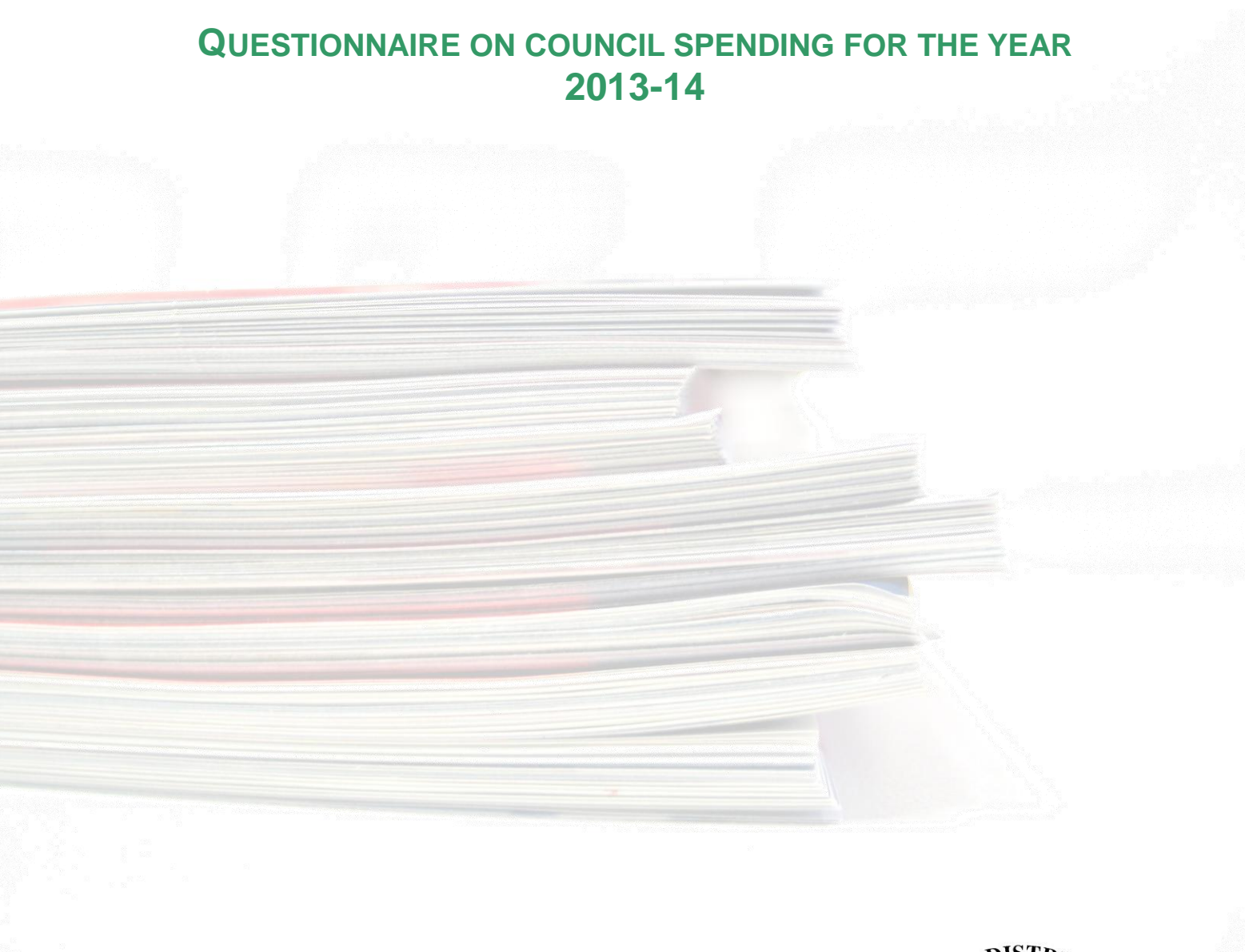


## **COUNCIL SPENDING**

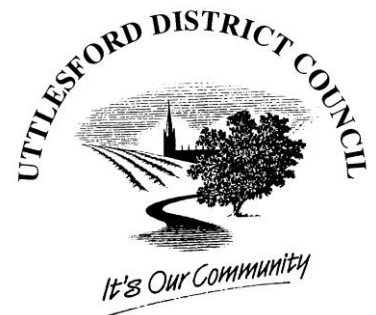
### **Budget Consultation Results**

**July 2012**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE ON COUNCIL SPENDING FOR THE YEAR 2013-14**



**Prepared by:**  
**Consultation Unit**  
**Uttlesford District Council**  
**July 2012**



## CONTENTS

- 1. Executive summary**
- 2. Purpose methodology**
- 3. Survey results, detailed findings**
- 4. Appendices –Tables and charts**

## 1. Executive summary

This is the second year that a consultation asking for residents' views on the headline priorities for setting the budget has been run primarily through a questionnaire distributed to every household in the district as part of the council's magazine *Uttlesford Life*. Additional opinion was sought from members of the e-citizens panel via an online version of the survey. The results from both groups of respondents have been collated and are detailed below.

Questions posed in the 2012 budget consultation are broadly similar to those asked in 2011. In 2011 residents were asked for their views on replacing brown bins with kitchen caddies. As a result of feedback, this scheme has been implemented and from Monday 11 June 2012 new caddies were distributed across the district. Also in the 2011 survey, a question asked for views on setting up a Highways Panel with Essex County Council to deal with minor road issues. In July 2012 the new Uttlesford Ranger Service was launched and a Cabinet member has been appointed with responsibility for Community Safety. A question in the 2012 consultation consequently asks for public opinion on the prioritisation the council should now give to working with Essex County Council to improve the condition of the district's roads.

Amongst respondents to the budget consultation there was a marked preference for "Continuing with sound financial management to ensure continued stability of the council and its services in difficult times" with 45.7% indicating that they felt this area of spending should be the council's highest priority. This is a continuation of the trend established in 2011 when 51.8% selected the same option. The headline view for the second highest spending priority was that the council should be "Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in partnership with the police and others" and that the third priority

**Council Spending - Have your say**

**It's Your Choice**

Preparing the council's budget is a process for which many residents - and it can't be done without the input of the council's residents.

With limited money available it is important the council makes the best use of the money that it has. The results of this consultation, along with feedback from the public, will help us to decide the budget for April 2013. It is really in a public consultation that we will be asked to approve in February next year.

Our budget is based closely on the priorities in our Corporate Plan - the long document which sets out what the council wants to achieve.

To take part in the consultation fill in the form on this page and pass it back to us - remember you don't need to use a stamp. Alternatively you can take part online at [www.uttlesford.gov.uk](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk)

**Have your say on what the council's top priorities should be.**

Simply choose your top three priorities from the list below and place the corresponding letter in the boxes provided. If there is anything you think should also be done then you can add it on the top. Then fill in your contact details, put the form and any additional information you want to send in an envelope and post it to:

Consultation Team, Uttlesford Life, 100 High Street, Uttlesford, Essex, CB11 1AB

Uttlesford District Council, London Road, Uttlesford, Essex, CB11 1AB

Remember - no stamp is needed. We'll accept completed forms up to and including Friday, 4 July.

**A. Continuing with sound financial management to ensure continued stability of the council and its services in difficult times**

**B. Giving responsibility to local communities to run services where appropriate (for example to manage public council)**

**C. Providing affordable housing for local people**

**D. Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in partnership with the police and others**

**E. Supporting our schools and other organisations and the wider community**

**F. Maintaining support for charities and the voluntary sector**

**G. Developing opportunities for local residents to influence decision-making on public services (such as through the Community Forum)**

**H. Working with Essex County Council to improve the condition of the district's roads**

**I. Work more closely with the business community to benefit the local economy**

**J. Other (please provide details on a separate sheet of paper)**

**YOUR ANSWERS:**

☐ Highest Priority ☐ Second highest ☐ Third highest ☐ Don't do (optional)

Please choose "other" or write in to make any points about the priorities you have chosen, we encourage you to provide additional information on a separate sheet of paper.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Uttlesford Life, Spring 2012

for spending should be “Keeping our streets and open spaces clean”. Again this shows little change from the views of the consultees in 2011. Conversely, almost a quarter of those who expressed an opinion (23.0%), selected that “Giving responsibility to local communities to run services where appropriate” should not be a priority area for council consideration. This represents a change of position from last year when respondents considered the council should refrain from “Increasing income from fees and charges to minimise spending cuts on council services”.

The results are summarised below and fully detailed findings can be seen in Section 3.

Priority	Spending Area
Highest priority	[A] “Continuing with sound financial management to ensure continued stability of the council and its services in difficult times”
Second highest	[D] “Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in partnership with the police and others”
Third highest	[E] “Keeping our streets and open spaces clean”
Don’t do	[B] “Giving responsibility to local communities to run services where appropriate”

## 2. Purpose methodology

Each year Uttlesford District Council sets a budget to decide how to allocate money to the wide range of services that the council provides. The budget is linked closely to the priorities in our Corporate Plan - the key document which sets out what the council wants to achieve over the next three years. The council is obliged to consult with the residents of the district when setting the budget for the forthcoming year. The results of this consultation will inform the decisions made by officers and councillors when setting spending for the year April 2013 to March 2014.

The consultation was run over the period 21 May to 6 July 2012. Respondents were asked to select their top three spending priorities from a list of 10 options covering the full range of the council's activities. They were also offered the opportunity to indicate a preference for reducing spending in any area and for appending additional comments.

Questionnaires were distributed to every household in the district as part of the summer issue of the council's in-house magazine *Uttlesford Life*. An electronic Snap 10 survey version was also made available on the website and an additional email promotion was made specifically to those members of the council's citizens panel who had agreed to participate in on-line surveys. By the close of the consultation period 176 returns had been made via the *Uttlesford Life* printed form and a further 81 electronic submissions were received using the Snap consultation making a total return of 257 for the consultation. This represents a slight decrease of eight percent on the previous year, possibly attributable to consultation fatigue.

## 3. Survey results, detailed findings

Key results from the survey are as follows:

### **SECTION 1: HIGHEST PRIORITIES - GENERAL AREAS OF SPENDING FOR THE COUNCIL**

- On the highest spending priority, a significant proportion (45.7%, 116 in total) considered that the council should concentrate on "Continuing with sound financial management to ensure continued stability of the council and its services in difficult times".

- The second highest spending priority, as rated by respondents, should be “Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour in partnership with the police and others” (25.0%, 63 in total). This option was also selected as the ‘highest priority’ by 15.4% (39 in total) of the respondents and as ‘third highest priority’ by a further 14.3% (36 in total). Whilst not the headline priority for the overall survey, it is important to note that 138 people in total chose to include this option as of major concern.
- “Keeping our streets and open spaces clean” had the most selections for the third highest priority (21.5%, 54 in total). This demonstrates the continuing preoccupation amongst residents with maintaining the quality of the environment in Uttlesford.

## **SECTION 2: LOWEST PRIORITIES – “DON’T DO” AREAS OF SPENDING**

- Of the 74 who expressed an opinion, just under a quarter 23.0% (17 in total) considered that that the council should not consider “Giving responsibility to local communities to run services where appropriate”, though a comparable 21.6% (16 in total) also flagged up their concerns over expenditure on “Providing affordable housing for local people”. When considering the total number of respondents to the survey (257), these figures represent comparatively small percentages; in all only 28.8% of those who participated chose to indicate an area in which they thought the council should not be active.

## **SECTION 3: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS RECEIVED**

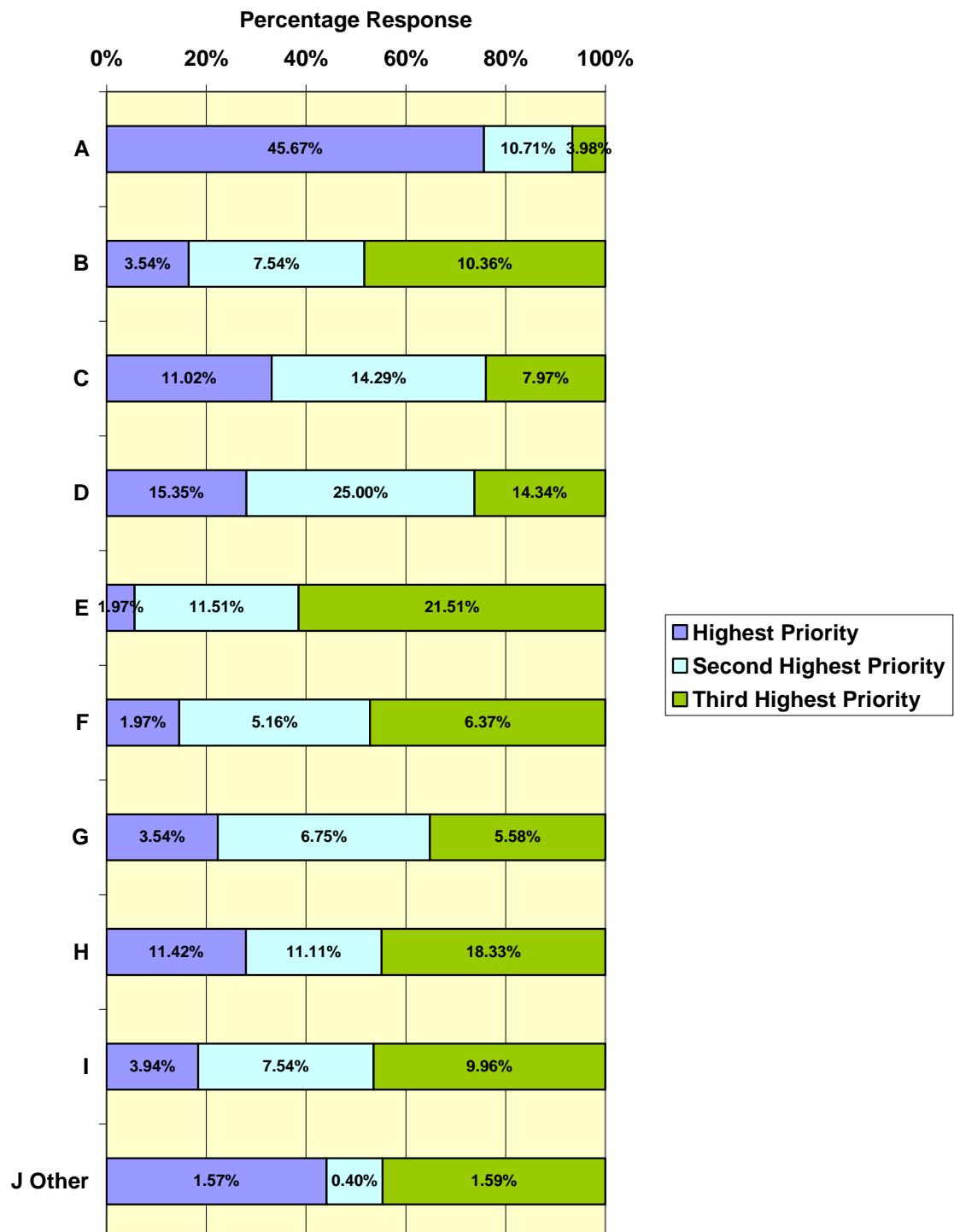
- Consultees were also invited to submit further comments additional to the formalised questions with some 12.1% (31 in total) choosing to do so. These appended responses covered a wide range of subjects but generally show a topical preoccupation with housing development (10 responses) including three comments regarding the link between housing development and potential planning permission for supermarket expansion. Seven further comments were submitted regarding the condition of the district’s roads with three of these acknowledging that this is solely the responsibility of Essex County Council and should not be a concern of Uttlesford District Council.

## **4. Appendices**

### **Priority options**

- A. Continuing with sound financial management to ensure continued stability of the council and its services in difficult times**
- B. Giving responsibility to local communities to run services where appropriate (for example to town/parish councils)**
- C. Providing affordable housing for local people**
- D. Reducing crime and antisocial behaviours in partnership with the police and others**
- E. Keeping our streets and open spaces clean and free of litter**
- F. Maintain support for charities and the voluntary sector**
- G. Develop opportunities for local residents to influence decision-making on public services (such as through the Community Forums)**
- H. Work with Essex County Council to improve the condition of the district's roads**
- I. Work more closely with the business community to benefit the local economy**
- J. Other**

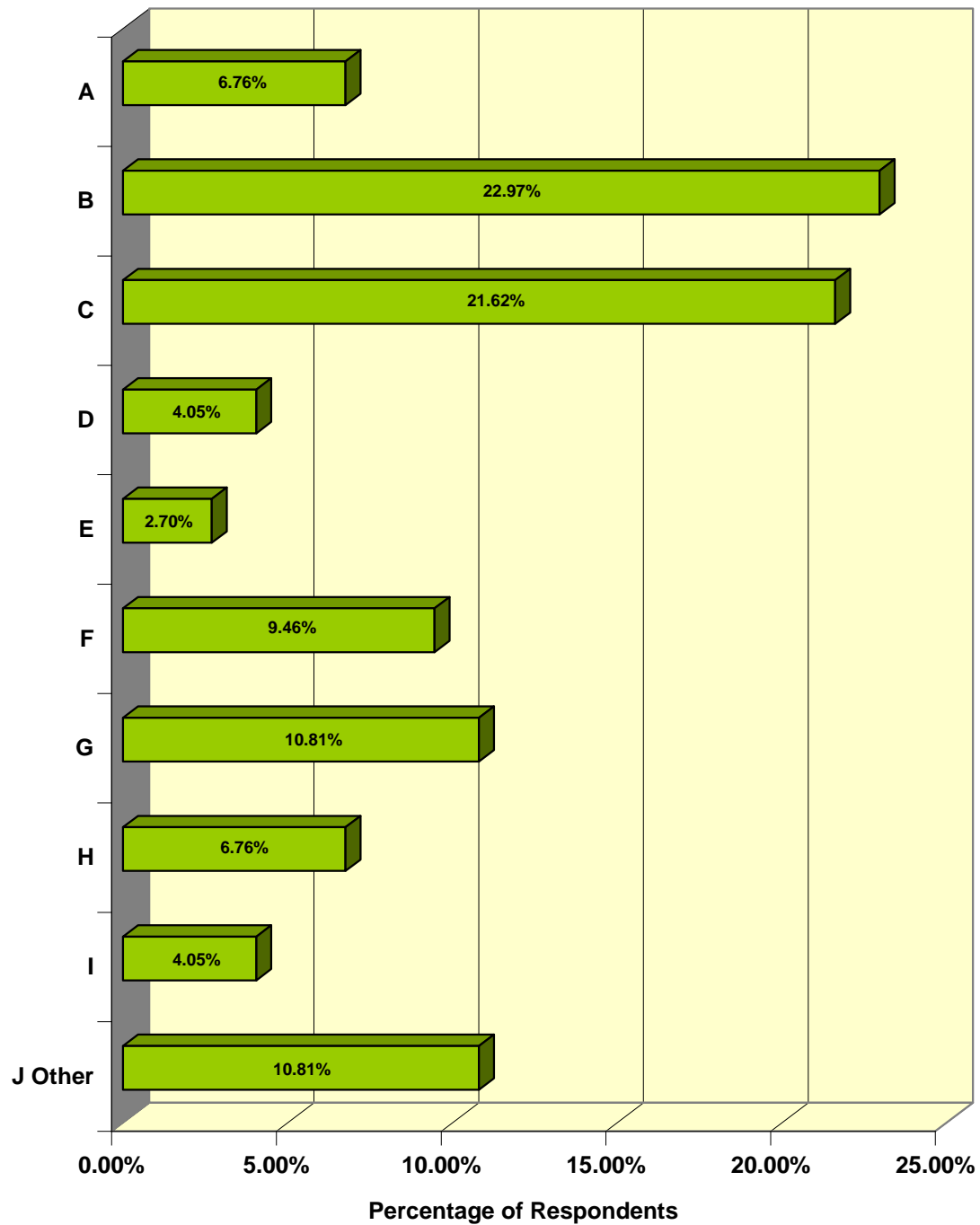
## Council Spending Priorities



NB. Option 'J' comments for "other" priorities can be seen included as part of the table of "Respondents Comments"



## Council Spending - Rejected Priorities



*NB. Option 'J' comments for "other" priorities can be seen included as part of the table of "Respondents Comments"*

Respondents Comments
<b>Highest Priority Option 'J'</b>
<p>As a local business owner I know that Walden's biggest commercial problem is parking. It needs to be :</p> <p>Cheaper</p> <p>Not limited to three hours before moving</p> <p>Pay on exit</p> <p>If you took a poll of local shoppers I know they'd all agree. For two hours in Walden you can have a day in Haverhill! And Ely is still free.</p> <p>If all the shops are empty due to low footfall, you won't get your business rates!!</p>
<p>Firstly congratulations for such a lovely area in which we all live – generally the 'top priorities' listed are sound and are the sort of motherhood and apple pie of politics. Most local authorities would be very please to have an area and a population like that of Uttlesford – in short most of the problems are will under control and the area is well run.</p> <p>Right, having said that, and appreciating again the work that is done by local politicians in Uttlesford, we would like to observe that nowhere in the list is there a mention of health wellbeing and leisure. Is hard labour the only thing we have to offer?</p> <p>On of the dominant things in life these days seems to be roads and cars – are we not all MAINLINING on oil – and have we probably been doing this for over 100 years?</p> <p>Our particular interest is cycling for leisure, for families and for health. Ask anyone their immediate response to any suggestion concerning cycling and their response is likely to include a reference to the fact that is far too dangerous – why should that be so?</p> <p>Why should not greater priority be given to gradually improving safety and facilities for cycling and walking within Uttlesford?</p> <p>Clearly vehicles are a vitally important part of life but they seem to have a stranglehold over us – generally the vehicle lobby seems to control and direct us, rather that the other way around.</p> <p>We postulate, inter alia, that local and council politicians should try to set and agenda rather than slavishly follow. Continental Europe seems better at doing this in respect of their cycle ways than we do. Many less wealthy countries on the continent do so much more to encourage and develop walking, cycling and family pursuits – to general benefit of their peoples and their infrastructure.</p> <p>We do not believe in quick fix solution but measured thoughtful and long term steady development including investment, in better safer cycleways and joint pedestrian/cyclist pathways.</p> <p>Our comment upon the Uttlesford plan then is for more to go into the plan for leisure particularly better safer facilities for pedestrians and cyclists – leading hopefully to an increase in the healthy usage of our countryside. This cannot be achieved overnight but it requires long term joined up thinking, consistency - something sometimes conceded that our systems have difficulty delivering.</p> <p>The only way to achieve that is to create a single permanently appointed post within Uttlesford council, and Essex County Council, responsible for the careful consideration of the road, path and signage network as it relates to walkers and</p>

cyclists and to work to steadily promote, develop and encourage the network and make available safer better cycling and walking areas within Uttlesford. A mention for leisure and cycling in the councils tip priorities list might be a start. We need long term Uttlesford and Essex County Council cycling plan. On a cyclist's back I read, 'Burn fat not oil!' – a worthy sentiment.
Purpose built homes for the elderly
Preserving rural nature of district by sensible development policy, particularly keeping Stansted Airport as one runway and not changing use of land at airport to no-airport related usage at a policy level.
Prioritise libraries, staffed by professionals who are trained to provide information on other council services ( e.g. Citizens Advice, local services, business information, family information services) as well as on traditional library things (books, information, support in job hunting, acting as a community hub etc). By doing this you can bring the council out to the community more without it costing more. I don't understand why this hasn't been done long ago!
<b>2nd Highest Priority Option 'J'</b>
(No submitted comments)
<b>3rd Highest Priority Option 'J'</b>
Maintenance of footpaths and bridleways including Flitch Way and pathways and verges and roundabouts
The district should take over the maintenance of public rights of way so ECC can concentrate on off-roaders mis-using byways
Sort out Airport related parking in a speedy manner - nip it in the bud, don't wait years to enforce your existing processes.
<b>Don't do Option 'J'</b>
Stop wasting money on various bins etc.
Work which can be outsourced economically
Build vast housing estates and ruin the area. Limit housing development to real need.
Waste money on planting annual bedding to celebrate the queen's jubilee. Don't agree to more houses being built in Elsenham. Don't leave the potholes to damage cars. Don't leave the drains untended causing local flooding.
Keep changing our town and bringing in people that is making Dunmow High Street and surrounding streets unsafe to walk at night
Do not build any more so called affordable housing which is bought by landlords for renting and housing London overspill creating several social issues such as crime, pressure on local services and the destruction of the green belt area etc.
<b>Additional Comments</b>
The Little Sampford Road at Bardfield End Green is the worst road in the Thaxted area for potholes and speed from the fast amount of traffic. I have lived up here 74 years. It's got dreadful. A few weeks ago we were so pleased to see red paint round the potholes and the damage roads were going to be repaired but no, the red paint has worn away by the traffic and no repairs. I walk a mile to Thaxted most days, it's getting so dangerous now. No footpath no street lights, the

speeding traffic trying to miss the damage to the road. Greensword not cut until we complain. We have the short cutters going to Stansted, we have very large lorries taking grain from the farms, large lorries taking machinery to the farms, lorry loads of firewood going to be cut up. Most of the farm buildings are let out for car and lorry repairs, another for Miles Kelly Books. This brings a lot of traffic up here. This is why the road is in such a state. We have tried hard for a speed limit, we have no footpath or street lights. The council tax is £1500.46 a year. The only thing we get is our bins emptied. In the winter the road is terrible, we have no salt. As the trees and hedges are so high the sun doesn't get to thaw it. If we have snow it has to get to certain depth then is cleared but in not a lot of good because no salt or sun it just stays slippery. Perhaps if we had a teaspoon of salt it would be a great help but we don't get any up here.

**Highest Priority C** – by 'affordable' I suggest *cheaper* for rent an to buy and emphasise *local*.

**Second Highest Priority E** - a few widely advertised prosecutions for those who litter Uttlesford, may shame some of those thoughtless folk

**Third Highest Priority F** – Without our voluntary sector It would be difficult for Uttlesford to be and stay one of the best districts in Britain to live (as stated by the leader in Uttlesford Life) a grant to any local charity is far more cost effective that the council taking on the service. Hooray for volunteers I say!

**Don't do G** – I may be wrong but I have always wondered if Community Forums are the best way. In my experience it always seems to be just a few who bother to turn up to the forums will probably be speaking for the silent majority. (Mind you I would find it difficult to suggest an alternative at present. I was brought up never to criticize unless you have something better to put in place)

All these new homes and employment land. That's great but only one Tesco's in Walden, why not Sainsbury's? Can't understand the logic there. We can't all afford to shop at Waitrose, have you seen Tesco's forecourt queues? Please planners wake up!

If you are going to build all the houses that are planned then we need Sainsburys supermarket. If you are going to build 880 houses in Saffron Walden as planned we will need a new supermarket and it should be built now, not when the 880 houses are built and then say we should have built it earlier. Build Sainsburys! Be prepared!!

As I have only be able to choose three options does not mean the others are less important to me.

I increase of parking fees DOES NOT help local business community.

**Don't' do : C** You may be surprised to see that I have placed the letter C in the do not do box. This is not because I am against housing, in fact I am for it.

The point I am making is that I am totally against the sale of council houses which, according to our local MP, is still government policy. I was against it in Thatcher's day and am still against it now.

It seems ridiculous to have such a policy while at the same time go on bleating about affordable housing.

I have written to Alan Haselhurst about this but he disagrees with me. So be it but I still think the policy is wrong and not compatible with the need for poorer people to at least have the opportunity to have a roof over their heads for an affordable rent.

Curb excessive development eg. Sainsburys/expansion of Tescos

<p><b>Highest Priority – H:</b> I have selected the roads highest priority as I feel action should be taken to complete the small section of the Dunmow bypass from the Tesco roundabout in Stortford road to little Easton. This would prevent a great deal of heavy traffic driving through the town and make life more bearable for those who live in Rosemary Lane, The Downs and the Causeway. It seems as if Wickford's building plan has slowed down and the hope of them finishing the road appears to be many years off.</p>
<p>With reference to your questions in Uttlesford Life. choice A is not a choice; it should be the Council's prime duty and responsibility to ensure the Council is operated in a sound fiscal and stable manner for the benefit of the local populous. Is the alternative implied by the questionnaire that the Council can conduct its business in an unsound manner allowing instability, uncertainty, and arbitrary poor service for the area?</p>
<p><b>Don't do : H</b> as ECC should be doing</p>
<p><b>Highest Priority – Other:</b> As a local business owner I know that Walden's biggest commercial problem is parking. It needs to be : Cheaper Not limited to three hours before moving Pay on exit If you took a poll of local shoppers I know they'd all agree. For two hours in Walden you can have a day in Haverhill! And Ely is still free. If all the shops are empty due to low footfall, you won't get your business rates!!</p>
<p><b>Don't do : B</b> Our parish council is useless</p>
<p>(Leave brown bins alone , no to caddies) It's working</p>
<p><b>Re Empty Buses –</b> Too many buses run empty at hourly intervals in many villages. Public transport is in a great need to be reorganised. Suitable vehicles should be used. A call centre could organise timing for elderly so that buses would run to demand.</p>
<p><b>Don't do – H</b> As Essex CC is responsible for roads Uttlesford should leave it to them. G is the same as B, or should be A should be obvious to all councils, (though reports of large salaries paid to "executive officers" which should be cancelled. The most important priority should be "less Council Tax" Why is this missing from your list?</p>
<p><b>Second Highest priority – C</b> Affordable Housing 1. Rents in this area seem to be driven more by the letting/managing agents than by the landlords. I know of at least one who insisted on keeping her rent the same for the new letting 2. Council 'providing' need not necessarily mean the Council's own housing stock. The Council planning could, indeed should, require developers to provide homes that can be afforded, with a sensible mortgage, by people on salaries available locally</p>
<p><b>Don't do – H</b> Hardly the greatest priority in times of recession</p>
<p><b>Second Highest priority – H</b> Speed control on Thaxted Road. Used like a race track at times. Dangerous to cross by our house</p>