



Public Document Pack

Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Peter Holt

Cabinet

Date: Monday, 15th November, 2021

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber - Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden,
CB11 4ER

Broadcast:

Leader and Chair: Councillor J Lodge

Members: Councillors A Armstrong, C Day, J Evans, R Freeman,
N Hargreaves, P Lees, L Pepper and N Reeve

Other Attendees: Councillors M Caton (Liberal Democrat Party Group Leader), C Criscione (Conservative Party Group Leader), N Gregory (Chair of Scrutiny Committee), V Isham (Green Party Group Leader), E Oliver (Chair of Governance, Audit and Performance Committee) and R Pavitt (Uttlesford Independent Party Group Leader)

Public Speaking

At the start of the meeting there will be an opportunity of up to 15 minutes for members of the public to ask questions and make statements subject to having given notice by 12 noon two working days before the meeting. Please register your intention to speak at this meeting by writing to committee@uttlesford.gov.uk

Public speakers will be offered the opportunity for an officer to read out their questions or statement at the meeting, and encouraged to attend the meeting via Zoom to readout their questions or statement themselves. For further information, please see overleaf. Those who would like to watch the meeting live can do so virtually [here](#). The broadcast will be made available as soon as the meeting begins.

AGENDA

PART 1

Open to Public and Press

1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

To receive any apologies for absence and declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

5 - 9

To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021.

3 Questions or Statements from Non-Executive Members of the Council (standing item)

To receive questions or statements from non-executive members on matters included on the agenda.

4 Matters Referred to the Executive by the Scrutiny Committee or by the Council (standing item)

To consider matters referred to the Executive for reconsideration in accordance with the provisions of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules or the Budget and Policy Framework Rules.

5 Consideration of reports from overview and scrutiny committees (standing item)

To consider any reports from Scrutiny Committee.

6 Report of Delegated Decisions taken by Cabinet Members (standing item)

To receive for information any delegated decisions taken by Cabinet Members since the previous Cabinet meeting.

- [Appointment to an Outside Body: Uttlesford Youth Strategy Group - 29 October 2021](#)

7 Report on assets of community value determined by the Assets of Community Value and Local Heritage List Committee (standing item)

To receive for information any decisions made by the Assets of Community Value committee since the previous Cabinet meeting.

- No decisions to report.

8 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23 10 - 24

To consider the report regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23.

9 Appointment of replacement Director of Uttlesford Norse Services Limited 25 - 26

To consider the appointment of replacement Director of Uttlesford Norse Services Limited.

10 Prudential Code consultation and proposed changes to Minimum Revenue Provision and possible debt caps

To consider the report regarding the Prudential Code consultation and proposed changes to Minimum Revenue Provision and possible debt caps (to follow).

MEETINGS AND THE PUBLIC

In light of the High Court judgement regarding the extension of remote meeting regulations, Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings have returned to in-person and been held on-site from Thursday 6th May 2021. However, due to social distancing measures and capacity considerations in line with the Council's risk assessment, public access and participation will continue to be encouraged virtually until further notice.

Members of the public are welcome to listen live to the debate of any of the Council's Cabinet or Committee meetings. All live broadcasts and meeting papers can be viewed on the Council's calendar of meetings webpage.

Members of the public are permitted to speak at this meeting and will be encouraged to do so via the video conferencing platform Zoom. If you wish to make a statement via Zoom video link, you will need to register with Democratic Services by midday two working days before the meeting. There is a 15 minute public speaking limit and 3 minute speaking slots will be given on a first come, first served basis. Those wishing to make a statement via video link will require an internet connection and a device with a microphone and video camera enabled. Those wishing to make a statement to the meeting who do not have internet access can do so via telephone.

Technical guidance on the practicalities of participating via Zoom will be given at the point of confirming your registration slot, but if you have any questions regarding the best way to participate in this meeting please call Democratic Services on 01799 510 369/410//548 who will advise on the options available.

Agenda and Minutes are available in alternative formats and/or languages. For more information please call 01799 510510.

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Agenda Item 2

CABINET held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 19 OCTOBER 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor J Lodge (Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, C Day, J Evans, R Freeman,
N Hargreaves, P Lees and N Reeve

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), R Harborough (Director - Public Services) and A Knight (Assistant Director - Resources)

Also present: Councillors M Caton (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group), N Gregory (Chair of the Scrutiny Committee), B Light (Leader of the Green Group) and R Pavitt (Leader of Uttlesford Independent Group).

CAB45 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pepper.

CAB46 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 September were approved as a true and correct record.

CAB47 QUESTIONS OR STATEMENTS FROM NON-EXECUTIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (STANDING ITEM)

In response to a question from Councillor Caton regarding all members contributing to the Ethical Investment Policy, Councillor Reeve said the Policy had been recommended to Cabinet by the cross-party Investment Board and would be considered at Full Council in December. The pre-approval process had been thorough and the Policy should have been determined by Council in October.

CAB48 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Gregory provided a report on the Scrutiny Committee's activity since the previous Cabinet meeting in September. He said the Committee had been impressed by the management of the Local Plan process and praised the work of the Local Plan Project Manager and the Local Plan and New Communities Manager. However, the Committee held reservations regarding the Memorandum of Understanding document and wanted to see local councils formally included in the process.

In response, Councillor Evans said a consultation with third tier councils had begun on the technical process, in the context of the 'call for sites' exercise. He said formal consultation on emerging policies would normally happen at the Regulation 18 and 19 stage. This was a work in progress and he would keep Scrutiny informed.

Councillor Gregory asked that details relating to the call for sites be shared with third tier councils. In terms of other scrutiny workstreams, he said the Committee noted the forthcoming Local Council Tax Support Scheme and asked Cabinet to consider increasing the support for residents at this difficult time, to what was already the most generous scheme in Essex. The Committee were not impressed with the Corporate Plan Delivery Plan (CPDP), and although there had been some improvement, there was still many areas that required improvement and lacked detail. The Committee had highlighted the areas that required more work and he asked that monitoring of the CPDP be stepped up.

Councillor Reeve noted the comments and thanked Committee for their comments. He said he would endeavour to improve the CPDP.

In regards to the Planning Review report, Councillor Gregory said he expected an implementation plan to be presented to Scrutiny Committee in November. The plan should include specifics on what would change in the planning service and a timeline in order for Scrutiny to monitor the implementation process.

CAB49 REPORT OF DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET MEMBERS (STANDING ITEM)

Cabinet noted the decision regarding the Designation of the Takeley Neighbourhood Plan Area, which had been published on 29 September 2021.

CAB50 REPORT ON ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE DETERMINED BY THE ASSETS OF COMMUNITY VALUE AND LOCAL HERITAGE LIST COMMITTEE (STANDING ITEM)

There were no assets of community value decisions to report.

CAB51 BUDGET 2021/22 - QUARTER 1 FORECAST OUTTURN

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report, which detailed the financial performance of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and Treasury Management. Details were based upon actual expenditure and income from April to June and predicted a forecast for the end of the 2021/22 financial year.

In response to a question from Councillor Caton, Councillor Hargreaves said the figures relating to recent interim appointments were not included as the report pertained to quarter one of the financial year. However, recruitment costs for the

Chief Executive had been included. He agreed that it would be helpful to have a clear budget line for expenditure relating to the Transformation Programme and this would be included in the next Quarter 2 Forecast Outturn report.

In response to a question on the Housing Revenue Account, the Assistant Director – Resources said rent collections were currently on target, although in light of the furlough scheme coming to an end, a downturn was expected in the near future. Debt management support and additional funds would be made available to assist residents. Councillor Hargreaves added that this was listed as a risk in the report; the issue would be exacerbated by rising fuel and living costs.

In response to a question from Councillor Lees regarding overspend, Councillor Hargreaves confirmed that the term 'overspend' related to spending which had been budgeted for but had been spent sooner than expected.

The Leader added that due to the success of the investment programme, additional revenue was being generated earlier than expected.

RESOLVED to approve The General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital Programme forecast outturn positions including the updated use of reserves and requested slippage for the Capital Programme.

CAB52 REVIEW OF THE PLANNING SERVICE

Councillor Evans presented the Review of the Planning Service report, which outlined details relating to the peer review undertaken by the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) and addressed how to improve the Council's development management service. The report contained eight recommendations for implementation to improve the service. He said he had accepted Scrutiny Committee's request to come back in 6 months' time to provide an update on progress, and to also produce an implementation plan in readiness for the meeting in November. A number of actions had already been completed, or were near completion, including:

- The appointment of a Planning Transformation Lead.
- The imminent appointment of an Interim Director of Planning.
- Legal and senior planning posts had been created to assist the service.
- A new and improved Planning Committee report template and format would be introduced imminently.
- A Planning Committee member training programme was in development.
- The call-in procedure had been identified as an area in need of revision.

He said measures contained in the peer review were budgeted for and would be implemented as soon as possible. He proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

The Leader said planning had been identified as an area for improvement in the early days of the Administration; he thanked the interim and newly appointed Chief Executive for the speed at which they had moved this review forward.

Councillor Caton welcomed the recommendations in the report. He expressed disappointment that the 2018 peer review report had not been acted upon at the time. Furthermore, he said planning performance management issues should have been brought to Planning Committee in the past, and that opposition leaders should be kept informed of developments relating to the planning transformation project. He wished the Administration well with implementation of the recommendations and said he would remain a “critical friend”.

The Leader agreed with Councillor Caton’s comments on the 2018 report. He said Councillor Caton was welcome to attend regular Group Leaders’ meetings for routine briefings.

Councillor Hargreaves said performance reports would nominally be considered by the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee.

The Chief Executive said planning performance indicators would be refined and revised in light of the report and the letter from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities setting out that the Council was failing in terms of the proportion of major planning applications overturned at appeal. He said the responsibility to improve the service would be a shared endeavour between the Executive, Planning Committee, officers and all members. There was a need to work together to get this process right.

Councillor Lees read out a statement on behalf of Councillor Pepper, who was not present, which said the planning service had dealt with some major issues in the past two years and it had been challenging for all involved. Furthermore, she highlighted the environmental reasons why unsustainable planning applications should be refused and said the Government’s Planning White Paper and housing algorithm should be reviewed. She was confident that the right personnel were in place to produce a sound Local Plan.

Councillor Day said the Administration made decisions based on the evidence before them; this detailed report provided such evidence and the situation would now be put right.

Councillor Freeman said controls needed to be put in place whereby planning committee members were warned when the number of applications being determined against officer recommendation was at such a high level that the Government would intervene. He said the late Councillor Storah had been extremely effective at defending such applications but the Council now needed an automated system to caution councillors when in danger of passing this threshold.

RESOLVED to:

- a. receive and consider the report, together with any comments or recommendations from the Scrutiny Committee;

- b. note the improvement actions implemented to date;
- c. approve the recommendations of the report, as amended if agreed under (a) above, for implementation towards an improved planning management service;
- d. acknowledge the recommendations directed to the Cabinet and its Executive Members and requests the Chief Executive and the Leader to bring forward proposals to address these recommendations;
- e. consider any consequential resource implications as part of consideration of the Council budget for 2022-23;
- f. require a progress report to Cabinet on implementation of the recommendations no later than six months from this meeting; and refer the report to the Planning Committee for its information and consideration.

The meeting was closed at 8.10pm.

Agenda Item 8

Decision Maker:	Cabinet	Date: Monday, 15 November 2021
Title:	Local Council Tax Support Scheme Proposals 2022/23	
Portfolio Holder:	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget Cllr Neil Hargreaves	
Report Author:	Angela Knight, Assistant Director - Resources aknight@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision: No

Summary

1. There is a requirement to annually review the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme and propose changes to the scheme for the following financial year. The decisions made, even if no change is proposed, must then be consulted upon before a decision is taken at Full Council in December on the final scheme for the following financial year.
2. A consultation has been carried out during the summer on the scheme proposals, to retain the contribution rate at 12.5% and continue to protect Vulnerable and Disabled residents and Carer's on a low income.
3. The consultation was carried out via an online form and was widely promoted on our website, social media and a press release to all local media and newspapers. The consultation was available in paper form on request. The total number of responses received was 28.
4. As can be seen from the table in paragraph 19 Uttlesford has the lowest percentage contribution requirement of any authority in Essex. This demonstrates that whilst the council has had sufficient funds to support the scheme it has done so.
5. In 2013/14 when the original scheme was introduced the contribution rate was set at 8.5%. This increased in 2014/15 to 12.5% and it has remained at this rate for each subsequent year.
6. The Exceptional Hardship Fund is available to support residents and claimants who are suffering financial hardship.

Recommendations

7. The Cabinet is requested to recommend that Council approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2022/23 are set on the same basis as 2021/22:
 - I. The contribution rate is frozen for the eight consecutive year at 12.5%.
 - II. The Council continues to protect Vulnerable and Disabled Residents and Carer's on a low income.

Financial Implications

8. Detailed in the main body of this report.

Background Papers

9. None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	Proposals subject to public consultation and discussions with major preceptors
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	An equalities impact assessment will be completed as part of developing final proposals for decisions by Cabinet and the Council later in the year.
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Compliance with relevant legislation.
Sustainability	The objective is to achieve a financially sustainable set of arrangements.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	Ongoing demands on the Revenues & Benefits, Housing and Customer Service teams

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)

10. LCTS replaced Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from 1 April 2013. The Council has adopted a scheme which has the following key elements:
 - a) Pensioners on low income protected from adverse changes (as required by Government)
 - b) Disabled people, Carer's and blind people on a low income receive discretionary protection from adverse changes
 - c) Working age people previously on full CTB pay no more than 12.5% of the council tax bill
 - d) £25 per week of earned wages income disregarded from assessment (to provide a work incentive)
 - e) Child Benefit and Child Maintenance disregarded from assessment (to minimise exacerbation of child poverty, or accusations of same)
 - f) Hardship Policy to enable additional support for genuine extreme hardship cases

Essex Sharing Agreement

11. An Essex wide income sharing agreement was entered into with all billing authorities and major preceptors at the time of implementation of the new LCTS scheme.
12. The main principles of the agreement are to ensure a joint approach in maximising income collection, reduce fraud, ensure compliance, and increase the taxbase.
13. By working proactively on fraud this ensures that our tax base is maintained at the maximum level generating extra revenue for both the major preceptors and billing authorities.
14. Preceptors receive a share of all income generated for Council Tax and this is allocated through the Collection Fund at year end.
15. The increased income generated specifically from these activities and internal decisions made by UDC each year is monitored by ECC, and the preceptors have agreed to share their element of the increased income with the Local Authorities.
16. The current share back of the additional income is between 12% and 14% dependant on the level of tax base increases.
17. The major preceptors provide funding through this agreement to employ.
 - a) an officer to ensure the efficient administration of the LCTS scheme and provide claimants with dedicated support in debt management.
 - b) two officers to work directly on all areas of fraud and compliance within Council Tax.
18. Essex County Council contributes £7,000 per annum towards the running of the hardship scheme which has a £17,000 annual budget (£10,000 UDC element).

Contribution Rates across Essex

19. The council has the lowest percentage contribution rate within Essex with the highest being set at 30%. The contributions across Essex Local Authorities have remained the same since 2017.

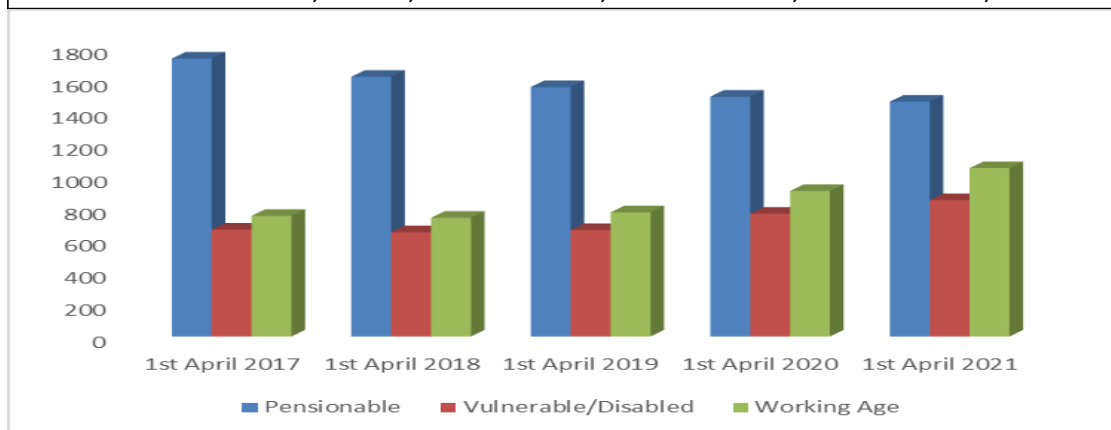
Contribution Rate 2021/22			
	%		%
Basildon	25	Harlow	24
Braintree	24	Maldon	20
Brentwood	25	Rochford	28
Castle Point	30	Southend-on-Sea	25
Chelmsford	23	Tendring	20
Colchester	20	Thurrock	25
Epping Forest	25	Uttlesford	12.5

Caseload

20. The current caseload shows an increase in the working age recipients. Since April 2020, increases can be directly attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic.

21. The following table and graphs provide an analysis of each category of claimant and how the caseloads have changed over the past 5 years.

	1st April 2017	1st April 2018	In year movement	1st April 2019	In year movement	1st April 2020	In year movement	1st April 2021	In year movement
Pensionable	1,735	1,621	-114	1,557	-64	1,497	-60	1,466	-31
Vulnerable/Disabled	667	651	-16	664	13	766	102	851	85
Working Age - Employed	334	341	7	323	-18	331	8	337	6
Working Age - unemployed	419	400	-19	452	52	577	125	714	137
Total Claimants	3,155	3,013	-142	2,996	-17	3,171	175	3,368	197



Increases to the Contribution Rate

22. The Band D equivalent used in this report for the calculation of the increase in contribution rate and the full cost of the scheme is estimated based on the 2021/22 Band D equivalent multiplied by the average increase over the previous two years (3%).

23. The table below sets out the financial impact of an increase to the contribution rate to both preceptors and claimants and is shown in 2.5% increments. Each 2.5% increase will generate additional income of £38,710, of which the council will receive £5,420.

24. It is impossible to identify and calculate precise figures as the contribution level varies dependant on the claimant's financial circumstances. The financial gain and the claimant cost impact are based on all working age claimants paying a 12.5% contribution.

Percentage Contribution	Average liability income due	87% Collection Rate	Increase @ 2.5% increments	Additional Cost to claimant	
				per year	per week
12.50%	£255,033.24	£221,879			
15%	£306,039.89	£266,255	£44,376	£42.22	£0.81
17.50%	£357,046.54	£310,630	£88,752	£84.44	£1.62
20%	£408,053.19	£355,006	£133,127	£126.67	£2.44

Reducing the Contribution Rate

25. This report acknowledges the Chair of Scrutiny's request to reduce the contribution rate to support those on the lowest incomes and I would like to refer members to the Exceptional Hardship Fund which was set up alongside the LCTS scheme to support residents in severe financial hardship and unable to pay their council tax.
26. A reduction of 2.5% to the contribution rate will reduce income by £38,710 and will reduce the taxbase for all preceptors including Town and Parish Councils. Reducing the taxbase has the following impacts.
- a) Any reduction would be subject to a consultation process, there would not be sufficient time to carry out a further consultation and meet the legislative requirement of an approved scheme in place by January 2022.
 - b) To reduce the contribution is not in the spirit of the sharing agreement (please see details above), where we have committed to an Essex wide agreement which includes the commitment to maximise our taxbase. We currently have the lowest contribution rate in Essex.
 - c) The share back from the Essex Sharing agreement will be reduced, currently predicting to generate additional income of approx. £45,000 dependant on the year end collection rate.
 - d) Town and Parish Councils will have to increase their precepts to offset the reduction in taxbase to meet their budget requirements.

Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)

27. The Council holds a ring-fenced budget specifically to support residents and claimants suffering from financial hardship due to unforeseen circumstances. The EHF is supported by the major preceptors as part of the Essex Sharing Agreement.
28. The annual budget held for this fund is £17,000, with UDC contributing £10,000 and ECC contributing £7,000. In 2020/21 the Council received £325,304 hardship funding from Government to provide additional support to those on the lowest income during the Covid Pandemic. There was £19,870 of this funding unspent at the end of the 2020/21 financial year, and this has been added to the current budget for 2021/22 providing a total allocation of £36,870.
29. The EHF is subject to award criteria and supports all residents who find themselves in financial difficulties, you do not have to be in receipt of LCTS to qualify, making this scheme fully inclusive to all residents. Full details can be found using the following link: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/ehf>
30. It is recommended that the EHF fund is used to provide additional financial support to residents rather than reducing the contribution rate.

Full cost of LCTS scheme (estimated)

31. The following table shows that the forecast financial position for UDC in 2022/23 is an estimated net cost of £460,994. The costing has been based on caseload as of 1 April 2021, the 2021/22 band D equivalent and the 12% share back on current predicted collection rates.

£'000	LCTS Expenditure	County, Fire and Police Share	UDC Share
LCTS Discounts	3,614,450	3,108,427	506,023
Major Preceptors - Sharing Agreement (12%)	0	0	(45,000)
Net of LCTS Scheme & Discounts	3,614,450	3,108,427	461,023
Major Preceptor LCTS Funding (Admin & Recovery)	0	34	(34)
LCTS Hardship Scheme	17	7	10
ECC Funding of Hardship Scheme	0	5	(5)
Total Net Cost	3,614,467	3,108,473	460,994

32. Due to the current Covid-19 emergency and the ongoing impact of the measures put in place to control the virus it is expected that current caseload levels will increase during the current financial year. It is difficult to predict the outcomes for 2022/23 but it is hoped that the economy will recover during 2021/22 and that caseloads will start to decrease.

Consultation

33. The consultation was carried out using an online form using an open text box format requesting views on the proposals to maintain the contribution rate at 12.5% and to continue to protect Vulnerable and Disabled Residents and Carer's on a low income. For those who do not use digital services, paper copies were available on request.
34. The full consultation report is attached as Appendix A.
35. The consultation was extensively publicised via a press release to all local media and newspapers, E-newsletters were sent to all the subscribers on our mailing lists (more than 8,900 contacts). In addition, the consultation was promoted on Facebook and Twitter in July, with reminders in August.
36. The major preceptors, (Essex County Council, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner) and Town and Parish Councils were sent an email directly inviting them to provide their views on the proposals.
37. The consultation received a total of 28 responses (27 responses last year), an analysis of the responses is set out below.

Responses Received	
Total number of paper forms returned	0
Total number of web forms / direct emails submitted	28
Total number of comments received	28
Number of responses on behalf of/from representatives of preceptors*	2
Number of responses providing an email contact address	17

38. The Survey was carried out using open text box's rather than a Yes or No option, all responses have been included in the attached report at Appendix A in full and a summary of the responses are listed below.

- 16 respondents were in favour of maintaining the scheme in line with the proposals
- 5 said that the contribution should be reduced
- 4 said we should increase the contribution
- 2 responses said the scheme criteria should be expanded to help more people in low-income work or financial difficulties
- 1 comment made no reference to the scheme proposals

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Assumptions about costs and income levels are incorrect	3 - a high degree of variability and estimation is involved	3 - adverse or favourable cost affecting the council budget/collection fund	Monitor trends closely and review scheme each year to make necessary adjustments.
Covid-19 and effect on the economy longer term	2 - possible that unemployment levels will still be high	2 – cost of the scheme will increase	Monitor caseload and work with preceptors on managing the scheme

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.



Uttlesford District Council September 2021

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)

A summary report on the survey about Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) provision in Uttlesford for the financial year 2022-2023.

In April 2013 Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by a new local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. The government required councils to protect pensioners so that they would receive the same level of support as they did under Council Tax Benefit. This means that LCTS has applied only to working age people.

Uttlesford District Council has been consulting local residents regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme (the scheme) since 2012 during which time the scheme has undergone various changes. For the financial year 2022/2023, the council has proposed that the scheme is set on the same basis as that for 2020/2021, namely:

- The contribution rate is frozen for the seventh consecutive year at 12.5%
- The council continues to protect vulnerable and disabled resident and carers on a low income

For the current consultation, there were no questions requiring a specific 'yes' or 'no' answer. As with the 2020 consultation (for the 2021-22 scheme), respondents were asked to consider the proposals and provide their views in an 'open text box'. The survey invited (but did not require) participants to provide their name and a contact email address. Participants were also asked to identify if their response was on behalf of an organisation (such as a major preceptor). The survey ran from 22 July to 31 August 2021.

The online survey took the form of a simple web form on the Uttlesford District Council website which could be accessed via a direct link or from the website home page. Emails inviting participation in the survey were sent directly to Essex County Council, the PFCC and to all town and parish councils in the district on 22 July.

The survey was widely publicised to the citizens of Uttlesford who were encouraged to take part with a press release, which went to all local media and newspapers on 22 July. E-newsletters were also sent to all of the subscribers on our mailinglists (in excess of 8,800 contacts) on 20 July and again with a follow-up on 5 August. In addition to this, the consultation was promoted on Facebook just after the launch in July and again twice in August to remind users of the closing date of the survey – these posts together reached over 2,000 people. Similar posts were also put out on Twitter and Instagram.

Finally, for those who do not use digital services, we offered (details were provided on the website, in the press releases and in all publicity) to send out by post paper copies of the survey. We did not receive any requests for paper copies.

Results – Overall submissions

The LCTS scheme survey conducted in 2020 received a total of 27 responses. This year the response rate was much the same with a total of 28 responses, as shown in the table below.

Overall submissions	Result counts (percentage)
Total number of paper forms returned	0
Total number of web forms / direct emails submitted	28 (100%)
Total number of comments received	28 (100%)
Number of responses on behalf of/from representatives of preceptors	2* (7.1% of total responses)
Number of responses providing an email contact address	17 (60.7%)

*The survey was sent to Essex County Council, the PFCC and the town and parish councils in the district; a total of 54 email addresses. We received 2 responses from preceptors or from representatives of those preceptors. In 2020 we received 3 replies from preceptors.

Results – Submitted comments

Of the submitted comments, 16 (or 57.1% of all the comments received) either directly supported the proposals, or could clearly be interpreted as such. This includes 2 responses on behalf of/from representatives of preceptors. These are identified in the tables below.

A further 11 comments proposed expanding or making amendments to the proposed scheme.

A single comment did not comment directly on the scheme but instead offered an opinion on fraud in relation to benefits in general.

All the comments received are listed in this report.

Comments received generally in favour of the proposed scheme

Responses on behalf of/from a representative of a preceptor

Henham Parish Council supports the proposals and has no comments.
I would like Uttlesford District Council to continue the LTCS support scheme. There will be a continuing need to support those of us who are struggling to survive in the current and post Covid era.

Responses from citizens

Page 20

It has been a difficult time for all but particularly those on low incomes and benefits I am in favour of maintaining LTS scheme at 12.5%
I agree to continue the same tax benefit for the vulnerable for 2022/23
I agree with the proposed scheme to support those in need. In these difficult times the council must have an obligation to help people who are in trouble.
This scheme currently makes the difference between being able to live not in hardship. Continue with it.
I agree that the scheme should remain the same as last year.
I support the Council intention to continue support to low earners and vulnerable citizens.
I agree.
I support the proposal that the LCTS scheme will be maintained at the same rate of 12.5% because I think that is our duty to support the disabled and vulnerable people in our community especially through this time of pandemic.
I am quite happy that you continue as in the previous year.
I agree that the current subsidies should continue at 12.5%
Agree. Keep the figure at 12.5%

I support the proposal that the local council Tax support Scheme for 2022/23 shall provide the same support as in the current year 2021/22 and should continue to support vulnerable and disabled resident and carers on low income.

I agree with the proposals for the 2022/23 LCTS scheme. I appreciate UDC continuing with this level of support for people on a low income.

Dear Uttlesford Councillors

As a recipient of pension credit, I am also a very thankful recipient of Uttlesford council tax support; and this is an opportunity to express to you my gratitude for a benefit which makes an enormous difference to my wellbeing and to the quality of my daily life.

As you will be aware, pensioners on minimum income have a total of about £7,000 a year. So if I were paying the full Uttlesford council tax, I would be paying about a sixth of my total income - roughly two months' of my household income each year - on council tax.

This is of course a very different situation to that of people on average income, which I believe is nationally about £31,000. So the council tax is about 4% of their income. But many people in Uttlesford have a much higher income than that, so for many people locally, council tax is 2% of their salary, or even less.

I do of course live modestly; I don't run a car, don't drink, smoke, nor do I have expensive hobbies or recreations. But there are some big expenses which are inevitable: a plumber's bill or a broken kettle may be a mere inconvenience, or an outgoing to make a plan about - or a crisis, depending on whether there is spare money in one's purse. For me, the council tax support has provided the cushion that makes it possible to be merely irritated instead of heart-sick when the kettle packs up; and to be - almost - philosophical when a plumber or other workman is needed (though yes, I do procrastinate when any household repair is required.....). I am looking forward nervously to the increases in energy prices which we have been told to expect, and, again, it is the cushion of Uttlesford's council tax support that means people in my position won't have to make the difficult choice between groceries and warmth.

So, what I am saying is thank you enormously for the council tax support hitherto, and, also, that I hope it continues at the highest possible level in the future. I have been proud, as well as thankful, that Uttlesford has been one of the most generous councils in the country in this respect. I am a pensioner - but people of working age on Income Support are in an even more stringent financial position (hence, sadly, the need for food banks, even in relatively affluent Uttlesford), and it simply seems unjust that in many parts of the country they are required to spend their small income from central government on paying local government taxes. I am so thankful that up to now Uttlesford council has chosen to be clement about council tax for the very poor. I do hope that this will continue in 2022/3 and beyond.

Comments received suggesting the proposed scheme be expanded or amended

Uttlesford has a diverse mix of residents, ranging from wealthy to those living in poverty. In a fair society it is morally appropriate for those able to support those who are struggling to do so. I am in favour of increasing support to those who need, it via an increase in Council Tax if necessary.

After having been left in financial difficulty twice at the hands of your council incompetent administration skills, I personally feel that this scheme would be of great benefit.

Sadly due to this terrible government more and more normal people are finding it harder and harder to pay bills every month. (You try paying all these things on minimum wage that doesn't increase in line with inflation)

Support should be offered to those who need it not just carers. After my family was forced to pay 9 months council tax in just 4 months after an administration error on your part that you openly admitted was your fault, all we got was a verbal sorry for; I completely understand the need for help and support.

Please please expand payment options and schemes to help those who like my family through no fault of our own were left struggling financially for months after.

LCTS should not be cut for the coming tax year. If anything it should be increased. Paying 12.5% CT when you are on benefits of a very low income puts people in debt.

We live in a well off area and most people can afford a little more to help those who are struggling. I think that Uttlesford District Council can afford to increase any support it gives.

Increase the amount of money that is given.

With reference to the invitation to comment on the Council tax support scheme, I don't have a comment as such, just a question as to why the rate in Uttlesford is so much lower than all the other Local Authorities in Essex. I haven't been able to 'get my head around' the subject sufficiently to be able to comment but the large divergence in the rates does make me wonder whether Uttlesford could / should increase its rate to anyway 15% - perhaps in 2023/24 by when hopefully the effect of the pandemic will have lessened somewhat.

The minimum amount of council tax should be increased to 20% especially as it has not been increased for the last 7 years. This would bring it inline with other councils and according to your own information would only mean an increase of £2 per week. This amount is not excessive . Council tax in Uttlesford is extremely high and costs need to be shared. People who do not quite fall into the category of needing benefits are also struggling with high bills.

I think this is too little and I'd lift it to 20% progressively over the next three years. Given the government's cap of Council Tax you may have to lobby them to remove or lift it so as to pay for this by increase local taxation. I speak as a householder who does not like more tax but is frustrated by central Gov't attitude to local discretion.

For anyone that can't pay council tax up To 100% should be funded. If I was struggling financially I would prioritise the following; Food Heat / fuel Commuting costs Rent Clothing (basics) Council tax

There should be more help for those in work with no kids who only just earn above the cut off for any benefits. There is help available for the low income families, disabled, vulnerable and elderly in many different forms. But there are no provisions for those in work but don't qualify for other help. Council tax is a huge burden for this forgotten group and Uttlesford could pave the way to highlighting this

I think you should increase in line with other councils if possible and perhaps this year at least increase it to 20% to help the people who need help post pandemic too which is by 5%,

Comments received not specifically relating to the proposed scheme

With all benefit schemes as we all know they are abused and non deserving people take advantage and financially gain considerable amounts of money and get away with it. I don't have a problem with genuine cases of hardship benefitting but I REALLY do have a problem with the systems being abused. Providing the means testing is rigorous enough to stop abuse and if fraudulent claims are identified the FULL force of the law must be used.

Agenda Item 9

Committee: Cabinet

Date:

Title: Appointment of replacement Director of Uttlesford Norse Services Limited

15 November 2021

Report Author: Peter Holt, Chief Executive
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01799 510400

Key decision:
No

Summary

1. Uttlesford District Council has representation on the Board of Directors of Uttlesford Norse Services Limited. Due to the impending retirement of the Director of Public Services a replacement is required.

Recommendations

2. That Cabinet endorses the appointment of Angela Knight, Assistant Director Resources as a director of Uttlesford Norse Services Limited.

Financial Implications

3. None

Background Papers

4. None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	No specific implications
Community Safety	No specific implications
Equalities	No specific implications
Health and Safety	No specific implications
Human Rights/Legal Implications	No specific implications
Sustainability	No specific implications
Ward-specific impacts	No specific implications
Workforce/Workplace	No specific implications

Situation

5. In April 2020 a joint venture between Norse Limited and Uttlesford District Council was created to provide a number of Council services. The joint venture is a limited company and registered at Companies House as company number 12441356.
6. Under the shareholder arrangements Uttlesford District Council has two directors nominated to the Board, one a councillor and the other an officer.
7. The current occupant of the officer directorship is Roger Harborough and he will retire from the authority, and therefore from the Board on 19 November 2021.
8. Consideration has been given to a suitable replacement and it has been agreed that Angela Knight, Assistant Director Resources should be the new officer director on the Board.
9. The Assistant Director Resources role includes oversight of the Housing Revenue Account budget, which is the main source of funding for the joint venture.