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Uttlesford District Council

Chief Executive: Peter Holt

To all Members of Uttlesford District Council, you are hereby summoned to attend the meeting of the District Council to be held as shown below to deal with the business set out in the agenda.

Chief Executive: Peter Holt

Council

Date: Tuesday, 21st March, 2023

Time: 7.00 pm

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

Chair: Councillor H Asker

Members: Councillors A Armstrong, G Bagnall, S Barker, M Caton, A Coote, C Criscione, A Dean, G Driscoll (Vice-Chair), D Eke, 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, T Loveday, S Luck, S Merifield, E Oliver, R Pavitt, L Pepper, N Reeve, G Sell, G Smith, M Sutton, M Tayler and J De Vries

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. A time limit of 3 minutes is allowed for each speaker.

Those who would like to watch the meeting live can do so by accessing the live broadcast [here](#). The broadcast will start when the meeting begins.

AGENDA

PART 1

Open to Public and Press

- 1 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest**

To receive any apologies and declarations of interest.
- 2 Minutes of the previous meeting** 5 - 16

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting.
- 3 Chair's Announcements**

To receive any announcements from the Chair.
- 4 Reports from the Leader and Members of the Executive** 17 - 35

To receive matters of report from the Leader and members of the Executive. Written reports have been received from:

 - Portfolio Holder for Planning, Stansted Airport, Infrastructure Strategy and the Local Plan
 - Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services
 - Portfolio Holder for Environment and Green Issues; Equalities
 - Portfolio Holder for Housing
 - Portfolio Holder for Sports, Leisure and the Arts
- 5 Questions to the Leader, Members of the Executive and Committee Chairs (up to 30 minutes)** 36 - 38

To receive questions from members for the Executive and committee chairmen.
- 6 Matters referred from the Executive and the Council's committees**

To consider any reports referred from the Executive and the Council's committees and receive questions and answers on any of those reports.

 - No matters referred.

- 7 Matters received about joint arrangements and external organisations**
- To consider matters concerning joint arrangements and external organisations.
- No matters received.
- 8 Returning Officer Fees and Charges** 39 - 46
- To consider the Returning Officer Fees and Charges report.
- 9 Political Balance - WITHDRAWN**
- Item withdrawn.
- 10 Motion: Council Tax Exemption for adopters and Foster Carers - WITHDRAWN**
- Motion withdrawn.
- 11 Motion: Right to Buy** 47
- To consider the motion regarding Right to Buy as proposed by Councillor Coote.
- 12 Motion: Saffron Walden Amenity Centre Booking System** 48
- To consider the motion regarding Saffron Walden Amenity Centre's booking system as proposed by Councillor Foley.
- 13 Motion: Essex Devolution** 49
- To consider the motion regarding Essex Devolution as proposed by Councillor Hargreaves.

MEETINGS AND THE PUBLIC

Members of the public are welcome to attend any Council, Cabinet or Committee meeting and listen to the debate. All agendas, minutes and live broadcasts can be viewed on the Council's website, through the [Calendar of Meetings](#).

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The agenda is split into two parts. Most of the business is dealt with in Part I which is open to the public. Part II includes items which may be discussed in the absence of the press or public, as they deal with information which is personal or sensitive for some other reason. You will be asked to leave the meeting before Part II items are discussed.

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General Enquiries

Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 4ER

Telephone: 01799 510510

Fax: 01799 510550

Email: uconnect@uttlesford.gov.uk

Website: www.uttlesford.gov.uk

Agenda Item 2

COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 21 FEBRUARY 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor G Driscoll
Councillors A Armstrong, G Bagnall, S Barker, M Caton, A Coote, C Criscione, D Eke, J Emanuel, J Evans, R Freeman, N Hargreaves, V Isham, R Jones, A Khan, G LeCount, P Lees, M Lemon, B Light, J Lodge, J Loughlin, T Loveday, S Luck, S Merifield, E Oliver, R Pavitt, L Pepper, N Reeve, G Sell, G Smith, M Sutton and M Tayler

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), N Coombe (Interim Assistant Director Governance and Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer), J Etherington (Assistant Director of Finance), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), and A Webb (Director - Finance and Corporate Services)

C73 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In the absence of Councillor Asker, Councillor Driscoll took the Chair.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Asker, Dean, Fairhurst, Gregory, Lavelle, de Vries and the Youth Council.

Councillor Barker declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 8 as a member of Essex County Council.

C74 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 December 2022 and 2 February 2023 were approved as correct records.

C75 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

In the absence of Councillor Asker, the Chair said councillors would shortly be receiving details about the Chairs Civic Dinner, which would be held on 31st March in the Officers Mess, Carver Barracks.

He said that Councillor Asker would be most grateful if those who were unable to attend would make a generous donation to the Chairs charity, the Youth Outreach Project and additional youth projects.

C76 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE

The Leader said she had written to Essex County Council to request improved communications in relation to matters that affected the district and town or parish councils, such as the closure of the Highways Rangers service.

Councillor Coote thanked the Leader and Chief Executive for the support they had provided to Ukrainian refugees in the district.

C77 MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

The Chair said that the matters referred by the Executive had been included as standalone items on the agenda (Items 7 and 8).

C78 MATTERS RECEIVED ABOUT JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

No matters were received regarding joint arrangements or external organisations.

C79 CORPORATE PLAN 2023-2027

Councillor Reeve presented the Corporate Plan 2023-27. He said this would be the final Corporate Plan of the administration, which would be light-touch due to the elections in May. He said the administration had delivered its vision within the council's means and some excellent work had been done in regards to a wide range of matters, such as the Climate Change Strategy, Economic Recovery Delivery Plan and the Investment Portfolio. He thanked the Assistant Director Corporate Services and the Chief Executive for their assistance in producing the document and proposed approval of the Plan.

Councillor Evans seconded the proposal.

Councillor Khan said the Corporate Plan was shallow and asked for evidence that services had been delivered cost effectively. He said fewer council homes had been built than promised and highlighted that the annual accounts had still not been signed off.

Councillor Sell said there was a gap between what was promised and what was achieved by the administration; he said he regretted the aborted attempt to amend the Cabinet system.

In response, Councillors Lees and Coote said the administration had promised to review the Cabinet system and that was what they did. Councillor Coote said he had spent time trying to improve governance measures in consultation with opposition groups.

Councillor Criscione asked whether a Corporate Plan Delivery Plan would be made available before the election. He said caution should be applied to political

statements made on matters that could result in planning applications, such as the second runway at Stansted Airport

In response to a question from Councillor Caton regarding the Local Plan Leadership Group, Councillor Evans said the working group was not operating in secret as a cross-party workshop had been held in the previous week. Councillor Bagnall added that the working party sessions had been constructive and Councillor Caton had been present.

Councillor Reeve summarised the debate and confirmed that a Corporate Plan Delivery Plan would not be produced before the next election. He commended the report.

RESOLVED that the Corporate Plan 2023-2027 is adopted.

C80

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND 2023/24 BUDGET PROPOSALS

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Budget proposals 2023/24. He commended the comprehensive documentation of “unvarnished detail” and thanked the Assistant Director of Finance for his work. He said that all current services would be maintained and no cuts were required this year, although he advised caution going forward into future years. He said there was uncertainty regarding the Fair Funding Review from central government, business rates, inflation and the war in Ukraine, and members could find best and worst case forecasts found in the MTFS papers.

He highlighted the following:

- Planning fees in the Council’s control would be increased to ensure the service was in line with other authorities. There had also been more PINS applications determined by the Council, leading to greater income than forecast in the previous year.
- A Council Tax rise of 3%, equating to a £5.00 rise for Band D properties, providing an additional £195,000 income per annum.
- The Cost of Living Support Fund had been established with this additional income, to assist those who did not qualify for other measures of support but were still struggling in the economic climate, as per discussions at a member workshop.
- To note the balanced budget, including the use of £1.8million from reserves for planned purposes and £2.7million from the MTFS reserves. He said if an asset was sold from the investment portfolio, the shortfall could be covered.
- Existing council rents had been increased by 7% in line with Government policy. A 11% rise would be applied when a property was to be re-let. These measures had been accepted by the Housing Board.
- In regards to the Treasury Management Strategy, he said the fair funding review had not been completed by Government and all councils were affected by the uncertainty this created.

He said the proposals had been through both Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. He proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report.

Councillor Reeve seconded the proposal.

Councillor Khan spoke to his amendment. He said the Cost of Living Crisis had led to a cohort of people who were just about managing but who did not qualify for other measures of assistance. He asked members to support the amendment to assist families who were just about managing. He proposed the following:

“In light of the Office for Budget Responsibility forecast that real household disposable income will fall by 7.1% between 2021/22 and 2023/24, worsening the existing Cost Of Living Crisis and further squeezing the low to middle income families, this Council resolves to: 1. rebate the proposed 3% increase in the Council precept in 2023/24 financial year to households in Bands A-C to help the "just about managing households" in the district at an estimated cost of £44k and; 2. fund this cost from General Fund Reserves as the Council did with the similar targeted “cost of living” payments in the 2022/23 budget.”

Councillor Caton duly seconded.

Councillor Hargreaves spoke in response to the amendment and said that there was no evidence that this would support those that needed help. This was “too little, too late” and asked why this proposal was not raised during the member workshop.

Councillor Jones said the amendment would not support those that needed financial help. He said the Cost of Living Fund Policy would provide targeted support.

Councillor Lees said she had asked members to work together and a workshop was held to support residents with the cost of living crisis. She thanked the Liberal Democrats for their constructive input but asked why they had not raised their amendment proposal at this stage in the process.

Councillor Barker said it was disappointing that the administration would not consider proposals that had originated with an opposition group.

Councillor Caton said the amendment would provide additional support to residents on top of the Cost of Living Support Fund and said it should not be rejected for the sake of it. He said the administration did not provide opportunities to collaborate.

Councillor Khan said the amendment would work in tandem with the Cost of Living Support Fund. He urged members to support the amendment.

The Chair moved to a vote. A recorded vote was requested.

Councillor:	For, Against or Abstain
Armstrong	Against

Bagnall	Against
Barker	Abstain
Caton	For
Coote	Against
Criscione	Against
Driscoll	Abstain
Eke	Against
Emanuel	Against
Evans	Against
Freeman	Against
Hargreaves	Against
Isham	For
Jones	Against
Khan	For
LeCount	Against
Lees	Against
Lemon	Abstain
Light	For
Lodge	Against
Loughlin	For
Loveday	Abstain
Luck	Against
Merifield	Against
Oliver	Abstain
Pavitt	Against
Pepper	Against
Reeve	Against
Sell	For
Smith	Against
Sutton	Against
Tayler	Against

The amendment fell with 6 votes for, 21 against and 5 abstentions.

The Chair returned the debate to the substantive motion.

Councillor Lodge said local authorities across the country were suffering financially but the Council would be far worse off if it were not for the sound investments made by the administration.

Councillor Barker asked for clarification regarding the status of the MOOG investment and the figures relating to the Livingstone and Chorley investments.

Councillor LeCount said the Council's investment portfolio was impressive and thanked the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and his team for their hard-work.

Councillor Light spoke on Councillor Fairhurst's behalf and said the purpose of the budget process was to ensure public money was managed effectively. She said in principle the council had failed as important details on opportunity costs had been left out of the budget papers, such as the costs related to the Local

Plan and staff turnover. Furthermore, reserves were being used to balance the budget.

Councillor Coote said the Council was in a much better position than other local authorities. This budget would ensure that services would continue and he urged members to support it.

Councillor Isham said he had concerns that there was no mention of the fact that the Council's accounts had not been signed off by the auditor for the entirety of the administration. This had resulted in additional costs and the council should not have been put into this position due to a governance issue by the administration.

Councillor Caton said this was a pre-election "make believe" budget. He said officers had warned of an emergency budget in the summer.

The Chief Executive said there would most likely be an additional mid-year budget following the election, along with a new Corporate Plan, but this would not be an emergency or crisis budget.

Councillor Caton said that was a question of semantics. He said the Council should not pretend all was well with the finances and highlighted the impact of the Stansted Airport appeal on the council's reserves, as well as the use of reserves to balance the budget over the next eighteen months. He said borrowing on loans was higher than needed and that the investment assets were worth less now than when they were purchased. He said the public should not be bamboozled as the council was not in a good place financially.

Councillor Smith thanked officers for producing the budget papers. He said in previous years the MTFs had shown "gaps" in the finances, which had been mitigated by the council's investment portfolio, and further spending controls could have been put in place. He said the budget showed the council was not in a robust position and reserves would be depleted by 2025.

The Chair sought Council's consent to extend the meeting by one hour.

Council gave its consent.

Councillor Sell said the council was operating in a difficult financial environment but highlighted the issue of borrowing rates. He said borrowing costs would continue to rise and the council was paying the price for not fixing costs when interest rates were at a historical low.

Councillor Khan asked how many staff would be made redundant and which services would be reduced.

Councillor Bagnall said investment assets were accruing funds and said yields ranged from 4 to 7.5%. Overall, the investments had grown in capital value.

Councillor Jones said the budget was the most important decision of the year as it established the necessary funds to provide services to residents. He said the

finances had been managed soundly during this administration and this was a balanced budget. He urged members to support the proposals.

Councillor Luck said the budget had been debated at Scrutiny and Cabinet and he was disappointed with the level of political point scoring taking place.

Councillor Lees said there had not been an increase in staff vacancies under the administration. She also refuted the comments regarding the need for an emergency budget in the summer.

Councillor Reeve said the council was doing well compared to other local authorities in these difficult economic times. He thanked the officers for putting together the budget under challenging circumstances and said it was not a crisis budget; amendments to the budget mid-year would be entirely appropriate, given that an election was due in May. He said assets were purchased to generate revenue income and that was “locked-in”. He seconded the proposals.

In response to questions asked, Councillor Hargreaves said the following:

- In regards to the MOOG asset, £16million had been spent from a commitment of £40million.
- In regards to the transposition on page 65, he said this was transposed between Waitrose and the veterinary hospital.
- It was common practice to use reserves to balance a budget.
- The administration had continued to invest in Chesterford Research Park, which showed the greatest return as it was the oldest asset.
- The Council had been prevented from fixing borrowing rates by Government when interest rates were historically low.
- He said staff redundancies in the next 5 years could not be ruled out but they were not a certainty, either. He said vacancies could be managed and there was some great staff working at the Council who would be able to retrain and undertake other roles.

Councillor Barker requested answers to her questions in writing.

The Chair requested a recorded vote on the budget proposals for the purposes of the Council Tax Resolution.

Councillor:	For, Against or Abstain
Armstrong	For
Bagnall	For
Barker	Against
Caton	Against
Coote	For
Criscione	Against
Driscoll	Abstain
Eke	For
Emanuel	For
Evans	For
Freeman	For
Hargreaves	For

Isham	Against
Jones	For
Khan	Against
LeCount	For
Lees	For
Lemon	Against
Light	Against
Lodge	For
Loughlin	Against
Loveday	Against
Luck	For
Merifield	For
Oliver	Against
Pavitt	Abstain
Pepper	For
Reeve	For
Sell	Against
Smith	Against
Sutton	For
Tayler	For

The vote was carried with 18 votes for, 12 against and 2 abstentions.

RESOLVED to:

- i. note and have regard to the Section 25 report when considering the budgets for 2023/24;
- ii. note the risk assessment relating to the robustness of estimates as set out at paragraph 9 of the Section 25 report;
- iii. set the working balances for 2023/24 at £1.782 million for the General Fund and £581,000 for the Housing Revenue Account
- iv. approve the Commercial Strategy 2023-28;
- v. note the key risks and assumptions set out at paragraph 29 of the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023-2028;
- vi. approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023- 2028;
- vii. approve the changes to investment counterparty limits set out at paragraphs 52-54 of the Treasury Management Strategy, to apply with immediate effect;
- viii. set the treasury management prudential indicators as set out at paragraphs 66-74 of the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24;
- ix. approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24
- x. set the capital prudential indicators as summarised at Annexe E2;
- xi. approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2023/24 as set out at Annexe E1;
- xii. approve the Capital Strategy 2023/24;
- xiii. approve the Capital Programme 2023/24 - 2027/28, including the planned application of capital financing set out at Annexe F4
- xiv. approve the increases in HRA rents as follows:-
 - . General needs and supported accommodation - a 7% increase for existing tenants in accordance with the cap set by government, with formula rents to increase by the maximum permitted amount of 11.1% (to be applied only when properties are relet).
 - . Temporary accommodation – rents to be increased in line with formula rents as in previous years (11.1%).

- . Garage rents – to be increased in line with September 2022 CPI (10.1%)
- xv. approve the increases in HRA support and service charges as set out at paragraphs 21-27 of the Housing Revenue Account budget report;
- xvi. note the Equality & Health Impact Assessment at Annexe G4;
- xvii. approve the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2023/24
- xviii. approve the Council Tax Requirement for 2023/24 of £6,694,027, equivalent to £171.61 for a band D property, representing a £5.00 increase on the 2022/23 amount;
- xix. approve placing £195,036 (the equivalent of the 2023/24 band D council tax increase) into a Cost of Living Support Fund to support households in hardship through additional council tax discounts, as proposed by officers;
- xx. approve the planned use of General Fund reserves during 2023/24 as set out at paragraph 47 of the General Fund budget report, including the use of £2.667 million from the Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve to balance the General Fund budget
- xxi. approve the reprofiling of spend on the Local Plan, and associated drawdown of reserves, as set out at paragraphs 29-34 of the General Fund budget report;
- xxii. approve the schedule of fees and charges for 2023/24 as set out at Annexe H5;
- xxiii. delegate authority to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) to set and/or amend fees and charges in relation to services which are operating in competition with commercial providers, for example trade waste;
- xxiv. note the Equality & Health Impact Assessment at Annexe H6
- xxv. approve the General Fund budget for 2023/24;
- xxvi. note the contents of the Budget Consultation Report 2023/24
- xxvii. approve the Council Tax Resolution 2023/24 report;
- xxviii. adopt the formal council tax resolution as set out at Annexe J1

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9.15pm. The meeting was reconvened at 9.21pm.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Loveday to his first meeting of Council.

C81 **PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24**

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24. There was a requirement under the Localism Act 2011 for councils to publish an annual Pay Policy Statement, which set out the pay and remuneration of its employees for the forthcoming year. He proposed approval of the Pay Policy Statement and to delegate authority to officers to update the Statement when the necessary figures became available on 31 March 2023.

Councillor Luck seconded the proposal.

In response to a question from Councillor Smith regarding Bank Holiday pay, Councillor Hargreaves said this would be passed to officers to be looked at.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Approve the Pay Policy Statement
- II. Give delegated authority to the Assistant Director – Business & Change Management to update the Pay Policy Statement and associated documents with pay multiple and average salary figures as at 31 March 2023 and with revised salary information once the 2023/24 national pay award is agreed

C82 BUSINESS RATES RELIEFS POLICY 2023/24

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding Business Rates Relief Policy 2023/24. He said the Government was removing pandemic related grants but in effect this was the council enacting government policy. He proposed approval of the recommendation set-out in the report.

Councillor Sutton seconded the proposal.

Councillor Barker requested that the 20 largest business rates in the district were circulated with councillors, to give an idea of the scale of increase in May, along with a timetable for challenge.

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

RESOLVED to approve the updated Business Rates Relief Policy as set out in this report and Appendix A, using its discretionary powers under S47 of the Local Government Act 1988 (as amended).

C83 COST OF LIVING SUPPORT FUND POLICY 2023/24

Councillor Hargreaves presented the Cost of Living Support Fund Policy 2023/24. He said the Policy consisted of three elements; the Cost of Living support Fund, the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and further monies would be put in the Extreme Hardship Fund. He proposed approval of the recommendation set-out in the report.

Councillor Bagnall seconded the proposal.

Councillor Caton said he was pleased to see this on the agenda and the Liberal Democrat and Green Group would be supporting the proposals.

Councillor Lees said she was pleased with the collaboration that had led to this Policy. She said support would be easily accessible for those who were struggling in the current economic climate.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- a. to approve the Uttlesford Cost of Living Support Fund Policy as set out in Appendix A
- b. to note the Government Council Tax Support Fund as set out in Appendix B
- c. to approve the Discretionary element of the Government Council Tax Support Fund as set out below and in Appendix B
 - i. to provide an additional maximum £25 top up payment for all households in receipt of Local Council Tax Support
 - ii. to add the remaining unallocated funds to The Exceptional Hardship Fund.

C84 **APPOINTMENT OF A MONITORING OFFICER**

The Chair said that the meeting would need to move into Part 2 if specific details relating to the individual and the appointment of Monitoring Officer were to be discussed.

RESOLVED to exclude the public and press due to consideration of reports containing exempt information within the meaning of section 100I and paragraph 1, part 1, Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Lees presented the report which outlined interim arrangements for the management of the Council's Legal Services, including the appointment of the Council's Monitoring Officer. She proposed approval of the recommendation.

Councillor Evans duly seconded.

Members discussed the appointment and the following comments were made:

- The role of Monitoring Officer was key and the approach to this appointment had shown a disregard to good governance.
- The role did not require legal qualifications and the Deputy Monitoring Officer was suitably qualified and would support the Monitoring Officer.
- The appointment was interim only and a permanent Monitoring Officer would be appointed in due course.

The Chair took the proposal to a vote.

The vote was carried with 27 for, 2 against and 3 abstentions.

RESOLVED:

- i. That the council appoints Richard Auty as Monitoring Officer for the council and gives him delegated power to grant dispensations under s.33 Localism Act 2011 to district, parish and town councillors who have disclosable pecuniary interests to speak and/or vote on issues relating to such interests and to grant dispensations under the Code of

- Conduct to district, parish and town councillors with other pecuniary interests to speak and/or vote on issues relating to such interests.
- ii. That the council notes the powers delegated to the Assistant Director Governance and Legal, by the council's Scheme of Delegation, save those on elections, are be delegated to Norman Coombe, on an interim basis.

C85 **POLITICAL BALANCE AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS POST BY-ELECTION ON 5 JANUARY 2023**

The Chair informed the meeting that Council was in public session.

The report regarding Political Balance and Committee Appointments following the by-election on 5 January 2023 was noted.

The Chair closed the meeting at 9.55pm.

Councillor John Evans

Portfolio Holder for the Planning, Stansted Airport, Infrastructure & Local Plan

Full Council report – 21 March 2023

Progress with Staffing and Resources

It has been a difficult year in terms of attracting and retaining staff in the Planning Service. High quality, dedicated staff underpin all of our service areas. A number of councils across the country have also reported extreme difficulties in this sphere over the past year. Indeed, the latest Local Government Association Workforce report cites planning as the single most difficult local government profession to recruit to. This is reported by RTPI and RIBA too.

Recruitment and retention of staff has been a top priority in the Planning Service for some time now, particularly so in our Local Plans Team.

So, I am pleased to report that by next month we will have a full complement of staff in the Local Plans Team, all bar one of which will be on a permanent contract. In the past two months we have attracted two career-grade policy planners (one of which we will be supporting through a planning master's degree using Apprenticeship Levy funding), a transport planner, and a highly experienced principal planner. We have also appointed an interim team manager to help lead us through to our regulation 18 consultation. In addition, we have appointed a Conservation Officer, engaged after working with Public Practice (a not-for-profit public sector recruitment company).

Elsewhere in the Planning Service, we have just appointed an additional, part-time planning enforcement officer for a one-year fixed-term period. Planning enforcement, while not a statutory function of local government, **is** critical to maintaining confidence in the planning regime and the additional officer will enable evermore site inspections to be carried out.

Whilst we will still have some agency staff (seven) across the Planning Service going into the next municipal year (all of whom make a substantial and valued contribution to the council), 86% of posts will then be filled by those on permanent or fixed-term contracts, compared to just 14% via agency provision – our lowest proportion for some time.

In terms of the budget, the legacy of a reliance on agency staff has had cost implications on expenditure. However, this additional expenditure has been effectively 'cancelled-out' by a similar increase in income, over and above that predicted at the start of the year.

Local Plan

It has already been reported (Local Plan Leadership Group and Local Plan Scrutiny meetings of 13 March) that, as a result of staffing challenges, work on the local plan timetable has slipped.

In the last quarter the team consulted on, amended, and has taken the developer contribution SPD through for adoption. This will greatly assist in securing planning obligations (via S106) in the period until a new local plan is adopted.

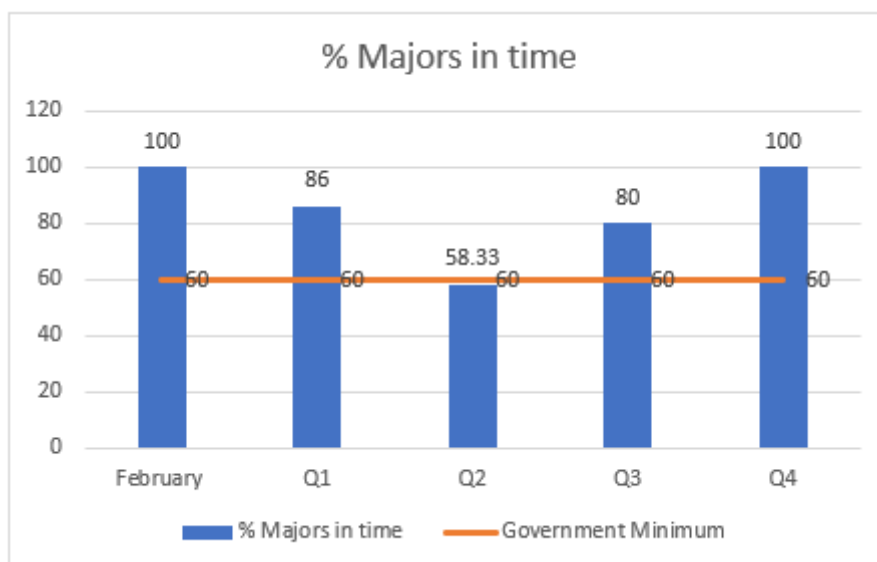
Officers and member of the LPWG also formulated a detailed response to the government’s consultation on planning reforms and the NPPF. The government’s response to the consultation and shaping of future reforms may be favourable to Uttlesford in terms of plan-making.

Throughout January and February the depleted local plan team assessed more than half of the approximately 300 sites submitted in the ‘call for sites’. The assessment work continues rigorously. Further work has been undertaken in terms of putting a local plan document structure and draft policy chapters together, as well as revisiting the settlement hierarchy for the district and ensuring information is accurate, factoring in feedback received from Parish Councils. Work on developing a Design Code for Uttlesford has also been ongoing. A site tour was organised for members on 6 March.

With reduced staff numbers, and the briefing and training of new recruits, it has been difficult to mitigate against slippage to the timetable. Officers have suggested a revised Regulation 18 consultation date towards the end of October. Once all new staff are in post a more precise work programme and timetable will be brought to members.

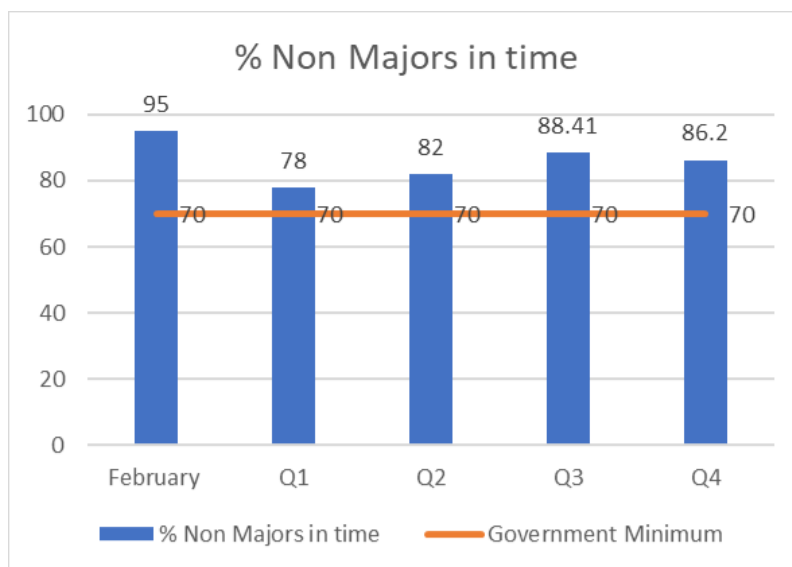
Development Management & Enforcement

The development management team has issued decisions on 2,891 applications this year (to 10 March 2023), including 40 major planning applications. 85.7% of major planning applications have been dealt within target timescales this year – 100% were in time in Q4 of this year, significantly above the government target of 60%.



% Major Planning Applications decided within target timescales by quarter

Similarly, non-major applications performance has improved throughout the year, from 78% in time in Q1 to 86.2% in the current quarter. This results in a cumulative statistic of 84.8% for the year to date.



% Non-major Planning Applications decided within target timescales by quarter

This year the council responded to 99 appeals against its planning decisions. In terms of major appeals (the measure for which Uttlesford is designated) performance has improved from 17% across 2018-2020, to 10.45% in 2022, and at time of writing to just 5.56% (% of lost appeals set against overall number of major applications). We have 6 major application appeals pending and it remains to be seen whether this figure will increase by year-end, depending on the outcomes of those appeals. In terms of non-major appeals, performance has improved from 2.91% lost in 2019/21 to just 1.22% as of March 2023.

The Planning Validations Team has validated 100% of planning applications within 5 working days again this quarter and have been consistently high-performing throughout the year.

I am pleased to report encouraging signs in our planning enforcement performance this year. So far this year the team opened 228 new enforcement cases and closed 255. The team’s backlog has thus been demonstrably reduced. So far this year we have served six planning enforcement notices and two breach of condition notices (all within the past six months). All of these reflect a significant increase in activity on previous years.

As previously reported, the Planning Service submitted its draft Performance Improvement Action Plan to the Secretary of State and officers met with DLUHC Officials in December. DLUHC have asked to meet officers in April in order to finalise an agreed set of performance metrics which will be monitored to establish levels of improvement going forward. These metrics will include:

- Percentage of applications submitted to UDC as opposed to PINS (i.e. an indication of developer confidence in UDC).
- Measure of PPA / pre-apps numbers via UDC as opposed to PINS (indicates developer confidence in our pre-app service)
- Speed of major applications decisions (indicates general performance on major apps and is currently 85.7%)
- Percentage of UDC response to PINS on S62a applications within time (currently 100%)
- Planning Committee over-turns (indicates elected Member performance)
- Hours of member training programmed / undertaken
- Staff turnover and vacant posts
- Quantitative measures, such as feedback from PINS and service users is also likely to be relied on.

Building Control

Our Building Control Team has maintained a market share of 80% of all building control contracts in the district throughout the year. This is exceptionally high for a council building control function that operates in a competitive market where there are 28 'Approved Inspectors' also operating in the area (i.e. private companies licensed to provide Building Control services). This year, we have supported one career-grade officer, who is local to Uttlesford, in gaining a building control degree with a second due to graduate later this year. The team further remains on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in respect of urgent and dangerous structure callouts (e.g.. bridge strikes, building collapses etc).

General – Stansted Airport and Northside

Engagement and regular meetings have taken place with MAG in the past months regarding future development plans for Stansted Airport and their detailed plan is anticipated in the next few months. Likewise, engagement with the developers of Northside will be arranged on an on going basis in both the planning as well as the economic contexts. Members will be advised further regarding these matters.

Councillor Richard Freeman

Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services

Full Council report – 21 March 2023

COMMUNITY HUBS:

Three of our four UDC Day Centres were closed in 2020 because of the Covid pandemic. All have now re-opened, as “Community Hubs” providing a range of facilities and services more closely matched to the needs of their local population.

Each operates on a different business model to the Day Centre it replaces, which were dependent upon a supporting staff from UDC. The new Community Hubs are run largely by volunteers, but with occasional financial support from UDC in the form of one-off grants.

Most recent of these, in the **GARDEN ROOMS** at **SAFFRON WALDEN**, has been functioning informally as a warm hub for the public and is widely used for town council and social purposes. A lease has this week been agreed between its owners (Uttlesford District Council) and Saffron Walden Town Council (SWTC) for the latter to use the premises as a re-imagined community hub. It will provide a range of facilities and services for the walk-in public. Its central position in the middle of Saffron Walden, adjacent to a car park and several major shops, makes it ideal for this purpose. It will be run by SWTC in collaboration with local volunteer organisations.

THAXTED COMMUNITY HUB has been re-imagined as “Pam’s Place” and has a regular clientele who enjoy meals and social events which take place in a friendly and welcoming environment. It is run by a newly formed **Charitable Incorporated Organisation**. Again, there are no staff paid for by Uttlesford district council, but we own and maintain the building.

CLLR MIKE TAYLER, a Thaxted District Councillor, has kindly provided the following summary:

“The Day Centre is now known as PAM’S PLACE, as part of our wish to widen the scope of the community hub, to be less focused on providing a regular set lunch time menu to those aged 55 plus (and in reality it was providing necessary food to a maximum of 35 individuals who were mostly in their 70s and 80s) and more accessible to all residents, for a wider range of activities.

A manager and manager/cook have been employed, and we have asked if a resident of nearby Vicarage Mead Flats could act as a caretaker.

Bookings are now being taken via e-booking. We are setting up a website.

Regular openings to the public are held on Friday mornings to coincide with Thaxted Market (when visitors come from Thaxted and the surrounding villages). “Coffee and Cake” and social mixing has been very successful; further days are being considered, also providing light lunches.

It is hoped that our cook will be able to provide some more formal lunches from time to time.

Regular bookings have been re-established for lectures and activities such as sewing groups. The Scouts are also interested.

Cllr Foley and I provided funding (via our “new homes bonus”) to equip Pam’s Place with audio visual equipment for presentations and films to appeal to those who want to use the venue for talks, lectures and business use.

Before opening the building new flooring and internal decoration took place, making the whole place much more attractive.”

An approximation of the numbers attending each week for the Thaxted Community Hub, according to officers, are:

Activity	Number of residents attending per week
Cosy Cafe Monday 9:00am-18:00pm	100
Wednesday Lunch Club 12:30-14:30 -	35
Alzheimer/Dementia Lunch	25
Drop In Café – Friday 10:00-13:00	40 - 50

STANSTED COMMUNITY HUB is run by a voluntary organization (Touchpoint; <https://www.thetouchpoint.org>) in a building owned by Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council. UDC has very recently made a grant to upgrade some of the facilities (mainly kitchen and toilets) when the day centre was recommissioned as a community hub.

Approximate numbers of users according to officers are:

Activity	Number of residents attending per week
Tuesday Kids Free Tea-Time	30-40
Thursday Community Café	70-80 (10 free)
Friday Free Breakfast	35 (young families)
Sunday afternoon at the movies	20-25 free toasties

GREAT DUNMOW COMMUNITY HUB is largely unchanged by Covid. It never formally closed but introduced safety measures during the epidemic. It functions within the Rowena Davey Centre, which is supported by Uttlesford District Council and run by volunteers. It continues to deliver a similar range of services to locals as the former day centre.

Approximate number of users according to officers are:

Activity	Number of residents attending
Lunches Tuesday & Thursday	40-50

When the day centres were closed or their activities truncated because of Covid, it was thought that it could be the end of this community service in Uttlesford. The enthusiasm and support of local volunteers and UDC staff has enabled this possibility to be averted.

The new Community Hubs fulfil a worthwhile purpose in their communities and are no longer dependent upon on-going funding from UDC for their existence. They now enjoy a secure future meeting a proven need of the communities in which they function.

Cllr Richard Freeman
Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services
10th March 2023

Councillor Louise Pepper

Portfolio Holder for Environment and Green Issues; Equalities

Full Council report – 21 March 2023

Equalities March 2023 update

- EqHIA – The final of a series of Equality Health Impact Assessment workshops are to be delivered to senior officers will go ahead on 27th March 2023, this will enable them to become critical friends to colleagues completing the EqHIA alongside any new or changes to UDC activity, a policy, strategy, procedure, project, new or change in service, initiative or other.
Session aims:
 - To have an understanding of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
 - To understand better which groups are protected from discrimination and what types of behaviour are unlawful.
 - To develop an awareness of Equality Analysis as a tool for promoting equality, tackling discrimination, and fostering good relations.
 - To have a better understanding of the different issues and stages of the Equality Analysis process.
 - To develop some practical skills in how to use Equality Analysis within the organisation.
- Essex Equality Network
 - The development of an Essex Equalities Hub/Centre of Excellence by the Essex Equalities & Partnerships team ECC – I have volunteered to be part of the development group and have a follow up conversation with an EEC colleague on 10th March 2023.

International Women's Day 8th March 2023



- Communities, Health & Wellbeing Team celebrated 2023 theme #EmbraceEquity (picture attached) this will feature in the staff newsletter.
- Staff Wellbeing Conference – A proposal has gone to the HR Manager to introduce the newly accredited Menopause Mentors at the June Staff Wellbeing Conference, along with a guest speaker to talk about Menopause Health and the hire of MenoVests from Over The Bloody Moon - MenoVest™ is a powerful tool designed to develop allyship and cultivate conversation in the workplace around menopause. Created for men to experience menopausal hot flushes (alongside

brain fog, anxiety, and sometimes headaches and dizziness) its profound impact is felt in a matter of minutes. The purchase of Menopause Ally pins from Over The Bloody Moon for those who have completed their accreditation.

Environment & Green Issues March 2023 update

Cllr Pepper had the opportunity to speak to Cllr Peter Schwier (deputy of ECC), after the Go Green Business awards, regarding the importance of working together on a joint County Council Climate & Biodiversity strategy. We both agreed (given the complexity and scale), it is an ominous task trying to achieve local carbon & biodiversity goals and targets. A lot of people feel overwhelmed with information. We need to investigate easy digestible solutions to address key objectives, including having the right information on our websites for the community to view. She also asked whether he could have a word to central government on more media climate coverage (like their **help for households**' advertisement), which reaches a far wider audience and making insulation a key priority (rather than heat pumps). **Fabric first.**

Go Green Business Awards - In collaboration with the Economic & Business team, Cllr Pepper **announced the Go Green 2022/23 business awards** at Little Easton Manor on Monday 6th March 2023. The three categories were environmental impact, reduction of single use plastics and energy saving.

Zero Carbon Communities Grant Fund of **£300K (£150k for 2023 & £150k for 2024)**, was launched last year with the aim of supporting community groups in Uttlesford to take action on Carbon Emission Reduction, Biodiversity Restoration and Enhancement & Community Engagement in Climate Change. This will go to Cabinet on March 16th and the publication of funding awarded will be March 17th. Grant funding will be released on March 20th onwards. If you weren't successful this time around, you might be successful in the next round of funding (due to commence at the end of August 2023). UDC will host another webinar to assist with these applications.

AIR QUALITY & TRANSPORT

Surface transport is responsible for 70% of our carbon emissions as a district.

UDC conducted an **Active Travel Survey** to assist with developing a new **Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)**. For example, new safe crossings, new cycle lanes or slower traffic speeds, to identify projects that can be delivered to transform active travel provision in the local area. **LCWIP Consultants have already commenced work**, that should be completed in July of this year. They will work in parallel with Steve Essex who is conducting the **Flich Way Cycle Study**, which is a proposal to investigation options for cycle links between the Flich Way and the south side of Bishop's Stortford, Stansted Airport and Start Hill.

Cllr Pepper pointed out at Scrutiny and to the **LCWIP** consultants, **Uttlesford is largely car dependent. We don't have a genuine choice of travel. Both of our largest towns don't have railway stations.** ECC have put on more buses that have a £2 deal up until June of this year, but they are largely empty. With all the house building going on, **NPPF 9. Promoting sustainable transport - Paragraph 105. The planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives. Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes.**

The control of these KEY objectives (also reviewing maintenance costs, in particular cycle lanes), lie with ECC and Highways.

Essex County Highways Panel have allocated funding for the 'Great Chesterford to Saffron Walden Cycleway' (design), and for 'Thaxted Road, Saffron Walden - New footway'. The Highways panel are also due to deliver a feasibility study for several Saffron Walden cycle schemes arising from requests submitted by the

Saffron Walden Town Council.

Dialogue has commenced with the Strategic Highways Team and the Council Planning team, to explore how we can best influence the pre-application planning stage for housing developments, with the objective that Council expectations for **active travel infrastructure needs are made clear to developers at the outset**. Dialogue is ongoing about how to influence and inform other planning process, **including Section 106 agreements**. There is **currently a lack of assurance that existing mechanisms can deliver the active travel infrastructure that is needed in the district**.

Further work is needed by the Climate Change, Lead Officer working with Planning Officers, to fully scope out the different active travel actions.

Cllr Pepper has spoken to several key people from ECC, in relation to this (Cllr Peter Schwier (deputy of ECC) and David Sprunt (ECC Principal Transportation & Infrastructure Planner). This is something UDC needs to actively address now, starting with linking our key cycle paths to key employment hubs and railway stations (prioritise Great Dunmow & Saffron Walden), despite our rural constraints. We need to be engaging with all key stakeholders (Flitch Way Action Group, LCWIP consultants, ECC, Stansted Airport & East Herts council). She pointed out to Cllr Schwier; *“Even though we took Stansted Airport to court, we weren’t disputing flying, only airport expansion. There is a future for the aviation industry [Another boost for green aviation as largest hydrogen fuel cell aircraft takes flight - AirQualityNews](#) and we should be working together.”* This partnership can create a joined-up active travel option for the community. She also mentioned that we need to review s106 contributions differently, by **creating good connectivity within the district** (**joined-up** cycle lanes, footpaths [that are user friendly for wheelchairs, pushchairs & mobility scooters], with adequate conservation friendly sensor lighting, community electric car sharing schemes and community EV (including on-street) charging points).

The Flitch Way cycle path is a safe cycling option for the south (during the summer months). However, it doesn’t currently link up to our **nearest railway** and **largest employment hub - Stansted Airport** (an ECC transport policy). A solution must be found, and this means engaging with the airport to make this happen. 220,000 people live within two miles of the cycle lane and Stansted Airport has 12,000 employees that are within one mile. Approximately 1,000 of the airport’s employees live in Bishop’s Stortford. A route connecting the two places has been proposed in at least four strategy documents since 2000 but has not yet materialised. Cllr Pepper also noted that Stansted Airport’s travel survey said that employee’s travelling to work by car, had increased. She has asked whether UDC’s STACC representative, could please mention these facts at the next meeting and promote/encourage this objective to be investigated as a key sustainable choice of travel, to assist with their 2038 net zero goal.

Climate Change Committee’s recommendations - Limiting traffic growth. Electric vehicles must not be the sole focus, with action also needed on demand and modal shift.

Cycling - Clear policy and guidance is required to **embed the shift to active travel** seen throughout the pandemic. Targets have been set and initial funding allocated for increasing walking and cycling. Electric bikes could have a valuable role in supporting an increase in cycling. The pandemic saw an increase in participation in cycling. Policy will need to build upon this to meet the target of **doubling cycling by 2025**.

New Active Travel planning requirement - The Department for Transport has now confirmed that from 1st June 2023, local planning authorities outside of London (where TfL and Borough policy and guidance will still apply) will be required to consult Active Travel England (ATE) on planning applications.

ATE has an ambitious target of 50% of trips in towns and cities being walked, wheeled, or cycled by 2030. To help implement this, in January, the DfT announced that £32.9 million of funding was to be made available for local authorities to train engineers and planners to conduct high-quality engagement and consultation sessions with local communities.

DEFRA AQ government grant £517,124 - To deliver a novel **Market Town Clean Air initiative** in Saffron Walden (consisting of a range of pilot schemes viability of **e-bike hire** and **electric vehicle car clubs** in the town and **improve awareness** and **change behaviour**) The first meeting of the Clean Air project Stakeholders was in February this year with various stakeholders. Residents, businesses, and all communities will be consulted via stakeholder surveys and focus groups on their interest in bike hire schemes, zero emission deliveries and e car clubs. The later will potentially be a model that can be rolled out to other parts of the district

and be the exemplar for the rest of the country.

BIODIVERSITY

The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world.

The UK needs to urgently cut down their carbon footprint and overseas imports, by **growing and selling more locally produced food**. Selling more locally produced food in local areas could help to reduce the copious amounts of plastic you find in supermarket fruit & veg packaging and would also reduce their overall profits by providing some local competition. Locally grown food tastes better and is more nutritious. We also need to be cutting down on our meat production and eating more plant base food. This objective also coincides with the current UK shortage of several fruit and vegetables on supermarket shelves.

Small scale market farming - Cllr Pepper will be focusing this month, on what steps the farming industry can take to address the climate and biodiversity emergency. Cllr Reeve mentioned as part of UDC's business and economic plan, that they would be looking into promoting empty farm sheds as one possibility, where new local agricultural businesses could evolve.

Cllr Pepper has recommended the following to Cllr Reeve and the Business & Economic team: -

Countryfile featured a small 2-acre market garden, with an inspiring small agricultural business called **Middle Ground Growers (MGG)**. They produce ecologically grown food (on a small manageable scale), to sell to local communities. They started supplying their veg to a whole food shop however, they have launched a veg box scheme and they now deliver weekly to around 200 families and to 10 local outlets.

Middle Ground Growers

<https://g.co/kgs/nb9A3q>

Innovative farming solutions - Cllr Pepper also recommended watching a programme on an eco-farm in Nottinghamshire that provides several examples of how diverse a farm can become, if you have adequate funding, land, and ideas. They run an organic farm that includes growing fruit trees and small hold leasing. They had several small business units that offer Botox treatments, a hairdresser, new kitchens, a café, man's shed, a well-being centre run by a charity, bikes to ride and local walks.

It gives you some idea on the potential for farms in Uttlesford and the prospect of small businesses units and other sustainable employment opportunities for local people.

Episode 5

FarmEco: Amanda discovers a Nottinghamshire eco-farm that's the beating heart of a local community

<https://www.channel4.com/programmes/amanda-owens-farming-lives>

ENERGY

Housing energy use is responsible for 18% of our carbon emissions as a district.

External government funding £1,268,000 for low-income families has encountered challenges and was hit by delays by our consortiums (the Energy Hub for **LAD2 £249k** & Warmworks for **LAD3 £919k**), not only in the scheme commencing but also **barriers with retrofit assessments and available supply chain** (the County are all competing for the same objective). **There was also a short timeframe to implement the funding**. Approximately 37% of measures have been installed to date. Essexwide consortium have assured UDC, that **they continue to work to grow the supply chain**, with further installers coming on board. They **now have 80 retrofit assessors**. UDC have released some funding to Uttlesford CAB, who had resource available to deliver focused promotion of the scheme to eligible residents by the end of December 2022. The Sustainable Warmth (LAD3/HUG1) government grant scheme finishes in March 2023. **UDC have bid for funding via consortium for the HUG2 Scheme which will run from April 2023 to March 2025**. Focus remains targeting low income/fuel poverty

homes, with off-gas grid for heating.

N.B Someone mentioned to Cllr Schwier, at the Go Green awards, there was only government energy efficiency funding for low-income families. Cllr Pepper mentioned in her closing speech, the government had announced a three-year scheme to provide up to £15,000 for middle-income households that will start in April 2023. However, she hasn't heard anything since but maybe the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt will announce this scheme, at his next budget (due on **15 March 2023**).

Save on energy bills and cut carbon emissions with solar panel group-buying scheme.



Solar Together Essex is an Essex County Council backed scheme that helps buyers through the process of purchasing high-quality solar panels.

It offers lower prices than the open market using trusted suppliers, and is an ideal way to cut future electricity bills and carbon emissions by using clean energy.

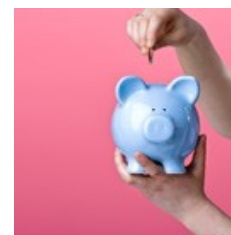
Register at Solar Together Essex by 10th March, without obligation, for a personal recommendation. [Group-buying for solar | Essex County Council](#)

solartogether.co.uk

Cost of living support

Many of us are worrying about the rise in living costs.

Our cost of living booklet [COST OF LIVING BOOKLET_FINAL.pdf - Google Drive](#) brings together information about the support on offer for Uttlesford residents – from financial assistance and debt advice, helping with utility costs to making your home more energy-efficient.



Warm Homes Essex, Warm Homes Fund and Ways to save energy in your home

[Check your tariff - Uttlesford District Council](#)

WASTE

Important changes to your recycling centres



From Monday 13 March, you will need to book a slot to visit an Essex County Council recycling centre to dispose of your household waste.

The booking system is designed to help to reduce queues, manage congestion both in and around the sites.

The booking system is not applicable to Blue Badge holders, or for pedestrians who bring their waste on foot.

Get more information [Recycling centre bookings \(loveessex.org\)](http://loveessex.org)

Garden waste weekend skip service

Our garden waste weekend skip service collects from different locations around the district.

If you cannot easily get to the Recycling Centre for Household Waste, some parish councils have asked us to provide weekend drop-off points for garden waste. These are at various locations and times.

You should contact your parish council if you need any further details.

Find out more about our garden waste service [Garden waste weekend skip service - Uttlesford District Council](#)



Love Essex – 1) What a waste video [What a Waste - YouTube](#) **2)** Waste Action Week 2023 [Food Waste Action Week 2023 | Love Food Hate Waste](#) **3)** Create a meal plan [Meal planning \(loveessex.org\)](#)

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Cllr Pepper is working on a pdf [Towards Zero Carbon – Sustainable Communities document](#), alongside Cllr Evans to explore key sustainable planning policies and making sure Developers demonstrate the path that their proposals take towards achieving net-zero carbon by 2030 (UDC's target), and working towards this in response to planning law, and also to the [guidance set out in the NPPF](#) and [Planning Policy Guidance](#). This will link in with our [Interim Climate Planning Policy Document](#) policies that will form part of the **Local Plan policies, which will have climate change mitigation and adaptation at its core.**

Cllr Pepper has requested the following Water Efficiency policies to be included in our Local Plan. [Water abstraction is Uttlesford's greatest concern.](#) Chalk streams are both rare and sensitive. The East is also one of the driest parts of the UK. Efficient use of Water Resources requires development to minimise the use of mains water by incorporating water saving measures and equipment; [grey water recycling](#) and natural filtration measures and designing new residential development to meet a target of 110 litres or less per head per day. Re-using grey water (the wastewater from baths, showers, and washbasins) can save up to 18,000 litres of water a year for each person, or a third of daily household water use. Where possible, [harvested rainwater](#) should be substituted for mains water. It can be used for flushing toilets (unless harvested from a green roof), watering plants/ gardens, topping up garden ponds and wetland habitats, and for general cleaning tasks such as car washing. In the simplest form, **water butts** and **rainwater collection tanks** can be used to capture rain for reuse in a low-cost way. [SuDS \(sustainable drainage systems\)](#), to manage surface water run-off.

Cllr Pepper also stated that she does not support Biodiversity Offsetting (please see comments below, in her letter to the Forestry Commission).

Cllr Pepper attended a TCPA climate planning guidance webinar, which highlighted that money lenders are no longer lending mortgages in flood risk areas and insurers are thinking very hard about the future shape of their industry because of the risk generated. To view this webinar please see attached link: <https://tcpa.org.uk/resources/webinar-climate-guide-launch-2023/>. The new edition of the TCPA climate guide is available here. [The Climate Crisis – a guide for local authorities on planning for climate change \(tcpa.org.uk\)](#). They also mentioned Natural England's green infrastructure tool which is worthwhile investigating. <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>

Check the long-term flood risk for an area in England <https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk>

Climate change: Warming could raise UK flood damage bill by 20% <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-64866058>

Cllr Pepper mentioned how [hemp was now being used for insulation](#). The urban design Officer said he could mention it in the design code, unfortunately though, we will be very unlikely to be able to mandate use of it. We can suggest it as a material and show some examples of how it could be used

<https://www.indinature.co/news/2021-04-housewarming-hemp-insulation-renfrewshire-council-social-housing>.
Hemspan, spoke at the Go Green awards and are based in Cambridge <https://hemspan.com/>.

LOBBYING

Cllr Pepper emailed Kemi Badenoch to say that Conservative Environmental Network member, Derek Thomas MP, has become the latest supporter of the Climate & Ecology Bill, joining a growing list of 160+ cross-party MP's and Peers.

To mark Derek's support for the CE Bill, Zero Hour has produced a video (see below) exploring the Conservative MP's vision and his work in the St Ives constituency to address climate and nature issues.

In this video, Derek discusses embracing opportunities to develop skills—bringing green jobs to the area—and how the CE Bill can bring this about. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPEMGT4tbJ8>.

Cllr Pepper asked for Kemi's support on a CE Bill.

Cllr Pepper has emailed the Forestry Commission and stated the following:

“At COP15, the UK has committed a target to protect 30% of nature on Earth by 2030. The National Trust is aiming to plant and establish 20 million trees by 2030 to benefit people and nature and the Government has committed to increasing tree planting rates across the UK to 30,000 hectares per year by 2024. Do you have a joint working tree strategy partnership with Central Government, Natural England, the National Trust, and the Woodland Trust, to achieve a similar long term tree management and tree planting goal?”

*Despite having some environmental planning protection, ancient woodland is still under threat of destruction or deterioration from development. Developers are still chopping down trees and hedgerows to build houses or roadways <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-64734051> and still get planning approval to destroy ancient woodland. When Owen Patterson was the environmental minister in 2014, he suggested that ancient woodland could be destroyed as long as 100 trees were planted elsewhere for every one that was felled. HS2 Ltd are planning to plant new trees and translocate woodland soils for the creation of new woods. They are completely missing the ecological point of veteran trees and the accumulated cultural meaning of old woods. These are woodlands have been an integral part of the local landscape and fabric of life for centuries. Older trees play a vital role in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. **One tree absorbs 1 ton of carbon dioxide by the time it reaches 40 years**. One ton of CO2 is a lot. During a climate and biodiversity crisis, how can building new roadways, railways and developments, **STILL** be considered a greater priority, rather than protecting them from destruction? <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/news/new-report-hs2-got-it-wrong>*

The UK is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. Enforcement on many fronts has been severely lacking and could be argued, has partly led to nature's decline. We need to protect our most valued environmental assets, with more robust tree planning, monitoring and management policy. I would also like to see key woodland bodies joining forces and making sure these precious ecosystems receive the protection they deserve.”

Making effective use of land NPPF - 120. Planning policies and decisions should: b) recognise that some **undeveloped land can perform many functions**, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production.

What will 2023 mean for climate change and nature? <https://news.sky.com/video/what-will-2023-mean-for-climate-change-and-nature-12772436>

Thank you,
Cllr Pepper

Councillor Arthur Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing **Report to Full Council: 21 March 2022**

Repairs and maintenance

Following on from my last report to Council, I can confirm that the stock condition survey for all council homes is nearing completion and the information collected will be used to create a new planned maintenance programme for 2023-24 and beyond. The programme will focus on delivering safe and warm homes for our tenants and our budget is being prioritised for this purpose.

At time of writing there have been just under 80 severe damp cases identified and the Council has procured an external specialist surveying company to visit these homes and identify the causes of the damp and mould, so that works can be arranged to resolve the problem. This will also involve housing management interventions to support the tenants through this process. This work will be undertaken alongside visiting homes where the tenant has reported damp and mould themselves.

In terms of health and safety compliance, the Council has now reported the externally validated performance to the Regulator of Social Housing, following the self-referral last year. The validated position is:

- Gas servicing, individual properties – 99.29% compliant
- Electrical safety, individual properties – 98.9% compliant within the statutory 10 year programme and 89.2% compliant within the best practice 5 year programme
- Gas servicing (communal areas) – 100%
- Electrical safety (communal areas) – 100% within the 10-year programme and 99% within the 5 year programme
- Fire Safety Risk Assessments – 100% compliant
- Asbestos Management – 62% compliant
- Water Hygiene – 81.9% - four properties are being taken off the shared tank system in March and then we will achieve 100% compliance
- Lift Safety – 98.1% compliant.

The Council is now waiting to hear whether the Regulator will serve a Regulatory Notice on the Council.

In recognising the much-improved position, it is important that this is maintained and that the Council continues to micro-manage UNSL and check that performance being reported by them is accurate. The Council is recruiting additional staff to carry out this work and building a repairs and maintenance client team, to oversee the service and ensure that Council tenants deliver the best possible service across the board, through strong contract management.

Reynolds Court, Newport

Lovell, the original developer, are on site to address the fire safety issues highlighted in my recent reports to Council. The Council has made it clear to Lovell that compensation will be required to cover any additional spend as a result of the issues identified and Lovell have accepted responsibility for the issues.

Complaints and Member Enquiries

The Council has published an updated tenant facing complaints policy. This is available on the Council's website. Work is ongoing to develop the new process for Member enquiries and this will be shared in due course.

New performance framework

We are finalising the new suite of housing KPIs for the new financial year. The Council will be taking a more robust approach to benchmarking performance against similar providers so that Members will be able to see how we are performing against others, as well as against the new statutory Tenant Satisfaction Measures being introduced from April 2023.

Rent and service charge setting.

Following the decision by Council to raise the rent by 7% and service charges by actual costs, tenants have now been informed by letter what they will need to pay from April 2023. This has generated a number of enquiries and the housing team has been responding, to explain the charges. The Housing Team will ensure that where tenants face hardship in these challenging economic times, as much support as possible is given, including referring tenants for hardship payments and/or to other agencies for help and advice.

In relation to rent overcharges as detailed in my last report to Council, work is ongoing to correct these and arrange either refunds or where tenants are in arrears, to credit rent accounts. Work will also be undertaken to correct housing benefit payments. The Council is waiting to hear whether any further action will be taken by the Regulator of Social Housing in relation to this, following the decision to self-refer.

Regulatory matters

The Housing Team is continuing to prepare for the new regulatory standards, which will come into force from April 2023. This includes reviewing services and governance arrangements.

In preparation for the statutory tenant satisfaction survey, the Housing Team will be working with tenants to help understand more about what tenants expect from its services, so the Council can learn from tenants and improvements can be made.

Members may also have seen or heard about the government's intention to require housing managers to have appropriate qualifications as part of the Social Housing Regulation Bill. This has been ramped up, in light of issues within the housing

sector, particularly about property conditions in social housing nationally. Government believes that housing professionals should be qualified in the same way that for example, social workers are and the expectation that officers will require a level 4 or 5 qualification, depending upon their roles and responsibilities. The Council is looking at what this means for its existing housing staff and the requirements will of course be included as part of any future recruitment processes.

Recruitment of Assistant Director, Housing, Health and Communities

This is ongoing following the first recruitment round, which was unsuccessful.

Councillor Alex Armstrong – Portfolio Holder for Sports, Leisure and the Arts
Report to Full Council: 21 March 2022

1Life Leisure centres

Parkwood Leisure Group have purchased the Company who own all 3 Leisure Centres and will continue to trade under the name of 1Life. We are in discussion with Parkwood Leisure and will continue to work with them to keep all centres open.

Saffron Walden Football Club 3G stadium

Saffron Walden Football Club 3G stadium continues to grow and goes from strength to strength and is a resounding success.

Newport MUGA is progressing well and we have been kept informed.

Great Dunmow Town Council MUGA is progressing with a quantity surveyor who is undertaking a site survey and report.

I am also in discussions with the various housing developers on the Braintree Road sites with the development of sports facilities, mainly soccer and hockey.

Carver Barracks running track is in use during the day and at weekends with local running clubs.

UK Power Networks are due to recommence work at the end of March, which will include floodlights.

Cllr Alex Armstrong
Cabinet Member Portfolio Holder for
Sports, Leisure, and The Arts

Agenda Item 5

Uttlesford District Council Meeting 21 March 2023

Written Questions to Members of the Executive and Committee Chairs

Written responses to be published on 20 March 2023

1. By Councillor Gregory to Councillor Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing:

“What progress has been made on Reynolds Court remediation, and at what total cost to UDC to 28 Feb 23?”

2. By Councillor Gregory to Councillor Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing:

“What efforts are being made to recover those sums and what investigations have/are being carried out as to culpability in this matter?”

3. By Councillor Barker to Councillor Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing:

“How many of our Council properties have had a condition survey done within the last six months and what percentage of our properties is that?”

Of those properties surveyed how many have been identified as having defects requiring remedial work/maintenance and what is the timescale to complete such works?”

4. By Councillor Smith to Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Budget:

“The CEO has suggested that a newly formed administration in May should expect to receive a paper on potential increases to UDC owned car park fees. What proposals are currently in development that would potentially increase the Councils income?”

5. By Councillor Khan to Councillor Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing:

“The Uttlesford Norse Partnership, which R4U implemented in 2019, has clearly been a disappointing venture, as has been reported to this Council and the Governance, Audit and Performance Committee. In addition, the failure by R4U to

put in a place a robust process to manage the Partnership has contributed to the poor performance of the service.

The proposal which R4U negotiated offered several areas of benefit. Can the Lead member provide clear evidence that the following areas in the proposal have been achieved:

Page 1 states that profits will be shared 50/50. How much has Uttlesford Council received and where can this be evidenced.

Page 22 states the following benefits to the people of Uttlesford:

- Improvements to people's lives.
- Raised service standards.
- Greater customer satisfaction.
- Continuity of service.
- A boost to the local economy.
- Community partnerships.
- Improved environmental standards.

What evidence can the Lead Member provide to corroborate on **each** of the above points?"

6. By Councillor Khan to Councillor Lees – Leader of the Council:

“The impact of not building council homes can have far-reaching consequences for both the council and the residents we serve. When R4U were elected, the Leader of the Council, Cllr Lees, pledged to build 184 new council homes over the lifetime of this administration. So far 55 have been built, a number of these were projects started under the previous administration. Now all new council home building is frozen.

Does the Leader of the Council agree that the impact of not meeting the pledge will be the following:

1. **Increased housing costs:** The freeze on new council homes means that the demand for social housing will further outstrip supply, increasing costs for residents seeking properties that have higher rents. This aggravates the inability of people on lower incomes to find suitable accommodation and may result in overcrowding, homelessness, or people being forced to move away from the area.
2. **Social inequality:** The lack of affordable housing can lead to social inequality, with those on lower incomes being disproportionately affected. This can have a knock-on effect on health, education, and employment opportunities.
3. **Increased pressure on services:** A lack of social housing can also put pressure on other public services, such as healthcare and education. For example, overcrowding can lead to increased demands on healthcare services, while children living in inadequate housing may struggle at school, which can impact their future prospects.

4. **Reduced income for UDC:** Building council homes generates income for UDC through rents and other charges. Failure to build new council homes will lead to reduced income for the council, and poor-quality service to existing tenants. ”

7. **By Councillor Caton to Councillor Armstrong – Portfolio Holder for Sports, Leisure and the Arts:**

“As you will recall the Council provided a £500,000 contribution towards establishing a running track at Carver Barracks. Can Cllr Armstrong please provide the Council with a progress report, including reference to the following:

- the level of use of the running track by Uttlesford residents;
- who is responsible for the management of the track;
- what is being done to promote the use of the track and
- any other action that the council is taking to ensure that the £500,000 investment is providing value for money for local Council Tax payers.”

8. **By Councillor Light to Councillor Lees – Leader of the Council**

“I would like to thank those Cabinet members who have regularly presented to Council reports on their portfolios.

Could the Leader of the Council explain, however, why some Cabinet members and all councillors who are designated Topic Leads have not submitted any written reports to the Council providing an update on activities they have undertaken since the administration came to power in 2019?

In the case of Cabinet Members who receive an additional allowance, given the lack of reports, does the Leader think that the public are getting value for money?”

Agenda Item 8

Committee: Council

Date:

Title: Review of Returning Officer's Fees and Expenses

Tuesday, 21 March 2023

Report Author: Peter Holt, Chief Executive
pholt@uttlesford.gov.uk

Summary

1. Members are asked to review and approve the Returning Officer's scale of fees and expenses for use at all relevant local elections and referendums held in the Uttlesford district from 1 April 2023

Recommendations

2. That the Council:
 - a. Approves the scale of fees and expenses set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
 - b. Reviews the fees and expenses every four years in the year immediately preceding the ordinary election of district and parish councillors.
 - c. Delegates authority to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services to increase the scales annually to reflect the local government pay award.

Financial Implications

3. The recommendations have costs which are already budgeted. The full cost of administering parish elections will be charged directly to those parishes concerned, whether those elections are contested.

Background Papers

4. None.

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	No specific consultation has been carried out Guidelines from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has been followed on rates of pay for non-returning officer fees
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Community Safety	No impact
Equalities	No impact
Health and Safety	No impact
Human Rights/Legal Implications	The Council must pay all the Returning Officer's expenses as reasonably incurred, provided they do not exceed the scale of fees, if the scale of fees is adopted
Sustainability	No impact
Ward-specific impacts	All
Workforce/Workplace	No direct impact

Situation

1. The Council is obliged by law to appoint a Returning Officer, who at Uttlesford is the Chief Executive. The Returning Officer's duties are separate from his duties as a local government officer.
2. The Representation of the People Act 1983 provides that all expenditure properly incurred by the Returning Officer in relation to an authority election shall be paid by the Council, in so far as such expenditure does not, in cases where there is a scale fixed for the purpose by the council for that area, exceed that scale. There are similar provisions for the election of parish councillors, although there is discretion as to whether that cost should be reclaimed from the parish councils concerned.
3. The legislation therefore makes provision for a scale of expenses to be fixed for the purpose of determining the expenses which are to be met, although it does not require such a scale to be adopted. It also provides that, in cases where a scale has been fixed, such scale may not be exceeded.
4. Where combined polls are held, the legislation requires that election expenses be apportioned equally between such polls. However, not all functions at a combined poll are combined. The Council's scale of fees will therefore be used where costs are attributable to district ward elections, but parish election costs will be reclaimed from the parish councils concerned (unless the Council were to decide otherwise). If a contested parish poll does not take place, the costs reclaimed will be limited to the work involved in dealing with nominations, publishing notices, associated fees and incidental costs such as postage.
5. The Council has operated on the basis of an adopted scale of fees and expenses. These fee arrangements are reviewed by the Council every four years to coincide with the ordinary election of district and parish councillors. Delegated authority has been given to the Director of Finance and Corporate

Services to increase the fees under these scales annually in line with the average annual local government pay award in the interim period between the four yearly reviews by Council.

6. The above approach is considered the most convenient method of ensuring that election expenses are met, and that appropriate staff may be recruited. It is proposed to retain the same arrangements during the period until the next review prior to the local elections in 2027.
7. The Returning Officer and Clerical Allowance fees and charges have been increased by 6% for 2023. Other fees listed in the appendix are based on the DLUHC indicative rates of pay as it seeks national consensus on pay for main electoral duties like polling, postal vote opening and duties at the count. These fees are listed for transparency purposes and so all fees are shown in one document. Election fees for national elections are not currently set and it is for the Returning officer to agree these at a suitable level to attract staff and be similar to other councils as much as possible, hence the Government's intended approach to set broad rates based on hourly rates of pay. For national polls, the Returning Officer has to submit accounts and hence fees need to be in line with their proposed rates or otherwise they are challenged and potentially the Council is not reimbursed for its properly incurred costs. The appendix to this report sets out the proposed increase in relation to all fees.

Risk Analysis

8.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
2 That fees agreed for the payment of polling and other staff engaged by the Returning Officer become progressively more uncompetitive as compared with neighbouring authorities, or they are challenged for national polls for being too high	2 By adopted the DLUHC's indicative rates for polling and other staff payments this greatly reduced the risk of not having payments fully reimbursed for national polls and fees will be of a similar level to neighbouring councils so	2 The impact would be making the recruitment of election staff more difficult and potentially jeopardise the effective administration of the statutory functions of the Returning Officer	Following the indicative guidelines of the Government and other actions, ensures that the rates of payment are sufficient to recruit enough reliable staff with the skills required and avoids national challenge.

	maintaining the attractiveness of working on elections in Uttlesford.		
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- 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.

RETURNING OFFICER'S SCALE OF FEES AND EXPENSES PAYABLE AT ELECTIONS OF DISTRICT AND PARISH COUNCILLORS, REFERENDUMS AND PARISH POLLS IN THE DISTRICT OF UTTLESFORD EFFECTIVE FROM 1 APRIL 2023.

1. Returning Officer's fees – local elections only (see note 1)

Fee for conducting the election and generally performing duties which a Returning Officer (RO) is required to perform under any enactments relating to Local Government elections, other than any duties for which separate allowances are prescribed herein:

a. for each electoral area for which a contest takes place	£82.63
b. at a contested election, for every 1,000 electors or part thereof within each electoral area	£29.04
c. for each uncontested electoral area, countermanded election and elections at which there are insufficient valid nominations	£39.05

2. Clerical fees and allowances

For all supervisory and clerical assistance, including the services of one or more Deputy Returning Officers (other than counting of votes – see separate payments Section 5), the following shall be payable:

a. For each contested electoral area	£108.73
b. For each uncontested electoral area or countermanded poll	£52.47

3. Postal voting

New rate as from May 2023 in accordance with proposed band rates from DLUHC.
(See Note 2).

Hourly rate x 1.5 after 9.30pm (night rate) or weekend/bank holiday.

a. Postal Vote Clerk	£13.00 ph
b. Scanner operative	£13.00 ph
c. Supervisor	£15.00 ph
d. Session Manager	£17.00 ph

4. Polling staff

New rate as from May 2023 in accordance with proposed band rates from DLUHC.
Hourly rate x 1.5 after 9.30pm (night rate) or weekend/bank holiday. (See Note 2).

Presiding Officer (PO), Poll Clerk (PC) and Polling Station Inspector (PSI) – 15-hour day

For every additional poll, the PO receives an additional one hour pay.

Any other additional payments for polling staff to be at the discretion of the RO.

a. Presiding Officer	£17.00 ph
b. Poll Clerk	£13.00 ph
c. Training – F2F (for POs)	£40.00
d. Training – Online (for PCs)	£20.00

Appendix 1

e. Trainer – to prepare and deliver training	£125.00 per session
f. Polling Station Inspector	£20.00 ph
g. Mileage - PO – flat rate fee	£20.00
h. Mileage - PC – flat rate fee	£10.00

5. The Count

5.1. Returning Officer's fee

a. (1) For performing the duties of a Deputy Returning Officer, a fee for each contested district or parish election, or combination thereof for which the counting of votes takes place	£58.04
(2) Fee for each re-count for any electoral area for which the Deputy Returning Officer is responsible	£29.04
b. a fixed sum is payable for each contested ward or parish, for the remuneration of all staff engaged in the counting of votes, except for any Deputy Returning Officer(s) so appointed; and	£244.50
c. a fixed sum is payable, in respect of each separate re-count of votes that is required to be held, for the remuneration of all staff engaged in that count or those counts, except for any Deputy Returning Office so appointed	£122.30

5.2 Counting Staff

New rates as from May 2023 in accordance with proposed band rates from DLUHC.
Hourly rate x 1.5 after 9.30pm (night rate) or weekend/bank holiday. (See Note 2).

a. Counting Assistant	£13.00 ph
b. Count Supervisor	£15.00 ph
c. Count Table Supervisor	£18.00 ph
d. Control Supervisor (top table)	£18.00 ph
e. Count Manager	£25.00 ph
f. Ballot Box Receipt Supervisors	£15.00 ph
g. Count Reception	£13.00 ph
h. Porters	£13.00 ph
i. Porters Supervisor	£15.00 ph

6. Travelling expenses

The travelling expenses of the Returning Officer and clerical or other assistants employed by him where necessary to make arrangements for the poll or otherwise in connection with the conduct of the election; shall be reimbursed at the **rate of 45 pence per mile.**

Polling staff to be paid a fixed rate sum as set out in Section 4.

8. Other miscellaneous staff payments

Other payment rates as from May 2023 in accordance with proposed band rates from DLUHC. Hourly rate x 1.5 after 9.30pm (night rate) or weekend/bank holiday. (See Note 2).

This to include such roles as:

HR Payroll	£17.00 ph
Communications	£17.00 ph
Caretaking	£15.00 ph

9. Miscellaneous Disbursements

The actual and necessary costs shall be payable in respect of each of the following items:

- (a) printing and providing ballot papers, postal vote packs and poll cards;
- (b) printing and providing notices and other documents required in and about the election or poll and costs of publishing the same;
- (c) the renting of any building or room for the purpose of the election and for expenses of heating, lighting and cleaning any building or room for such purpose;
- (d) adapting and fitting-up any building or room for the purpose of the election (including the provision of voting compartments and any necessary furniture) and restoring it to fit condition for its normal use;
- (e) providing ballot boxes, including any repairs and cleaning;
- (f) general stationery, postage, telephone calls, bank charges, insurance premiums and all miscellaneous expenses.

10. Local referendums

For every poll held under The Local Authorities (Conduct of Referendums) (England) Regulations 2012, or equivalent Regulations, this scale of fees shall be the same as in 1 to 9 above. This being for Neighbourhood Planning Referendums and other such local referendums.

11. Parish Polls

For every poll consequent on a parish meeting, this scale of fees shall be applied. All costs associated with the parish poll will be reclaimed from the parish council concerned.

12. Parish election costs

Appendix 1

All costs associated with parish elections will be reclaimed from the parish council concerned.

Notes:

1. Returning Officer's fees - relate solely to local polls for district and parish council elections and local referendums. For national polls, the Returning Officer or his/her title to be used as per the appropriate poll e.g. Local Returning Officer for the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner elections for Essex and the Acting Returning Officer for the Parliamentary General Election, his/her fees are prescribed by the statutory Fees and Charges Order. At a County Council election, the County Returning Officer will set the Deputy Returning Officer's fee. The Returning Officer's fee and that for clerical allowance shall be subject to review every 4 years prior to the local elections and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services be authorised to increase the scales in line with local government salary awards annually from 1 April.
2. Other fees - polling, postal voting, miscellaneous and for the count - are to be reviewed and determined annually by the Returning Officer based on national guidance and in relation to the appropriate poll.

PJH 22/02/2023

Member Motion - Full Council, 21 March:

Mould and Right to Buy

Motion:

“The Council believes that this and other councils are tackling the health issue of mould in houses, accruing substantial investigation and remediation costs in the process, which are required by statute to be paid for out of rents from council tenants. The viability of the Housing Revenue Account is degraded by the loss of houses, and their rental income, through Right to Buy (RTB), from which this council loses on average 12 properties a year. A significant burden of rules and restrictions surrounds RTB which means that the Council cannot replace houses sold without adding in additional funds. The resulting loss is not only rental income, but a shortage of homes and a lengthened wait for housing applicants who need to move. This leads to over-crowding which in itself heightens the likelihood of homes suffering from damp and mould.

Therefore, in order to support the financial viability of providing quality homes for tenants in the district, this Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to Government to request that they either:

- i. fully reimburse councils’ Housing Revenue Accounts for losses arising from Right to Buy, or*
- ii. follow the leads of the Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly and abolish Right to Buy entirely”*

Proposer: Councillor Arthur Coote

Agenda Item 12

Member Motion - Full Council, 21 March:

Civic Amenity Site in Saffron Walden Booking System

Motion:

'The Council believes that the Civic Amenity Site in Saffron Walden does not have queues. Council therefore calls on the Chief Executive to write to Essex County Council and request that plans for a booking system are abandoned and that the drop-in, no-appointment-necessary operating system is continued at the Saffron Walden site.'

Proposer: Councillor Martin Foley

Member Motion - Full Council, 21 March: Essex Devolution

Motion:

“The council considers that ‘Greater Essex’ is too diverse for a mayor to effectively represent and support all parts equitably, and that the extra cost of the precept, to pay for a fifth layer of governance, would be unwelcome for the residents of Uttlesford”

The council believes that the possible ‘Devolution’ option for ‘Greater Essex’ is not a substitute for setting local government finances on a sound basis, and may result in wasteful projects.

The council therefore instructs the Chief Executive to write to government urging them to implement a programme to fully fund councils on a long term stable basis, that will enable them to deliver all of the high quality services needed, before further considering Devolution deals.”

Proposer: Councillor Hargreaves