

COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 19 JULY 2022 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor H Asker (Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, G Bagnall, S Barker, A Coote, C Criscione, A Dean, G Driscoll, J Emanuel, J Evans, P Fairhurst, M Foley, R Freeman, 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 Merifield, E Oliver, R Pavitt, L Pepper, N Reeve, G Sell, G Smith, M Sutton, M Tayler and J De Vries

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), D Hermitage (Director of Planning), J Reynolds (Assistant Director - Legal and Governance) and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

Also present: Mr Woodcock, Dr Noble, Mr Ross and Ms Jones (public speakers)

C20 MINUTE'S SILENCE

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting. She paid tribute to long standing former employee Karen Denmark who had tragically passed away earlier in July. Karen had worked with the Council from 1985 to 2020 and was an exceptional planner who would be sorely missed by all who knew her.

The Chair offered the Council's heartfelt condolences to Karen's family, friends and colleagues and led a minutes silence in her memory.

C21 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Mr Woodcock, Dr Noble, Mr Ross and Ms Jones addressed Council. A summary of their statements are appended to these minutes.

C22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Caton, Day, Eke, Loughlin and Luck.

Councillor Evans declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10 as the Chair of Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and a resident of Stebbing.

Councillor Merifield declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 10 as a member of Stebbing Parish Council and a resident of Stebbing.

C23 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meetings on 17 May 2022 and 15 June 2022 were as correct records of the meetings.

C24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair provided a brief update on events she had attended since the previous meeting including:

- Services commemorating the Queen`s Platinum Jubilee, at St Mary`s Church in Saffron Walden and also at Chelmsford Cathedral
- Dunmow Town Council`s Summer Solstice event which was most enjoyable and she recommended attendance at what had become an annual event
- Colchester Garrison Armed Forces Day
- Carver Barracks Jubilee Parade where she was honoured to hand out Jubilee medals to the troops
- Saffron Walden Scouts Group AGM
- Afternoon tea with the High Sheriff of Essex at Hyde Hall
- Annual Reception hosted by the Chair of Essex County Council

She said there would be further events coming forward that she would like Members to attend and that dates would be circulated in due course.

C25 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

Three reports had been submitted from the Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Green Issues were all noted.

Councillor Barker said that Councillor Freeman`s report detailed work with the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) improving junction protection where inconsiderate parking was a safety issue. She said that this was an issue around the estates in Takeley, with the main estate in Priors Green being particularly problematic, which was situated in the parishes of both Takeley and Little Canfield. She said that she had written to Councillor Freeman last week asking him when he would talk to Little Canfield about this issue as when she had spoken with the NEPP they were not aware of any active schemes being put forward.

Councillor Freeman said that he had responded to two Little Canfield residents and had explained their parking options and how they could achieve residents parking for themselves or on one occasion junction protection, which had a lower standard of public involvement than required for residents parking. He said that double yellow lines would be installed as junction protection and that the residents knew how to take the resident parking forward.

Councillor Barker asked Councillor Freeman to let the Parish Council know what action he had taken.

C26

QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS (UP TO 30 MINUTES)

Councillor Barker asked in reference to Question 2, when would the Housing Waiting List Scheme be considered at the Housing Board and then Cabinet.

Councillor Coote said that it would go to Housing Board and then Cabinet when it was necessary.

Councillor Gregory asked in reference to Question 3, whether the Council had undertaken internal due diligence before deciding to spend £32,000 of residents money as detailed in Councillor Pepper's report.

Councillor Pepper said that when looking at ways to reduce the Council's carbon emissions, it was identified that the London Road offices were not suitable for solar panels. Nonetheless, she had wanted to send out a clear message demonstrating the Council's commitment to Climate Change and it was agreed that switching to green energy from black fossil fuel energy, although expensive, was necessary. Therefore, she said the right due diligence had been undertaken by Officers.

Councillor Gregory asked that the minutes reflected that Councillor Pepper did not answer his question.

Councillor Khan asked in reference to Question 4, what specific help was being provided to residents presenting to their GPs sick with worry about financial burden.

Councillor Sutton offered to provide a further response by email to Councillor Khan. She said she could list the agencies they were working with to support residents.

Councillor Khan agreed and asked for the response to be copied in to all Councillors.

Councillor Dean asked, in reference to Question 7, for details to be provided regarding the breakdown of Standards complaints into political groups. He also asked whether Councillor LeCount would be a more proactive Chair of the Group.

Councillor LeCount said that he had only be in post for two months. He said that Councillor Dean's question would be answered and was currently being reviewed by the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Executive. He said that Councillor Dean would receive a response to his questions within six weeks.

Councillor Sell asked, in reference to Question 8, for clarity whether the £80,000 figure was correct. He asked whether any further details could be shared of the green initiatives for the local parishes and specific sums available.

Councillor Pepper said that there was a meeting scheduled next week to discuss financial allocations. She said that she would circulate the information as it became available.

C27 MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

The Chair confirmed that all matters had been included as stand alone agenda items.

C28 MATTERS RECEIVED ABOUT JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

No matters received.

C29 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Gregory, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, presented the Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report.

He thanked the following Officers for their work:

- The Local Plan and New Communities Manager for his work on the Local Plan
- The Business and Performance Manager for her work on economic development
- The Assistant Director of Environmental Services for his work on Climate Change
- The Director of Finance and Corporate Services for his helpful work on Finance
- The Assistant Director of Resources also for her work on Finance
- The Assistant Director of Corporate Services as lead Officer

He also thanked the Scrutiny Committee for their work, including cross party colleagues who had ensured that party politics were put to one side in the interests of the Council and residents as a whole. He extended particular thanks to the Vice-Chair Councillor Le Count and Councillor Jones.

He said that Uttlesford has not always had the most open culture but that he was very pleased to acknowledge the openness and transparency that the current administration demonstrated under the Chief Executive.

He said that openness was vital, and that it was Scrutiny's job to ask reasonable questions and expect reasonable answers.

He highlighted the following from the previous year;

- Review of the Local Plan process, conducted extraordinarily well by the Local Plan and New Communities Manager and his team in challenging times
- Planning Obligations have been brought forward, have gone to Cabinet and are now under the process of being implemented, led by Councillors Criscione and Jones and the Assistant Director of Environmental Services. He said that he expected great things under the new Director of Planning
- Economic recovery had been excellent
- The Corporate Plan Delivery Plan had seen a huge improvement
- The Committee had found some of the Climate Change representations unconvincing
- The budget was well received but further engagement was required with people who were making suggestions that would improve performance. He asked Officers to embrace accountability.

Councillor Dean thanked Councillor Gregory for the report. He said that paragraph 39 relating to the Local Plan lacked comment about outcomes. He noted that paragraphs 24 and 25 stated that things got underway in June 2021, but actually began in 2018.

Councillor Gregory confirmed that the role of Scrutiny with regard to the Local Plan was only process. He said that the issue arose from the status of the Stansted application as Scrutiny was constitutionally barred from involving itself with live applications. The Stansted application flitted between live and resolved a number of times, further muddied by the delay in the publication of the decision notice, the possibility of appeal and subsequently judicial review. Scrutiny was required to wait until absolute closure was achieved before addressing it.

The report was noted.

C30

GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Councillor Oliver, Chair of the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee (GAP), presented the Committee's Annual Report.

He thanked members and the Vice-Chair, Councillor Driscoll, and commended the Assistant Director of Corporate Services as lead officer and the Internal Auditor for their assistance to the Committee.

He noted that External Auditors had been reviewed by the Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd but remained two years behind signing off the Council's accounts. He said that he hoped that the investigations that had been holding up this matter would soon be resolved.

He highlighted that the Internal Auditor had spent a lot of time this year looking at Uttlesford NORSE Services Ltd which had resulted in considerable concerns being raised. Uttlesford NORSE has been considered four times by GAP in the

past year and this had resulted in an audit opinion of limited assurance due to the significant number of control weaknesses. He said that he was hopeful that the new Members on the board of Uttlesford NORSE Services would work with the Committee to resolve the outstanding issues.

He noted that GAP have reviewed areas of the Constitution which were being moved forward and that the Community Governance Review of the Parishes had been completed, with a number of changes accommodated.

He said that annual reports had been received from the PFI contracts and Local Government Ombudsman. There had been four complaints received by the Ombudsman and the Council had been found at fault in relation to one case, the details of which were reported to Full Council in July 2021.

He said that the Contract Procedure Rules and new arrangements for Statutory Senior Officer Disciplinary Procedures had been agreed.

Councillor Foley said that the Chief Executive had quickly responded to the issues relating to NORSE and should be commended.

Councillor Khan acknowledged the hard work of the GAP Committee and related Officers. He said that Uttlesford NORSE was the biggest failure of contract management in public services that he had ever seen and that the Chief Executive felt the same. He said that he looked forward to taking forward improvements with Councillor Coote and the Housing Board. Having missed the previous meeting due to annual leave, he asked whether the External Auditor was going to sign off the outstanding historic accounts.

Councillor Oliver said that he couldn't comment but that he hoped that the External Auditor would be present at the next meeting. He added that he hoped that the new representative from Uttlesford NORSE would also be in attendance.

The report was noted.

C31

STEBBING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Councillor Evans presented the Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan report. He extended thanks to the members of the steering group in Stebbing that had worked tirelessly for six years to reach this point, ably assisted by the Planning Policy Officer and the external Neighbourhood Planning Consultant.

He said that the turnout of voters on 23 June 2022 was extremely high at 48% and was the highest Neighbourhood Plan turnout recorded in Uttlesford.

He said that the post-referendum meeting of the steering group had identified that the Neighbourhood Plan process had resulted in a number of benefits for the community, including educating residents on planning policy matters and pieces of evidence that were not previously known about. He said that the 21 policies, 155 heritage assets and 8 housing allocations within the plan had already been given weight by a Planning Inspector and Council Officers.

He noted that the entire cost of delivering the Neighbourhood Plan was recoverable from central Government, who continued to support neighbourhood planning.

He proposed that Council formally made the Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan as part of the statutory development plan for the District.

Councillor Criscione said that Councillor Evans should be very proud and noted that 43% of respondents to the consultation had lived in the area for less than 10 years and that the new and fresh thinking was welcomed.

Councillor Isham said that it was a fine document and added his thanks to Councillor Evans for his help and advice, noting that he would be requesting further guidance with Broxted's plan.

Councillor Khan added his congratulations to Councillor Evans and asked for clarification on the definition of affordable homes within the plan.

Councillor Evans said that they were reliant upon land becoming available and that regrettably they had no policy within the Neighbourhood Plan for council housing. The land allocated within the plan was for affordable housing through housing association dwellings.

Councillor Hargreaves noted the hard work that goes into preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and commended the plan to Council.

Councillor Merifield said that she was delighted to second the proposal and thanked the Neighbourhood Plan steering group and residents who helped and turned out to vote.

The Chair moved to a vote. The proposal was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED: To formally make the Stebbing Neighbourhood Plan as part of the statutory development plan for the District.

C32 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUNDING

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Household Support Funding report.

Councillor Khan said that he supported this proposal, but asked whether the funding could be administered by a third party rather than Essex County Council.

Councillor Hargreaves said that the Council were just the agent for the funding and did not have the power to allocate it to a third party.

Councillor Criscione said that he supported the proposal, but asked whether there was more the Council could do to support residents, in particular to foster carers and adopters who are often not included in such schemes.

Councillor Hargreaves recommended that Council approved the proposal, which was seconded by Councillor Reeve.

The Chair moved to a vote and the proposal was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED: To approve the extension of the discretionary Council Tax Rebate Scheme:

- I. To include a council tax rebate of £80 to the vulnerable, disabled and their carers on low incomes and in receipt of LCTS
- II. To extend the eligible date to the 1 April 2022

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 20:22. The meeting would be reconvened on Thursday 21 July 2022 at 19:00 to resolve the remaining items of business.

C33 **MEETING RECONVENED**

The meeting was reconvened at 7.00pm on Thursday 21 July 2022. The Chair reconvened the meeting.

Apologies for absence for the evening's session were received from Councillors Barker, Caton, Criscione, Day, De Vries, Foley, Luck, Oliver and Tayler.

Councillor Dean declared a personal interest as a member of Stansted Airport Watch.

C34 **STANSTED AIRPORT SCRUTINY REVIEW: INDEPENDENT REPORT OF THE STANSTED AIRPORT EXPANSION PLANNING APPLICATION**

Councillor Light raised a point of order. She said that the role of the Chair was to ensure that the Council meeting was a forum to debate matters of concern to the local community and to hold the Executive to account. She said that the proposals to manage the meeting had limited the number of Members that could speak and that all Members had the right to speak for their constitutional five minutes.

Councillor Fairhurst said that he had not agreed with the proposals in relation to speakers and asked who had agreed with these arrangements.

The Chief Executive said that the rules of debate had not been amended and were owned by all Councillors.

Councillor Light said that the meeting was unconstitutional.

The Chair reminded Councillors about her request for respect when she took on the Chair.

Councillor Le Count presented the Stansted Airport Independent Review report. He thanked the independent expert, Members of the Task and Finish Group and the Monitoring Officer. He proposed the recommendation to receive and note the Independent Review report.

Councillor Gregory seconded the proposal. He reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Isham said that the Council's defence strategy never had any intention to win the refusal decision at appeal. He said that condition 15 was conditional on approval, which the Inspector saw through immediately, as did the judge at the judicial review. Condition 15 was ultimately deemed unreasonable and resulted in full costs being awarded against the Council. He said that Uttlesford's approach at the hearing was disastrous and, in legal terms, unreasonable. He said that responsibilities were not addressed within the report and that the administration needed to be held accountable. Instead, the report blamed the Planning Committee, which was not evidenced. He said that although the Chief Executive's action plan appeared promising, if failures of process, professional responsibilities and oversight were not addressed, then there was no guarantee that the same would not happen again. He said that the action plan needed to follow in depth scrutiny of the full story. He asked that the action plan be revised to include addressing all the evidence, questions and statements raised at Scrutiny so that Members could be fully informed to then sign off the revised report.

Councillor Merifield thanked all those who had worked to bring the review before Members. She reminded Members that the motion in 2019 to refer the application back to the Planning Committee was truly cross party and received only one vote against and one abstention. She said that it was a privilege to Chair the Planning Committee, and whilst there were disagreements, Members were united in working in the best interests of residents and communities. The cross party decision that Planning Committee made in January 2020 regarding the Airport application was complex. However, regardless of party membership the decision was made by Committee collectively, within the constraints as they were understood.

Councillor Smith asked why the Council had decided to overturn the decision of 2019. He said that Leadership was about taking decisions that might not be liked, but were in the best interests of the district. He said that the application was in line with national policy and should have been approved. In response to comments regarding the 2019 decision, he said that the use of the casting vote by the Chair was part of the legitimate democratic process and should not be undermined.

Councillor Emanuel said that it was an excellent decision to engage an independent, highly qualified external resource to conduct the review and highlighted the Council's commitment to transparency and openness. She said that an application relating to nationally significant infrastructure should have been undertaken by the Government, as had been the case of airport expansions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Leeds-Bradford. She said that until the announcement of "Jet Zero" this week there had been no update to government planning policy on aviation and climate change since Net Zero became law in the

UK. The Jet Zero policy was already subject to criticism for being unrealistic and over-reliant on unproven technology and Net Zero policy itself was deemed unlawful and failed to meet the Climate Change Act obligations. She said that the weight accorded to climate change ultimately tipped the balance against the Council, but morally she thought that the Council behaved with integrity and it should be acknowledged that the Council tried to protect residents from harm and were right to do so. She said it was invidious and inappropriate to attempt to single out individuals for blame for democratic decisions that have been made. The Council had a collective responsibility for their actions and while scrutiny was absolutely within their remit, scapegoating was not.

Councillor Khan said that the dissenting document fully covered why the partial report should be sent back for further work. He said that the Nolan principles ensure that those in public office were held accountable for their decisions. He said that although some of the officers responsible for the failed management of the defence were no longer with the Council, the lead Member and the then Leader of the Council remained in office and were responsible for liaising with officers on a regular basis. He said that they were accountable, bore responsibility for the process and invited the lead Member for Planning to offer his resignation.

Councillor Pepper said that Climate Change was occurring in real time, as evidenced recently by unprecedented temperatures in the UK. She said that there was undeniable scientific evidence that climate change was causing more harm than previously anticipated. In January 2020 the Council made a bold, democratic cross party decision to challenge the airport expansion. She said that the result would not have been different, regardless of evidence or the carbon commitments enshrined in law. She said that local government deserved more power to make decisions based on the needs of local residents.

Councillor Lemon said that he had always fought against the airport but having listened to the debate he felt that the Council had let the community down.

Councillor Freeman said that this was an opportunity to learn from the past. He said that Officers were custodians of the democratic process and needed to be listened to. He said that planning law was legislated by central government and was complex, but it remained the only planning tool the Council had to control development. He commended the report.

Councillor Dean said that he feared that the Council's political leaders were trying to scapegoat their own Planning Committee, and that the independent report blamed the Committee for acting politically, which was incorrect. He said that he had provided a report of his reaction to the report to Scrutiny and an updated version to Members of Council. His report had said that the independent report was incomplete and undermined the democratic standards of the Council. He urged Members to not accept the report and finish the job properly.

Councillor Evans said that the consistent advice that he had received from the then Chief Executive, Director of Public Services and Monitoring Officer was that he had no role in the Stansted Airport planning appeal, and that the conduct

and management of the appeal were entirely delegated to Officers, as per the Constitution. He rejected Councillor Khan`s invitation to stand down as there was no lack of diligence. He welcomed the reports and thanked those who had contributed to the work of the Scrutiny Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Gregory said that the report was incomplete, but highlighted a series of failures in process and substance. He said that much could not be determined as evidence did not exist, such as the 43 meetings with the airport that took place in 8 months, of which only 2 were minuted. He said that there had been a failure to comply with the Constitution or accepted good practices. He said that Council`s instructions to Scrutiny had been crystal clear, as were Scrutiny`s terms of reference and those of the Task and Finish Group. The review had been delivered and the entirety of the independent report was in the public domain. He said that the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer had done a huge amount of work to achieve maximum transparency in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. He said that the Council had failed residents, but this was the basis for improvement and the Chief Executive had already started to address these failings. He asked Members to receive the report and focus on improvements.

Councillor Hargreaves requested a recorded vote.

Councillor:	Vote:
Armstrong	For
Asker	Abstain
Bagnall	For
Coote	For
Dean	Abstain
Driscoll	For
Emanuel	For
Evans	For
Fairhurst	Against
Freeman	For
Gregory	For
Hargreaves	For
Isham	Against
Jones	For
Khan	Against
Lavelle	For
LeCount	For
Lees	For
Lemon	Abstain
Light	Against
Loughlin	Against
Merifield	For
Pavitt	For
Pepper	For
Reeve	For
Sell	Against
Smith	For
Sutton	For

The result was declared with 19 votes for, 6 against and 3 abstentions.

RESOLVED: to receive and note the independent expert review report into the handling of the Stansted airport expansion planning application.

C35 **STANSTED AIRPORT SCRUTINY REVIEW: LESSONS LEARNED ACTION PLAN**

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Stansted Airport Review: Lessons Learned Action Plan report.

He proposed to approve the recommendations as set out in the report:

- I. The action plan changes requiring changes to either the Council's Constitution or explicitly to future Member behaviours – as clearly identified thematically in each section of the report were approved.
- II. That Council formed a Task and Finish Group to consider draft Constitutional Changes as proposed in section 15.2.2, to be made up of one member each nominated by the Conservative and Independent party groups, and two members from the joint Liberal Democrat and Green group, alongside five members nominated by the majority Residents for Uttlesford group.
- III. The action plan changes relating to operational processes and approaches in areas either delegated to Officers or else held independently by Officers statutorily in their own rights – again as clearly identified thematically in each section of the report were noted.

Councillor Lees seconded the proposal. She reserved the right to speak.

Councillor Sell welcomed the report and recommendations. He acknowledged that Members had received a significant amount of training for the Stansted Airport application. He suggested that the culture of the Council was undermined by the independent report and that the Council needed to move forward.

Councillor Driscoll said that he supported training for Members.

Councillor Smith said the review of the Constitution should be thorough.

Councillor Bagnall said that lessons would be learned but the Council needed to move forward.

Councillor Fairhurst said that the Council should be rigorous and robust in their self scrutiny and that the lessons would be learned. He asked how the Council would avoid repeating the errors of the past.

Councillor Lavelle said that the recommendations were relevant to all of the semi-judicial committees. He said that the proposed Task and Finish Group to focus on amendments to the Constitution was fundamental to progress.

He said that Members were reliant on the officers to help with the technical details on how to implement matters within a semi-judicial process. It was a shared endeavor. He said that when officer recommendations were significantly different to what had been discussed at Committee, this should be brought back to Committee for agreement.

Councillor Isham said that it was within the remit of the Monitoring Officer to assess any minutes held on meetings with the Airport. The evidence base which informed the Action Plan was incomplete. It was for the Chief Executive to review these processes.

Councillor Gregory said certain information had been denied to the Task and Finish Group in line with privacy laws. He said the current commitment to openness and transparency was not so apparent in the past.

Councillor Reeve said that he remained proud of the Council and supported the recommendations for improvement. He paid tribute to current and former officers on whose expert advice Members routinely rely. He said that written notes would be made of Member briefings as had been requested.

Councillor Lees said that Members were advised how the meeting would be run by the email from the Chief Executive. She said that she would have welcomed comments ahead of the meeting from any aggrieved parties and would have been open to negotiation. She said that she would like to be more collaborative and work together to move forward. Furthermore, she said that Officer and Developer meetings would be noted for the file in future and had already been introduced.

The Chair moved to a vote.

RESOLVED:

- I. To approve those action plan changes requiring changes to either the Council's Constitution or explicitly to future Member behaviours – as clearly identified thematically in each section of the report.
- II. That the Council forms a Task and Finish Group to consider draft Constitutional Changes as proposed in section 15.2.2, to be made up of one member each nominated by the Conservative and Independent party groups, and two members from the joint Liberal Democrat and Green group, alongside five members nominated by the majority Residents for Uttlesford group.
- III. To note those action plan changes relating to operational processes and approaches in areas either delegated to Officers or else held independently by Officers statutorily in their own rights – again as clearly identified thematically in each section of the report.

The meeting ended at 20:34.

Summary of Public Statements: Full Council, 19 July 2022

Mr Woodcock

Mr Woodcock, a resident of Stansted Mountfitchet reminded Council that he had addressed them in February 2022 regarding the need for an NHS licensed community pharmacy to be located as near as possible to Stansted Surgery. He said that he had subsequently learned that the communities of Stansted Mountfitchet, Stort Valley and the surrounding communities urgently need the Council's assistance.

He said that Essex County Council were conducting another online consultation which he had forwarded to Council on 8 July 2022 including the draft Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment Report dated May 2022. He asked whether District Councillors had been informed of the consultation by the County Council. He asked Members to consider the report and respond to the survey before 5 August 2022.

He said that:

- The base data within the report identified that Uttlesford had only eight licensed community pharmacies, one per 12,000 residents or 80 square kilometres
- It was reported that there were eight dispensing doctors surgeries within the district, but they were not identified by location
- Uttlesford had fewer community pharmacies than any other Essex district
- Uttlesford residents have to travel further to access a community pharmacy than other Essex residents
- NHS regulations state that community pharmacies should be one mile apart. Saffron Walden and Dunmow both have two pharmacies that are a few hundred yards apart. Access from local surgeries was relatively easy,

unlike Chapel Hill in Stansted which involved a walk up a steep hill from the surgery to access the only pharmacy on Cambridge Road, which was often closed

He asked Members to;

- Read the draft Essex County Council Health and Wellbeing Pharmaceutical Needs Report
- Read his report to Essex County Council, titled “The Case For An Additional NHS Licensed Pharmacy In Stansted Mountfitchet”
- Note his analysis of part of the report and compare the facts relating to Uttlesford compared with other Essex districts
- Respond to the latest Essex County Council consultation

Dr Noble

Dr Noble asked Councillor Evan to explain how the Planning Department had been overhauled recently. He said that he had recently moved to the area from another district, understood the challenges that planning presented and was interested to learn exactly what changes had been implemented.

Councillor Evans said that the East of England Peer Review (EEPR) undertaken in autumn 2021 had provided the foundation for the work currently underway and to be undertaken in the future.

He said that updates regarding the Local Plan could be accessed through the Council’s website.

He said that reports presented to the Scrutiny Committee in February 2022 followed through from work identified in the EEPR and outlined all of the steps undertaken to that date. This was then taken to Cabinet in the same month and subsequently a Director of Planning was recruited. Additionally they were looking to recruit additional planning officers, although this was currently proving challenging countrywide.

He said that there would be a further detailed report regarding progress made and actions taken presented to Council in September 2022 and that he would email Dr Noble his detailed response to the question.

Dr Noble asked how many vacancies there currently were in the Planning Department and said that he had heard in the pub that planning powers had been revoked from the Council and whether this impacted the current planning outlook.

In response to a question from the Chair, Dr Noble agreed that he would be content to receive Councillor Evans’ response by email.

Councillor Sell asked that Councillor Evans’ email to Dr Noble be shared with all Members, which was agreed by the Chair.

Mr Ross

Mr Ross, Chair of Stansted Airport Watch, said that he had focused on learning lessons for the future from the Stansted Airport Inquiry when he addressed Scrutiny Committee last week and had made five recommendations.

He said that Scrutiny Meeting had lasted for over three hours, during which time Members from all parties had made some excellent points. He hoped that the shortcomings identified would be addressed to ensure lessons were learned and appropriate changes made to the Constitution.

He said that he was not impressed with the external report and that the claim that the Planning Committee had acted politically was nonsensical as it was a cross party decision.

He said that the Action Plan drafted by the Chief Executive went some way to addressing the shortcomings, but did not go far enough. The starting point appeared to be the presumption that the Planning Committee were responsible for the disappointing outcome of the inquiry. He said that Members were not responsible for the decision or the failure to record thirty or forty meetings, contrary to the Council's Constitution and he raised concerns that there was nothing in the action plan to prevent a recurrence of the same issue. He noted that Members were not responsible for entering into what appeared to be an open ended financial arrangement with barristers which did not represent value for money for residents, and again was not addressed within the action plan to prevent recurrence.

He said that a very similar public inquiry took place in 2007, again opposed and lost by the Council. Costs were awarded against the Council, but on that occasion BAA owned the airport and settled for £100,000. MAG who now own the airport seem to want their pound of flesh in their settlement. He thought it was worth bearing in mind.

Ms Jones

Ms Jones, a Broxton resident for over forty years said that she was very aware of the growth of Stansted Airport and the different activities undertaken to attempt to curtail further growth. She said that she was disappointed at the recent activity surrounding the latest planning application and that she felt some Councillors had been unfairly criticised and castigated.

She said that she was not fully familiar with the Council administration protocol, but thought that Councillors who put themselves forward to support their constituents needed residents support and thanks.

She said that if Councillors had failed to follow protocol then perhaps it required revision and change. She thanked Councillors who had put themselves forward to represent others.