



## Public Document Pack

# Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Dawn French

## SUPPLEMENTARY PACK

### Council

**Date:** Tuesday, 19th May, 2020

**Time:** 7.00 pm

**Venue:** Zoom - <https://zoom.us/>

**Chairman:** Councillor R Freeman

**Members:** Councillors A Armstrong, H Asker, G Bagnall, S Barker, M Caton, A Coote, C Criscione, C Day, A Dean, G Driscoll, D Eke, J Evans, P Fairhurst, M Foley (Vice-Chair), N Gregory, N Hargreaves, V Isham, R Jones, A Khan, P Lavelle, G LeCount, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light, J Lodge, J Loughlin, S Luck, S Merifield, E Oliver, R Pavitt, L Pepper, N Reeve, G Sell, A Storah, M Sutton, M Tayler and J De Vries

## ITEMS WITH SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION PART 1

### Open to Public and Press

- |           |  |                |
|-----------|--|----------------|
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Minutes of the previous meeting(s)</b>                                      | <b>3 - 18</b>  |
|           | To receive the minutes of the previous meetings held on 22 April and 30 April. |                |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Reports from the Leader and Members of the Executive</b>                    | <b>19 - 22</b> |
|           | To receive matters of report from the Leader and members of the Executive.     |                |



# Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Dawn French

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# Agenda Item 7

**COUNCIL held at ZOOM, on WEDNESDAY, 22 APRIL 2020 at 7.30 pm**

Present: Councillor R Freeman (Chair)  
Councillors A Armstrong, H Asker, G Bagnall, S Barker,  
M Caton, A Coote, C Criscione, C Day, A Dean, G Driscoll,  
D Eke, J Evans, P Fairhurst, M Foley, A Gerard, N Gregory,  
N Hargreaves, V Isham, R Jones, A Khan, P Lavelle,  
G LeCount, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light, J Lodge, J Loughlin,  
S Luck, S Merifield, E Oliver, R Pavitt, L Pepper, N Reeve,  
G Sell, A Storah, M Sutton, M Tayler and J De Vries

Officers in attendance: A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer), B Ferguson  
(Democratic Services Manager), D French (Chief Executive),  
C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director  
- Public Services), S Pugh (Assistant Director - Governance and  
Legal) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

## C69 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meetings on 25 February and 10 March were signed and approved subject to an amendment proposed by Councillor Gerard to minute C64 of 25 February meeting, "Felsted Neighbourhood Plan".

Additions are highlighted in bold:

Councillor Gerard seconded the proposal and commended the hard work of the local team who had put the plan together. He said Newport had an **emerging** Neighbourhood Plan but the challenge they faced was a lack of a three-year land supply. He urged Members to support the proposal.

## C70 **REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Leader gave a report to Council. A copy of his statement is appended to these minutes for information.

## C71 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS (UP TO 15 MINUTES)**

In response to a question from Councillor Sell regarding whether more could be done to engage with residents, the Leader said there was already a tremendous amount of information being provided to residents from a variety of sources.

In response to a question from Councillor Khan regarding risk assessments against investments, the Leader said he had already responded to Councillor Khan's letter. The matter could be reviewed at the Investment Board and could continue to be discussed offline.

In response to a question from Councillor Dean, the Portfolio Holder – Planning and the Local Plan said he did not intend to seek clarification from the Inspectors on the reasons for the Local Plan being found unsound because they were clear. It was not appropriate to approach the promoters about public support for the sites.

The Portfolio Holder – Finance and Budget noted that town and parish councils would still get their precepts paid, and the Council was being moved onto a green energy tariff which would cost approximately an additional £30000.

In response to a question from Councillor Barker, the Chief Executive said the Council was not furloughing any staff, and staff who were self-isolating would be receiving full pay.

In response to a question from Councillor Light, the Leader said that headline figures about how the coronavirus public health emergency was affecting Council finances had been provided to councillors. The Council was doing a tremendous amount of work with charities at this time.

## C72 **REMOTE MEETINGS**

Members considered the report on remote meetings, which summarised the steps that needed to be taken to hold remote meetings in light of the coronavirus pandemic.

RESOLVED to:

- a. Approves the holding of remote meetings in compliance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the Regulations”) for so long as is reasonably necessary.
- b. Authorises the Chief Executive to summon remote meetings of the Council, its Executive, committees and working groups.
- c. Confirms that references in the Council’s Constitution to attendance at meetings shall be satisfied by remote attendance in accordance with the Regulations.
- d. Confirms that references in the Council’s Constitution to publication, deposit or inspection of notices, agendas, documents and other information shall be satisfied by publication, deposit or inspection in accordance with the Regulations.
- e. Amends the Council Procedure Rules as set out in the Appendix to this report as they apply to remote meetings.
- f. Authorises the Chief Executive to develop and implement protocols for the holding of remote meetings, subject to consultation with Group Leaders and the Scrutiny Chair.
- g. Authorises the Chief Executive to take such other steps as, in her view, are reasonably conducive or incidental to facilitating remote meetings.

**C73 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES, PRINCIPLES AND SCHEDULES**

The Portfolio Holder – Finance and Budget gave a summary of the report which set out Treasury Management Practices, principles and schedules in line with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services. Local Authorities are required by Law to have regard to the Treasury Management code.

RESOLVED to approve the Treasury Management Practices, Principles and Schedules as set out in Appendix A.

**C74 COUNCIL TAX DISCRETIONARY DISCOUNTS POLICY**

The Portfolio Holder – Finance and Budget gave a summary of the report which said that in December 2019, Leaders and Chief Executives of the County, district, borough and city councils in Essex agreed that they would like to support care leavers with their council tax liabilities.

In addition, Council Tax Premiums currently applied to all unoccupied and unfurnished properties in Uttlesford after a period of 2 years had elapsed since the property became unoccupied. Where there were mitigating circumstances it might be deemed that the premium is not appropriate and that this could therefore be waived subject to qualifying criteria.

REOLVED to approve the recommendations as set out in the report and associated appendices;  
a. That a Council Tax discretionary discount for Essex Care Leavers as set out in Appendix A is applied  
b. That the Empty Property Premium Waiver as set out in Appendix C is applied

**C75 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES**

The Portfolio Holder - Finance and Budget gave a summary of the report which said that the Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure rules had been reviewed in order to ensure that they remained relevant and fit for purpose.

In response to member questions, the Portfolio Holder - Finance and the Budget said the rules and regulations were all about providing value for money. He would look into how these rules took account of environmental and ethical concerns.

RESOLVED to approve the updated Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules.

**C76 BUSINESS RATES RELIEF AND GRANTS**

Members noted the urgent officer decision that had been made on 30 March 2020 to update the business rates relief policy and to approve the additional Small Business Grant and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grant.

#### **C77            HARSHIP GRANT FUNDING**

The Portfolio Holder – Finance and Budget gave a summary of the report which said that in response to the Public Health Emergency, Covid-19, the Government had provided £500 million to Local Authorities for additional support to council tax payers. Government had requested that these funds be administered using Local Authorities discretionary powers, under Section 13a (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992.

RESOLVED to approve the Exceptional Hardship Fund Policy (Appendix 1) using their discretionary powers under Section 13a (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:

- To provide working age Local Council Tax Support recipients with an award of £150 or the total of their Council Tax liability whichever is lower
- To provide council tax relief via the Exceptional Hardship Fund to residents suffering extreme hardship

#### **C78            GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Chair of the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee presented the report which summarised the work of the Committee in the 2019-20 year.

Members noted the report.

#### **C79            SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee presented the report which summarised the work of the Committee in the 2019-20 year.

Members noted the report.

The meeting ended at 9.40pm.

## **Cllr John Lodge, Leader of Uttlesford District Council**

### **Statement for Full Council, 22 April 2020**

I would like to open by expressing my gratitude and thanks, on behalf of the council, to our brave NHS workers and carers, other key workers and volunteers. Like many others, I am on the doorstep at 8pm each Thursday applauding those on the frontline in this crisis. Let's continue to show them the admiration they deserve. And thank you for remembering that 'stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives' is as important as ever.

I'd like to say how proud I am at the way the council has prepared and reacted to this crisis. Despite the many challenges, essential services have been maintained and we've continued to support businesses and residents, particularly those most vulnerable and at risk.

The following is a brief summary of some of the key areas:

#### **Benefit claims/change of circumstances**

The Benefits team is continuing to provide the most vulnerable residents with an efficient and effective service throughout this crisis. Every member of the team is working remotely, with many working overtime to ensure financial support is provided to those who need it most in a timely and accurate manner. It has been an exceptional effort.

New Claims (NC's) to Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) have seen the biggest increase in demand. Some 181 claims were made in March – this is an increase of 99% compared to the average received per month from April 2019 to February 2020. From 1 to 20 April, a further 196 NC's have already been received. A 62% increase this month (to 294 claims) is therefore forecast.

Despite this substantial increase in workload, the team is continuing to process applications and changes in circumstance within targets. NC's are currently taking an average of 15 days, and changes in circumstance four days, to process.

#### **Housing and homelessness**

The **Housing Options Team** is providing the service by phone/email and continues to offer housing advice, homelessness assessments and carry out homelessness prevention measures. They have maintained a duty service over the telephone 24/7, including a number of out of hours calls. They

are managing 54 homelessness applications at the moment and are maintaining our priority of providing applicants with accommodation whilst minimising the use of B&B. Currently there are 16 homeless households in temporary accommodation and two currently in B&B.

With regard to rough sleepers, the council is following government guidance to accommodate anyone who is at risk of rough sleeping. We are still able to secure B&B accommodation if we need it and have been able to maintain a small supply of our own temporary accommodation available for emergency access. We've also secured accommodation that can be used for people at risk of rough sleeping if they have Covid symptoms.

The team is working closely with Citizens Advice, Social Care and Peabody Floating Support, amongst others, to support our homeless applicants.

We have temporarily suspended the allocation of social housing as people are unable to move at this time unless it is an emergency situation. Registered providers have also stopped sending through their properties for advertising. We can direct let properties if there is an urgent requirement to do so and are concentrating void works, where there is a limited supply of materials, to where it is most required – for example, to help free up temporary accommodation and then to get temporary accommodation ready for re-letting.

The **Housing Management Team** has phoned as many of our 70+ tenants and those with a disability to check on their welfare and whether a lack of family or other support meant they required assistance with food shopping, collection of a prescription or just feeling socially isolated and require someone to talk to. A total of 958 welfare check calls have so far been made and referrals made for support services to be linked in where required. In addition, calls are being made to tenants who are newly on Universal Credit to check on their welfare and to see if they require any advice or assistance, especially as a number of these were first time claimants of UC.

The team is also calling those tenants in rent arrears to check on their welfare and see if they require any welfare benefits advice or debt counselling, or even whether they require a food parcel via the foodbank.

The Tenancy Sustainment Officer has been keeping in touch with all tenants to offer support to them during the current lockdown.

Whilst the team can't be working face to face with tenants at this time they are ensuring tenants have support – they are finding the vast majority of people have been very appreciative of the call.

## **Community activity**

The Uttlesford Community Response hub, launched with voluntary sector partners, the Council for Voluntary Services (CVSU) and Volunteer Uttlesford only a few weeks ago, has taken over 850 calls, responded to 825 emails and registered more than 200 volunteers who they continue to link to those who need support. The hub has been able to help over 250 people with their shopping, almost 500 people with collecting their prescriptions, and over 300 people by offering a befriending service.

Alongside this, the team is supporting some very vulnerable people with their food boxes and any other help they may need as part of the nationwide 'Operation Shield', which is being led locally by Essex County Council. The team continues to link in with partners such as the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and doctor surgeries to ensure no-one is missed.

Working with our partners at Immigration enforcement we have been able to set up a bulk prescription delivery service two days per week, which has proved beneficial for residents, volunteers and local pharmacies.

Through the CVSU we are looking forward to being able to offer to our elderly and vulnerable residents in care home/sheltered scheme settings the chance to connect with their friends and families through a Facebook Portal device.

The response hub continues to link with many local partners who are also offering support and help to residents on a daily basis e.g Citizens Advice, Foodbank and West Essex Mind.

Throughout this crisis, the voluntary and community sector have proved pivotal in our ability to be there for those most in need. We know there is more great work happening in the district – this is something we are supportive of, and would encourage any group offering support in the community to make contact with the hub:

- Call: 03333 408 218 (8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday)
- Email: [communityresponse@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:communityresponse@uttlesford.gov.uk)

## **Sheltered Housing and Lifeline**

The team is calling all our sheltered tenants at least once a week, more frequently for those who would normally receive a daily visit. They are making sure all our sheltered residents are accounted for and making sure they have everything they require. Half of the team is still able to be mobile and are responding to emergency calls, and doing shopping and prescription collections for sheltered

residents who have no-one else to help them. They also continue to carry out all health and safety checks at each site to ensure fire safety systems and warden call systems are working correctly.

The team has called round all our 730 lifeline users, twice, to check on their welfare. Letters have been sent to all customers informing them of potential bogus callers as this appeared to be an issue at the beginning of the lockdown.

They are still responding to any Lifeline equipment failure call outs and are installing lifelines if these are in emergency circumstances.

## **Business grants**

Local businesses are the backbone of our community and it is important we do all we can to help and support them through this crisis. The Revenues team has been working hard to ensure money from the government reaches those in need as quickly as possible. As of 21 April, we have handed out £13m in cash grants to almost 1,100 local businesses.

We know businesses are struggling and that more will be entitled to this grant funding. Please get in touch with the team. Further information, including links to other funding sources not administered by the council, is available on the UDC website

<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/article/6635/Business-support-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>).

## **Waste collection**

The crews and the waste management team continue to do a great job under very challenging circumstances. Despite an initial reduction in staffing levels, the recycling and waste bin collections have continued largely as normal. This week the garden waste bin collection and bulky waste collection services were reinstated this week, thanks to the hard work of the crews and management team. It's been a team effort.

I would like to thank residents for their patience and understanding at this difficult time, but most importantly for their support. The crews have been clapped, cheered and waved at on their rounds, and seen some lovely notes and pictures left on bins. We've also seen a huge number of messages of support on social media. This show of support has been overwhelming – it has not gone unnoticed and I know it is greatly appreciated by the teams.

## **Customer services**

Since closing its doors to the general public during the week of 23 March, the council has seen a marked increase in the number of other ways customers can contact us. Emails have increased (by about 25%) as well as the number of payments made both online and via the Automated Telephone Payment (ATP) system (up by 30%). However, call levels have remained at 'normal' levels where we believe those that would usually visit our Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow or Thaxted sites are now picking up the phone as a 'preferred' alternative method of contact. A re-structure of the telephone messaging system has further enhanced our customers experience by offering clearer options for query resolution.

The service is being provided with at least 70% of customer services staff currently based at home on any one day. Many customers have been surprised the level of service has not been affected by the move to remote working. This has been down to the efforts of IT to get everyone up and running but particularly to the CSC advisors supported by the CSC management team who have adapted to the revised working processes and environment seamlessly.

## **Staff**

Around two-thirds of staff are working from home and have been adjusting to a way of working. This has been a huge undertaking and particular thanks goes to the IT team who have worked tirelessly over a number of weeks to enable this to happen. Only a skeleton staff are still based in the office (observing strict social distancing). Others cannot work from an office and are still on the frontline, such as the refuse crews, but are following and sticking to the latest government advice around social distancing so ensure safety.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank staff for their hard work and dedication – not just those workers that residents see (such as the refuse crews), but everyone who is working behind the scenes to ensure essential services can continue to be provided for our communities at this difficult time.

## **Stay up to date with the latest information**

The council continues to monitor government guidance daily and issue communications to staff, members and the public regularly. Lots of information is being made available through a wide range of means. We'd encourage people to keep an eye on our website. There is a lot of useful content including a dedicated section with the latest updates/changes to services as well as links to trusted sources of information, at [www.uttlesford.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/coronavirus). We're also putting information out

regularly through our other comms channels – we would encourage people to sign up to receive our regular e-newsletters ([www.uttlesford.gov.uk/keepmeposted](http://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/keepmeposted)) or to like/follow us on Facebook and Twitter (search @UttlesfordDC).

**COUNCIL held at ZOOM - [HTTPS://ZOOM.US/](https://zoom.us/), on THURSDAY, 30 APRIL 2020 at 6.00 pm**

- Present: Councillor R Freeman (Chair)  
Councillors A Armstrong, H Asker, G Bagnall, S Barker, M Caton, A Coote, C Criscione, C Day, A Dean, G Driscoll, D Eke, J Evans, P Fairhurst, M Foley, N Gregory, N Hargreaves, V Isham, R Jones, A Khan, P Lavelle, G LeCount, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light, J Lodge, J Loughlin, S Luck, S Merifield, E Oliver, R Pavitt, L Pepper, N Reeve, G Sell, A Storah, M Sutton, M Tayler and J De Vries
- Officers in attendance: A Bochel (Democratic Services Officer), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), D French (Chief Executive), C Gibson (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Director - Public Services), S Miles (Planning Policy Team Leader), S Pugh (Assistant Director - Governance and Legal) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)
- Public Speakers: A Dodsley (Little Easton Parish Council), D Hall (Great Chesterford Parish Council), G Mott (Elsenham Parish Council), V Thompson (Stop Easton Park)

**C80 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Freeman, Eke, Fairhurst, Asker, Coote and Light declared non-pecuniary interests in that they were members of Saffron Walden Town Council.

Councillor Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Essex County Council.

Councillor Day declared a non-pecuniary interest as his wife was a Treasurer of Stop Easton Park.

Councillor Dean declared a non-pecuniary interest in that his wife was on the Board of the Gardens of Easton Lodge.

Councillor Criscione declared a non-pecuniary interest in that he had held a meeting with Mr Thompson of Stop Easton Park.

Councillor Pepper declared a non-pecuniary interest in that she had been actively involved with Stop Easton Park.

Councillor Foley declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the Campaign to Protect Rural Essex.

Councillors Armstrong and Jones declared non-pecuniary interests as members of Dunmow Town Council.

Councillor Bagnall declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Takeley Parish Council.

Councillor Lemon declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Hatfield Heath Parish Council.

Councillor Isham declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Broxton Parish Council.

Councillor Merifield declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Stebbing Parish Council.

Councillor Evans declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Councillor Sell declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Stansted Parish Council and Stansted Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

Councillor Reeve declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of High Easter Parish Council.

Councillor Khan declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Stansted Parish Council.

Councillor Hargreaves declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Newport Parish Council and Newport and Quendon and Rickling Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

C81

## **LOCAL PLAN - DECISION FOLLOWING INSPECTORS' LETTER**

Councillor Evans gave a summary of the report which recommended the withdrawal of the Local Plan following receipt of the Inspectors' letter, and the preparation of a new Plan.

Councillor Caton proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Dean.

*To remove the recommendation in the report in full and replace with the following wording:*

*The Council recognises the deeply held and divergent views of members across the Council, which reflect personal principles and the range of views in our community.*

*The Council believes that in whatever future form (revised or new), our District's Local Plan should:*

*(1) Contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at*

*the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*

*(2) Support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of low/zero carbon housing of all types and costs, including truly affordable homes, required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and create a high quality, built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and*

*(3) Contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, help to improve biodiversity, prudent use of natural resources, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy, with the potential to create surplus energy.*

*The Council, however, is disappointed by the invidious position the current administration has placed our community in. In particular, it is concerned by:*

*(1) the distinct lack of public engagement and participation since January in the proposal to withdraw the current draft Local Plan;*

*(2) the estimated £1m spent by the administration on the Plan in the period since they declined to withdraw the draft plan when the Inspectors offered them that opportunity in the summer of 2019 and the likely £3m cost of developing a new plan;*

*(3) a lack of any indication of a revised spatial strategy before making a decision which indicates in broad terms where new housing will be allocated in any new plan and a readiness to rule out large Garden Communities as an option before any reconsideration; and*

*(4) the inevitability that the development of a new plan will require a two-fold increase in required housing under central government regulations, and*

*(5) that the district will increasingly be subjected to speculative applications for ad hoc developments without adequate infrastructure to address an even greater fiveyear land supply deficit.*

*Therefore, Council instructs the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Local Plan to refer consideration of the future direction of the Local Plan firstly to open and transparent discussion with Members and public participants within a forum such as the Planning Policy Working Group, or equivalent, before bringing back the matter to this Council with considered proposals.*

Members arguing against the amendment noted the following:

- They believed the Council had engaged with the public sufficiently. It was important to start again with a blank piece of paper to ensure a good level of public participation. The new plan would now be fully in this Council's control.
- Garden communities might be a part of the new local plan if they were appropriate.

- The Council had taken independent advice on the options available. A peer review had been clear that the cost of withdrawing the plan would be the same as amending the plan. The matter was now a planning decision rather than whether financial impacts weighed in favour of one option or the other.
- The Council was not able to consult with inspectors once the letter had been received.

Members arguing for the amendment noted the following:

- The aim of the amendment was to ensure the options for the Local Plan were debated in another forum with further options for public engagement.
- There would be an increase in the amount of houses the District was required to build should work begin on a new plan, and given the number of houses the District was required to build, it would be necessary to deliver communities of some scale.
- It might be more costly to prepare a new plan than to amend the current one.
- It would be positive to discuss the inspectors' letter with the inspectors. Other councils had done this upon receipt of their letters.

RESOLVED by 6 votes to 32 that the amendment proposed by Cllr Caton was defeated

Members returned to debate the recommendations in the report.

Members against the recommendations noted the following points:

- No plan was perfect and the Council had been trying to adopt a local plan for a long time. It was told by three different inspectors that the previous local plan was on track and had received a grant of £750,000 for its work on garden communities. There was a limited amount of available space to build within Uttlesford.
- With some effort, it might be possible to make the appropriate changes to the existing plan.

Members in favour of the recommendations noted the following points:

- The inspectors' letter was clear that withdrawal of the Local Plan was likely to be the only pragmatic and realistic alternative.
- It was important to introduce the Community Infrastructure Levy and put money aside to support parish councils to develop neighbourhood plans.
- The Council would be able to ensure the new plan had effective engagement across the community, and that houses would be built in the right places.
- The withdrawal of the plan was supported by some parish councils.
- It was important for the Council to manage expectations as a lot of houses would need to be built and the new plan would not please everyone.
- A new plan should protect the Countryside Protection Zone and the Metropolitan Green Belt, and take into account the needs of small and medium sized businesses.
- It would be important to have a detailed analysis of what went wrong with both the current plan and the two previous plans.

A recorded vote was called for. The results were as follows:

For the withdrawal of the Local Plan and the preparation a new Plan: Councillors Armstrong, Asker, Bagnall, Coote, Criscione, Day, Driscoll, Eke, Fairhurst, Foley, Freeman, Hargreaves, Isham, Jones, Lavelle, LeCount, Lees, Lemon, Light, Lodge, Luck, Merifield, Pepper, Reeve, Storah, Sutton, Tayler and de Vries

Against the withdrawal of the Local Plan and the preparation of a new plan: Councillors Barker, Caton, Dean, Khan, Loughlin, Oliver and Sell

RESOLVED by 31 votes to 7 to withdraw the Local Plan and prepare a new plan.

*Graham Mott (Elsenham Parish Council), Andy Dodsley (Little Easton Parish Council), Vincent Thompson (Stop Easton Park) and David Hall (Great Chesterford Parish Council) spoke on this item. Summaries of their statements are appended to these minutes.*

The meeting ended at 9pm.

# Minute Item 2

Summaries of public statements:

Graham Mott (Elsenham Parish Council):

Inspectors of the Local Plan had recommended a strategy of reducing garden settlements to more small and medium sized sites. Many of the smaller sites were not examined by the inspectors, seeming to assume that there would be many of these sites readily available. One of the inspectors' objections to the garden settlements was on the basis that much of the housing would not become available until after the plan period. Extending the plan period would solve this issue. Government has now decreed that councils have a plan in place by 2023. A new plan would be a slow process, and the Council would do well to draw as much as possible from work already done on the previous plan.

Andy Dodsley (Little Easton Parish Council):

Following the inspectors' letter in January, the peer review carried out at the Council was the correct action to take. The inspectors were clear that they had no appetite for modifications to the plan. There was nothing else to do but withdraw it. The plan is fatally flawed and the Council needs to start again. This should be an open and transparent process, engaging with residents and taking account of their views. The current plan does not reflect the vision and aspirations of local communities. Residents delivered judgment on this in the May 2019 elections. It was necessary to develop a new approach that planning inspectors and residents considered sound.

Vincent Thompson (Stop Easton Park):

Thank you for ensuring the wellbeing of the community. The inspectors and peer review had given a firm base for working together for achieving a local plan that we all need and want. The inspectors' emphasis on the need to engage with residents was welcome, as was the Council's emphasis on protecting the district's heritage, character and natural capital, and insisting on locally led development corporations. A unanimous vote to withdraw would restore the trust of the electorate. There was a need to provide large open and spaces for physical and mental wellbeing. The Council has the power and responsibility to stop development in Easton Park, and the ancient park could be restored.

David Hall:

UDC had stated that any decision taken with regard to the Local Plan would be subject to consultation. However the Council had been subject to criticism that constructive, pro-active, positive planning was lacking in the preparation of the Local Plan from, amongst others, Historic England and Great Chesterford Parish Council. The parish council's requests for additional information went unanswered. He urged consultation with and respect for local opinion in the development of a new local plan.

## **Councillor Petrina Lees – Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder – Housing, Communities, Youth and Health**

### Housing Management:

The Housing Management Team is continuing to phone elderly tenants and those with a disability to carry out welfare checks. Over 1,000 welfare check calls have so far been made by the team and referrals made for support services to be linked in where required.

Calls are being made to tenants who are newly on Universal Credit to check upon their welfare and to see if they require any advice or assistance especially as a number of these are first time claimants of Universal Credit. The team are also phoning those tenants in rent arrears to check upon their welfare and see if they require any welfare benefits advice or debt counselling or even whether they require a food parcel via the food bank.

Following the Government's announcement this week to lift restrictions on people moving house, the letting of Council properties will re-commence. Vacant properties will be advertised from next week and people waiting to move into their homes since before lockdown have been contacted to advise them they can now make plans to move. There will continue to be some delays in getting void properties turned round as most properties could not be cleared during lockdown. There are currently 45 void properties that could not be let during lockdown.

### Sheltered Housing:

The Sheltered Housing Team are supporting 370 sheltered tenants not only with welfare calls and emergency responses but also by doing shopping and collecting prescriptions.

All of the Council's 730 lifeline users have been contacted by phone to check on their welfare. Letters have also been sent to all customers informing them of potential bogus callers as this appeared to be an issue at the beginning of the lockdown.

The team are continuing to respond to any call outs or Lifeline equipment failure and are also installing new lifelines if these are required for emergency circumstances.

### Homelessness:

The Housing Options Team have dealt with 106 homeless approaches, during working hours and out of hours since lockdown began and are currently managing 54 homeless applications, with 17 people placed in temporary accommodation.

### Development:

Two new housing developments in Newport and Great Dunmow, consisting of 8 new council houses, have been completed. The tenants moved into their new homes a week before lockdown.

The re-development of Hatherly Court in Saffron Walden is progressing. Contactors are now back on site and building work has re-commenced.

Following discussions with the Contractor work on another development site in Little Dunmow re-commenced this week.

The housing department received planning permission to build 12 new council houses in Great Chesterford at the Council's first planning Zoom meeting.

Officers are currently working on developing the new HRA business plan and investigating 3 new sites for development. Pre planning application advice is being sought.

#### Private Sector Housing:

The Council is continuing to investigate poor housing conditions and is doing its utmost to ensure that landlords fulfil their legal obligations, but this must be balanced against the risk of infection or spread of the virus.

In response to the outbreak the Environmental Health service have issued summary guidance leaflets for tenants and landlords and for those living in Houses of Multiple Occupation.

#### Community Response Hub:

The Community Response Hub (consisting of UDC's Communities Team, the Council for Voluntary Services and Volunteer Uttlesford), has taken over 1200 calls and responded to over 1100 emails. 270 volunteers are registered with the Hub and the team is continuing to link volunteers to those who need support.

Up until the beginning of May the Hub has been able to help over 350 people with their shopping, almost 850 people with collecting their prescriptions, and over 300 people by offering a befriending service.

Last week the Hub contacted a further 160 high risk residents to offer help and support as part of the nationwide 'Operation Shield'. It continues to link in with partners such as the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group and doctor surgeries to ensure no-one is missed.

## Cllr Neil Hargreaves – report for Council 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020

The brief for these reports is 'to update members on items outside your normal committees'. Taking that literally we may therefore report on anything we are doing, so this report is not strictly about my portfolio

I am Chair of the Newport Quendon & Rickling Neighbourhood Plan steering group. We have just received our examiner's draft report for internal fact checking. Although he recommends deleting or significantly altering some policies, other parts he supports and has we think strengthened some policies. The draft is not public, but I would say he is a tad more enthusiastic than our Local Plan inspectors.

The requirement is that Neighbourhood Plans be consistent with the adopted Local Plan - emerging plans get no mention. In practice we have aligned it with both, although the withdrawn Local Plan references will now have to be stripped out. With no draft Local Plan policies to carry weight, members whose wards have no NhP may wish to now consider this. Where we incorporated some withdrawn plan policy texts (against advice!) he has accepted these with little amendment. In particular the 2005 Plan has no protection for existing viable commercial space from residential conversion, but the withdrawn plan policies are excellent, and we have adopted and tailored them. Similarly the withdrawn plan policies to replace S7 are good and the pre-NPPF S7 blanket prohibition was replaced by specific landscape protections (and a wide list of permitted types of development) – which we have also incorporated. Unfortunately it is now too late for us to lift other text, which had we known the Local Plan would fail, we could have done. But not too late for others.

Like assembling an Ikea wardrobe, doing a Neighbourhood Plan a second time we could do a better build and in a fraction of the time. If members and residents are concerned over the cost of an NhP, there are grants available up to £19k. Our one will come in less than this, but we only paid for one professional report and got £10k from a developer to fund another one. Contrast this however with the cost to a parish of fighting a large appeal, which could be anything from say £25k to £100k.

The functional part of a Neighbourhood Plan is purely land use policies which inform planning applications. The rest of the aspirations in the Localism Act are subsidiary. In my opinion we spent too much time on 'wouldn't it be nice to have' things and noting that the villages were in Domesday. Our evidence base of every permission since 2011 has proved invaluable and neither UDC (nor developers at appeal) has that information to challenge it. Lists of missing or desired facilities and infrastructure are also helpful. Given a more focussed approach to do only what will likely have a practical use would, I think, allow new NhPs to come to fruition more quickly than ours.

## **Deryk Eke Portfolio Holder for Infrastructure, Transport and Stansted Airport.**

**Infrastructure** – Parking issues in Uttlesford have continued to be problematic but progress is ongoing through a combination of efforts by our UDC officers and co-operation from NEPP.

NEPP had instigated a series of workshops for TC's and PC's to help them understand the process for applying for TOR's. These have been put on hold due to Covid 19.

NEPP have responded to queries from residents who have been forced into lockdown, by allowing parking in restricted areas as long as pavements and roads are not obstructed.

I previously reported that the NEPP management meeting in January approved our bids for residual funding, from NEPP reserves, for additional parking projects were successful to the tune of £300,000. This was in support of extensions to Crafton Green and Lower Street car parks in Stansted and for variable car park messaging around Saffron Walden. However, it appears the decision taken at the meeting has subsequently been challenged and has been the subject of additional supporting information and email exchanges. No conclusion has been agreed.

The implementation of cycle paths across Uttlesford remains outstanding. 3 cycling strategies have been issued since 1999 and only ONE cycle route implemented. The major blockage to progress is still Essex Highway's arbitrary specification for 3m wide cycle paths and lack of funding. However, with the recent announcement of £2bn of funding and new Statutory Guidance Document to go with it, I have written to ECC asking for action.

**Transport** – A further meeting of the Uttlesford Transport Forum was due to be held in March but cancelled.

A follow up meeting with ECC to explore local bus routes and focus on school bus provision had to be canceled.

A meeting of the ECC Passenger Transport group scheduled for March was likewise canceled

**Stansted Airport** – The consultation on Future Airspace at Stansted Airport is on going with various Focus Groups representing stakeholders such as general public, elected representatives, business, aviation, consultative bodies and national organisations taking part. There have been several meetings of the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG), attended by myself via zoom, to review the process and provide constructive comment.

Other meetings of SASIG (Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group) and Stansted Airport Transport Forum were canceled.