



Public Document Pack

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, 10th October, 2023

Time: 7.00 pm

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

Chair: Councillor G Driscoll

Members: Councillors M Ahmed, A Armstrong, H Asker, G Bagnall, S Barker, N Church, M Coletta, A Coote, C Criscione, J Davey, A Dean, B Donald, J Emanuel, J Evans, C Fiddy, M Foley (Vice-Chair), R Freeman, R Gooding, N Gregory, N Hargreaves, R Haynes, P Lees, M Lemon, J Loughlin, T Loveday, S Luck, C Martin, D McBirnie, J Moran, E Oliver, R Pavitt, A Reeve, N Reeve, B Regan, G Sell, R Silcock, M Sutton and M Tayler

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 - 20

To receive the minutes of the previous meetings held on 18 July and 24 August 2023.

3 Chair's Announcements

To receive any announcements from the Chair.

4 Reports from the Leader and Members of the Executive 21 - 23

To receive matters of report from the Leader and members of the Executive.

Reports have been received from:

- The Portfolio Holder for Planning

5 Questions to the Leader, Members of the Executive and Committee Chairs (up to 30 minutes) 24 - 26

To receive questions from members for the Executive and committee chairs.

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.

7 Matters received about joint arrangements and external organisations

To consider matters concerning joint arrangements and external organisations.

8 Appointment of Independent Persons to the Audit and Standards Committee 27 - 30

To consider the appointments of Independent Persons to the Audit and Standards Committee (Standards functions).

9 Local Joint Panel - provision for substitutes 31 - 36

To consider the provision of substitutes for the Local Joint Panel.

10 Member Motion: Cost of Living Crisis 37 - 39

To consider the member motion regarding the Cost of Living Crisis as submitted by Councillor Fiddy.

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](#).

Members of the public and representatives of Parish and Town Councils are permitted to make a statement or ask questions at this meeting. If you wish to speak, you will need to register with Democratic Services by midday two working days before the meeting. There is a 15-minute public speaking limit and 3-minute speaking slots will be given on a first come, first served basis.

Guidance on the practicalities of participating in a meeting will be given at the point of confirming your registration slot. If you have any questions regarding participation or access to meetings, please call Democratic Services on 01799 510 369/410/460/548. Alternatively, enquiries can be sent in writing to committee@uttlesford.gov.uk.

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.

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

Facilities for people with disabilities

The Council Offices has facilities for wheelchair users, including lifts and toilets. The Council Chamber has an induction loop so that those who have hearing difficulties can hear the debate. If you are deaf or have impaired hearing and would like a signer available at a meeting, please contact committee@uttlesford.gov.uk or phone 01799 510 369/410/460/548 as soon as possible prior to the meeting.

Fire/Emergency Evacuation Procedure

If the fire alarm sounds continuously, or if you are instructed to do so, you must leave the building by the nearest designated fire exit. You will be directed to the nearest exit by a designated officer. It is vital that you follow their instructions.

For information about this meeting please contact Democratic Services

Telephone: 01799 510548, 510369, 510410 or 510460

Email: Committee@uttlesford.gov.uk

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

EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on THURSDAY, 24 AUGUST 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor G Driscoll (Chair)
Councillors A Armstrong, H Asker, G Bagnall, S Barker, N Church, J Davey, B Donald, J Evans, C Fiddy, M Foley (Vice-Chair), R Freeman, R Gooding, N Gregory, N Hargreaves, P Lees, M Lemon, S Luck, J Moran, E Oliver, A Reeve, B Regan and G Sell.

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), J Etherington (Director of Finance, Revenues and Benefits), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), T Howes (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and A Webb (Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services).

Public Speakers: J Sharp, D Buscombe and K Waters.

C35 **MINUTE'S SILENCE**

The Chair opened the meeting and said that he had sadly learnt of two former councillors who had recently passed away. Councillor Eric Hicks, who represented High Easter and Barnston and later Dunmow South and Barnston, from 2003 to 2019, and Councillor Emily Gower, who represented Dunmow South from 2004 to 2011. He offered his sincere condolences to their family and friends and asked Council to stand for a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

C36 **PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Public statements were given by Ms Sharp, Ms Buscombe and Ms Waters. A statement was read out on behalf of Mr Harrison. Summaries of their statements have been appended to these minutes.

Before moving onto formal business, the Chair said his charity fundraising efforts would begin on 4 September and invited all members to participate in his charity cycle ride.

C37 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors Criscione, Haynes, Emanuel, Pavitt, Loveday, McBirnie, Martin, Neil Reeve, Dean, Silcock, Tayler, Sutton, Ahmed and Loughlin.

There were no declarations of interest.

C38 **PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUE – ELECTRICITY SUB-**

STATION, MORTIMER'S GATE, SAFFRON WALDEN

The Chair moved Item 4 forward in proceedings for the benefit of the public present at the meeting.

Councillor Freeman spoke to the report regarding Mortimer's Gate and said the electricity sub-station was situated in his Ward. He said the noise emanating from the sub-station had caused significant problems for many residents on the surrounding housing development, which had led to a complaint to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's report recommended that the Council find a lasting solution to the issue, although this was not a legal obligation but rather a moral one. He said that the developer had failed to engage with the Council in order to resolve the problem, and while the Council should not take responsibility, the damage to affected residents' quality of life could not be allowed to continue. He urged members to take the moral approach and support funding the works which would reduce the noise by 20db. He proposed the recommendation to Cabinet that the Council fund the remedial works up to a sum stipulated in confidential Appendix C and approve the additional expenditure.

Councillor Gregory seconded the proposal.

Members discussed the proposal to fund the remedial works. The following points were raised:

- The developer was a wealthy corporate body and should fund the remedial works.
- The issue before members was essentially a moral one; the Ombudsman's findings were not legally enforceable.
- It should not fall to the tax-payer to remedy this problem and concerns were raised that this could set a precedent. A request was made for a report outlining spend on this issue.
- The issue was between private home owners and the developer.
- The "Buyer Beware" attitude was not appropriate here as the planning conditions imposed on the developer had not been adequate. It would fall to the Council to be the "refuge" for those affected.
- The Council was looking at implementing measures to ensure this would not happen again. One proposal was to oblige developers to sign a "truth and honesty" statement during the application process.
- The developer had been approached many times in order to find a solution; they had refuted all responsibility in every instance and were unwilling to assist residents who lived on the development.
- This was a difficult decision with compelling arguments on both sides. This was reflected in the debate and public speaking statements at Scrutiny Committee on 22 August 2023, whereby a cross-party recommendation had been approved to fund the remedial works. Primarily, this was a moral argument as the Council was not legally responsible to fund the works.

Councillor Freeman was invited to speak before the Chair took the matter to a vote. He urged members to support the recommendation to fund the works without accepting liability.

RESOLVED: to recommend to Cabinet that the Council funds the remedial works up to a sum as stipulated in confidential Appendix C and approves the additional expenditure.

C39 LICENSING ACT 2003 - REVISED STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

Councillor Armstrong, Chair of the Licensing and Environmental Health Committee, introduced the report regarding the Statement of Licensing Policy. He said the Policy had been circulated for consultation and no objections had been received, with the Policy being recommended for approval at the Licensing and Environmental Committee meeting on 10 August. He clarified that the governance process had been correct and the Statement of Licensing Policy was reserved to Full Council for formal approval. He proposed adoption of the new Statement of Licensing Policy to take effect from the 01 December 2022 to maintain continuity with the current policy.

Councillor Alex Reeve commended the report and seconded the proposal.

Councillor Moran spoke in support of the new Statement of Licensing Policy and referred to his experiences as a Police Officer. Over the years he had seen how such Policy documents had developed and commended the new Policy as the best he had ever seen.

The Chair took the proposal to a vote; it was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED: The Council adopts the proposed new Statement of Licensing Policy to take effect from the 01 December 2022 to maintain continuity with the current policy.

C40 REQUEST FROM ASPIRE (CRP) LTD FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AT CHESTERFORD RESEARCH PARK

Councillor Hargreaves presented the report regarding a request from Aspire (CRP) Ltd for additional loan funding. The purpose of the loan was to fund new development at Chesterford Research Park, namely the building of a new unit for letting (Building 800), and phase 1 of an on-site solar farm. The loan was forecast to provide a significant positive return to the Council over a number of years. Furthermore, should the Council decide not to proceed, there was a risk that the value of Aspire's existing stake in Chesterford Research Park would be adversely affected. For these reasons, it was recommended that the Council proceed with the loan as requested. He said the proposal had been recommended for approval by both the Investment Board and Cabinet. He formally proposed the recommendation set-out in the report.

Councillor Sell seconded the proposal.

Members discussed the report and were supportive of the development.

In response to a request from Councillor Barker, the Strategic Director of Commercialisation and Corporate Services said a site visit would be arranged for members.

The Chair took the proposal to a vote.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Approve a new loan facility of up to £21,060,000 be made available to Aspire (CRP) Ltd, to be drawn down in tranches over a period of up to 2 years;
- II. Note the implications of making the loan on the Council's access to Public Works Loan Board, as set out in paragraphs 50 to 57;
- III. Delegate authority to the Director of Finance, Revenues & Benefits (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy and the Council's external treasury advisers) to agree the final terms of the loan facility, including the interest rate to be charged (such rate to be no less than 7.5%); and
- IV. Approve the financing of the new loan facility through additional external borrowing as set out in paragraphs 38 to 41 of the report.

The meeting was closed at 8.10pm.

Public Statements (all in relation to Item 4 - Planning and Environmental Health issue at Mortimer's Gate, Saffron Walden)

Jane Sharp

Ms Sharp said she was a resident on the Mortimer's Gate estate and was the ombudsman complainant referenced in the report. She provided an update on the debate earlier in the week at Scrutiny Committee and said the developer had been allowed to get away with a poor solution to a statutory noise nuisance due to mistakes made during the planning process. She said most of the homes around the sub-station were occupied by affordable housing tenants and the statutory noise nuisance could lead to significant health problems, and one such resident was already suffering from poor health. She said she recognised that this was a difficult decision to make when resources were scarce but local people were looking to the council for protection. She asked that improvements be made in the planning process to ensure that developers could not advantage of such situations again. She concluded that rejecting the ombudsman recommendation would undermine the right of redress open to residents and prolong the dispute. She thanked residents and campaigners for their support in this matter.

Debbie Buscombe

Ms Buscombe said she and her daughter suffered from tinnitus and the constant noise of the sub-station had meant she and her family could not enjoy her home without a constant 'hum', which was having a detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing. She said the developer had built the social housing section of the development around the sub-station, which, along with the limited availability and affordability of homes in the area, had led to a feeling of powerlessness and lack of control over tenants' living situations. This was exacerbated by the inferior fixtures and fittings placed in the social houses. She said she would move if given the choice but the issue had to be remedied to ensure future tenants did not have to suffer from the same problem.

Kate Waters

Ms Waters said she did not live by the sub-station but could hear the noise when taking her children to the nearby playground. She said it was an injustice for those families who had to suffer from the noise every second of the day, and she highlighted the situation for social tenants or renters who had no choice but to live on the estate due to high costs elsewhere. She said the noise would have a human cost and cited sleep problems and concentration issues for local children. She said she thought the Council should come to the aid of residents and ensure that developers were held to account in future. She urged members to support the proposal to resolve the noise nuisance.

Mr Harrison (read out by Democratic Services)

Mr Harrison wrote that he had put down a deposit on his home by Mortimer's Gate before the property was constructed and therefore was shown another

finished build, not in the vicinity of the sub-station, in order to secure his deposit. Following a move into the property, the noise from the sub-station became louder and the constant hum had stopped him from enjoying the garden, as well as preventing him from opening his windows during the summertime. He said he could not understand how the Council had permitted the building of homes so close to the sub-station, and he felt let down with the fact that the developer did not honour their agreement to ensure soundproofing.

As a part owner, he said it would be very difficult to sell and move on due to the sub-station and he was disappointed with all parties involved.

COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 18 JULY 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor G Driscoll (Chair)
Councillors M Ahmed, A Armstrong, H Asker, S Barker, N Church, M Coletta, A Coote, C Criscione, A Dean, J Emanuel, J Evans, C Fiddy, M Foley, R Gooding, N Gregory, N Hargreaves, R Haynes, P Lees, M Lemon, J Loughlin, T Loveday, S Luck, C Martin, D McBirnie, J Moran, E Oliver, R Pavitt, A Reeve, N Reeve, B Regan, G Sell, R Silcock, M Sutton and M Tayler

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), N Coombe (Interim Legal Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer) and B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager)

Also present: V Thompson, V Isham and G King (Public Speakers)

C22 ALDERPERSON PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed former Councillors Cant, Godwin and Morson and congratulated them on their appointments as Honorary Alderman and Alderwomen of Uttlesford District Council. He presented each with a certificate of office for their distinguished service to the public and the Council.

Council showed its appreciation with a standing ovation.

C23 PUBLIC SPEAKING

Vincent Thompson, Vere Isham and Graham King addressed Council.

Councillor Coletta spoke as a member of the public on Item 13, the member motion relating to Railway Ticket Office Closures. He had given notice of an other registrable interest as a member of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) Union.

A summary of their statements has been appended to these minutes.

C24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bagnall, Davey, Donald and Freeman.

Councillor Coletta declared an other registrable interest in relation to Item 13 – Railway Ticket Office Closures as a member of the RMT. He said he would

recuse himself from the item and leave the meeting at the relevant time. He had already exercised his right to speak on the matter as a member of the public.

Councillor Evans, in respect of Item 6 and the rivers and water questions, said he owned part of Stebbing Brook.

C25 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2023 were approved as a correct record.

C26 **CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Asker entered the meeting at 7.20pm.

The Chair listed the ten civic engagements he had attended since the previous meeting in May. He announced his charities for the year, the Uttlesford Dementia Action Alliance and Accuro Stride. He also said he would be fundraising by visiting every ward in the district and invited councillors to join him.

C27 **REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Leader provided an update on the Local Government Association conference she had attended and said she had spoken to a number of leaders with airports in their authorities with a view of a more joined up approach to issues such as welcoming incoming refugees. She said volunteers and officers at Stansted Airport had handled the Ukraine and Sudan evacuations magnificently. On planning matters, she said the Council would receive feedback regarding the Planning designation on Friday. Furthermore, she noted the written rivers and waters questions relating to planning policy and said there would be more time to deal with these properly at a session of Local Plan Leadership Group. She also asked members to complete the training survey feedback forms.

Councillor Reeve provided an update on waste services and said there had been a number of glitches of late with waste collections, attributed to past vacancies, getting new staff members up to speed and structural changes relating to where the waste was processed. He said all vacancies, bar one, had now been filled and he was confident that problems with collections would now be resolved going forward.

Councillor Coote provided an update on Reynolds Court and fire safety measures. He said in recent weeks officers had met with the contractor to ascertain how the issues would be fixed. He said the contractor would now trial safety measures on one flat which would be tested by independent experts. The contractor had agreed to complete the works as quickly as possible and a new tester would be onsite by next week. A meeting was also held on Monday to update residents. Once the work had been complete, the fire service would be

notified and the waking watch would be stopped and the contractor would be asked to compensate residents.

Councillor Dean asked to meet with Councillor Reeve regarding the disruptions to the waste collection service. Councillor Reeve said he was always available.

Councillor Sell requested that each Cabinet member produce a written report for Council.

In response to questions from Councillor Barker, Councillor Evans said he was optimistic about the Council moving out of designation following discussions with the peer review panel and further news would be issued on Friday. He said the major application appeal statistics had gone down below the 10% mark and the council was no longer on the "naughty step". In regards to the fee for the Stansted Airport expansion application, he said the fees which would have been incurred had the Council not been in designation was £43,590.

Councillor Gooding requested that the Council inform the Fire Service of the issues with compartmentation at Reynolds Court if they had not already done so.

In response to a question from Councillor Criscione regarding the waking watch at Reynolds Court, Councillor Coote agreed that the contractor should be paying the costs in full.

Councillor Gregory thanked Councilor Coote for his honesty; he said he was disappointed with the written responses to his questions from Councillor Evans

Councillor Emanuel said she was reassured by the independent safety assessments at Reynolds Court but felt the contractor should be held accountable and the council reimbursed for associated costs.

C28

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

In response to Councillor Barker's questions of clarification which related to the list of executive responsibilities and the members' bulletin, the Leader said she had discussed the issue with the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer and the Leader would be responsible for any unlisted functions. She said further information on Cabinet member profiles and listed responsibilities had been issued on social media and the members' bulletin by the Communication team.

Councillor Barker said she had not received the Members' Bulletin.

In response to a question regarding the new evidence base documentation for the emerging Local Plan from Councillor Criscione, Councillor Evans said the Local Plan team would publish the relevant background documentation as soon as possible. He said a Local Plan Leadership Group meeting would take place next week.

In response to a question from Councillor Haynes regarding the commissioning of a landscape sensitivity study and heritage assessment, and whether this was newly commissioned, Councillor Evans confirmed it was and did include details on key views and heritage settings.

In response to Councillor Lemon's question regarding the Youth Council, Councillor Sutton said schools were stretched and circumstances had changed since the pandemic, which in turn required a fresh approach. Meetings were ongoing with schools and she was working hard to support young people in the district.

Councillor Pavitt questioned whether officers asked water companies if the water supply was sustainable when processing major planning applications for new developments. He said the statistics demonstrated that they could not. He asked Councillor Evans to elaborate on what details were available to Planning Officers in this respect. In regards to question eight, Councillor Pavitt said the response given did not answer his question and seemed to demonstrate that nothing had been done since the motion in question was passed in 2021.

In response, Councillor Evans said the Local Plan Leadership Group would be best placed to deal with the water supply details. In regards to planning applications, he said the Environment Agency had intervened in three applications in South Cambridgeshire in relation to allocated sites. He said the Planning Committee Working Group could also look at this issue.

Councillor Gregory said the responses provided did not address his questions; he said the answers were deeply evasive and did not provide the level of detail written questions warranted.

In response, Councillor Evans said he was not being evasive as the matter relied on the readiness of the evidence arising from ongoing water studies. That was the reason for a lack of specificity and as soon as the evidence was available a report would be considered by the Local Plan Leadership Group.

In response to question ten regarding the date of the meeting with the Environment Agency and when members could expect a report, Councillor Evans said the meeting was being arranged by officers and made a commitment to bring a report to members following said meeting.

In response to Councillor Criscione's clarification question regarding further expert advice in order to protect and improve water supply and environmental conditions, Councillor Evans said the advice had been commissioned and a presentation had been given last week at which point the question was asked in respect of a "showstopper" that would impact on the preparation of the emerging Local Plan.

C29

MATTERS RECEIVED ABOUT JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

No matters were received regarding Joint Arrangements.

C30 **PROTOCOL FOR SELECTION OF PANEL MEMBERSHIP**

Councillor Oliver presented the report regarding the Protocol for selection of Panel Membership, on the recommendation of the Audit and Standards Committee. He said it would cover three panels; Licensing and Environmental Health Panels, Standards Panels and Appointment Panels. In the event that a Panel was required, officers would establish a pool of eligible and available members and, by default, defer the selection of members to the majority group and main opposition group leaders. There was enough flexibility built into the process to allow either group leader to offer their entitlement to the next largest opposition group. He proposed approval of the protocol.

Councillor Fiddy seconded the proposal.

Councillor Barker supported the proposal but asked to add a line to clarify the position regarding the election of a Chair for each Panel. The Chief Executive confirmed that this could be done.

Councillor Sell supported the proposal and asked that smaller groups be given an opportunity to be involved, as per the recent Appointments Panel meeting.

RESOLVED to adopt the protocol for appointing members to panels.

C31 **APPOINTMENT OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

Councillor Evans presented the report regarding the appointment of the Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal. He said it had been a competitive interview process and proposed approval of the appointment.

This was seconded by Councillor Barker. She commended the appointment.

RESOLVED to appoint Nurainatta Katevu to the post of Head of Legal and Monitoring Officer effective from a date to be determined by the Chief Executive in consultation with the HR Manager.

C32 **APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT PERSON**

Councillor Lees presented the report regarding the appointment of an Independent Person to act in the matter of a complaint at Standards Hearings. She proposed approval of the appointment.

Councillor Reeve seconded the appointment.

RESOLVED That the council appoints Gillian Holmes to the position of Independent Person under s28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 to act in the matter of a complaint at a Standards Hearing.

MOTION: HGVS AND SATELLITE NAVIGATION

Councillor Barker presented her motion regarding Heavy Good Vehicles (HGVs) and satellite navigation. She said the Government needed to do something in order to prevent HGVs being stuck on byroads and under bridges in rural areas, causing great disruption.

Councillor Gooding seconded the motion.

Councillor Hargreaves had provided notice of an amendment and said the motion could be improved by requiring all HGVs to use specialist satnavs by law. He proposed an amendment as follows:

To remove the following wording:

“This Council therefore instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Government and call on them to work with Satellite Navigation companies and others providing road information to remove By Ways, By Roads and other similar roads from their systems.”

And replace with:

“This Council therefore requests the Chief Executive to write to the Government in support of the Local Government Association call to take urgent action to require all HGV drivers by law to use specialist satnav devices rather than currently only advising that they do. These are widely available devices which include bridge heights, narrow roads, and roads unsuitable for trucks, so that vehicles are only guided along suitable roads.”

Councillor Alex Reeve seconded the amendment.

Councillor Asker spoke in support of the amendment. She said driver error was also a factor in HGVs getting stuck and it was a wider issue than just satellite navigation.

Councillor Pavitt spoke in support of the amendment and said byways should not be removed from all satnavs, as they were used by cyclists, and it would be better to move towards bespoke satnavs for HGVs to resolve the issue.

Councillor Neil Reeve said he supported the sentiment behind Councillor Barker’s motion and something needed to be done.

The Chair looked to take the amendment to the vote.

Councillor Barker raised a point of clarification; she said Councillor Gooding wished to speak on the amendment and should be able to do so.

The Chief Executive said Councillor Gooding could speak on the substantive motion following a vote on the amendment.

The Chair took the amendment to a vote.

The amendment was carried.

Councillor Gooding said he no longer had anything to say since the amendment had been carried. He asked for the Constitution to be reviewed in respect of this matter.

The Chair took the substantive motion to a vote. It was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

This Council believes that HGVs using standard car Sat Navs collide with local infrastructure, such as railway bridges, or become stuck on narrow roads, causing major disruption and is costly to local communities. They often take significant amounts of time and resources to free, causing major congestion across the Essex road network generating more emissions and disrupting local rail services.

This Council therefore requests the Chief Executive to write to the Government in support of the Local Government Association call to take urgent action to require all HGV drivers by law to use specialist satnav devices rather than currently only advising that they do. These are widely available devices which include bridge heights, narrow roads, and roads unsuitable for trucks, so that vehicles are only guided along suitable roads.

C34 MOTION: RAILWAY TICKET OFFICE CLOSURES

Councillor Coletta recused himself at 8.27pm and took no further part in the meeting.

The Chair asked members to note the altered motion as tabled by Councillor Sell and asked whether there was any objections to altering the motion. The meeting consented to proceed with the altered motion.

Councillor Sell presented his motion regarding Railway Ticket Office Closures. He said it was important for a human presence to be available at railway stations and cutting jobs would create an environment of “digital exclusion” which would disproportionately affect vulnerable people. He cited a resident who struggled with arthritis and digital screens and who called out such closures as ageist. He urged members to support the motion.

Councillor Dean seconded the motion and said ticket clerks were also vital in ensuring passengers got the best deal.

Councillor Moran spoke in support of the motion and commended Councillor Coletta's speech in the public session. He said the need for a "trained human" was evident in his experience as a police officer who had attended life and death situations at stations. He added that staff were also helpful in directing tourists to the area to Uttlesford's attractions.

Councillor Hargreaves said modernisation was needed and the motion could have gone further, although he supported the sentiment. He said analysis was required to identify customer practices and where staff should be deployed.

Councillor Coote said he would support the motion and the issue was between the workers, the unions and their employers, and consultation should have been undertaken on a station by station basis.

In response to Councillor Asker's comments regarding the need to address the situation in all stations, the Chair said the broader themes raised would be captured in the letter and consultation response.

The Chair moved to a vote. The motion was carried.

RESOLVED:

This Council notes the plans by Greater Anglia to close the ticket offices at Stansted Mountfitchet, Elsenham, Newport and Audley End Railway stations. Therefore, the Council resolves to:

- i. Respond to the consultation expressing our opposition to such closures, and;
- ii. Call on the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary State of Transport, copying in Kemi Badenoch MP, to express opposition to such closures.

The meeting was closed at 8.45pm.

Public Speaking

V Thompson

Mr Thompson spoke on behalf of Stop Easton Park.

He thanked Councillors for their time and effort in regards to the development of the new Local Plan. He said the council had to get it right this time. He welcomed the two questions submitted by Cllrs Haynes and Criscione on process and the resultant clarifications. And he looked forward to clarification on the Council's approach to the 1939 Agreement, as requested by my colleague Andy Dodsley at the Scrutiny Meeting on 22 June.

Key decisions on the draft Local Plan were imminent. He said he wanted to highlight the underlying mission of Stop Easton Park since its formation in April 2017, namely the imperative of preserving large open spaces for the physical and mental wellbeing of future generations, The 2019 assessment of Open Space highlighted the shortage of Open Space in the District as too the heavy reliance on Hatfield Forest. He was pleased to learn that Hatfield Forest was to be excluded from further assessments. But this rendered the shortage of Open Space more acute.

He said that not only was Easton Park a key part of the district's heritage but it also had an important environmental role to play, both through its restoration and as a link to form a Nature Recovery Network connecting Hatfield Forest to Thaxted via Tilty and the Chelmer valley.

He said he understood that houses needed to be built and that UDC was required to build houses. However, this should be achieved without prejudicing a vital asset for future generations. He said UDC inherited responsibility for Easton Park through the 1939 Agreement and confirmed that responsibility in a variation of 2001. Strengthening communities to support the infrastructure needed in small towns and villages, as advocated in The Community Stakeholder Forum, was surely better than destroying a key asset for future generations.

V Isham

Mr Isham urged members to fully support the preservation of the Swift. He said the actions of others had highlighted how a very simple, low cost, special nest box brick could aid Swifts to breed, which was vital as the Swift had been added to the UK's 'Birds of Conservation Concern Red List' and had declined 57% between 1995 and 2017. He said assisting with the provision of nest sites would aid the Swifts recovery. He referenced a number of Swift facts

and said the Government had welcomed the idea but had passed on the responsibility to Local Authorities. He asked members to include the requirement of Swift Bricks in the emerging Local Plan.

G King

Mr King said he had accepted a job at Saffron Hall and moved to Uttlesford because of the rich cultural offer of Saffron Hall and the many other arts organisations in the area. He said he was concerned that the cultural landscape could easily disappear due to a lack of funding, recognition and support. He said there was strong evidence that culture was a key contributor to the health and well-being of the population whilst also contributing significantly to economic stability.

He said it was clear that interaction with arts and culture offered wide-ranging benefits to individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Investing in culture yielded significant returns, not just in terms of economic growth, but also in fostering creativity, cultural enrichment, and social well-being.

He said the council will have received letters in support of Saffron Hall and culture more generally in Uttlesford, which would have highlighted the financial challenges Saffron Hall and other organisations faced.

He asked whether the council believed that local authority investment in culture could have a positive impact on tourism, health and wellbeing and the local economy and that investment in culture could therefore be a solution to many of the challenges faced across the district, whether economic or health related.

Furthermore, he asked whether the Councillors were willing to meet with the authors of the Uttlesford Cultural Strategy to discuss culture in Uttlesford and the future sustainability of cultural organisations in the area.

M Coletta

Councillor Coletta spoke as a member of the public and said he would recuse himself for item 13 – the motion regarding the closure of railway ticket offices, as he had declared a conflict of interest.

He said railway station staff were the custodians of the station, which included taking responsibility for health and safety, revenue collection and customer service. It was an important and dynamic role and they were incident trained to deal with extremely challenging scenarios, such as dealing with fatalities and anti-social behaviour. The railway environment was not straight forward and was open to the elements; it was extremely difficult to prepare for all outcomes and a trained human was required on site to ensure the safety of passengers and the efficient running of the railways. Booking Office Clerks were trained to deal with horrific circumstances, such as deaths on the tracks, and could not be replaced with a machine. He said a human interface was required to deal with the myriad of problems that could arise in such a dynamic and challenging environment.

Councillor John Evans

Portfolio Holder for Planning

Full Council report – 10 October 2023

Local Plan

Since my last report in July we have drafted a full suite of local plan policies and policy chapters, developed provisional housing and employment site allocations, held meetings with a range of stakeholders (including neighbouring councils, Essex County Council, the NHS and Education providers) and held a local plan workshop with Parish Council colleagues.

The Local Plan Leadership Group has had two public meetings on 26 July and 4 October 2023. The purpose of the latter meeting to make recommendations to Cabinet. The group also held workshops in August and September to consider specific policy positions and provisional site allocations and has reviewed all of the draft local plan chapters by exchange of papers, in some cases requiring working over weekends by officers and colleagues.

We have now published a draft 'Regulation 18' Local Plan which will be reviewed by Cabinet and Full Council. If there is agreement from Full Council we will consult publicly on the draft throughout November and into December, all in general accordance with the timings given at meetings of the LPLG and Local Plan Scrutiny in the spring of this year.

The draft seeks to plan for housing in the most sustainable way we can, that minimizes the need for travel and maximizes opportunities for walking, cycling and using public transport. Thus, new homes are proposed to be near to jobs, shops and services and facilities. The draft seeks to support our existing centres (retailers/ businesses/ employers), but also seeks to ensure that any new infrastructure (schools/ health care/ leisure facilities/ open space) benefit as many people as possible, including our existing communities rather than solely new residents.

The decision made by Full Council will be a decision on whether or not to publish the draft for consultation; not necessarily to support each and every aspect making up the constituent parts of the plan. The Regulation 18 stage is still a relatively early stage within the plan-making process and can be amended following responses to the consultation.

During the recent LPLG workshops officers explained that some 6,000 homes had been consented in the current plan period, some on appeal, some via s62a and some by the council. Whilst this amounts to 6,000 fewer homes that we now need to plan for, it again demonstrates that development does not stop coming when there is no local plan in place. We just get more in locations that we do not support and that are not particularly sustainable. We saw that recently with the Secretary of State's decision to grant permission for up to 1,200 homes at Little Easton, made against the council's wishes.

I am therefore pleased that we now have a carefully prepared draft plan that we can seek residents' views on and then go on to revise and improve next year – as we will.

Allied to the above, we have just finished a six week public consultation on the Uttlesford Design Code. The code is intended to sit below the current 2005 Local Plan and will steer developers towards high quality design outcomes in the district once adopted. It is intended to be updated and republished to support the new local plan in 2025-26.

Development Management & Enforcement

In August, the Director of Planning and I prepared papers on the performance of the Planning Service at the request of DLUHC Officials. On 1 August, we met with DLUHC Officials to discuss progress. Officers have held further meetings with DLUHC Officials in September to discuss performance statistics and local plan progress.

Performance across Development Management remains strong and in all areas it met government performance requirements for the quarter. The Council is currently 'designated' for its performance in terms of 'quality of major planning decisions'. It is this measure that we perform less well on, and the recent appeal decision at Little Easton served to place us very close to not meeting the government's threshold of losing less than 10% of major planning appeals. The Planning Service is monitoring this statistic closely and reports it to Planning Committee on a monthly basis. Of course, the council is more likely to lose appeals without an up-to-date local plan in place.

Now that the council has its own Conservation Officer, we have started work on the designation of new Conservation Areas (CAs), the first in many years. A proposed Conservation Area for Smith's Green, Takeley is currently going through consultation, and a Saturday drop-in session in Takeley on 9 September was very well attended. This marks the beginning of a rolling programme of CA work with progress now being made on a CA for Stebbing Green. A review of policy regarding listed building consent in the context of energy efficiency and retro-fitting will also be undertaken.

Consultations as to aircraft flights commissioned by MAG and by DLUHC as to permitted development rights have been responded to.

In Planning Enforcement the team has been focussing resources on unauthorised off-airport parking. Officers have served Stop Notices at a site known as Squirrels in Broxted and at a site known as The Nook in Burton End. At time of writing the occupiers of these sites have not complied and officers are preparing further action which may lead to prosecution. Officers also recently served a notice on a site known as the Warehouse, Pledgdon Green. The operator of that site appears to have complied with the notice and parked vehicles were removed.

Building Control

Our Building Control Team continues to maintain a market share of approximately 80% of all building control contracts in the district. It has also won a contract from a conservatory company reviewing plans for the company nationwide. This contract is predicted to generate some £100,000 in income this year. The team are to be congratulated on this.

Building Control Officers, nationally, must complete compulsory registration and pass a competence exam to operate. The new regime commences in April 2024. This comes from the Dame Hackitt Review and new legislation (Building Safety Act 2023) governing building safety. Our BCOs are registering and are being supported in order to do so.

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).

Personnel

This year, Quarter 2 has been a particularly busy time in the Planning Service, and the nature of the work has placed even higher demands on our officers and those elected Members who are involved with the planning function.

I am pleased to report that staff turnover within the Planning Service remains low. We are to be joined by a new Urban Design Officer this month (October).

Uttlesford District Council Meeting 10 October 2023

Written Questions to Members of the Executive and Committee Chairs

Written responses to be published on 9 October 2023

1. By Councillor Loughlin to Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy:

“In view of the credit agency, Moody’s, look at local government finances where Uttlesford was placed ninth on a list of councils’ borrowing to income ratio, have any of Uttlesford’s debtors failed to service their debt and has this council failed to service theirs?”

2. By Councillor Dean to Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy:

“What steps has and will the Leader of Council continue to take to deal with the reputational damage to this Council following the recent publication by the national ratings agency, Moody’s, of a report about councils with high levels of debt? The report placed Uttlesford District Council amongst the ten worst indebted councils in England relative to their financial size.”

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

- 1) “How many houses will the Administration build/ acquire during the lifetime of this Council?”
- 2) Could the portfolio holder provide an update of the relationship between the Council and Uttlesford Norse. Further can minutes of the partnership board meetings be provided on a regular basis?”

4. By Councillor Sell to Councillor Reeve – Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Climate Change:

“What have been the % of missed collection for domestic and garden waste and can this information be provided on a monthly basis for 2023?”

5. By Councillor Sell to Councillor Lees – Leader of the Council

“What were the full time equivalent (fte) for UDC employees as at 1/9/23 compared to 1/9/22?”

6. By Councillor Barker to Councillor Lees – Leader of the Council

“At the August Council meeting I asked Cllr Lees to write, in her capacity as leader of the Council, to Bloor Homes regarding soundproofing to the Electricity Substation at Mortimer’s Gate. At the time she responded that all possible avenues had been explored. I am delighted that she took another look at this, followed my suggestion, and did write an open letter to Bloor Homes that she shared with Councillors.

Can I ask whether Bloor Homes have officially replied to the Council as to how much, or what percentage of the costs involved they are prepared to fund to remedy the situation for residents?

They were due to be discussing this at a Board meeting in late September.”

7. By Councillor Barker to Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy

“Aspire (CRP) Ltd has not submitted its accounts for the 2021-2022 year by the due date of 31st March 2023.

Can I ask the reason/s for the delay, accompanied with a timeline for these accounts to be submitted, and what impact this delay has on each of the Officers/ Directors of the Company?”

8. By Councillor Gregory to Councillor Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing

“What progress has been made on remediation of the problems discovered at Reynolds Ct, the cost to date and the extent to which those costs have been recovered?”

9. By Councillor Moran to Councillor Evans – Portfolio Holder for Planning

“Can you update councillors as to progress in regards to recruiting additional enforcement officers for UDC, including details on how the backlog in enforcement cases is being actively and effectively reduced, and, to help us understand the current situation, how many open enforcement cases does UDC have at present?”

10. By Councillor Martin to Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy

1. “Can the CBRE report, which supports the uplift in asset valuation be provided to the council for review?”
2. Why, when the investment is stated at the historical cost basis, is there still such a material uplift in the value of the investment – it’s only approximately £250K less than under the fair value method. If this reflects additional investment, which represents the cost uplift, why is it treated as profit rather than simply being capitalized into the balance of the asset?”

Agenda Item 8

Committee: Council

Date:

Title: Appointment of an Independent Person

Tuesday, 10
October 2023

Lead Member: Cllr Edward Oliver, Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee

Report Author: Richard Auty, Monitoring Officer
rauty@uttlesford.gov.uk

Summary

1. This report recommends that the council appoints a person to the position of Independent Person under s28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 to fulfil the various roles that can be required in the event of Code of Conduct complaints against district, town or parish councillors, and in the capacity of a “relevant Independent Person” for the purposes of the Statutory Officer Discipline and Dismissal Panels.

Recommendations

2. That the council appoints Daniel Paul to the position of an Independent Person under s28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 with regard to Code of Conduct complaints, and in the capacity of a “relevant Independent Person” for the purposes of the Statutory Officer Discipline and Dismissal Panels as set out in the Council’s disciplinary procedures for statutory officers in Part 4 of the council’s Constitution.

Financial Implications

3. None arising from this report.

Background Papers

4. None

Impact

- 5.

Communication/Consultation	None
----------------------------	------

Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	<p>The council is required under section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 to appoint sufficient Independent Persons to assist the Council in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by district councillors and co-opted members of the Council, and by Town/Parish Councillors of Town/Parish Councils within the District.</p> <p>The council is also required under its Statutory Officer Employment Procedure Rules in paragraphs 8.4 to 8.7 in Part 4 of the Constitution to appoint at least two “relevant independent persons” for the purposes of statutory officer disciplinary panels.</p>
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	None

Situation

6. The Council is required under section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 to appoint sufficient Independent Persons to assist the Council in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct by district councillors and co-opted members of the Council, and by Town/Parish Councillors of Town/Parish Councils within the District.
7. In addition, the Council is required under its Statutory Officer Employment Procedure Rules in paragraphs 8.4 to 8.7 in Part 4 of the Constitution to appoint at least two “relevant independent persons” for the purposes of statutory officer disciplinary panels.
8. The Council currently has three Independent Persons. There is the potential for all three to play a role during the Code of Conduct complaint process – initial assessment, supporting the “subject member” and attending a Standards Panel hearing as an advisory but non-voting panel member. There is therefore a resilience issue should for any reason one Independent Person be unavailable.

9. In addition, a recently-concluded, long-running and complex complaint saw all three Independent Persons having already been involved in the matter before a Standards Panel was called, meaning the council had to find an Independent Person from another authority.
10. Although in this case the Panel hearing did not in the end take place, it highlighted the need to mitigate against such a situation arising again. The Monitoring Officer therefore advertised for an additional Independent Person to join the council. Interviews were conducted by Cllr Oliver, the Chair of Audit and Standards Committee, one of the three existing Independent Persons and the Monitoring Officer. Each candidate also had the opportunity to meet the other two existing Independent Persons during this process.
11. Following this successful interview process, the Monitoring Officer proposes to appoint an Independent Person to act in accordance with section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 and Statutory Officer Employment procedures. Their personal details have been appended to this report.

Risk Analysis

11.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The council does not appoint an Independent Person	1: members are expected to observe their statutory duty	3: The council are unable to determine complaints in accordance with their procedures. The council risks reputational damage if this function is not performed	Appoint suitable Independent Person.

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.

Appendix A

Daniel Paul holds a senior position in Human Resources at a London Borough, where he also has overall responsibility for the Elections team.

He is a resident of Saffron Walden and is a Governor at RA Butler Academy. He is also a Forest School volunteer at the school.

He has both private and public sector professional experience, a strong understanding of the Nolan Principles and the local government Standards regime, advanced knowledge of local government structures and the role of Independent Persons within those structures, and demonstrated excellent independent thinking skills and personal integrity during the interview.

Committee:	Council	Date:	Tuesday, 10 October 2023
Title:	Local Joint Panel – provision for substitute members		
Lead member:	Cllr Arthur Coote, Member of the Local Joint Panel		
Report Author	Ben Ferguson, Democratic Services Manager bferguson@uttlesford.gov.uk		

Summary

1. This report proposes an amendment to the Local Joint Panel's terms of reference to permit the provision of substitute members.
2. The proposal is put to Full Council following a request from the cross-party working group. Subsequently, the Group Leaders of the three largest groups have nominated themselves as substitutes, subject to Council amending the Terms of Reference.

Recommendations

1. That Council:
 - i. Amends the Local Joint Panel's Terms of Reference in order to permit the appointment of a substitute member for each participating political Group (Appendix A);
 - ii. Subject to the amended Terms of Reference being approved, appoint Councillors Lees (Residents for Uttlesford), Barker (Conservative) and Sell (Liberal Democrat) as the nominated substitute members.

Financial Implications

2. None.

Background Papers

3. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

None.

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	Group Leaders of the relevant Groups who have seats on the Local Joint Panel.
Community Safety	N/A.
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	The Local Joint Panel is a working group of Council and is not a statutory body.
Sustainability	N/A.
Ward-specific impacts	N/A.
Workforce/Workplace	N/A.

Situation

5. The Local Joint Panel (LJP) is a working group of Council. Its role and purpose is to help promote good industrial relations through effective communication between Unions and the employer, to enable the employers to inform employees on matters which concern them and to enable staff representatives to raise employment issues on behalf of its members with the employers.
6. In addition to the staff representatives on the Panel, the LJP is composed of three elected members, appointed by the leaders of the three largest groups in Council. Councillors Coote, Loughlin and Criscione currently sit on the Panel.
7. Two of the three elected members must be in attendance at LJP meetings in order for quorum to be achieved. While quorum has not been an issue to date, the matter was raised at the previous meeting of the LJP and there was agreement to request the provision of substitutes to mitigate against member unavailability.
8. Group Leaders of the three largest groups have been consulted and have nominated themselves as substitute members of the LJP.

Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The Local Joint Panel is a working group of council and is governed by its	2	1	To permit the provision of substitutes.

<p>terms of reference. The provision of substitutes will mitigate against member unavailability and negate the need to reorganise meetings where quorum is not achieved.</p>			
--	--	--	--

LOCAL JOINT PANEL

1 The Role and Function of the LJP

To help to promote good industrial relations through effective communication. To enable the employers to inform employees on matters which concern them. To enable staff representatives to raise employment issues on behalf of its members with the employers.

The objectives of the LJP are:

- 1.1 To bring together employers and staff in consultation with the mutual objective of developing and maintaining an efficient service providing value for money.
- 1.2 Where this is the most appropriate avenue to afford a regular basis of consultation and negotiation on matters relating to industrial relations, productivity and working and other arrangements and terms and conditions of employment which are not negotiated under more extensive bargaining arrangements at national, regional or other agreed local levels (this includes the Single Status consultations and agreements).
- 1.3 To secure the largest possible measure of agreement in relation to the relevant Conditions of Service of the Council.
- 1.4 To act in accordance with and fulfil the role outlined in Stage Three of the Procedure in the even of a Collective Dispute as stated in the Collective Disputes PPN, Number 56.

2 Membership

The Panel shall be made up of:

- Three Members of Uttlesford District Council, to be appointed annually on the nomination of Group Leaders from the three largest political Groups in Council. **In addition, each participating political Group may nominate a substitute member.**
- Three named Staff Representatives appointed by the officially recognised union(s).

Either party may arrange for one or more temporary internal 'advisers' from a Service which may be the subject of discussion, to attend for individual agenda item(s) only.

In addition, the Chief Executive, and a representative from the HR Partnership may attend.

3 Meetings

Scheduled meetings are to be held four times annually, dates to be agreed in advance. Other formal meetings may be called, by either Unison or Members, if necessary.

A meeting shall be called within seven days of the receipt, by the Chief Finance Officer, of a request in writing by either party.

Ad hoc informal meetings may be arranged as and when agreed.

Chair: The chairmanship of the Meetings shall alternate annually between Members and Unison representatives. The incoming new Chairman will take up office at the May meeting.

If unable to conduct the meeting (or a part thereof), the Chairman shall appoint a replacement from the available members of their party of this committee.

3.1 Conduct of Meetings

- 3.1.1 Two-thirds of the named Members and two-thirds of the named Employee Representatives together constitute a quorum.
- 3.1.2 The employers will provide reasonable facilities for the conduct of the meetings, which will be held during normal working hours.
- 3.1.3 The employee representatives on the committee shall be paid at their ordinary rate for time spent at meetings.
- 3.1.4 The Agenda, as agreed by both parties, shall be prepared by Democratic Services and circulated to each member, not later than three working days before a meeting. Business other than that on the agenda may be introduced at the request of either party, subject to the agreement of the other.
- 3.1.5 During meetings, either side may call for a break in order to try to reach an agreement or develop a solution.
- 3.1.6 The Committee shall not have power to make a recommendation which conflicts with the powers or decisions of the National, Regional Council or any other agreed body which has been given authorisation to take decisions relating to industrial relations, Terms and Conditions of Service or employment-related issues, as defined in 1.2 above.

Appendix A

- 3.1.7 In the event of any matter arising upon which the Committee cannot agree (or if the Authority does not accept the Committee's recommendation), and where no settlement can be achieved between the authority and officials of the Union(s) concerned, the matter may thereafter be referred by either side to the Regional Joint Secretaries, provided it falls within their remit.
- 3.1.8 The LJP must refer all recommendations and proposals to the appropriate Committee of Uttlesford District Council, for its approval, or otherwise.

**Member Motion as submitted by Councillor Fiddy:
Full Council, 10 October - Cost of Living Crisis**

Council notes that:

- I. Inflation and rising interest rates have caused a dramatic fall in real household disposable incomes:

According to the House of Commons Library¹ in August 2023, the UK's annual inflation rate of 6.7% was higher than in most comparable economies.

Key drivers of inflation are food and energy prices, both of which have risen since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022. Over the two years from August 2021 to August 2023 food prices rose by 28.4%. To provide context, it previously took over 13 years, from April 2008 to August 2021, for average food prices to rise by the same amount.

The Bank of England has been raising interest rates to try and get the inflation rate back to its 2% target, and as a result, the cost of mortgages and rents have risen.

Real household disposable income is the amount of money that households have available for spending after tax and social contributions (such as National Insurance Contributions) have been deducted.

The Office for Budget Responsibility reports that real disposable income is falling at the fastest rate since comparable records began, and forecasts that even by 2028 it will still be below pre-pandemic levels.

- II. Low-income households are particularly affected by rising prices:

Low-income households such as those on Universal Credit are already making savings for instance on food and heating wherever they can and have little headroom for cutting their expenditure further as prices rise. Rises in the cost of food and energy therefore have disproportionate impacts on their budgets relative to households with higher incomes.

51% of adults in Great Britain reported an increase in their cost of living in August – September 2023 compared to a month ago. Of those who reported an increase in the cost of living in this period, almost all (95%) said which was because of an increased price of food shopping, while 57% cited an increase in gas and electricity bills.

67% of those who reported a rise in the cost of living between 23 August and 3 September 2023 said they are spending less on non-essentials as a result, while 45% report cutting back on essentials like food shopping and 44% reported using less energy at home.

¹ Unless otherwise referenced, all data in this report is sourced from: [CBP-9428.pdf \(parliament.uk\)](#) Research Briefing 23rd September 2023 – Rising Cost of Living in the UK

Here in Uttlesford the Foodbank distributed 1,670 parcels in the year to March 2023 compared to 1,160 in the year before. This number would have been considerably higher had it not been for two Cost of Living payments made to low-income individuals as part of the central government emergency cost of living measures.

This provided emergency food to 4,310 individuals, 44% of these being children compared to the 3,100 who needed help the year before. It is estimated that 18% of children in Uttlesford are in low-income families, and that 7 in 10 of these are in working families.²

III. The number of people struggling financially in Uttlesford is rising:

The Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) model illustrates that socio-economic factors carry the most weight (40%) for determining health outcomes, highlighting the importance of this. We must therefore find ways to support our communities through these challenging and unprecedented times

The UDC Health and Wellbeing Strategy notes that Uttlesford is one of the 20% least deprived local authorities in England, however about 18% (3,272) of children live in low income families, after housing costs* (JSNA, 2020). This figure is likely to increase with rising costs of living. Deprivation in affluent areas can be very challenging. It has been suggested that a poorer individual living in a wealthier area may have worse health than a poorer individual living in a deprived area, for example (Stafford & Marmot, 2003), although the evidence for this is not conclusive. We must, however, be mindful of this and focus efforts on areas of need within the district as part of our work to support the UK's Levelling Up agenda to reduce inequalities.

Despite ranking highly in great places to live surveys, Uttlesford has a high number of families in receipt of Universal Credit. In April this year (2023) there were 4,247 people claiming Universal Credit, for comparison in November 2021 there were 1,290 claimants.

Benefit uprating lags the wider economy. The April 2023 annual uprating took them back to the real level they were a year earlier. It is not until April 2025 that benefit rates are set to recover the ground they lost over the autumn and winter of 2021.³

The number of people on UDC's housing register rose 17% from 1,145 in September 2019 to 1,338 in June 2022.⁴

In Uttlesford 36.7% of households are owned with a mortgage and 14.6% of households are privately rented⁵ which means that over 50% of households are exposed to the impacts of high interest rates on their housing costs.

² Data provided by Uttlesford Foodbank

³ [The cost of living crisis: a pre-Budget briefing | Institute for Fiscal Studies \(ifs.org.uk\)](https://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/1044)

⁴ Data provided by Uttlesford Citizens Advice

⁵ Data provided by Uttlesford Citizens Advice

Of the 33,815 properties in Uttlesford, over half 17,259 have EPCs of D,E,F,G, the least efficient rating. These households are particularly affected by increased costs of energy.

Council therefore resolves;

To call on the UK Government and our local Members of Parliament to effectively tackle the cost-of-living crisis facing Uttlesford families and act now to support them with the following specific measures;

- a) Introduce a guarantee that benefits will cover the essentials so that people don't have to resort to debt or emergency charitable support to meet their basic needs, and that deductions will never pull benefits below this level, and thereafter ensure that benefits are uprated in line with inflation.
- b) Unfreeze Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and bring Housing Benefit back in line with rents so it covers at least the cheapest 30% of private rents in every part of the country and uprate it every year to reflect changes in rents.
- c) Increase in Discretionary Housing Payment, which provides additional financial support for claimants who are in properties with rents above LHA rates
- d) Household Support Grant is allocated proportionately to District Councils in line with local needs. For example, those in receipt of Housing Benefit only were not eligible to claim the cost of living payments
- e) To ensure that New Burdens administration funding is sufficient to deliver new initiatives effectively
- f) A new revised local government settlement that adequately funds local councils to protect and operate vital front line services.

Proposer: Councillor Fiddy
Secunder: Councillor Sutton