

**Uttlesford Council Size submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England**

**FURTHER ELECTORAL REVIEW OF UTTLESFORD DISTRICT**

**Submission by Uttlesford District Council on Council Size**

**1. Introduction**

This paper sets out the Council's formal response to a request from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) to put forward a submission for council size. The technical guidance on electoral reviews states that: *"Decisions on council size are the starting point in any electoral review, since that number determines the optimum councillor:elector ratio for the purposes of achieving electoral equality"*.

The LGBCE wrote to the Council in April 2011 confirming that Uttlesford had been identified as potentially requiring an electoral review. This was confirmed in January 2012 on the basis that Uttlesford met both of the intervention criteria for triggering a Further Electoral Review (FER). It was subsequently confirmed that the review would commence in July 2012 when the LGBCE would meet to determine a draft recommendation on council size for consultation.

The Council welcomes the electoral review and has engaged fully with the process of building a case for a reduced council size following an examination of the business needs of the district council. **This submission makes a case for reducing the number of councillors to be elected in Uttlesford from 44 to a figure of either 38, 39 or 40.** It is based on a detailed examination of the working practices of the Council in relation to the need to make well informed and speedy decisions that are subject to rigorous overview and scrutiny controls, and the need to ensure proper democratic accountability for those decisions by representing the views of local communities.

The LGBCE's technical guidance says that: *"It is important that, if we are to reach clear and transparent decisions on council size, we receive well-reasoned proposals that are based on the individual characteristics and needs of each local authority area and its communities"*.

The approach adopted in this submission has been to follow these guiding principles to support a proposed change to the size of the Council. The following sections of the submission set out the Council's case for that change.

**2. Summary of the Council's Submission**

The rationale for reducing the Council's size is based on the business and other needs of the Council going forward during the next ten to 15 years, as identified in this paper and in the accompanying key lines of enquiry document.

At the time of the last electoral review of Uttlesford (Periodic Electoral Review conducted in 1999/2000), there was agreement to increase the Council's membership from 42 to 44. At that time the Council's submission noted as follows:

*It is considered that the existing Council size does not facilitate electoral equality or community identity within the Uttlesford District.*

*The Commission will be aware that the Council will soon have to implement one of the models of political management about to be introduced by the Government for all principal authorities. The Council has adopted an executive and non-executive management structure for implementation in May 2000, or as soon as practicable thereafter.*

*The Council feels that a relatively low elector/member ratio is fully justified in a predominantly rural area such as Uttlesford. It is recognised that an increased membership is likely to have budgetary implications but the Council takes the view that the internal administration of the Council will be enhanced because it will allow the considerable workload of the scrutiny and constituency roles to be spread more evenly.*

Of course, since those words were written, the Council has adopted two different political management systems. From September 2001, the Council decided to operate a streamlined committee system and this continued until May 2011 when the Council changed to a leader and cabinet model of decision making.

The Council therefore has direct experience of two contrasting structures and two different methods of making decisions.

Evidence submitted as part of this submission and in the key lines of enquiry paper, attached at appendix A, indicates that the number of members directly involved in determining policy, other than at Full Council meetings and excepting regulatory matters, has fallen from 40 members of policy committees prior to May 2011, to seven Cabinet members now (as from 15 May 2012). To some extent, that is counterbalanced by the increased profile of the overview and scrutiny function. However, the number of members involved in regulatory and overview/scrutiny functions has not increased, as demonstrated by the table on page 12, even if the scrutiny function has now shifted in focus towards a position of holding the executive to account.

The Council's case for a reduced membership can therefore be summarised in the following bullet points:

- Fewer members are involved directly in day to day decision making.
- The Council is clear that sufficient councillor capacity must always be available to perform the regulatory and overview and scrutiny functions.
- An officer assessment of member workload has concluded that, taking no account of representational needs, the Council could operate with a minimum of between 34 and 36 members.
- Working groups contribute to policy development and carry out vital work at a more detailed level than can be achieved at Cabinet or Full Council meetings. While the table on page 12 indicates that more councillors are now members of working groups than prior to the adoption of an executive system, it is generally considered that the effectiveness of working groups would not be compromised by a reduction in membership to pre-cabinet levels.
- The workload of councillors would remain at a realistic and manageable level with a reduction of either four, five or six members. Workload would be

spread more evenly across the whole Council membership than is presently the case.

- A reduction of this nature would retain a good level of representation for communities within Uttlesford, allow the present mix of wards to be reviewed, including the appropriate number of three member wards, and retain a good elector/ councillor ratio below both county and national levels.

### **3. The Council's existing Model of Governance**

Until May 2011, the Council operated a streamlined committee based system, with three policy committees appointed to make decisions. As the population base of Uttlesford is less than the 85,000 stipulated in the Local Government Act 2000, there was no requirement to change from a committee system of governance to a leader and cabinet model.

The Council had a long-term intention stated in the corporate plan to consider changing to a new and more effective committee structure. The Constitution Working Group started examining options to improve decision-making efficiency in November 2009 and recommended to Council that the merits of adopting an executive leader and cabinet model should be explored. The Council approved this recommendation in December 2009 and agreed to carry out public consultation in the first half of 2010.

The option of adopting an elected mayor and cabinet system was effectively discounted by the Council at this stage as it was not felt to be an appropriate system of governance for the Uttlesford area.

During this time visits were made to neighbouring councils already operating a leader and cabinet model such as Braintree and Chelmsford and further research was conducted into the likely implications for the Council's method of operation should such a change be adopted.

The Council concluded in December 2010 that it would be appropriate to move to a leader and cabinet mode of governance with effect from 8 May 2011, immediately following the ordinary election of councillors, and resolved accordingly. The general view of councillors at that time was that the new model would provide a more effective way to make decisions and that the advantages would outweigh the disadvantages. Other perceived advantages at that time were considered to be in terms of partnership working and in representing the Council on external bodies.

Since May 2011, the Council has operated with a leader, elected by councillors at the first annual meeting following the ordinary election, together with a cabinet consisting of a deputy leader and four portfolio holders. With effect from the annual meeting in May 2012, one additional cabinet post has been created, so that there are now seven cabinet members including the leader.

The Leader has so far chosen not to delegate any functions to portfolio holders and therefore in practice all executive decisions that are not already delegated to officers are taken by the cabinet at formal cabinet meetings. Of course, that position may change at any time in the future.

Adoption of a cabinet system has had a dramatic impact on the role and workload of councillors at Uttlesford. Only a relatively small number of councillors are now

directly involved in making decisions, except for those that are referred to Full Council, and the role of the majority of councillors has changed accordingly.

This can be explained by reference to the make up of cabinet and committees. In the year prior to May 2011, 40 of the 44 councillors were members of one of the three policy committees. These were Finance and Administration, Environment and Community and Housing. Under the new cabinet structure, nearly all of the decisions that were formerly taken by the policy committees are now taken by the Cabinet, consisting of seven members.

Although there are four deputies covering four of the five designated portfolio areas (a fifth has yet to be appointed), the deputies are not directly involved in making decisions and cannot deputise for the portfolio holders in any formal sense. The leaders of the other two political groups are invited to attend cabinet meetings, as are the chairmen of the overview and scrutiny committees, and they can question cabinet members directly on items presented for decision, but of course they cannot play any role in making those decisions.

In terms of member involvement in regulatory and the overview and scrutiny functions, there has been little change in the number of members serving on those committees since the adoption of a cabinet system. The number of members involved in overview and scrutiny functions has increased by one from 17 to 18 but the number of members involved in regulatory committees has declined from 23 to 19 (please refer to the table on page 12).

There are now no fewer than five councillors who are not presently members of either the cabinet or any committee. Under the former committee system, the four members who were not appointed to a policy committee were all members of at least one regulatory, overview or scrutiny committee.

One aspect of the Council's governance that has not altered greatly is that there continue to be a number of working groups established to advise the decision making bodies. These cover matters of policy in housing, planning, waste and museum services, and the constitution, as well as other matters of interest to the Council such as the Olympics. Of course, these working groups are non-decision making bodies. The difference in practice since May 2011 is that working groups are now reporting directly to either council or cabinet instead of to the relevant policy committee.

There are now 39 members involved in one or more working groups in contrast to the position before May 2011 when a total of thirty members belonged to the equivalent groups.

Task and finish groups are set up as appropriate to consider particular projects. There are presently three such groups.

There are two area forums set up to provide a regular consultative function at a more local level and these have continued unaltered since the advent of the cabinet structure. All members are automatically members of either one or the other forum depending on which ward they represent. There are 20 members of the North Area Forum and 24 members of the South Area Forum. They are not committees of the Council and have no decision-making or advisory functions.

The other major change since the adoption of executive arrangements has been a generally enhanced role for the Scrutiny Committee. The Council is now operating more on the basis of pre-scrutiny than hitherto and this has resulted in the adoption of a more regulated programme of matters to be considered. For example, at its meeting on 21 May the Committee pre-scrutinised the Local Development Framework consultation document.

#### **4. Full Council**

There are 44 councillors elected every four years, with the next election being due in May 2015. Full Council elects the leader at the annual meeting immediately following an ordinary election. The leader then holds office for a full term of four years unless he resigns or a motion of no confidence is passed.

Only the Council may exercise the following functions:

- Adopting and changing the Constitution
- Approving or adopting the policy framework, the budget and any application to the Secretary of State for housing land transfer
- All electoral, polling, community governance and boundary review functions
- Agreeing and/or amending the terms of reference for committees of the council, deciding on their composition and making appointments
- Appointing representatives on outside bodies, unless the appointment is an executive function
- Adopting an allowances scheme
- Changing the name of the area
- Conferring the freedom of the district and appointing honorary aldermen
- Confirming the appointment of head of paid service
- All other matters reserved to it by law

All matters falling under the definition of the budget and policy framework are developed by inclusion in the leader's forward plan and agreed by the executive before being referred to the Council for final determination.

The Full Council meets six times a year, plus any extraordinary meetings required.

#### **5. Cabinet**

The Leader is appointed by the Council for a four year term. The Leader appoints the Cabinet and decides the scheme of delegation to executive members and to officers. There are presently no matters delegated to portfolio holders but there is an extensive scheme of delegation to officers.

The Cabinet comprises the Leader, Deputy Leader and five portfolio holders (from 15 May 2012) and so consists of seven members. There are nominated deputies for each of the portfolio holders (except, presently, one) but, although they attend cabinet, they do so on an unofficial and non-voting basis.

All of the executive members and their deputies are members of the majority party forming the Administration.

Cabinet agenda include a standing item for members' questions to the executive. This provides an opportunity for any member of the council to raise a question on

any topic of executive responsibility which is included on the agenda and to receive an answer.

The chairmen of the Performance and Audit and Scrutiny Committees, and the leaders of the opposition political groups are invited to attend all Cabinet meetings and are able to speak and to ask questions at any point in the meeting, subject to the agreement of the Leader acting as Chairman.

As individual executive members have no delegated functions allocated to them all key decisions and other matters not delegated to officers are referred to Cabinet for decision.

In its first year, the Cabinet met on a scheduled basis every four or five weeks, twelve times in total, together with extra meetings as required. The number of meetings in 2012/13 will be reduced in frequency to a six-weekly schedule and there will be a total of nine meetings, together with any additional meetings.

## **6. Overview and Scrutiny Functions**

The Council appoints two committees to discharge the functions conferred by section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000.

The Performance and Audit Committee monitors the performance of the Council and progress against improvement plans; oversees internal audit and risk functions; receives and approves external audit reports; scrutinises and approves the annual statement of accounts; and makes reports and recommendations on performance management and corporate governance.

The Scrutiny Committee monitors decisions of the executive and committees; scrutinises the performance of outside bodies; and receives public petitions.

It was expected that the role of the Scrutiny Committee in particular would be enhanced by the move to an executive structure of governance. This has proved to be the case and the Committee now has a full work programme of monitoring and investigation work through to April 2013. This involves, among other things, an examination of external services such as those provided by the PCT and a review of police station closures.

The Committee has decided to engage upon a series of internal policy reviews including an examination of the Cabinet system, the Council's waste strategy, and car parking charges. It will do this work by considering a series of scoping reports.

The Committee has also decided to engage upon a programme of pre-scrutiny reviews. This will include an examination of the LDF consultation document as already mentioned above.

Separate meeting dates have been put aside for the potential call-in of executive decisions. To date, under the new structure, only one policy decision has been subject to the call-in process but it was felt sensible to make provision for meetings in case they were needed.

The Council is very clear that enough councillors must be available to undertake the statutory scrutiny and overview functions under the new council size arrangements. This matter is further discussed elsewhere in this submission.

## **7. Regulatory Functions**

The Planning Committee carries out the Council's regulatory functions under the relevant planning legislation. The Committee meets every four weeks and there are 13 meetings annually. A special responsibility allowance is paid to members of the Committee in recognition of the extra responsibility and time demands placed on members because of the frequency of meetings and the requirement to make site visits on a regular basis.

Members are also required to attend regular workshops on related planning issues and to keep informed about current regulatory practice.

The Licensing and Environmental Health Committee is responsible for the Council's functions in the control of services, persons, vehicles and premises that are required to be licensed or registered.

The Committee has only three scheduled meetings per year but also meets as a panel to determine applications for licences and to consider breaches of licensing conditions. When meeting as a panel, the Committee has only four members in attendance.

## **8. Standards Committee**

The Standards Committee is appointed to promote and maintain high standards of conduct within the Council, to advise on the adoption or revision of the Code of Conduct, and to monitor the operation of the Code. The Committee appoints a sub-committee to conduct a preliminary hearing to determine whether complaints of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct should be referred to the Monitoring Officer or the Standards Board for investigation. The power of investigation extends to parish councillors in the district.

In the event that the Monitoring Officer finds that a breach of the Code has taken place a report will be prepared by the investigator and the Standards Committee must hold a hearing. The Committee will make a determination of the facts on an inquisitorial basis and will then form a judgement on whether a breach of the Code has occurred. Where a breach is found to have taken place, the Committee will decide upon an appropriate sanction.

The Committee consists of four members, not appointed on the basis of political balance, three independent persons, one of whom acts as chairman, and three representatives of town and parish councils in the district.

From 1 July a revised Code of Conduct will apply and a new Standards Committee has now been appointed to carry out these functions from that date, or another date as specified by the Secretary of State. There will be six members of the Council, not appointed on political balance terms, and three independent persons acting in an advisory and non-voting capacity.

## **9. Other Committees including Partnership Working**

The Staff Appeals Committee is appointed to determine appeals under the disciplinary or redundancy procedures, but has not met for several years as much of this work is undertaken by senior officers.

There are joint committees for the North Essex Parking Partnership (one Uttlesford member) and the Joint Revenues and Benefits Partnership with Harlow District Council (three Uttlesford members). The Council has now nominated one member to serve on the new Essex Police and Crime Panel established under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act to scrutinise the Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Council hosts the various bodies that comprise the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) drawing together a variety of organisations dealing with health and wellbeing, community safety, employment and the economy, transport and the environment, and families and children.

## **10. Area Forums**

The Council has established two area forums (North and South) to act as focal points for public and parish liaison within the district. Each forum meets three times annually and all members of the Council are automatically a member of the forum covering their ward.

The area forums are not committees and have no decision making powers or advisory functions. They are essentially consultative in nature.

The district is fully parished. There are presently 60 parishes and 53 parish councils in the district. There is no formal mechanism to engage with parishes outside of the area forums although occasional workshops are held on subjects of direct interest to parish councils.

Area forum meetings typically include one or more presentations about matters of interest to the local community. For example, the most recent meetings included presentations on the Local Development Framework, sustainable and affordable housing, the allocation of New Homes Bonus, and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations. On other occasions, presentations have been given by external bodies such as the police, the local PCT, and Essex County highways officers.

## **11. Working and Task Groups**

The Council and Cabinet both appoint a number of working groups to consider and make recommendations on particular areas of policy.

The Council presently has three working groups. The Constitution Working Group meets as and when needed to advise the Council on changes or additions proposed to the Constitution. Before such changes can be made, it is a requirement that they are first considered by the working group.

The Electoral Working Group is appointed to consider and advise the Council on electoral and community governance reviews. The number of meetings will depend on the work programme and incidence of such reviews.



The Local Joint Committee exists to consult employees and unions representing staff within the authority. Meetings take place on a regular basis but are generally informal and only rarely result in recommendations to Council.

The Cabinet appoints a number of working groups with specific areas of responsibility.

The Community Achievement Panel meets only bi-annually to oversee the organisation of community achievement awards.

A new Local Highways Panel has been created (replacing the Highways Panel established in November 2011) consisting of four Uttlesford members and the four county councillors representing the Uttlesford district. The Panel will be administered by the district council and will principally prioritise and make recommendations for traffic management improvements and other schemes within the allocated budget. Recommendations will be approved by the Cabinet and then submitted to the County Council's Cabinet member for Highways and Transportation. The number of meetings is expected to be in the order of four per year.

The Housing Board meets approximately six times a year to monitor the delivery of all housing related strategies and policies, the housing revenue account and the related HRA business plan, and to oversee the provision of affordable housing, the use of the housing stock and other housing assets. It includes tenant forum representatives.

The Local Development Framework Working Group is presently meeting regularly to oversee the preparation of the Council's Local Development Framework document. The Council has now agreed the housing distribution and allocations strategy for consultation and the need for future meetings will diminish once the plan is prepared for final adoption expected in November 2013. However, there will be a separate consultation on a local development plan for gypsies and travellers to be adopted from December 2014, so there will be a continuing need for meetings until that date, but probably at a reduced frequency.

The Council presently operates Saffron Walden Museum and the management of the Museum is arranged through the Museum Management Working Group in conjunction with the Museum Society which owns the building. Meetings of the Working Group are generally held quarterly.

The Olympics 2012 Working Group has recently been meeting monthly to identify potential opportunities and developments associated with the 2012 Olympic Games and to act as ambassadors for the district. The need for the working group is likely to disappear once the games have taken place, unless there is an enduring legacy to administer within the district.

The Stansted Airport Advisory Panel exists to form an overview of policy and operational issues in relation to Stansted Airport which is contained wholly within the Uttlesford district. It meets approximately three or four times annually.

Finally, the Waste Strategy Project Team is appointed to oversee the joint arrangements between waste collection and disposal authorities, as well as the delivery of the recycling strategy.

Task groups are established to deal with particular time-limited projects. At present there are task groups in place to oversee a housing redevelopment project and to recommend the appointment of independent persons to serve on the new Standards Committee.

## **12. Member involvement in Council and external bodies**

As explained in the previous sections of this submission, the Council operates a hierarchy of Full Council, Cabinet, one scrutiny and one overview committee, two regulatory committees, a standards committee, three joint committees (two of which are administered externally), two area forums, and a number of task and working groups.

In addition, the Council is represented by at least one member on 38 different outside bodies, excepting those bodies connected to Uttlesford Futures, operated as part of the LSP (see earlier comments).

The table on the following page sets out the hierarchy in terms of member involvement:

<b>Council body</b>	<b>Members pre-Cabinet</b>	<b>Members post-Cabinet</b>	<b>Meetings per year pre-Cabinet</b>	<b>Meetings per year post-Cabinet</b>
Council	44	44	6 + extra as needed	6 + extra as needed
Finance and Administration Cttee	14	N/a	5	N/a
Environment Cttee	15	N/a	5	N/a
Community & Housing Cttee	15	N/a	5	N/a
Cabinet	N/a	7 (+ 5 + 4) from May 2012	N/a	12 reducing to 9
Planning Cttee	15	14	13	13
Licensing Cttee	11	11	5 + hearings (14 in total)	3 + hearings (17 in total)
Standards Cttee	4 + ind. & parish members	6 + ind. members (from 1 July)	5 + hearings	3 + hearings
Performance & Audit Cttee	9	10	6	6
Scrutiny Cttee	10	10	5	6 + extra as needed (+ 10 reserved for call-in if required)
Constitution WG	8	8	4	2
Electoral WG	5	8	4	4
Local Joint Committee	3	3	3	3
Community Achievement Panel	5	5	1	1
Highways Panel	6 + 2 parish reps	4 (to operate as joint body with 4 cty cllrs)	5	4
Housing Board	6 + tenant reps	10 + tenant reps	4	6
LDF WG	6	12	3	12
Museum MWG	5 + Museum Society reps	4 + Museum Society reps	4	3
Olympics WG	6	7	0	8
Stansted AAP	11	10	3	3
Waste Strategy PT	6	10	1	3
North AF	20	20	3	3
South AF	24	24	3	3
Total meetings			111	129

The table on the previous page indicates that the number of meetings has actually increased since the advent of the Cabinet system. This does not necessarily mean that the objective of more streamlined decision making has not been achieved and seems to reflect enhanced activity in relation to work on the Local Development Framework and on the Olympics. The need for future meetings in both of these areas should diminish once the local plan is agreed and the Olympic Games has ended.

To some extent also, as already explained, there has been increased member involvement in the scrutiny function, especially in terms of pre-scrutiny.

The following table indicates the number of members involved in meetings by category both before and after the introduction of the Executive system:

<b>Total members involved</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	<b>Policy Committees</b>	<b>Regulatory + Standards</b>	<b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny</b>	<b>Working Groups</b>
<b>Pre-Cabinet</b>	N/a	40	23	17	30
<b>Post-Cabinet</b>	7 (+ 9) (from May 2012)	N/a	19	18	39

This table seems to show clearly a growth in member involvement in working groups. The scope of working group functions has not altered significantly since the executive system was adopted but the number of members appointed to several of those groups has increased. The main difference is that working groups now report to Cabinet (and Full Council in some cases) instead of to one of the former policy committees.

In terms of representation on outside bodies, there are 38 bodies to which the Council makes appointments (excluding the LSP groups). These are all considered to be related to executive functions and so are now appointed at the first Cabinet meeting following the annual council meeting, rather than at the annual meeting itself.

The existing list indicates that 27 different members represent the Council on outside bodies. A number of these bodies are partnership organisations or connected to the local strategic partnership, or bodies such as the Local Government Association and the various offshoots of the LGA.

In total, some 22 bodies to which the Council appoints representatives are attended either by executive members or their deputies. Putting aside those bodies, 19 of the 34 non-executive or deputy executive councillors presently represent the Council on one or more outside bodies.

### **13. Councillors' time commitment**

One of the questions in the key lines of enquiry document relates to how much time councillors spend on Council business. The most recent evidence for this dates from a survey undertaken in 2009 to guide the Independent Remuneration Panel's review of member allowances. The survey of course pre-dated the move to executive

arrangements and also excluded time spent on any work remunerated by a Special Responsibility Allowance. This is because the main purpose of the survey was to test the validity of the formula then used to calculate the basic allowance.

The Remuneration Panel intends to conduct another survey of members' time commitment later this year to inform the next review of allowances for 2013/14. This survey will examine all facets of a member's activity including cabinet, overview/scrutiny and regulatory functions. However, this information will not be available in time to use for the FER and we must therefore depend on what evidence is already available.

The 2009 survey found that the average number of hours spent on council business, excluding SRA duties, varied between 12.6 and 13.9 hours per week. The new survey, once available, will contrast this finding with the reported position under executive arrangements. No proper assessment can therefore be made of time commitment now compared with the position before May 2011. The evidence being submitted now is based largely on individual members' comments and on general impressions.

#### **14. Profile of the Uttlesford District**

Uttlesford is a large predominantly rural district in North West Essex with a total population of 77,500 (2010). The district shares a common boundary with Hertfordshire to the west and with Cambridgeshire to the north. The district is fully parished. There are 60 parishes in total and 53 parish councils.

The district currently has a large proportion of people in the 35 to 64 age group and a similar proportion of older people to the national average. However over the next 15 years there are expected to be increases of at least 72% in the over 65s and of 114% in the over 85s. The ratio of working age to older people in Uttlesford is expected to fall by 43% by 2029 – the second biggest fall in Essex. The proportion of Uttlesford's population from black and minority ethnic groups is substantially lower than the England average at 4.9%. The population is becoming more diverse over time, partly as a result of the expansion of the European Union, and partly as a result of the barracks at Wimbish presently occupied by 33 Engineer Regiment. There are also a small number of people from travelling communities in Uttlesford.

It is a primarily rural area with two major settlements, Saffron Walden (population 15,000) and Great Dunmow (pop. 8,000). Both are market towns which although still quite small by most standards provide a range of services to the areas surrounding them. There are a number of larger villages; Elsenham (pop. 2,500), Felsted (pop. 2,500), Great Chesterford (pop. 1,600), Hatfield Heath (pop. 1,900), Newport (pop. 3,200), Stansted Mountfitchet (pop. 6,100), Takeley (pop. 3,600) and Thaxted (pop. 3,000). These villages provide a range of services to the surrounding rural areas.

There are a large number of smaller villages which mainly provide services for their local communities. Smaller hamlets, groups of cottages and isolated homes and farmsteads are scattered across the district.

The quality of the built heritage and rural environment in the district is very high with around 3,700 Listed Buildings and over 30 Conservation Areas. This can restrict opportunities for new development in the historic centres of the towns and villages where few sites exist where development can take place without some loss to a

valued environment. There are limited brownfield sites within the district. There is one major employment centre within the district at Stansted Airport. Other employment is focused on smaller industrial estates or premises.

Unemployment in the district has traditionally been lower than the national average. Jobs in manufacturing have declined but with the growth of Stansted Airport there has been an increase in jobs in transport and communication. On average residents travel much further to work than is the norm. Qualifications and earnings of the resident population are generally higher than average. There is a link between the high level of out commuting and associated high incomes with residents commuting considerable distances to highly paid jobs elsewhere, particularly London.

House prices in Uttlesford are among the highest in Essex and are affected by the proximity to London and commuting patterns. Because of the rural nature of the district car ownership levels are high and public transport is limited. There is a clear link between social deprivation, economic conditions and poor health. As a district, Uttlesford has very low levels of social deprivation compared to most areas.

Compared to Essex as a whole, residents of Uttlesford are more likely to be in managerial and professional occupations and to own their own homes, and are less likely to be in receipt of means-tested benefits. Despite the relatively affluent position of many in the district there are pockets of deprivation as a result of rural isolation and lack of access to services and facilities, particularly for the elderly. The number of people aged 65 and over living alone in Uttlesford is expected to rise by 54% by 2025, with the figure for the over 75s rising by 68% in the same time period. Some 125 people in every 1000 in Uttlesford have a caring responsibility, which is very slightly below the Essex average.

Carbon dioxide emissions in the district are relatively high compared to other districts in Essex. Road transport is a major contributor to this and it is exacerbated by the presence of the M11 motorway in the area. Uttlesford has an ecological footprint of 5.8 global hectares per person, which is above the Essex and England averages and is substantially higher than the sustainable level.

The major road transport links in the district are the M11 motorway, which passes through the western part of the district in a north/south direction, and the A120 which crosses the southern half of the district from east to west. Stansted Airport, which is contained wholly within Uttlesford, is located near the district boundary at the intersection of these two roads adjacent to junction 8.

Other than these major roads, the various towns and villages are linked together by A and B roads and by a network of minor roads. The main Cambridge to London Liverpool Street railway line passes through much of the district with stations at Stansted, Elsenham, Newport, Audley End and Great Chesterford. These stations, particularly Stansted and Audley End, are used daily by the many commuters living in the towns and villages nearby. The Stansted Express provides services directly to and from Stansted Airport.

As for any possible future expansion of the Airport, permission was granted on appeal in 2008 for the increased use of the runway to 35 million passengers per annum. The previous Government intended to expand Stansted by building a second runway but the present Government has ruled out constructing a second runway during the lifetime of this Parliament. Unless aviation policy changes, the

Council considers that the permitted level of activity represents the most likely scenario on which to plan for the district.

Uttlesford is represented in Parliament by the member for Saffron Walden. The constituency includes part of the Chelmsford district as well as the whole of Uttlesford. Proposed boundary changes would result in the district being split into three separate constituencies and these proposals are being opposed by the Council. In addition the district is represented by four county councillors for Dunmow, Saffron Walden, Stansted and Thaxted, two of whom are also district councillors. Many district councillors are also parish councillors serving on one of the 53 town and parish councils in the district.

Parishes act as the main focal point for community engagement within Uttlesford. The Council is anxious to maintain good links with its parishes and hopes that the FER will respect the integrity of parishes as units of representation for local people. The Council will continue to monitor the parish pattern within Uttlesford and will undertake community governance reviews where considered necessary to maintain parishes that reflect the identities and interests of the communities they represent.

## 15. Existing Warding Scheme

The existing warding scheme came into operation at the ordinary district election in May 2003. Prior to that date, there were 21 single member wards, nine two member wards and one three member ward. Now there are 14 single member wards, nine two member wards and four, three member wards.

Generally speaking, the Council's preference is for single member wards in the rural village areas and for two member wards in the towns and large villages. It is acknowledged that it will sometimes be necessary to combine one or more smaller villages with a larger village to form either a single or a two member ward. Three member wards are generally not favoured by the Council but may be necessary to meet particular circumstances.

Uttlesford's electorate has grown virtually continuously since the Council's formation in 1974 (with three exceptions explained below) as can be demonstrated by the following table:

Period covered	Electorate at start of period	Electorate at end of period	+/- figure over period	% increase/decrease
1976-82	41,072	46,262	+5,190	+11.3%
1982-88	46,262	49,954	+3,692	+8.0%
1988-94	49,954	51,023	+1,069	+2.1%
1994-2000	51,023	54,189	+3,166	+6.2%
2000-06	54,189	55,528	+1,339	+2.5%
2006-12	55,528	62,047	+6,519	+11.7%
1976-2012	41,072	62,047	+20,975	+51.1%

The above figures show clearly that there have been considerable fluctuations in population growth over the period covered but that growth has been virtually continuous. In only three years over that time has there been a real decrease in electorate. Those three years coincided with the advent of community charge in 1990/91, a boundary change in 1993 resulting in a net electorate decrease, and a discontinuation in 2004 of personal campaigns.

Other relevant factors in considering electorate trends are the effect of migration from the EU (the number of EU citizens registered in UDC has increased from 85 in 1995 to around 500 in 2004 to the present figure of 1,300), and the impact of service personnel and their families associated with 33 Engineer Regiment based at Carver Barracks.

The forecast electorate figures as at July 2018 (six years from the beginning of the FER) are set out in a separate part of this submission.

## **16. Conclusion**

This paper sets out in full the Council's submission to the Boundary Commission on council size and must be read in conjunction with the attached key lines of enquiry document (appendix A), as well as details of the existing electorate (as at July 2012) and the forecast electorate as at July 2018 (see pro-forma spreadsheet).

Separate maps will also be supplied in electronic format indicating polling district and ward divisions.

Please also find attached a list of parish councils and other community organisations in Uttlesford for use as part of the consultation exercise (appendix B).

John Mitchell, Chief Executive  
June 2012

Other officers involved in this project are:

Peter Snow, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager (FER link officer)  
Maggie Cox, Democratic Services Officer  
Rebecca Dobson, Democratic Services Officer  
Andrew Taylor, Assistant Director Planning and Building Control  
Stephen Rhenius, Joint Research and Intelligence Officer  
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