



# Creating Opportunities

in Warwickshire

## The journey so far

July 2022 - December 2023



**COMMUNITY  
POWERED  
WARWICKSHIRE**



# Introduction

Levelling Up is a national agenda which we have worked to bring to life in the Warwickshire context. This means creating opportunity for all our residents and especially those who live in places where we know that inequalities exist.

By aligning this work to our Council Plan, countywide strategies and services, we have given it new meaning and made sure it has embedded into our day-to-day thinking.

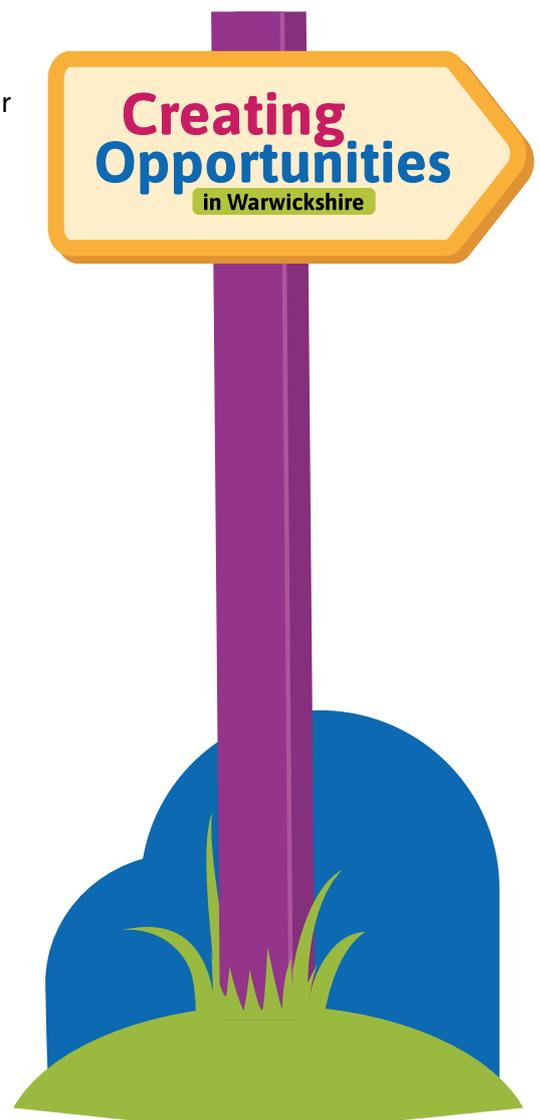
In July 2022, we published the [Countywide Approach to Levelling Up](#). It has acted as a catalyst to all that has followed.

- **Creating Opportunity by embedding our Community Powered Warwickshire approach**, which runs through all we do, seeking to empower communities and underpin our efforts.
- **Creating Opportunity by building Levelling Up principles** into all our services and core strategies as they are developed.
- **Creating Opportunity by funding community led projects**, committing £2.5 million of funding to invest primarily in the 22 most deprived communities in the County through our Social Fabric Fund.
- **Creating Opportunity by working collaboratively** with our District, Borough, Town and Parish Councils; public, voluntary and community sector partners; businesses; and health and education providers.

There is much to be proud of and this document provides an overview of countywide initiatives, innovative place-based schemes and hyper-local, community driven projects that are driving the progress against our Levelling Up commitments.

Creating Opportunity in Warwickshire is a long-term mission that will need to tackle the longstanding challenges facing some of our residents and places.

We want to celebrate the work that has taken place so far and look ahead to the opportunities that follow.





## Our journey so far...

This report brings three key streams of activity together – Levelling Up, Community Powered Warwickshire and Creating Opportunity.

### **Levelling Up: (2022-23)**

In February 2022, the Government outlined its ambition to address place-based inequality across the country. WCC's commitment to this agenda was consolidated through the Countywide Approach to Levelling Up, approved by our Cabinet in July 2022.

### **Community Powered Warwickshire: (2021-23)**

Community Powered Warwickshire aims to harness and enhance the strength of our communities to spread opportunity and to unlock and fulfil the full potential of all the residents within them. This potential was demonstrated across the County during the Pandemic and provided a robust foundation to build upon.

### **Creating Opportunity: 2024 onwards**

Bringing together Levelling Up and Community Powered Warwickshire, Creating Opportunity takes a community-centred approach to address place-based inequality across the County.



# Community Powered Warwickshire

The global Covid-19 crisis tested the strength of Warwickshire's community power and demonstrated what can be achieved when residents come together to support each other and their communities. Community Powered Warwickshire looks to build upon this strength, helping communities to harness it in order to meet other challenges.

## Key achievements:

- Continued to focus on working with communities with regards to decision-making and practical action. We know that individual communities are best placed to recognise their own immediate needs and have worked to enhance and utilise the strengths and knowledge they hold.
- Established a valuable two-year strategic partnership with New Local to shape our thinking and translate our plans into practical action.
- Created five community power-focused ground breaker projects. The areas of focus for the ground breakers include improving transport, highways and road safety; strengthening place-based wellbeing; and addressing inequalities by improving access to affordable food.
- Established Social Impact and Social Fabric Funds to invest £3.5m in social infrastructure, both of which are delivered by the Heart of England Community Foundation.
- Hosted a Big Conversation event that brought together key partners, as well as facilitated specific events on cost-of-living issues and the topics which matter most to our communities.
- Established three pilot schemes designed to test our community power principles. The pilots have taken place in Barpool North and Crescents, Mancetter South and Ridge Lane as well as Lillington East.
- Utilised the Anchor Alliance which draws together Coventry City Council, Coventry and Warwick Universities, District and Borough Councils and NHS trusts to promote social value by developing a more coordinated way of working through which communities feel services are working with them.

Looking ahead, Community Powered Warwickshire will underpin much of what we do to create opportunity in Warwickshire. It will be our underpinning ethos and test to ensure that we are putting the needs and views of communities at the heart of local decision making.

## Bringing it to life

Along the right hand side of this document you'll find a series of case studies that showcase projects from across Warwickshire which support our local definition of Levelling Up. Whilst not exhaustive, this sample highlights the exciting work already underway across the County and indicates how it relates to the views expressed by the Voice of Warwickshire residents' panel in 2022 (see page 6 for more information about the panel).

## Fair Change Employment Programme



The programme is a collaboration with education providers and employability groups, helping employers to "level up" their opportunities by offering Warwickshire residents with supportive and needs-equal access to careers.

The scheme aims to work with Warwickshire employers to engage with high-priority talent pools who are keen to access work opportunities. It is designed to unlock hundreds of jobs to jobseekers who experience mental health, disability and learning barriers, as well as women and Armed Forces veterans returning to work, young offenders, young care givers and care leavers who are not in education, employment or training and people over the age of 50.

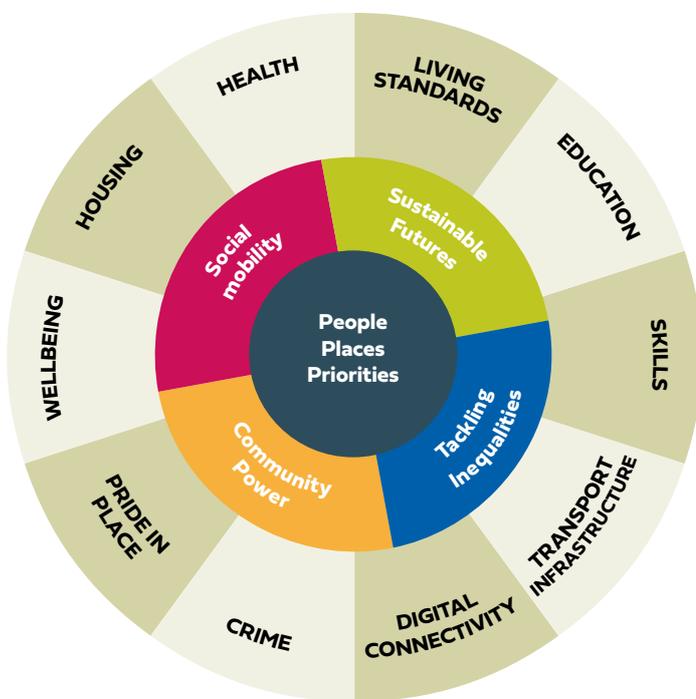




# Levelling Up

The Government published the Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022 which was legislated through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill 2023.

The White Paper introduced twelve national missions which focus on boosting productivity; spreading opportunities; restoring a sense of community; and empowering local leaders. In July 2022, we published a [Countywide Approach to Levelling Up in Warwickshire](#) which introduced Warwickshire's four-part definition of Levelling Up and established our priority places and communities.



## Warm Hubs



**72.3% of the Voice of Warwickshire panel said a supportive local community makes a great place to live.**

Working countywide, Warm Welcomes aims to tackle social isolation by helping community venues extend their opening hours, offer warm and safe spaces, host more events and provide energy saving advice. Stratford-upon-Avon introduced a Warm Hub in May 2023, inviting residents to coffee mornings and exercise classes in a friendly community area. Rugby Borough Council opened its first Warm Hub at the Benn Partnership Centre in June 2023, providing transport support and access to Community Energy trained volunteers who offer advice on energy efficiency.



## Grayson Place



**75% of the VoW panel said that shops and local facilities make them proud of where they live.**

Grayson Place, as part of the Transforming Nuneaton Programme (a partnership between WCC and NBBC), looks to grow its leisure offer to provide a unique experience for both residents and visitors, with new cafes, restaurants, public spaces and community services. Recently completed structural work includes the Hampton by Hilton Hotel, ahead of planned opening in summer 2024.



### For Warwickshire, Levelling Up means four things:



**1. Tackling inequalities** by improving living standards, health, educational attainment, access to affordable housing and connectivity.



**2. Increasing social mobility** by ensuring success is less dependent on where you live, your background and who your parents are.



**3. Building community power** by amplifying your voice and influence over your places.



**4. Creating sustainable futures** so that future generations can enjoy better opportunities, improved quality of life and a rising standing



# Progress so far

## Building an evidence base

Underpinning all our work so far has been the commitment to develop and understand a strong evidence base. We have developed a suite of materials that support this work and provide insight at a regional, county, district/borough and community level, including:

- The State of Warwickshire dashboard provides an in-depth analysis of the strengths and challenges from across the County.
- Creating Opportunity profiles and evidence bases for each of the District and Borough Councils identified headline messages from community engagement with the Voice of Warwickshire residents' panel.
- Place based Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs): analyse current and future wellbeing needs across the population, establishing key local priorities across health and social care.
- Poverty dashboard: WCC's business intelligence dashboard which outlines statistical information, interactive mapping and reporting tools that provide detail about the local areas in Warwickshire.

## Engaging with communities - The Voice of Warwickshire

Launched in October 2021, the Voice of Warwickshire is a residents' panel that gives people who live in the County an opportunity to share their views on a broad range of subjects. In May 2022, the panel was asked for its views on Levelling Up in Warwickshire. A further questionnaire was completed in Autumn 2023 which looked specifically at the priorities in Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough.



You can find out more about the Voice of Warwickshire panel here:

[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/voice](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/voice)

## 'You Can' Online



Warwickshire's Youth Council said they welcome the prioritisation of digital skills provision.

Across Warwickshire Libraries, this initiative provides digital devices, connectivity and IT support to help #FixTheDigitalDivide. The initiative aims to reduce the negative real-world impacts that digital exclusion has on job opportunities, developing career skills and confidence in shopping and banking online.



## Solar Vision Lighting Technologies



90% of the VoW panel said that parks and outdoor spaces make their communities great places to live.

This small business provides off-grid solar lighting across the local community in outdoor areas such as streets, schools and shopping centres to improve safety and accessibility. The business benefitted from the support of WCC's Local Community and Enterprise Fund, one of the pillars of the Warwickshire Recovery Investment Fund which supports small and micro businesses to access economic support.



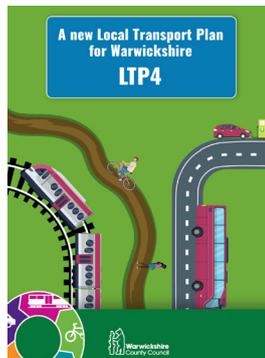


## Embedding Levelling Up

Warwickshire County Council has committed to embedding creating opportunity into our strategies. This has fundamentally strengthened the way we think about inequality and how we link between the themes and wider determinants that have an impact on quality of life.

### Published:

- **Local Transport Plan (LTP) 4:** The new LTP for the county (adopted in July 2023) presents a huge opportunity to improve the lives of our residents. The LTP will seek to deliver a range of sustainable transport options across Warwickshire that will reduce pollution and improve access to services. Each district and borough area will be supported by its own area sustainable transport strategy.
- **Sustainable Futures Strategy:** This strategy has considered the wider determinants of good health and explored the connections to other Levelling Up missions and themes. Working in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors, we will help shape a Warwickshire with lower levels of carbon consumption, strive to ensure that our natural landscapes flourish with biodiversity, and continue to foster a sustainable, thriving economy.
- **Health and Wellbeing Strategy:** This strategy has led the charge on considering the wider determinants of good health and exploring the connections to other Levelling Up missions and themes. The strategy is led by Warwickshire's Health and Wellbeing Board and supported by multi-agency partnerships in the North, South and Rugby.
- **Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020-2025:** WCC has a vision for a thriving, sustainable and dynamic community sector that improves the lives of individuals and communities in Warwickshire. This strategy establishes how WCC can enable and support a strong voluntary and community sector for Warwickshire residents, despite the challenges of constrained resources and a rapidly evolving environment.



## Community Pantries



**80% of the VoV panel said that they agree with reducing disparities and addressing gaps and inequalities.**

In partnership with Feed the Hungry UK, Community Pantries have been piloted in Camp Hill, Lillington and New Arley, allowing members to receive good-quality food and 'wrap-around' family support for £5 per visit for six months. Nearly 5,000 visits have been made and 906 residents have registered so far. Family Information Service has also been offering intervention and Citizens Advice have provided debt advice, writing off £92,557 across the three locations.





## In development:

- **Economic Growth Strategy:** We are committed to developing a vibrant economy, supported with the right jobs, skills, training and infrastructure. This strategy works to ensure Warwickshire reaches its full potential and capabilities by building and maximising its current economic strengths, addressing areas of underperformance and ensuring the economy is equipped for the future.
- **Education Strategy:** Education and schools are at the core of creating opportunity. A new Education Strategy, published in 2024, will reflect this by setting out our approach to education and providing a platform for tailored solutions for our diverse communities.
- **Safer Warwickshire Serious Violence Prevention Strategy:** This strategy will outline the long-term commitment of the Safer Warwickshire Partnership to address the causes of violence. The approach is aligned to key Public Health priorities to violence prevention; preventing violence before it happens, responding to the immediate risk and taking a long-term approach.
- **Future Infrastructure Strategy:** How infrastructure is developed and delivered has a huge impact on how communities interact with their place. This strategy will set out a long-term plan for major infrastructure developments and integrate a holistic approach to place-making.

## Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Broadband Project



23% of the VoW panel said that Broadband and 5G connectivity are important for pride of place.

In partnership with neighbouring authorities, 'Contract 3' will ensure 15,000 properties in the region will have superfast broadband by the end of December 2023. Supported by £2 million of European Regional Development Fund investment, the project will incorporate a minimum of 400 small and medium enterprises, boosting productivity and strengthening social inclusion for residents who may find it easier to access services online.



## Escape Community Arts in Action



73% of the VoW panel respondents said that leisure and culture make Warwickshire a great place to live.

A capital grant of £65,000 from the Social Impact Fund has supported renovations and extensions to the Stratford-upon-Avon Arts & Heritage centre, improving access, supporting larger group sessions and increasing overall capacity.



## Countywide action plan

The Countywide Approach to Levelling Up set our strategic vision. Many of our countywide priorities are addressed through the strategies and associated delivery plans listed above in pages 7-8. Specific actions are also picked up in our [Integrated Delivery Plan \(IDP\)](#).

The IDP is a rolling two-year delivery plan that sets out how we will deliver against the Council Plan's objectives.

Over 100 actions in the current IDP are linked to Levelling Up. The refreshed delivery plan will continue to monitor progress with a continued focus on creating opportunity.

## Securing funding

In 2021, we launched the Social Impact Fund and subsequently awarded funding to 21 projects led by voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations and Town and Parish Councils, with a specific focus on financial, digital, health and cultural inclusion, which can help build stronger communities. Find out more about the beneficiaries of the fund: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wsif](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/wsif)

In 2019, the Government invited 100 areas to develop proposals for a Town Deal through the £3.6 billion Towns Fund. Nuneaton was selected as one of these localities, with the fund's objective being to drive town regeneration for the successful delivery of long term economic and productivity growth.

In 2021, it was announced that Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council would receive the full £23.2 million bid from the Towns Fund, which is supporting the Transforming Nuneaton Programme to achieve its vision of a forward-looking innovation and entrepreneurial centre, benefiting from modern transport links and digital infrastructure, as well as offering a diverse range of community and leisure opportunities.

## Community Powered Pilots

### Mancetter South and Ridge Lane Pilot

Mancetter South and Ridge Lane have been selected to be a Creating Opportunities pilot. So far, community engagement is well underway, with 448 households approached and 167 questionnaires completed. This pilot strives for community engagement with stakeholders when making decisions about the communities' futures.

### Bar Pool North and Crescents Pilot

Another of the community pilots is taking place in West Nuneaton. The proposal is in partnership with a local social enterprise, Saints Nuneaton, funded by WCC's Social Fabric Fund to create a community hub and facility for community outreach. Looking to launch in 2024, this development will provide a space for community groups, activities and local initiatives.

### Lillington East Pilot

The third community pilot is Lillington East. Current actions are centring around community conversations with over 60 hours of discussions between individuals, groups and professionals already carried out.

## Newton Centre



A £93,000 Social Impact Fund grant has supported the hosting of regular community activities in a warm and welcoming environment at the Newton Centre in Nuneaton and Bedworth. Warwickshire Vision Support, hosting support sessions at the centre, has improved on-site acoustics and lighting through the grant funding.

## Green Grants Programme Extension



*"Energy costs are a major concern so the Warwickshire Business Support Green Recovery Grants scheme is there to help SMEs reduce their costs and make their premises greener as quickly as possible"*

The Green Recovery Businesses Grant Scheme works as part of our Covid recovery and investment programmes, which are targeted at supporting local economic recovery. Rough Hill Farm Shop in Stratford-on-Avon has benefitted by using grant funding to insulate the shop roof and help develop the shop's plans for growth by increasing the number of employees.



# Creating Opportunity in 2024 and beyond

Using our new visual identity for Creating Opportunities we will bring together Levelling Up and Community Powered Warwickshire in 2024.

## Creating Opportunities in Warwickshire



January 2024

### Launch of Creating Opportunities microsite

The microsite offers an overview of all the actions, those already completed, ongoing and planned, which relate to Levelling Up and the commitment to Creating Opportunity for Warwickshire.



Within Warwickshire, Levelling Up is a long-term mission building on the strengths of the vibrant communities and address the longstanding challenges facing some of our residents and places.

Over the last 18 months, WCC have delivered projects to support local communities through Creating Opportunity and deliver the Countywide priorities for Levelling Up and Creating Opportunity. WCC has worked collaboratively with our district and borough and town and parish councils, public sector partners, business, educational and voluntary and community sector partners.

Actions relating to Levelling Up include county-wide initiatives, innovative place-based schemes and hyper-local community driven projects supporting the progress against Our Levelling Up commitments.

This microsite offers an overview of all the actions completed, ongoing and planned relating to Levelling Up and the commitment to Creating Opportunity across Warwickshire.

### Health Equity Partnership Programme



**75% of the VoW respondents living in Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough said that education and schools make an area a great place to live.**

WCC's Public Health team, in partnership with Change Makers and Coventry University, have worked to tackle high levels of childhood obesity and deprivation in Nuneaton Central and have made recommendations to promote accessibility and improve the understanding of childhood obesity. Parents at three Nuneaton and Bedworth schools were engaged with, and Middlemarch Junior School received funding to support healthy lifestyle initiatives for both pupils and staff. A further eight primary schools have expressed interest in a £10k fund to support healthy lifestyle initiatives, with funding set to be released in January 2024.

### Kenilworth Repair Café



**74% of the VoW panel living in Warwick District said that having a supportive local community makes an area a great place to live.**

Through Warwickshire's **Green Shoots Community Fund**, Kenilworth Repair Café has been supported to repair personal and portable items to avoid waste and save residents money. Similar repair cafés have reported that approximately 80% of all repairs are electronic goods that would otherwise have been discarded or replaced.



## Working at place

### Stratford-on-Avon - Growing Opportunities

Building on the expertise of the Social Inclusion Partnership, Stratford-on-Avon District Council has embedded the Levelling Up missions into a refresh of its Social Inclusion Strategy. There is a focus on four priority themes: reducing rural inequalities; improving health and wellbeing; empowering and strengthening local communities; and improving education, skills and increasing financial resilience.

# Growing Opportunities

Stratford-on-Avon

### Nuneaton and Bedworth - Building a better borough

A multi-agency plan is now in place for Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council. The plan focuses on meeting the needs of local residents and has set out the priority themes of growing and learning, skills and working, health and wellbeing, crime and community pride.

# Delivering a Better Borough

Nuneaton & Bedworth

Plans for Warwick District, North Warwickshire Borough and Rugby Borough will move forward in early 2024.

### Poverty Proofing



WCC worked with Children North East to establish a 'Poverty Proofing' offer across public service settings. This work aimed to understand the opportunities to improve how services are designed and offered to allow for easier access. Venues in the programme include North Warwickshire Borough Council leisure centres; South Warwickshire University NHS Foundation Trust's midwifery and health visiting service; Mary Ann Evans Hospice and palliative care; George Eliot Hospital maternity service; local partners and organisations including the museum, theatre and NHS community services in Rugby Borough; and early years provision including the Barnardo's Children's Centre.



## Joining up partnerships

Effective partnership across multiple agencies is key to creating opportunity.

Our Team Warwickshire approach means joining up across local authority, health and social care, police, business and the voluntary sector.

In 2024, we will continue to work with these partnerships at both countywide and local levels to coordinate our efforts and activities in support of creating opportunities:

- Health and wellbeing partnerships
- Community safety partnerships
- Schools consortia and Headteacher forums
- Business and industry forums
- Coventry and Warwickshire Anchor Alliance
- Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector.

Internal Boards bring together officers from across the council, who are involved in these partnerships to co-ordinate our activity and approach.

## Social Fabric Fund

This is a £2.5 million fund which will progress until the end of March 2025, investing in social infrastructure to support the development of the most deprived communities in the County. The fund puts community power at its centre by providing flexible funding that begins with communities' strengths and priorities.

This fund will primarily focus on the 22 priority places across the County recognised in Warwickshire's Countywide Approach to Levelling Up. The fund amounts to £2.5 million, comprising £1.5 million capital and £1 million revenue.

There have been positive levels of interest in the fund to date.

[Find out more about the Social Fabric Fund being run by the Heart of England Community Foundation.](#)

### Knife Angel



Our Community Safety team successfully delivered sessions across three weeks to over 1,700 students on knife crime and the consequences of choosing to carry and use knives. Schools undertaking the knife awareness training included Hartshill Academy, St. Thomas More Catholic Academy & Sixth Form and The George Eliot Academy. The training coincided with the Knife Angel Exhibition, designed and constructed out of 100,000 recycled knives and stood in Nuneaton town centre in mid-2023.