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ISSUE 301 JANUARY 2025 FREE EVERY MONTH

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## Town to feature in another gangster movie

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# Editor's Comment



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**AS the curtain comes down on our 25th anniversary of publishing Warrington Worldwide, it is time to reflect on another year in Warrington – a year of change.**

While politically there hasn't been any change at the town hall there has been a change in the leadership team, which has announced a change in direction and a change in fortune.

These are the words of council leader Cllr. Hans Mundry, who has been working to reduce the council's huge debt made up of massive loans to generate additional revenues to cover Government shortfalls in funding.

While the early signs are promising there is a still a long way to go to balance the books, if indeed they will ever be balanced.

What with the cost-of-living crisis and another difficult year ahead financially for many, the council is

looking at closing some services to help reduce the debt, while also selling off some assets.

I am told no decisions have been taken yet on which services will close but I understand some community facilities are under threat.

Tough times require tough decisions – watch this space!

Meanwhile, on a positive note what a year it has been for Warrington's Luke Littler, who was short-listed for "Sports Personality of the Year" as we went to press.

The teenager from Warrington has certainly transformed the world of darts and become a household name and a great ambassador for our town.

It will be interesting to see what

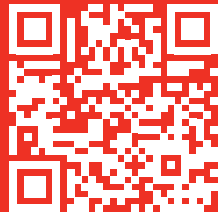
2025 brings for the youngster as he turns 18.

Here at **Warrington Worldwide** we wish him well.

Finally, I would like to wish all our readers and advertisers a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.



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# Town provides backdrop for another gangster movie

**WARRINGTON is once again providing the backdrop for a new gangster movie featuring Culcheth-based actor Johnny Wilson.**

Rising star Pete Hirst is making waves in the film industry as he takes the reins in writing, directing, and starring in his debut UK gangster film, "Fall To The Top" and chose Warrington for some of the scenes.

Locally based Johnny plays one of the lead characters Kenny and suggested Warrington as a picturesque, friendly location.

Pete said: "I am a huge fan of promoting the areas we film in to create local buzz and to get people into the area. Warrington provided a mix of friendly locals who were willing to jump in and star and it offers the beauty of scenery needed to show everyday community life in the film's setting."

Special thanks to Graham, Blue Bell pub, James at Hideaway and Doherty's pub for the support."

With a wealth of high-profile credits under his belt, Pete has recognised it was time to step up and craft his own feature film, showcasing

his unique vision and talent.

Joining Pete in this exciting venture are a host of notable names, including Mason Antonio Fardowe from the hit Netflix series The Gentlemen, reality star Pete Bennett from Big Brother, and Joe Egan, a former professional fighter turned cinematic heavyweight. The film also features a surprising new side to Paul Chuckle, known for his comedic roots, who will take on a chilling role that audiences have never seen before. Additionally, George Newton from This Is England adds to the film's dynamic cast and Joe Rooney of Father Ted delivers a shocking new side of himself.

Pete shared his enthusiasm: "Having Paul in a darker role is something truly special. He's known for his comedy, but in Fall To The Top, audiences will see a completely different side of him that will leave them astounded."

"Fall To The Top" promises to deliver an engaging narrative

infused with Pete's distinctive flair, blending gripping storytelling with a stellar cast. As he embarks on this ambitious project, Pete Hirst is not just making a film; he's inspiring a new generation of filmmakers to follow their dreams and push the boundaries of storytelling.

With his passion and determination, Pete is set to leave an indelible mark on the UK film scene. Keep an eye out for Fall To The Top as it gears up to make its debut, and join us in celebrating Pete's remarkable journey.

The film is about a frustrated manual labourer (Stephen Reilly) who feels life owes him more. On a

chance encounter in a club, he meets Kenny (Johnny Wilson) and becomes a low-level drug-peddling foot soldier who wants it all. He feels he deserves it all, his arrogance leads him to believe he's the top man and he should have it all. What's he willing to do to get to the top? The price is high, the cost more. Seriously evil men stand in his way, does he have what it takes? Will he take London's underground and the spoils of war? Or will he end up dead?

Warrington also provided the backdrop for another gangster movie "Geezers" also featuring Johnny Wilson.



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Wednesday 18 <sup>th</sup> December	
Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> December	
Friday 20 <sup>th</sup> December	
Saturday 21 <sup>st</sup> December	Normal Saturday Service
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> December	Normal Sunday Service
Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> December	Normal Service (School Holidays)
Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup> December	Normal Service with earlier finishes at around 1930
Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> December	No Service
Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> December	
Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> December	Saturday Service
Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> December	Normal Saturday Service
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> December	Normal Sunday Service
Monday 30 <sup>th</sup> December	Saturday Service
Tuesday 31 <sup>st</sup> December	Saturday Service with earlier finishes at around 1930
Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> January	No Service
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# Record-breaking Santa Dash for disability charity



**A record-breaking 220 Santas turned out in force to provide a timely Christmas boost at Warrington Disability Partnership's annual Santa Dash at Walton Gardens.**

Commenting on the event, Warrington Disability Partnership's Chief Executive and founder Dave Thompson said: "Wow, 220 Santa's running, wheeling and walking around the grounds of Walton Hall and Gardens for Warrington Disability Partnership's annual Santa's Grotto.

"There were smiles a plenty, great to see so many families, rugby clubs and friends.

"Huge thanks to our Deputy Mayor of Warrington Cllr. Mo Hussain for starting the Santa Dash and handing out medals and

certificates.

"Also thanks to our amazing Choir.

"Thanks also to our team at WDP, biggest thanks to our participants for making history with our record breaking number of entries.

"Final thanks to our sponsors Birchwood Shopping Centre.

As well as supporting WDP the Santa Dash allows groups to raise funds for their own cause.

The Santa Dash has now become part of the charity's annual grotto at Walton Gardens.

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# Local interior design business scoops 'Employer of the Year' award

**Birchwood-based interior design and fit-out business Claremont has scooped Employer of the Year at the British Council of Offices (BCO) national Next Gen Awards 2024.**

The annual awards ceremony, which takes place in November each year, recognises the outstanding accomplishments of young professionals in the office sector.

The Employer of the Year category celebrates organisations with an inspiring and supportive work environment, and a commitment to nurturing the next generation of talent.

Tim Frankland is the Managing Director of Claremont, which has delivered destination offices for big brand businesses including Paddy Power Belfair, the Professional Footballers Association and Admiral. He said: "This is fantastic, it's great for the Claremont team to win yet another award— this one really highlighting our culture as an employee-owned business and how successfully we work together and support each other, which makes it a win for the whole team."

"We really focus on developing talent from within, and nurturing growth and opportunity, valuing diversity, and ensuring the wellbeing of our young professionals. It's fantastic to have

our efforts recognised on a national scale and by such a respected organisation."

The BCO Next Gen Award Employ of the Year award is the latest in a raft of wins for Claremont, which has secured seven other industry accolades in 2024.

These include Inclusive Design Initiative of the Year at the annual Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management (IWFM) Awards, the Fit Out Awards UK's 'Fit Out Project of the Year' (Large Office over £7.5 million) for AQA's new Manchester office and the Insider North West Property Awards 'Fit-out of the Year' for Firesprite's statement HQ in Liverpool. Plus, interior designer Alicia Scally secured her place in the much sought-after '30 under 30' with Mix Interiors.

Claremont has been delivering office interior design and fit-out projects from its Birchwood in Warrington and Bristol offices for more than 48 years. It was the first of its industry peers to assume the EOT ownership model in 2020.



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# Farewell to modest John as Warrington looks to the future

by Stephen Fitzsimons - Warrington Chamber of Commerce

**John Laverick has hung up his regeneration boots and headed off into a shiny new tomorrow so it's back to me for the WW column.**

John was far too modest to highlight his achievements, however next time you watch a film at Cineworld or have a bite to eat

in the Market, remember that he led on the truly transformational Time Square development.

When we take investors around

the town, it's a beacon of how much can be achieved through working together.

Looking forward to 2025, what might we expect to see? The new government wants growth, however many of the businesses we speak with are having to sacrifice investment to cover the rising costs from the National Living Wage and National Insurance contributions. I'm sure we all accept that infrastructure and services are in a dreadful state, however business alone can't be given the expensive bill to make everything right again.

The devolution agenda will gather pace this year as the three Cheshire Councils work with central government to secure a favourable deal. Elected Mayors might not be everyone's democratic solution, however there really is no alternative. Cheshire & Warrington is already behind its regional neighbours in both lobbying government for support and securing vital funds for investment. The sub region remains one of the highest in the north for employment and economic value, however the others have started catching up.



The partnership for driving growth



Stephen Fitzsimons  
01925 715150

stephen.fitzsimons@warrington-chamber.co.uk

With a deal secured and Northern Powerhouse Rail confirmed, Bank Quay will then be able to move forward for development. The artist impressions look amazing, with another entrance from the Mersey and multiple improvements.

The current station is ok, however it's served its purpose and we need a wow factor for visitors into the town. With the remaining Fiddlers Ferry towers due to be demolished in the north west of Warrington, 2025 should see some exciting momentum gathering.

The Council and its partners can only do so much, so if you want to be part of future Warrington, get in touch and let's meet up.

All the very best for the New Year,  
Stephen



## Charlotte Nichols MP Warrington North

If you live in Warrington North and have an issue you need help with or would like to book a surgery appointment, please get in touch.

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## Divorce Column

By Peter Wilkinson  
Divorce Lawyer at Chambers Fletcher Solicitors

### New year, New me

The festive season is traditionally associated with joy, togetherness and celebration, but for many couples Christmas can be a breaking point, so much so that the media dubs the first working Monday of January as 'Divorce Day'.

So why does Christmas spark divorces? Here are just a few of a variety of reasons:

**High expectation:** According to song Christmas is romanticised as the most wonderful time of the year. But for some, rather than Love Actually it's Stress Actually. When relationships are already strained, high hopes of joy, family unity and generally good cheer may not materialise and this can lead to or exacerbate tension, disillusionment and conflict within the marriage.

**Financial stress:** Christmas can be costly. From buying presents to going out socialising and hosting celebrations it all adds up financially and people can find themselves spending money they can't afford and incurring debt they'll struggle to repay. If there's already tension in a struggling relationship added financial strain can soon make a bad situation worse.

**Forced togetherness:** The festive period often involves couples spending extended amounts of time together and while this can be a positive bonding experience for some, for others it can expose or magnify discontent or other issues which have been festering in the marriage, such as an affair, communication issues, unresolved conflict, incompatibility or emotional distance.

**Reflection:** As a year ends people often reflect on their lives and relationships and for some Christmas can bring on the realisation that they are no longer happy in their marriage or that they no longer want to continue in an unhappy marriage. This can prompt them to consider making a fresh start and adopting a 'new year, new me' mindset can lead them into deciding that the New Year would be a good time to embark on their new start.

If you are someone facing or contemplating divorce in the New Year then please get in touch - we have a lot of experience advising, guiding and supporting clients in this area of law.

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# ERA Wellbeing now open in the heart of Stockton Heath

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Meanwhile, if you're interested in becoming a Reiki practitioner, ERA also offers Reiki Level 1 & 2 training for those wishing to deepen their knowledge or start a new career in energy healing.

Reiki Level 1 (2-Day Course) – £199

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# Plans to revitalise walking and cycling routes are moving forward

**WARRINGTON Borough Council's plans to revitalise walking and cycling routes across the borough are moving forward – with the latest improvements now under way.**

The council is investing £450,000 of national Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) to enhance around 25km of Warrington's network of active travel routes. A range of improvements will be taking place over the coming months at a number of locations, including the scenic Sankey Valley and Trans Pennine Trail.

Part of the council's wider strategy to invest in sustainable transport – and building on several successful active travel projects already delivered in Warrington – the latest investment aims to improve the condition of a number of routes and paths and encourage more people to walk, cycle, and wheel.

The latest works are focusing on addressing surface deterioration, making improvements for disabled people and refreshing outdated signage, to make routes more accessible, safe and enjoyable for everyone.

The scope of the project includes a variety of improvements tailored to each location:

- Path surface maintenance: Repairing worn-out surfaces, particularly on the Trans Pennine Trail, to improve users' experience.

- Improved accessibility: Installing dropped kerbs and replacing A-frames with more suitable features to accommodate people with disabilities and adapted cycles.
- Enhanced signage: Upgrading and replacing outdated signage to improve wayfinding and route clarity.
- Vegetation clearance and buffer creation: Removing encroaching vegetation and creating grass buffers to protect paths from future overgrowth.

Council leader and cabinet member for transport, Cllr Hans Mundry, said: "These improvements support our ongoing work to make it easier and more pleasant for people to walk, cycle, and wheel, in every part of our borough.

"We are targeting areas that we know are in need of improvement or are inaccessible to people with disabilities. By investing in this way, our aim is to build sustainable transport into everyday life in Warrington, promoting healthier and more active lifestyles, reducing reliance on cars and improving air quality.

"I'm delighted these latest

improvements are now under way at some of our important our routes and paths, and I'm looking forward to seeing the positive impact it will have on our communities."

The rolling programme of works

is taking place between now and March 2025, with the winter months chosen for this phase of improvements so vegetation clearance will not affect nesting birds.



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## TUESDAY

### Orford

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5.30pm  
Tel: Emma 07880 223795

### Orford

The Veteran Support Centre  
Orford Park, WA2 8AG  
5.30pm & 7pm  
Tel: Debbie 07850 428777

### Westbrook

St Philip's Church  
Westbrook Centre, WA5 8UF  
5.30pm & 7pm  
Tel: Anne-Marie 07590 370988

## THURSDAY

### Grappenhall

Grappenhall Ex-Servicemens Club  
Chester Road, WA4 2QG  
9am  
Tel: Nicky 07765 915148

## THURSDAY

### Culcheth

The Scout Hut  
Jackson Avenue, WA3 4EJ  
9am & 10.30am  
Tel: Emma 07880 223795

### Orford

St Ann's Church  
Central Avenue, WA2 8AJ  
9.15am & 10.45am  
Tel: Debbie 07850 428777

### Latchford

Latchford Grange Sports Club  
52 Grange Avenue, WA4 1QH  
9.30am, 5.30pm & 7pm  
Tel: Kerrie 07960 961518

### Padgate

St Oswald's Club  
Padgate Lane, WA1 3LB  
5pm & 6.30pm  
Tel: Kerry Millington 07740 179645

### Westbrook

St Philip's Church  
Westbrook Centre, WA5 8UF  
5pm & 6.30pm  
Tel: Anne-Marie 07590 370988

## FRIDAY

### Latchford

Latchford Grange Sports Club  
52 Grange Avenue, WA4 1QH  
7.30am & 9am  
Tel: Kerrie 07960 961518

### Padgate

St Oswald's Club  
Padgate Lane, WA1 3LB  
7.30am & 9am  
Tel: Kerry Millington 07740 179645

## SATURDAY

### Orford

Beaumont Primary School  
Wilkinson Street, WA2 7RF  
7.15am & 8.45am  
Tel: Pip 07554 422451

### Latchford

Latchford Grange Sports Club  
52 Grange Avenue, WA4 1QH  
7.30am, 9am & 10.30am  
Tel: Kerrie 07960 961518

### Birchwood

Birchwood College  
Brock Road, WA3 7PT  
8am & 9.30am  
Tel: Nicky 07765 915148

### Penketh

Meeting Lane Community Centre  
Meeting Lane, WA5 2QX  
8am and 9.30am  
Tel: Lisa 07432 051489

### Fearnhead

Fearnhead Community Centre  
Insall Road, WA2 0HD  
8.30am & 10am  
Tel: Anne-Marie 07590 370988

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# New cutting-edge blood testing clinic opens to provide fast health screening

By Helen Bennicke

**A TEAM of entrepreneurs from Warrington are using cutting-edge blood testing technology to help with health screening for a huge range of conditions.**

The BAPP Blood Analysis has opened its new lab and collection point located at Park Manor, Victoria Park, Warrington, once the town's maternity hospital and it offers hundreds of tests which can help flag anomalies in blood work empowering patients with the knowledge regarding their health status and seek further advice if necessary.

It's the brainchild of John Lyons, 38, a father of three children who lives in Warrington.

He began his career in business working for his family home removal business for more than 20 years but then aged 35 branched out and established his own company in health and fitness, Elements Cyro Spa on Knutsford Road.

With the blood testing facility, John identified an opportunity to further innovate in the healthcare sector. BAPP is intended to be a bridge connecting expert care with those in need of insightful health analysis. They provide a wide variety of blood tests with some tests having a turnaround time of less than 1 hour, empowering clients to take control of their health decisions.

Despite BAPP launching recently it's already borne results for a businessman in his early 30s after a blood test uncovered a life-changing health condition he was completely unaware of which had not been spotted in previous NHS blood tests.

Thanks to the quick speed and turnaround of blood tests, it has gained popularity amongst people needing blood tests who are having to wait longer to get a blood test due to current waiting times.

BAPP aims to give answers to people who have nagging worries about their health that won't go away. It could be unexplained fatigue, shortness of breath, or other niggles. The blood tests are not just about finding out if those who undertake them are unwell, but it's about catching potential health issues before they become more severe.

After the success of Elements Cyro Spa, John realised the potential of blood screening and the business was established with partners Richard Sutton and Kevin Tobin joining forces to fund the technology. Both partners can see the benefits of what the business offers due to their own personal experiences with their families and health.

Bloods are taken by qualified phlebotomists in a pleasant facility and then analysed in a neighbouring laboratory with no public access. He said blood tests for hormones is a huge area of growth – both male and female hormones.

And there's been additional interest in the prostate checks following cyclist Sir Chris Hoy's terminal diagnosis of advanced prostate cancer.

John said: "We are trying to promote people being proactive about their health and we are

helping to educate people with blood screening. I get a huge sense of job satisfaction from what I do. When I see people like Luke Perret, I think this is what we are doing it for. Some people may say £360 is a lot of money for blood tests. But if you look at it as a once-a-year thing that you get into the habit of, it's not really that much when you think about what you'd spend £360 on during the course of a year.

"We can do a cancer risk assessment and our genetics blood tests can test 94 different genes for any mutation and our cardio risk assessment looks at 100 genes. We have 200 different blood tests.

"And it can make a difference to people's lives. If somebody is found to be at a high risk of skin cancer, for example, then they may no longer use sun beds and would be more inclined to use a higher factor sun cream when out in the sun. They will start making necessary changes to prevent the condition."

He also believes it will help relieve pressure on the NHS by offering an alternative service for the worried well or people who have a tendency to overthink or worry about their health or symptoms. By having their blood tested privately and giving them piece of mind, they can free up vital appointments, he noted.

"There is no other service like this in Warrington and our equipment and laboratory is on site.

"We offer peace of mind for people who can learn more about their health through these tests. When I think about what's happened to Luke, he's now lost a couple of stone from what he found out from his blood test, he looks healthier and fitter and his skin and eyes are brighter from the changes he's made. We are genuinely making a difference to people's lives."

He said for their customers it's the knowledge the blood tests empower them with, as they "don't have to wonder any more about their health. If they're lucky they are fine and happy. But the key is knowing your body and the changes.

"People may think they are ok but really they don't know for sure without these tests."

Since his journey began, John has worked hard to expand his knowledge and continuous learning gaining him numerous qualifications such as accredited phlebotomist, accredited in the application of cryosurgery, certified in the administration of cryotherapy and cpd accredited in skin anatomy and dermatology just to name a few.

Patients are then empowered with the results of the blood test and can seek further medical help from either their GP if they have concerns, or by arranging a private consultation with BAPP's private GP consultant Dr Sabharwal who can explain your results and discuss any necessary steps following your consultation.

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screening from as little as £90 to genetic testing such as Cancer Risk Assessments for £1,100 and also Cardiac Risk assessment. A Prostate Health check is available for £110, also STI screening, Microbiology, Hormone Health and Biochemistry tests are also available.

BAPP has a team of professionals, Rachael Kay, a HCPC chartered physiotherapist and accredited phlebotomist, who has now worked for many years in the NHS as a specialist physiotherapist in musculoskeletal conditions and paediatrics. Biomedical Scientist and registered HCPC, Ifeoluwa Olayemi Fatoba is responsible

for the smooth running of the laboratory analysing the results and maintaining quality control of the analysers. Seraphina Lyons a trained phlebotomist, mental health support worker and infant feeding support worker. Dr Sabharwal is an NHS GP partner and trainer with over 15 years of experience. He also holds a diploma in nutrition and health coaching and has won national awards for his diabetes reversal programme in NHS. Lyndsay Cash a fully registered and insured cpd accredited phlebotomist with over 9 years teaching phlebotomy. The business is to register with the Care Quality Commission.



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# College celebrates launch of Construction & Civil Engineering Academy

**Warrington & Vale Royal College has celebrated the official opening of its state-of-the-art Construction & Civil Engineering Academy.**

This milestone was made possible by a £3.8 million investment from Warrington's Town Deal, showcasing the college's commitment to addressing skills shortages and driving innovation in construction and civil engineering.

The event welcomed stakeholders, employer partners, local leaders, and industry representatives, eager to explore the new academy's potential. Based at the college's Warrington campus, the facility serves as a hub for advanced learning, equipping students with critical skills for a rapidly evolving industry. Focused on sustainable construction techniques, the Academy addresses sector challenges while fostering economic growth and supporting green skills initiatives.

The event began with networking, followed by formal proceedings in the workshop area. Nichola Newton, Principal and Chief Executive of Warrington & Vale Royal College, warmly welcomed guests and highlighted the Academy's transformative role in building strong partnerships between students, employers, and industry experts.

Kerry Dowd, Business & Partnerships Manager for

the Academy, then shared the Academy's journey from conception and its plans for the future which includes the Green Technology Hub, set to complete in early 2025 focusing on renewable energies and facilities.

Former HNC Construction Management (HTQ) student, Leanne Fitzsimmons, now an Assistant Quantity Surveyor at Galliford Try, shared her inspiring journey and the pivotal role the college played in her career progression. She said: "Pursuing the HNC was an invaluable opportunity to broaden my understanding of the construction sector. It gave me the chance to explore other disciplines within the industry, such as project management and site operations, which has deepened my appreciation for how these roles interconnect."

The event's highlight was the ceremonial ribbon-cutting, performed by Charlotte Nichols MP, symbolising the Academy's official opening and its commitment to empowering future construction and civil engineering professionals.

Kerry said: "The Construction & Civil Engineering Academy is more than a learning environment – it is a beacon for collaboration,

innovation, and sustainability. As it opens its doors to students, Warrington & Vale Royal College reaffirms its mission to transform education into impactful careers while strengthening the local economy and advancing the construction sector."

Ms Nichols, MP for Warrington North commented: "It was brilliant to officially open the Construction & Civil Engineering Academy at Warrington & Vale Royal College

in my capacity as MP and member of the Town Deal Board which secured the investment for its delivery.

"These state of the art facilities, working with local employers in the sector, not only set up students for success but will also help us tackle skills shortages in the industry that hold back the delivery of the infrastructure and growth we all rely on!"



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# Council reduces projected overspend by more than £8 million

**WARRINGTON** Borough Council's latest projection shows it has reduced the amount of a forecast £28.1 million overspend by more than £8 million.

At quarter 2 (July-September), the council was forecasting an overspend of £28.1 million. At period 7 (up to 31 October), the council is forecasting a reduced overspend of around £19.9 million.

Progress is being made across the council's departments to minimise the projected overspend. For example, families and wellbeing services (which account for children's and adult services, public health, education and SEND), have brought down their collective overspend projection by £2.2 million. The council has also seen an improved position across corporate finance.

More broadly, the council has been taking a number of measures to reduce expenditure. This includes limiting spend unless essential, holding vacancies and conducting a council-wide voluntary redundancy scheme.

Cabinet member for finance, assets and investments, Cllr Denis Matthews, said: "A £19.9 million projected overspend is still very significant, but the latest Cabinet report demonstrates the progress we are making."



"An overspend reduction of £8.2 million is an important step. I'm grateful to officers across the council who are working tirelessly to not only deliver valuable services to residents despite demand increases, but also working to identify savings to help reduce our overspend."

"We will keep doing everything possible to reduce the overspend further. There will be some very difficult decisions ahead of us as we work to reduce our current £19.9 million projection, but we will keep working together to find solutions."



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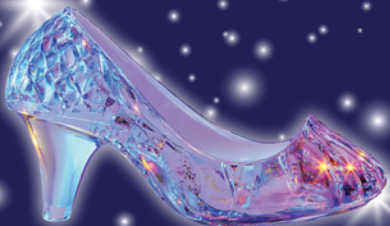
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# Luke Littler from teenage darts prodigy to household name

**IN less than 12 months, Warrington teenager Luke Littler has gone from a darts prodigy with potential to a household name.**

Littler was preparing for his second tilt at the PDC World Darts Championship and remarkably was entering the 2025 edition as favourite as Warrington Worldwide went to press.

Last year, in his maiden tournament, Littler went all the way to the final, capturing the hearts of the nation as a 17-year-old going

up against, and beating, darts biggest names before losing to Luke Humphries.

Despite the defeat, Littler has garnered more attention than the world number one all year, and has delivered on the big stage too – winning the Premier League title, an event that some suggested Littler shouldn't enter as it was too early in

his fledgling career.

Now ranked number four in the world, Littler has won three major finals, including the Premier League and most recently, the Grand Slam of Darts. He also won in the World Series of Darts, and came out on top in the Bahrain Darts Masters and Poland Darts Masters competitions. His career earnings from darts now surpass £1m, and that's without the endorsements and other deals he has received as a result.

Such is his stock, that a rookie darts trading card of Littler can be found on eBay for an eye-watering £300 – with more interest set to follow with the launch of the Panini trading card collection for the PDC World Championship, a first in darts.

A season ticket holder at Warrington Wolves, Littler was part of their recent kit launch for the 2025 season.

His interest in football, particularly Manchester United and playing EASportsFC, has opened up further opportunities and captured people's attention too, while he was spotted in the crowd at Warrington Town's recent win over Hereford.

There is now talk that Littler's emergence may just be the first of many of his ilk. 12-year-old Jayden Walker hit the headlines this week after featuring in the televised MODUS Super Series' Influencer Darts Showdown, scooping a doubles title after beating Humphries in an exhibition.

Darts supremo Barry Hearn told Sky Sports: "These kids, it's their career. They actually know it's going to take them some time so they're not necessarily in a rush."

"They haven't got the pressure on them of someone else who's maybe got a wife, children, mortgages, all the usual pressures that exist. These kids haven't got that. They're just going at it like Luke Littler."

"So what are you going to do with your winnings? I don't know. I'm going to go home and play my Xbox. That's frighteningly dangerous."

After being annihilated by Littler in the recent Grand Slam of Darts final, Martin Lukeman joked about Littler's match preparations.

He said: "He has a Boost bar, a meal deal and a curry, walks up there and smashes them in like that!"

There have often been jokes about Littler spending his winnings on 'FIFA points', the in-game currency of the EASportsFC PlayStation game that enables you to buy packs of cards for your team.

He has a further chance to add to his career earnings thanks to Village Hotels, who have offered to put up £60,000 for every nine-darter Littler hits at the Alexandra Palace later this month.

With Littler too young to be eligible for the nine-darter prize bonus put on offer by tournament sponsor's Paddy Power, Village Hotels have stepped up to ensure he doesn't miss out.

Littler became the youngest player ever to hit a televised nine darter against Nathan Aspinall back in January, and then followed that up in the Premier League against Humphries in May.

A Village Hotels spokesperson said: "What Paddy Power and the PDC have done in supporting Prostate Cancer UK through The BIGGER 180 campaign has been remarkable, and the nine-darter bonus promises to make this year's even bigger."

"But given what Luke has done in the sport already, and our close bond developed with the PDC since joining as a partner, we couldn't see one of the biggest names miss out – so we wanted to do our bit."

"But if helps inspire Luke to hitting the magic number, and if it means more money goes to saving lives as part of the wider campaign, then it'll be a small price to pay."

Luke Littler met up with Warrington borough Council Chief Executive and Warrington Wolves' Deputy Chairman Prof. Steven Broomhead at the Village Hotel in Warrington.

Commenting on the rising star Prof. Broomhead said: "I enjoyed meeting Luke. I congratulated him on his continuing success, his positive advocacy for our town and his great support for the Wire. His success is truly remarkable. He is a really good role model for young people."



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## A Happy and Prosperous New Year, Everyone!

As we head into the New Year, we start with dealing with the 31st January self-assessment deadline and payments that are also due by 31st January 2025.

HMRC last year announced changes to the requirement to file tax returns, however for the 2023-24 tax year, self-assessment

remains a critical process for taxpayers with income or financial circumstances that are not covered by solely PAYE (Pay As You Earn) income. Individuals must complete a self-assessment tax return if they earned more than £1,000 from self-employment, received untaxed income such as rental earnings or dividends above the

£10,000 allowance, or had PAYE income over £150,000. Additional requirements include those liable for the High-Income Child Benefit Charge, individuals with foreign income, or those claiming certain tax reliefs, like pensions or charity donations.

The filing deadline is 31 January



Thomas Coyne and Stuart Barr

2025 for online submissions, with penalties for late filings or payments. However, if you need any last-minute assistance, please get in touch to see if we can assist.

## How employers can manage rising National Insurance costs

From April 2025, employers will face significant cost increases due to changes in National Insurance Contributions (NIC). The Class 1 Employers' NIC rate will rise by 1.2%, bringing it to 15%, and the threshold at which employers must pay NIC on employee earnings will drop from £9,100 to £5,000. This change alone adds an extra £615 in costs per employee annually. Additionally, the NIC increase will apply to Class 1A and Class 1B contributions on benefits in kind reported on P11Ds, payrolled benefits, and PAYE Settlement Agreements.

To offset these rising costs, employers can consider salary sacrifice pension schemes, which remain a highly effective option. Under such a scheme, employees agree to exchange part of their salary for a direct employer pension contribution. This arrangement reduces taxable income, creating NIC savings for both employers and employees. For employers, replacing salary with a NIC-free benefit translates into substantial savings.

Salary sacrifice schemes offer clear

advantages. Employees not only receive tax relief on their pension contributions but also save on their own NIC payments. Employers, meanwhile, benefit from a 15% saving (effective from April 2025) on the amount sacrificed. For instance, an employer with 100 employees earning £50,000 each could save £45,000 annually by introducing a salary sacrifice arrangement with an average contribution rate of 6%. Employers can also use this as a tool to attract and retain staff by sharing some of the savings with employees, such as increasing the employer pension contribution. Sharing the savings—commonly on a 50/50 basis—can enhance employee satisfaction while maintaining financial efficiency.

Another advantage of salary sacrifice is the flexibility it provides employees. Workers can waive bonuses in exchange for higher employer pension contributions, enabling them to save more for retirement. Additionally, by reducing taxable income, employees might avoid moving into higher income tax brackets, potentially saving more in the long term.

However, employers must carefully consider several factors before implementing or expanding a salary sacrifice scheme. Reducing an employee's gross pay through salary sacrifice could inadvertently bring lower-paid workers below the National Minimum Wage (NMW). Employers must ensure robust checks are in place to comply with NMW regulations. Furthermore, lower declared income may affect an employee's ability to secure loans or mortgages. Employers should clearly communicate these potential impacts to employees during the consultation process.

Salary-based benefits, such as life insurance, could also be affected by reduced pay. Employers need to assess how these might change under a salary sacrifice arrangement. Proper implementation is crucial, as employees must agree to the arrangement before it takes effect. Seeking professional advice ensures that the scheme is compliant and effective.

In addition to pensions, employers can explore other salary sacrifice options, such as ultra-low emission

vehicles (ULEVs) or cycle-to-work schemes. Although the savings from these may be smaller, they provide environmental and sustainability benefits, aligning with broader corporate goals. Employers should also review employee NIC categories to ensure proper treatment. For instance, apprentices under 25 are exempt from employers' NIC unless their earnings exceed £50,270.

With the NIC increase applying to Class 1A contributions on benefits, now is an ideal time to reassess the value of existing benefit packages. Employers might discover opportunities to switch providers or reduce costs while maintaining employee satisfaction.

Ultimately, while the increased NIC rate and reduced thresholds will drive up costs, employers can take proactive steps to manage the impact. A well-structured salary sacrifice pension scheme, combined with a review of other cost-saving measures, can help offset the financial burden while supporting employee benefits and retention strategies.

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# Basketball club holds first-ever presentation event



**GRAPPENHALL Basketball Club held its first-ever presentation event and Christmas Party – bringing together players, families, and supporters to recognise the incredible achievements of the club's young players since its founding in mid-2023.**

Founded by Josh McGann and Tom Berry, with support from other dedicated volunteers, the club was established to provide opportunities for children often overlooked by other teams. Starting with a single Year 3&4 team, the club has since grown into a thriving community where every child has the chance to develop their skills and build confidence.

The occasion marked a significant milestone for the club, offering an opportunity to reflect on the progress made over the past year. Awards were handed out to recognise individual and team achievements, while families and players celebrated with festive cheer. The event also served as a reminder of the club's mission to provide equal opportunities for children to participate in basketball, regardless of their experience or background.

As the club looks ahead to 2025, it is seeking sponsors to support the development and expansion of its teams. Sponsorship plays a vital role in providing essential equipment, team uniforms, and access to tournaments, ensuring that no child is left on the sidelines. By becoming a sponsor, local businesses can directly contribute to the personal growth and well-

being of young players while also gaining visibility in the local community.

Founder Josh McGann said: "We're incredibly proud of how far we've come since our humble beginnings last year.

"This club was built to give kids who didn't have a team a place to play and belong. Seeing them celebrated at our first presentation event was a truly special moment. With the support of sponsors, we can continue to grow and offer even more opportunities for kids to be part of something positive."

Any business that would like to support a local cause and gain visibility within the community should contact Josh McGann on 07392 196268 or [josh@sportforallcentres.co.uk](mailto:josh@sportforallcentres.co.uk).

The club would also like to say thanks to 2024 sponsors for their generous support. Special thanks to Birchwood-based Kloud9 ([www.kloud9.co.uk](http://www.kloud9.co.uk)) who are also continuing to sponsor the Year 7&8 team 'Grappenhall Cobalt', and local business Autoquest. Their support has been instrumental in helping the club provide opportunities for young players.

The club is based at Ball Hall in Latchford.

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