraging the pre-existing investment in NPR and calculating the economic benefits of the project to determine the phasing of enabling infrastructure.

Because this project is in Warrington, many believe that it is into nationally significant, but it is worth highlighting that the site will be one of largest and best connected sites in the country at 120 hectares and is a long term 30+ year project. It is our ambition that placing new office development in the centre will leverage the connectivity benefits and is considered a reasonable plan to monitor and manage the delivery of new commercial space over time that will ultimately put the heart, and employment, back into the town centre. Is therefore a continuation and completion of

the original New Town objectives, to rebalance and transform the centre and a response to physically regenerate the town's gateways ahead of Northern Powerhouse Rail and connect the town to its historic quayside once again.

Enabling this site to be developed will deliver 3,800 homes for the next generation, schools, GP services, dental practices, cycling and walking green ways through the Town and network distributor relief roads all of which require a comprehensive package of sequenced investment.

The golden thread of strategic land release such as this has always been investment in enabling infrastructure and a partnership with Central Government as key funder of the infrastructure.

Key projects within the wider project include the Western Link, a redesigned station at Bank Quay, acceleration of the NPR line and although there is floodrisk (some of the site is in floodzone 3 for the technically minded of you out there). This will impact previously developed industrial land and the existing station and so there will need to be some flood alleviation



The partnership for driving growth



John Laverick
01925 442 243

www.warringtonandco.com

measures to protect the station, ground raising to move water towards the natural estuary that is surrounded by green spaces and natural floodplains. This is significant work that fall into the scope of NPR enabling works and hence the need for government intervention. The test of this is still to come, as we start to work out with our neighbours in Liverpool and Manchester, to understand how as a north west region we accelerate the benefits that we can extract from regional infrastructure in Northern Powerhouse Rail.

We know that this will not be delivered by the Council alone. We know, that because of its regional and national significance, it will be delivered across many partners and across a number of years. Luckily Warrington is quite good at that.

ANDY CARTER MP

Member of Parliament for Warrington South

I hold regular constituency advice surgeries at my Warrington South office and around the area.

To make an appointment call **01925 231 267** or email **Andy.Carter.MP@parliament.uk**

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Divorce Column

By Peter Wilkinson
Divorce Lawyer at Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

Child arrangements

There is no doubt that when a relationship breaks down it can be a very difficult and distressing experience for all those involved. There can be a lot to deal with and emotions tend to run high. Whilst this is not a piece about the psychological impact of divorce on children, it is important to understand that when parents separate it can have a profound impact on the children and they too will likely feel a whole range of emotions, perhaps shock, upset, anger, confusion, worry, rejection, insecurity and so on.

Separating parents may have several questions concerning their children, such as: Who will they live with? How often will I see them? What happens if we don't agree? The list goes on. The broad answer is that parents are free to try to agree between themselves whatever they like regarding arrangements concerning their children and in my experience many parents do reach their own agreement. But in cases where for whatever reason the parents don't agree then the court can make orders to determine the arrangements.

A Child Arrangements Order (CAO) is an order which may state whom a child shall live with and when they shall spend time with the other parent, or another person, and which may also address different types of contact such as phone calls and video calls for example. Child Arrangements Orders replace 'residence orders' and 'contact orders' but if you have one of these older types of order there is no need to reapply for a CAO as your existing order is still valid.

The court can also make other types of orders concerning children such as a 'specific issue order' and a 'prohibited steps order'. A specific issue order is an order which deals with a particular (specific) issue, such as for example, which school a child should attend, or an issue concerning religion or medical treatment. A prohibited steps order, as the name suggests, is an order which is used to prevent a parent from doing something such as relocating with a child or changing the child's surname.

If you are in need of advice and assistance regarding a matter of child arrangements then feel free to get in touch - we have a lot of experience advising, guiding and supporting clients in this area of law.

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Council's new cabinet is confirmed



WARRINGTON Borough Council's new Cabinet, the key decision-making group of the council, has been confirmed.

There have been a number of changes, with Cllr Jean Flaherty confirmed as deputy leader, and several new appointments made, along with reshaped roles for long-serving Cabinet Members, Cllrs Maureen McLaughlin, Tony Higgins and Hitesh Patel.

The new Cabinet is as follows:

- Cllr Hans Mundry, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Transportation, Connectivity and Infrastructure. Cllr Mundry will also hold responsibility for the council's corporate plan, communications, LGA and corporate policy.
- Cllr Jean Flaherty, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for children, families and education - responsible for safeguarding children, children's social care, corporate parenting, fostering and adoption, schools and partnerships, children's centres, early help, reducing child poverty, skills and higher education, youth services and SEND.
- Cllr Sue Emery, Cabinet Member for poverty, inequality and protection - responsible for reducing inequalities and improving diversity, public health, community safety, welfare support/poverty, police/fire liaison, travellers, homelessness, domestic abuse and food poverty/cost of living.
- Cllr Maureen McLaughlin, Cabinet Member for health, wellbeing and social care - responsible for Statutory NHS/Local Place Wellbeing, adult social care, ICS/ICB, social care and health integration, safeguarding adults, mental health and disability, and Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Cllr Hitesh Patel, Cabinet Member for climate change, sustainability and the environment - responsible for climate change/net zero/sustainability, energy security, air quality, green energy, biodiversity, extreme weather, pollution, wildlife/woodlands, and Greenbelt.
- Cllr Denis Matthews, Cabinet Member for finance, assets and investments - responsible for financial planning and corporate performance, revenue and capital budget, council tax, benefits, trade union liaison (JCC lead), corporate property, procurement, external audit, investments, treasury management and FOIs.
- Cllr Laura Watson, Cabinet Member for economy, growth and quality work - responsible for business development and investment, local and sub-regional economy development, town centre management and district centres, regeneration, good quality jobs and careers, late night economy, sectoral liaison (including logistics, nuclear, hospitality, leisure and business start-ups).
- Cllr John Kerr-Brown, Cabinet Member for housing services and licensing - responsible for licensing and regulatory services, environmental health/food safety, community engagement and partnership, housing, social and affordable housing, waste management/recycling, trading standards, consumer protection, planning policy and development/Local Plan, births, deaths and marriages.
- Cllr Tony Higgins, Cabinet Member for communities, culture and leisure - responsible for neighbourhood and community services, Central 6, parks and open spaces, libraries, voluntary and third sector, sport and leisure services (LiveWire), culture, art and museum (Culture Warrington), visitor economy, community events, and veterans (ex-services).
- Cllr Nathan Sudworth, Cabinet Member for organisation, innovation and co-operation - responsible for communications (supporting the Leader), customer contact, policy development, devolution, democratic services/elections/democracy, external relations/civic relationships, human relations, personnel and staffing, digitalisation, service transformation, union relationships, code of conduct, and the youth council.

Cllr Mundry, said: "Our new Cabinet will play a key role in maintaining the positive momentum we are building in Warrington, helping drive forward our work to ensure our borough is a fantastic place for everyone who lives and works here."

"The new Cabinet group will deliver on our shared ambitions for a successful and thriving borough with strong, healthy and inclusive communities."

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ORGANISERS of the popular Lymm Historic Transport Day have been "very lucky" to have secured a flypast from a Lancaster bomber in the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight.

Returning on the 23rd of June and now its eleventh year, Lymm Historic Transport Day has grown to become one of Cheshire's best-loved events, attracting people from across the country, with its profits going to local causes and this year has new and exciting attractions.

The day will begin at 10.30 am with a parade through the village of over 100 vehicles of all sorts, including cars, traction engines, cars, motorbikes and bicycles

From 11.00 am the May Queen Field will be open with over 400 historic vehicles to see including cars from the movies, emergency vehicles, commercial vehicles as well as food and drink, market stalls and activities for all of the family.

By the Canalside there are old working canal boats and with a sail past at 4.00 pm. On the Henry Street Car Park there will be a fantastic array of steam traction engines.

This year organisers are very lucky to have secured a flypast from a Lancaster bomber in the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, a very rare

chance to see! one of only two of these legendary planes in the world which still takes to the air!

In the Village Hall, there will be an eye-popping model railway set up as well as model tanks, whilst in Maple Lodge there'll be Lego displays and the chance for kids to have fun with some bricks.

There will be a park and ride from Crouchley Lane in a fleet of historic buses, all part of the experience. They have worked incredibly hard to keep costs down so that the prices are the same as last year (£6 for an adult, £3 for a child and £15 for a family ticket), which is incredible value for a full-day out. Tickets can be purchased ahead of time from the Lymm Festival box office or on the day.

The event is entirely organised and run by volunteers and there is still an opportunity to help out, in return for two free tickets to the day, if interested please contact them via their Facebook page: www.facebook.com/lymmtransport

Website: www.lymmtransport.org.uk/volunteer

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All set for 33rd Disability Awareness Day!

LOCAL charity Warrington Disability Partnership, the organisers of the UK's and possibly, the world's largest voluntary led pan disability exhibition are finalising the plans for this year's 33rd annual event.

Disability Awareness Day founder and co-ordinator Dave Thompson MBE DL said, "We are very pleased to announce that disability education specialists Expanse Learning Group and the North West's water supplier United Utilities, are leading our list of sponsors for DAD 2024".

The aim of this year's event is to promote independent living through the theme "It's what disabled people can do that matters". DAD 2024 exhibitors will highlight solutions supporting independent living and mobility, with equipment, products, transport, employment, education, training, health and social care, leisure activities, alongside over 100 charities/support groups.

Most of this year's exhibitors will be housed in a huge, tented village of marquees that will be supported by; an extended Sports Zone, a Main Arena, a huge Performing Arts Marquee, two further Arts Marquees for art and crafts, a Silent Disco, a children's fun fair and play areas. Entertainment will also be available adjacent to the entrance bridge and Heritage Yard.

On Disability Awareness Day, visitors can gain an insight into the help and support that is available locally, regionally and nationally from statutory organisations, businesses and voluntary sector groups.

They can "have a go" at

sports activities including Tennis, American Football, Snooker, Rugby League, Martial Arts, Tai Chi, PowerChair Football, CrossFit and Scuba Diving in the on-site pool. In addition, Warrington Youth Zone's giant sports inflatables.

For those looking for a more relaxed day we will have a fantastic line-up of talent in the Arts Marquee with some of the UK's leading disabled artists including Ella Together, Creating Adventures, BSL Choir, Stars Drama, Wolf Print Dance and Groovy Movers. BSL interpreters will support all acts.

Alternatively, sit alongside the Main Arena watching Guide Dog display team, Reach Sled Dogs Display Team, Batida Rio Samba Band, Royal Marines Corps of Drums and sports demonstrations.

Children can visit the funfair rides or Walton Gardens accessible onsite zoo, crazy golf, high ropes and pitch and putt.

Disability Awareness Day 2024 will be the finale of a week of complementary events that includes:

- Tuesday evening: Creating Adventures "Greatest Show" with a wide range of variety acts. Tickets required.

- Wednesday daytime: Merseycare NHS Trust "Ignite Your Life", mental health and wellbeing festival.

- Wednesday evening: Ella

Together "Summertime Special", a showcase of talented entertainers. Tickets required.

- Thursday daytime: Warrington Carers Hub "Wellbeing Festival", join us for a day of socialising, information, and pampering.

- Thursday afternoon and evening: "Party in the Park" for disabled children, young disabled people and young carers.

- Friday evening: "Bjorn to be Abba", the UK's leading Abba tribute band. Tickets required.

All of the events listed above will be held undercover. A licenced bar will be available at the evening events (except the Party in the Park). For more details and tickets

please contact the DAD Admin team on 01925 240064 or visit www.disabilityawarenessday.org.uk

Support services at DAD 2024 will include a free accessible Park and Ride service, free accessible buses from Warrington Town Centre, a free scooter and wheelchair loan service with trained enablers, British Sign Language interpreters, additional unisex wheelchair accessible toilets and over 100 trained stewards and helper's eager to make it a day to remember for everyone.

For any enquiries, please contact Warrington Disability Partnership on 01925 240064



#DAD2024

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Dementia care village operator appoints new Head of Operations

Not-for-profit dementia care village operator Belong, which has a location on Loushers Lane has strengthened its senior management team with the appointment of Rebecca Woodcock as Head of Operations.

Peter Norman has also been appointed Peripatetic Operational Quality Manager to support quality improvements across the Belong

group. From Bolton, Rebecca has worked in the care sector from the age of 16, developing her skills across

numerous roles within Belong. She was previously general manager of the group's CQC Outstanding-rated Atherton village for five years, having worked at Belong for over 10 years previously, including as the registered manager at Belong Wigan, during which time it was also rated Outstanding by the CQC.

Peter has held a number of management positions within Belong since joining the organisation in 2010. Notably, he was part of the leadership team that supported Belong Crewe to become the first nursing care provider in Cheshire to be rated Outstanding by the CQC. In 2020, he was promoted to General Manager at Belong Newcastle-under-Lyme, a role he held up until his promotion.

Commenting on her appointment, Rebecca said: "I'm delighted that Belong has put its faith in me to help maintain and enhance standards of care across the group's locations. I am a passionate advocate of Belong's model, and I intend to share learnings gathered over the years, in particular as General Manager at Belong Atherton, to inspire others about the benefits of small household models and improve outcomes for customers."

Belong Chief Operating Officer, Sue Goldsmith, added: "It is great to see two people who have

built careers with Belong, and who understand our vision and values, progress to become part of the senior leadership team. I am confident that their experience and knowledge will continue to enhance the lives of many more people as we expand our services in new areas."



Labour increase majority on council

THERE were gains for Labour and the Lib Dems in the borough local elections with the Tories facing near wipe out, retaining just one seat.

Labour made a significant gain in Culcheth, Glazebury and Croft, taking all three seats off the Tories, while the Lib Dems took over from the Tories as the official opposition.

At Burtonwood and Winwick Independent Stuart Mann took a seat off Labour.

The Tories were left with just one Cllr. Rob Tynan at Rixton & Woolston.

The full election results can be found on the Warrington Worldwide website.



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Young rugby player is college's sports person of the year

A YOUNG rugby player who made headlines after his debut for Warrington Wolves has been crowned Priestley College's Sports Person of the Year.

Arron Lindop – who impressed the rugby world with his performance for Wolves against Catalans Dragons – won the honour at Sport Priestley's annual awards.

Unfortunately, the 18-year-old, who is studying BTEC sport coaching and development, was unable to collect his trophy in person as he was busy – competing for Wolves again, this time against Hull FC.

"I was extremely grateful to receive the award, especially because it was voted for by other students and there are so many talented athletes at this college," said the former Bridgewater High School pupil.

"This time last year I had a big injury so it has been a crazy time. My biggest achievement has to be making my debut in France as it was a proud day for myself and my family. Even now I cannot put into words how much it means to me."

Other nominees for the Sports Person of the Year Award were netballer Taylor Ratcliffe and martial artist Jess Ryan, both internationals in their chosen sports.

This year's Sport Priestley Awards were sponsored by Toby and Lisa Macormac of Warrington Town FC, which hosted the event.

Fitting then, that Priestley College's Football Academy was named 'Team of the Year' after a season that saw the firsts and seconds win their respective leagues. They reached the finals of the national college competition and the John Sleigh Cheshire Cup.

At the awards dinner, national and international honours were awarded to athletes in sports as diverse as tennis, windsurfing and netball.

Carys Backhouse Worrall, a former pupil at Cardinal Newman Catholic High School, received the Special Recognition Award for her voluntary coaching work at Warrington Youth Zone, RugBees and other community work encouraging girls into rugby league.

Sport Tutor Sam Nightingale, who organised the event, paid tribute to the entire cohort.

"We attract the most talented young athletes to Priestley every year and this year's cohort has impressed not only with their sporting talent, but also their commitment to their studies," she said.



Plan to convert a cafe into micro-pub approved – after three years

A PLAN to convert a café into a "micro-pub" has been approved by planning chiefs at Warrington – more than three years after the change actually took place.

The decision means the Anchor and Hops – a terraced property formerly used as a café in Walton Road, Stockton Heath – can open the standard opening hours for licensed premises.

Previously, because its planning consent was for a café, it had to close earlier than other nearby licensed premises.

A retrospective application for the change was submitted to Warrington Borough Council earlier this year.

But planning officers were told the premises had been operating as a "micro pub" for three years.

There had been no complaints from neighbours, but the restriction on opening hours was having a negative effect on the viability of the business as patrons had to leave earlier than at other nearby licensed premises.

Planners were told there was nothing to suggest that the use of the premises as a micro-pub over the last three years had caused any harm to the amenities of nearby neighbours.

The micro-pub has proved hugely popular in the village offering a wide range of speciality beers.



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St Rocco's raises a colourful £15,000 at Walton Gardens

OVER 300 people arrived at Walton Gardens recently, dressed in white t-shirts and sunglasses ready to walk, run or skip around the park to raise money for St Rocco's Hospice.

During the event, coloured powder paint was thrown by sponsors and volunteers who made sure they left a multicoloured mark on everyone!

Charlotte, the Events Manager at St Rocco's Hospice, said "We last held the colour run event in 2018 so we were excited to bring this family event back. It was a joyous occasion with runners of all ages forming a rainbow trail along the course. We rely on over 80% of our funding being generated from the local community so the funds raised will ensure that the hospice can continue making a difference to patients and their families in Warrington. Thank

you to everyone involved."

An event as vibrant as this is not possible without the help and support of lots of people. St Rocco's Hospice would like to thank the colour station sponsors Gulliver's World (yellow), McDonalds (purple) and The Village Hotel (blue) for their enthusiasm and dedication to making sure all participants were covered from head to toe in powder paint as they made their way around the 3km course.

Thanks also go to all the volunteers including photographer Brian Touhey and Moore Camera Club; the team at Walton Gardens; Adrian Cunliffe (MC & First Aid); Amanda, Mike & Rhian from Omni Fit for the warm up; Spectrum Striders Running Club for the gantry; Asda for the donation of snacks for goodie bags; BT Skips; staff from RBS for their support with event preparations; Just Face Painting Cheshire; Candy Occasions and The Mayor for starting the run!

And of course, the biggest thank you goes to everyone who took part and helped to raise a huge £15,000 which will go towards patient care at the hospice in Warrington.

If you would like to find out more about events that St Rocco's Hospice hold throughout the year, please visit www.stroccos.org.uk/events-campaigns or call the Fundraising Team on 01925 575780.



St. Rocco's Memory Wall

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For many years the optimal salary for directors (with no other income) was the Employers secondary threshold (currently £9,100), however over the last couple of years due to changes in the NIC threshold this should now be set at £12,570 (whether the employer is eligible for the employer allowance or not).

In order to be most tax efficient the normal recommendation is to take a minimum salary of £12,570 and take dividends up to the higher rate threshold which is currently £50,270. Even with recent reductions in the dividend free allowance and increases in dividend tax rates this remains the best option.

However, it should be noted that as your remuneration from the company increases beyond £50k, the benefits of minimum salary/dividends approach begin to reduce due to the fact that the majority of the drawings are not deductible against the companies profit and at those levels are more likely to be paying a higher rate of corporation tax.

As with all tax arrangements, there is no one size fits all

and we would invite anyone with queries regarding their remuneration setup to get in touch for us to review.

HMRC refunding voluntary Class 2 NIC in error

Some self-employed taxpayers who made voluntary class 2 national insurance contributions (NIC) by 31 January 2024 may find they have an unexpected gap in their national insurance (NI) record, reducing their entitlement to state pension, due to an HMRC processing error.

The requirement to make voluntary contributions was changed from April 2024, as announced in the Autumn Statement in November 2023, however the mix-up relates to the 2022/23 tax year.

For 2022/23, self-employed taxpayers with profits above £12,570 had to pay class 2 NIC of £3.15 per week, £163.80 for the full year. Those with profits between £6,725 and £12,570 were not required to pay class 2 but the year still counted for their contributory benefits entitlement.

Those with profits below the small profits threshold of £6,725 could make

voluntary payments of class 2 NIC in order to secure their entitlement to certain contributory benefits. These include the state pension, maternity allowance, and employment and support allowance.

It would appear that for the last group the HMRC process that moves these voluntary payments from the self assessment (SA) computers to the taxpayer's NI records was run late following the 31 January 2024 deadline, resulting in the class 2 payment being rejected.

This means that although the payment was made on time by the taxpayers, it was subsequently refunded and the year is not counted towards their qualifying contribution years.

We always recommend that clients check their NIC records and if they are not expected or there are known gaps to get in touch with us to look to rectify this before it is too late.

Companies House reforms

From 1st May Companies House made significant changes to changes to their charging structure for submissions like incorporations, confirmation statements, restorations etc.



Thomas Coyne and Stuart Barr

The main changes include confirmation statements which previous cost £13 will now cost £34, and incorporations previously costing £12 will now cost £50.

Companies House state that these changes are to allow for the additional administrative costs that will be incurred by the Companies House reforms which are taking place over the coming months and years.

Anyone setting up a company online will need to verify their identity digitally and more information will be required in order to incorporate a company.

Future plans also include the requirement to file profit and loss accounts as well as the normal balance sheet pages. The government believe this will provide greater transparency and reduce fraud, however will also mean that small businesses can no longer keep more sensitive information private.

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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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Warrington Town reveal player retained list for 2024/25 season

WARRINGTON Town have announced the majority of their squad will be remaining with the club for the new 2024/25 season.

Their retained list includes Player of the Year Connor Woods and Fans' Player of the Year Dan Atherton, the goalkeeper who scored two goals last season.

Long-serving Josh Amis, local lad Dec Walker and veteran defender Peter Clarke will have also agreed new deals.

Only three senior players have not yet confirmed their futures – top scorer Isaac Buckley-Ricketts, former Liverpool defender Andre Wisdom and midfielder Sean Williams, who recently clocked up his 200th appearance for the club.

The club is still in negotiations with the three players.

A total of 11 senior players are therefore on contract for the 2024/25 season, which will kick-off on August 10.

Joining them in pre-season training will be six young players, three of which featured for the first team last season.

They include midfielder Sam Gill, who came through the club's junior ranks.

Connor McAuley, who scored four goals for the club's Under 21s side in their successful promotion

play-off final, has also been invited to join the first-team for pre-season.

Warrington Town retained list for 2024/25: Josh Amis, Dan Atherton, Peter Clarke, Matt Grivosti, Evan Gumbs, Tom Hannigan, Jay Harris, Matty McDonald, Dec Walker, Andy White, Connor Woods.

Young players invited to pre-season: Adam Brooks, Vini Desouza, Sam Gill, Paddy Kay, Connor McAuley, Deacon Smalley.

Still in negotiations: Isaac Buckley-Ricketts, Sean Williams, Andre Wisdom



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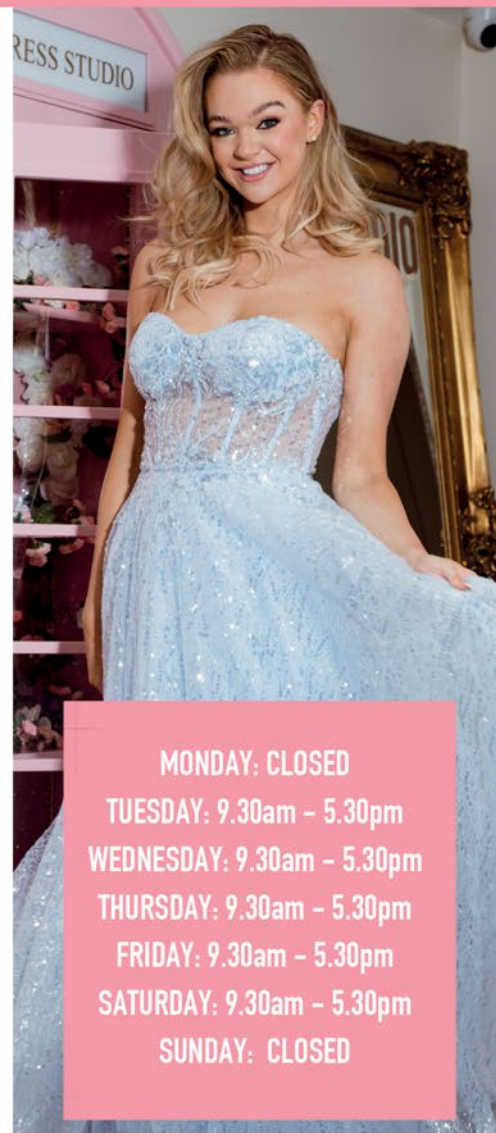
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