



## 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, 5th December, 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 - 60

To receive the minutes of the previous meetings held on 10 and 30 October 2023.

#### **3 Chair's Announcements**

To receive any announcements from the Chair.

#### **4 Reports from the Leader and Members of the Executive** 61 - 74

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

Written reports have been received from:

- The Portfolio Holder for Housing
- The Portfolio Holder for Planning
- The Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy
- The Portfolio Holder for the Environment and Climate Change
- The Portfolio holder for Communities and Local Partnerships

#### **5 Questions to the Leader, Members of the Executive and Committee Chairs (up to 30 minutes)** 75 - 77

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

#### **6 Matters received about joint arrangements and external organisations**

To consider matters concerning joint arrangements and external organisations.

#### **7 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.

**8 Members Scheme of Allowances 2024/25** 78 - 90

To consider the recommendation of the Independent Remuneration Panel in respect of the Members' Scheme of Allowances for 2024/25.

**9 Local Council Tax Scheme Proposals 2024/25 and Consultation Responses** 91 - 122

To consider the Local Council Tax Scheme Proposals 2024/25 and Consultation Responses report.

**10 Calendar of Meetings 2024/25** 123 - 124

To receive the Calendar of Meetings for 2024/25.

**11 Committee Appointments** 125

To consider the proposed changes to committee membership in respect of the following Conservative Group nominations:

- Appointments Committee – Councillor Moran to replace Councillor Criscione.
- Investigatory Disciplinary Committee – Councillor Regan to replace Councillor Criscione.

**12 Member Motion: Sewage** 126

To consider the Member Motion regarding the discharge of raw sewage into rivers.

## **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](mailto: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.

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# Agenda Item 2

**EXTRAORDINARY COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on MONDAY, 30 OCTOBER 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, J Davey, A Dean, B Donald, J Emanuel, J Evans, C Fiddy, M Foley, 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, G Sell, M Sutton and M Tayler

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager), D Hermitage (Strategic Director of Planning), N Katevu (Monitoring Officer and Head of Legal Services) and A Webb (Strategic Director of Finance, Commercialisation and Corporate Services)

## C53 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed councillors and the public to the meeting and said the meeting had been convened to consider the Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation item as set-out in the agenda. He said he would be exercising his full rights as a district councillor and would be participating in the vote on this important matter.

The Chair invited the Monitoring Officer to provide guidance on declarations of interest in respect of Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 decision. This guidance has been appended to these minutes.

## C54 PUBLIC SPEAKING

The Chair had agreed to extend public speaking to 30 minutes due to the extraordinary nature of the meeting. The following members of the public addressed Council; their statements have been appended to these minutes.

- J Johnson
- A Evans
- H Johnson
- B Critchley
- A Ketteridge

- Councillor J Cheetham (Takeley Parish Council)
- M Marriage
- E Gildea
- S Merifield
- P Barber
- Councillor G Bagnall (Uttlesford District Council)

The Chair said a number of written responses had been circulated with members prior to the meeting. Their statements have been appended to these minutes for the purposes of the public record.

- Mr and Mrs Fish
- Mr and Mrs Silvester
- M Ireland
- D Brett
- Dr Z Voysey
- M O'Reily
- R Jones
- Mr & Mrs Colocasidou
- Mr & Mrs Knight
- Mr Tracey
- C Blades
- D Spragg
- Mr and Mrs Taylor

C55

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

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Silcock and Regan.

Councillor Haynes declared a non-registrable interest in respect of Item 2 as he was a beneficiary and executor of a property in Takeley which was 75 meters from a site. He said he would not be recusing himself from the meeting.

In response to a question from Councillor Coletta regarding living 500 meters from a site, the Monitoring Officer said he did not have an interest as the distance was over 150 meters.

Councillor Barker declared an other registrable interest in respect of Item 2 as she was an Essex County Councillor. The Monitoring Officer had granted her dispensation and would be participating in the meeting.

Councillors Foley and Gooding declared an other registrable interest in respect of Item 2 as they were Essex County Councillors. Both said they had had no dealings with the Local Plan processes at county level and would be participating in the meeting.

Councillor Criscione declared a non registrable interest as he worked for PP Comms Ltd (trading as Meeting Place), a communications advisory company working in the development sector, which had clients in Uttlesford. However, he had not and would not work on any promotion sites in the district and would be participating in the meeting.

Councillor Martin said he lived in Little Canfield and would be participating in the meeting.

Councillor Evans said he had previously declared that there had been sites adjacent to his property in the 'Call for Sites' process but they had not been included in the draft Local Plan for Regulation 18. He said this did not amount to a non-registrable interest.

C56

## **DRAFT UTTLESFORD LOCAL PLAN 2021 – 2041 (REGULATION 18) CONSULTATION**

Councillor Evans presented the report on Uttlesford's draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation. He said the district desperately needed an updated Local Plan, with the previous Local Plan being adopted in 2005, making it one of the oldest in the country. He said it was time to get on with this overdue task as the consequences were one of continued speculative development in the district. He said the decision tonight was for the draft Local Plan to advance to the consultation step of the process, after which public responses would be considered by the Local Plan Leadership Group (LPLG). This would lead to changes to the draft Local Plan which would be considered by Council at the Regulation 19 stage of the process. He proposed the recommendations set out in the report.

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

The Chair invited members to open the debate.

Councillor Barker said the settlement definitions included in the Plan, such as what constituted a small or large village, were ambiguous and it was unclear how each settlement had been categorised. She asked why the Countryside Protection Zone (CPZ) area was being proposed for development. Furthermore, a quarter of the housing allocations could fall away between now and the Regulation 19 decision; therefore, there was a great deal of uncertainty regarding how the draft Local Plan would progress.

Councillor Sell said there had not been enough member engagement throughout the process but residents deserved a Local Plan. He said whilst the document was not perfect, the draft Local Plan needed to be approved for Regulation 18 consultation in order for the public to have their say. He said he and the Liberal Democrat Group had concerns regarding the percentage of affordable housing prescribed in the policy, which would decrease from 40% to 35% in the emerging Local Plan, and that the LPLG needed to meet more often in public for the next stage in the process.

Councillor Pavitt said as Vice-Chair of the LPLG that the draft Local Plan had been subjected to the proper process and that the vote before members tonight was not to approve the Local Plan, but to give the public an opportunity to comment on the proposals. He said that individuals who were currently opposed to the draft Plan would have an opportunity to lodge an official response by way of the Regulation 18 consultation. Members would have another opportunity to vote against the draft Local Plan at the Regulation 19 if they felt it was not fit for purpose. He urged Council to support the recommendation as they did not have the luxury of time and the draft Local Plan needed to be progressed.

*Councillor Martin left the meeting at 8.19pm and returned at 8.21pm.*

Councillor Alex Reeve commended the document and said the Local Plan was a chance to get things right in Uttlesford and protect against speculative development. He said the draft Local Plan was sympathetic to the district's character, as per the design guide suggestions for Thaxted.

*Councillors Loveday and Davey left the meeting at 8.27pm and returned at 8.30pm.*

Councillor Dean said the Local Plan timetable could be slowed down in order for more work to be undertaken before the Regulation 18 consultation. This would mean less time between Regulation 18 and 19 decisions but would provide members with a better understanding of the proposals.

*Councillor Church left the meeting at 8.29pm and returned at 8.31pm.*

Councillor McBirnie said it was right to allow all citizens in the district to comment on the draft Local Plan; this could not be done if the draft Plan was not approved for the Regulation 18 consultation. He said Uttlesford was an outlier by virtue of having such an outdated Local Plan and this was leading to uncontrolled development across the district, and cited examples in his own Ward to demonstrate that significant building that was already taking place. By having a Local Plan in place, more schools, open spaces (e.g. football pitches, play areas) and infrastructure would be made available to residents.

*Councillor Gregory left the meeting at 8.38pm and returned at 8.40pm.*

Councillor Loughlin asked why the CPZ had been included in the draft Local Plan, whereas the 'Green Belt' had been considered unsuitable for development. She said that the rural areas around Stansted Airport had to be protected. She urged residents to respond to the consultation and said it was not a tick box



exercise but a true part of the democratic process. She said she was disappointed by the reduced affordable housing allocation and urged that it be set at 40%. However, she would be supporting the draft local Plan for Regulation 18 consultation.

Councillor Fiddy said a delay to the draft Local Plan would result in a delay to good quality housebuilding and not prevent housebuilding per se. She said operating without an updated Local Plan in place was destructive for local communities and the environment and had led to a lack of infrastructure. It was in the public interest to send the document out for consultation and she urged members to support the recommendation.

Councillor Moran expressed concerns regarding the lack of infrastructure in villages where the proposed increase in housing numbers would result in a significant rise to the current population. He cited the example of Thaxted which he said was forecasted to rise by 37%. An extra bus service would not be enough to relieve the additional traffic on the road network.

Councillor Coletta said that members who had a substantial allocation of housing in their ward were caught “between a rock and a hard place” in terms of producing a sound Local Plan for the district and protecting the communities which had elected them. He raised serious concerns in respect to the current state of infrastructure in Takeley, with particular regard paid to the road network and the lack of water infrastructure in the village. He would be voting against the proposal on behalf of residents.

Councillor Church said it was essential to protect the CPZ and it was not in the public interest to put the draft Local Plan out for consultation if it was not fit for purpose. He said the advice provided to Councillor Bagnall on declaration of interests was unacceptable.

Councillor Hargreaves said the draft Local Plan contained some excellent Development Management policies which would assist the Council’s Planning Committee but further work was required before Regulation 19. He said the new “active travel routes” were not adequate, as demonstrated by the case of Newport where the suggested travel solution was to provide new residents with an e-bike to deal with the issue of road congestion. A policy on water and sewage infrastructure was also required. He looked forward to seeing the next version of the document following the consultation.

*Councillor Armstrong left the meeting at 8.59pm and returned at 9.06pm.*

Councillor Criscione said the emerging Local Plan would affect the district beyond its twenty-year span and would impact on generations to come. He said some councils had not adopted a Local Plan for seventy years, so it was right not to rush into a decision and to get the draft Local Plan right before proceeding to Regulation 18 consultation. The Regulation 18 draft Local Plan would hold “little weight” at this stage in the process but there were concerns that developers could use any unsound policies against the Council if the draft Local Plan was approved for consultation. There would be implications for the Council if the Local Plan was deemed to have not been properly prepared and he would

be voting against the recommendation as further work should be undertaken, particularly on site allocations and the use of land in the CPZ.

The Chair sought Council's consent to proceed beyond 9.00pm. The Council consented.

*Councillor Martin left the meeting at 9.00pm.*

Councillor Emanuel said she had grappled with the decision, but a draft Local Plan was needed in order to control development in the district. She said further revision and improvement were required following the consultation, such as in respect of site allocations and the affordable housing policy.

*Councillor Asker left the meeting at 9.04pm and returned at 9.07pm.*

Councillor Gregory said the draft Local Plan did not need to be perfect at this stage but it met the necessary test for sufficiency and it was ready for public consultation. He said the district was in the throes of a "fourth Industrial revolution" due its location in the London-Cambridge corridor, Stansted Airport and its proximity to the "bio-tech" industry. It was important to move the draft Local Plan onto the next step in the process to prevent more speculative development in the district that was being delivered without the required infrastructure, and to give people the chance to have their say on the proposals. He said members had a responsibility to all citizens in the district and he would be voting for the proposals.

*Councillor Ahmed left the meeting at 9.06pm and returned at 9.09pm.*

Councillor Haynes said he had a number of serious concerns relating to process, the evidence base and housing allocations contained in the draft. In terms of process, he said there had not been enough public engagement, which was disappointing considering the council had won an innovation award for its engagement with the public in the early stages of the process. Furthermore, there had been no public LPLG meetings for nine months. Evidence was missing in regards to traffic studies, landscape assessments, analysis of key views, heritage and setting policies, and the Thaxted Neighbourhood Plan had been ignored. Furthermore, sites which had failed at appeal had been included in the draft Local plan. In conclusion, he said it was misleading to say these issues would be ironed out during the Regulation 18 consultation. He said the amount of weight given to the draft Local Plan was subjective and he would be voting on behalf of his ward constituents against the proposals.

Councillor Tayler said he was confident it was the right time to put the draft Local Plan for public consultation and disagreed with any calls for delay. He said this would result in further developer led applications. The public consultation would provide an opportunity to refine the evidence base, as well as for the public to provide comment. This was an exercise in "joint decision making" owned by residents rather than developers.

*Councillor Moran left the meeting at 9.15pm and returned at 9.18pm.*

Councillor Coote said the draft Local Plan should have included social, not affordable, housing and he would make efforts to increase the percentage of affordable housing in the policy from 35% to 40%. He said a Local Plan was needed in order to make community the key consideration in emerging developments, rather than the drive for developer profits.

Councillor Luck said the draft Local Plan had been recommended for approval by the cross-party LPLG working group and the Scrutiny Committee, subject to the evidence base being made available to members. He said it was important to proceed otherwise the Council would be in the same position many years down the line.

Councillor Freeman commended the draft Local Plan and said it was ready for consultation. As the Chair of the Planning Committee, he said this would empower the Council to improve developments in the interests of residents. Whilst the draft document was not perfect, it was constructive, and he urged members to support the consultation so the public could have their say.

Councillor Gooding said there were always winners and losers in a Local Plan process but the decision before members this evening was whether the draft Local Plan was ready for consultation. He said further information was required before the draft document was ready for consultation and he would be voting against the proposals.

Councillor Neil Reeve said the Council had to follow the regulations imposed by central Government and get on with producing a Local Plan. He urged members to support the Regulation 18 consultation as without a Local Plan the district would be open to speculative development. He said it was impractical to delay the process and it was right to allow the community to respond to the proposals by way of the consultation.

Councillor Lees was invited to speak as seconder of the proposal. She said that there had been absolutely no political interference in the draft Local Plan and the proposals put forward were based on evidence. Residents were urged to respond to the consultation as each comment would be taken into account and community events would be scheduled in due course to help inform the public. Each settlement in the district had experienced speculative development but the Regulation 18 consultation would give people an opportunity to have their say. She said the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stated that at this stage, the draft Local Plan held no weight.

The Chair invited Councillor Evans to summarise the debate as proposer of the substantive motion. He thanked Council for a civilized and respectful debate, and thanked members of the public who had contributed to the process to date. He commended the officers for providing objective advice and urged members to approve the draft Local Plan for the Regulation 18 consultation.

Councillor Criscione raised a point of personal explanation; he said the statement made by Councillor Lees regarding the draft Local Plan holding no weight at Regulation 18 was incorrect and contradicted his earlier contributions to Council.

Councillor Lees said the information could be found in paragraph 48 in the NPPF; she clarified and said it held very limited weight, but this would increase as the draft Local Plan progressed to the Regulation 19 stage of the process.

The Chair looked to take the matter to a vote; Councillor Barker requested a recorded vote:

<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	<b>FOR / AGAINST / ABSTAIN</b>
Cllr Ahmed	For
Cllr Armstrong	For
Cllr Asker	For
Cllr Barker	Against
Cllr Church	Against
Cllr Coletta	Against
Cllr Coote	For
Cllr Criscione	Against
Cllr Davey	Against
Cllr Dean	Against
Cllr Donald	For
Cllr Driscoll	For
Cllr Emanuel	For
Cllr Evans	For
Cllr Fiddy	For
Cllr Foley	For
Cllr Freeman	For
Cllr Gooding	Against
Cllr Gregory	For

<b>COUNCILLOR</b>	<b>FOR / AGAINST / ABSTAIN</b>
Cllr Hargreaves	For
Cllr Haynes	Against
Cllr Lees	For
Cllr Lemon	Abstain
Cllr Loughlin	For
Cllr Loveday	Against
Cllr Luck	For
Cllr McBirnie	For
Cllr Moran	Against
Cllr Oliver	Against
Cllr Pavitt	For
Cllr Alex Reeve	For
Cllr Neil Reeve	For
Cllr Sell	For
Cllr Sutton	Abstain
Cllr Tayler	For

The vote was carried with 22 votes for, 11 against and 2 abstentions.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Agree the Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 (Regulation 18) document be published for six weeks consultation 3rd November 2023 to 15th December 2023.
- II. Provide delegated authority for the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Infrastructure and Stansted Airport to make any minor corrections prior to consultation, including for typographical and formatting purposes.

- III. Note the suite of technical supporting evidence published alongside the Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 consultation.

The meeting was closed at 9.58pm.

Monitoring Officer Advice: Council, 30 October 2023

Dear Councillors,

Thank you very much for taking the time to read my note and respond as necessary seeking advice and/or clarification on your declaration of interests in relation to the list of proposed site allocations in the proposed Local Plan.

I have had the opportunity to note your queries and respond to them individually.

It is natural and commonplace for Councillors to own their own homes (and sometimes also a financial interest in a second or subsequent property) in the area; and/or be related to, or a close associate of, someone in the area. Therefore, the question arises for each Councillor of whether that home ownership gives rise to a conflict of interest that is relevant to their participation in the Local Plan Regulation 18 debate and vote.

This exercise will be undertaken at each and every stage of the process of adopting the Local Plan. My advice to individual Councillors may change at each stage, depending on the content of the Local Plan (for instance the proposed allocations may change)

Although the decision tonight does not concern the adoption of the plan, simply whether to consult on the draft Local Plan, the draft does represent the Council's preferred option at this stage, including proposed site allocations. There is the potential, therefore, that the proposed Local Plan, and in particular its proposed site allocations, may affect private interests of Councillors.

To assure members of veracity of this advice, this has had input from two external barristers.

## **Non-Registerable Interests**

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, Councillors are required to disclose Non-registerable interests ("NRIs") when a matter which *affects* either (a) your own financial interest or well-being or (b) the financial interest or the well-being of a close associate or (c) the financial or the well-being of a body with you have registered as a Other Registerable interest.

Guidance published by the Local Government Association on the Model Councillor Code of Conduct (on which Uttlesford Code of Conduct is based) advises as follows:

"What is the difference between 'relates to' and 'affects'?"

Something relates to your interest if it is directly about it...

'Affects' means the matter is not directly about that interest but nevertheless the matter has clear implications for the interest – for example, it is a planning application for a neighbouring property which will result in it overshadowing your property. An interest can of course affect you, your family or close personal associates positively and negatively. So, if you or they have the potential to gain or lose from a matter under consideration, an interest would need to be declared in both situations.

What does "affecting well-being" mean?

The term 'well-being' can be described as a condition of contentedness and happiness. Anything that could affect your quality of life or that of someone you are closely associated with, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect your well-being. There may, for example, be circumstances where any financial impact of a decision may be minimal but nevertheless the disruption it may cause to you or those

close to you could be significant. This could be on either a temporary or permanent basis.

### **Whether to withdraw because of an NRI?**

If Councillors consider that they have an NRI, they must disclose this interest.

Where that is the case, the Appendix B of the Council's Code of Conduct establishes the following test to determine whether Councillors are permitted to take part in the meeting:

*"9. Where a matter...affects the financial interest or well-being:*

*a. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;*

*b. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest*

*You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest."*

### **Proximity to proposed allocations**

Although not the only consideration in determining whether there is an NRI, the proximity between a proposed allocation and a property owned by Councillors is plainly an important consideration. If a property owned by a Councillor is in close proximity to a proposed allocation then this *may* amount to an NRI. Proximity of 5 miles would clearly not be perceived as representing an NRI, but immediate adjacency (i.e. immediately the other side of a garden fence or just across the road from the property) would likely amount to an NRI.

Officers have carried out an exercise regarding the distances between the proposed site allocations and the proximity to Councillors' homes, as already publicly declared. This has been done for all 39 Councillors objectively, and without fear or favour, and so as to assist Councillors to fully understand their position and enable them to form their own view on whether they should declare a NRI and/or withdraw from the meeting. It should be noted that this exercise did not consider the proximity between allocated sites and properties owned by relatives or close associates of any Councillors, which would also need to be considered.

There is no national guidance or obvious explicit case law to determine quite how close a site and an owned property would need to be to amount to an NRI.

Officers have done so in the context of a relatively recent situation in Uttlesford in which a (now former) Councillor had a Standards complaint relating to declarations of interest partially upheld and thereafter published. Officers have therefore determined that it is better to be aware of any potential issues of controversy in this regard and address them calmly up front, rather than face a challenge after a (possibly close) vote that puts the outcome of that vote into question.

Officers have had to take a pragmatic approach as to how close a councillor's owned home is to the nearest of the allocated sites, and whether such proximity whilst *not* amounting to a Declarable Pecuniary Interest (as their home is not the proposed site itself), would nonetheless likely be considered a non-Registrable Interest 'NRI'.



Proximity of 5 miles would clearly not be perceived as representing an NRI, but immediate adjacency (i.e. immediately the other side of a garden fence or just across the road from the property) would likely amount to an NRI. There is however no national guidance or obvious explicit case law to determine quite how close a site and an owned property would need to be to amount to an NRI. In each case, judgment will need to be exercised as to whether a matter affects the interest of a member, their relative or close associate, to a greater extent than it affects the interests of the majority of inhabitants of their ward affected by the decision and, whether a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe it would affect the member's view of the wider public interest.

Officers have considered two alternative thresholds for proximity as a guide to applying the above principles – one of 20 metres, and a second of 150 metres. As a starting point or rule of thumb, Officers consider that where a Councillor's property is 20 metre or less any Members whose homes are that close to one of the allocated sites should declare an NRI and should withdrawing from the meeting. In the case of Councillors whose homes are in this range between 20 and 150 metres, officers have advised those Councillors and invited them to make their own judgement as to whether or not they feel they should declare an NRI and/or withdraw from the meeting (applying the tests set out in the Code of Conduct as set out above). These thresholds are indicative, and judgment will need to be exercised on the individual facts in each case. The same applies to interests of a relative or close associate of a member, and members will need to make their own judgment on this basis as well. As a general rule, where a property is further than 150 meters in distance, Officers consider that the allocation is less likely to directly affect a Councillor's interest, however Councillors must exercise their own judgment in each case.

### **Proximity to rejected allocations**

For clarification, sites that were put into the call for sites but ultimately rejected and do not form part of the proposed plan before you tonight were not considered as part of the exercise as they do not form part of the decision before you tonight at this Reg 18 stage. If, by the time the plan progresses to Reg 19 and some of these currently rejected sites make it into the plan, the same exercise will be carried out and if other Councilors homes are adjacent to or close to the same rules will apply.

### **Ramifications and Dispensation**

In light of the approach set out above, I have advised one Councillor out of all 39 whose home is immediately adjacent to a proposed allocated site (and indeed surrounded by the proposed allocation) that they should declare an NRI and withdraw from the meeting.

I have further advised the two other Councillors out of the 39 whose home is greater than 20 metres but less than 150 metres, that they should carefully consider my advice and considered (a) whether to declare an NRI and (if so) (b) whether to withdraw from the meeting (applying the test set out in the Code of Conduct as set out above). In both of these cases, the proximity is substantially closer to 150 metres than 20 metres.

Thankfully, there have only been a handful of members caught by this. Whilst it is in my gift to offer a dispensation for the reasons listed below:

1. It is considered that without the dispensation the number of persons prohibited from participating in any particular business would be so great a proportion of the body transacting the business as to impede the transaction of the business.

2. It is considered that without the dispensation the representation of different political groups on the body transacting any particular business would be so upset as to alter the likely outcome of any vote relating to the business.
3. That the authority considers that the dispensation is in the interests of persons living in the authority's area.
4. That the authority considers that it is otherwise appropriate to grant a dispensation

I cannot see any justification currently under the Code for granting one.

It should be stressed that the distance between the proposed allocation and the properties owned by Councillors is only one potential factor which may give rise to a NRI. The onus is on all Councillors to consider whether there are any other reasons to declare an NRI and/or withdraw from the meeting.

I have therefore advised the single Councillor out of all 39 whose home is immediately adjacent to a proposed allocated site that they should declare an NRI.

I have further advised the two other Councillors out of the 39 whose home is greater than 20 metres but less than 150 metres, that they should carefully consider my advice and either declare or not declare an NRI as they see fit. In both of these cases, the proximity is substantially closer to 150 metres than 20 metres.

Some District Councillors are also County Councillors and therefore have a Declarable Interest by virtue of their role at County, but my advice is that unless they have had a particular involvement at County level that either predetermines their judgement or could be inferred as a particular bias to a particular point of view they are able to take part.

### **Conclusions**

To reiterate, this advice has had input from two Barristers.

Officers have undertaken this analysis in the context of a relatively recent situation in Uttlesford in which a (now former) Councillor had a Standards complaint relating to declarations of interest partially upheld and thereafter published. Officers have therefore determined that it is better to be aware of any potential issues of controversy in this regard and address them calmly up front, rather than face a legal challenge after a (possibly close) vote that calls the outcome of that vote into question.

Not only would such a successful challenge undermine the authority's credibility but may cause significant delays in the ability of the Council to progress the Local Plan.

Chair, please could you now invite Councillors to declare their interest.

J Johnson Statement – Council, 30 October 2023

I have tried to look at evidence objectively. I want to be convinced about the plan, but I am not.

Transport evidence is badly flawed. The base year is 2021. This was the year of Covid lockdown when people worked from home, were furloughed, air travel was severely restricted. Driving any distance was not permitted unless you were testing your eyesight.

You cannot seriously extrapolate traffic flows from an un-representative base year and even then acknowledge that the B1256 will be seriously over capacity and LP traffic will add to delays. Takeley 4 Ashes is already acknowledged to be a problem, but you propose to divert traffic from the A120 through the village. You call this “mitigation”. I call it kicking the can down the road

Then of course there are the HGV's running up and down the B1256 to the un-needed employment land you have identified by wiping out the CPZ. There are no figures to suggest what this proposed distribution centre will deploy in terms of vehicles but at 37.5 acres -it will likely be a significant 24/7 operation with accompanying noise, air and light pollution. Hardly sustainable and damaging to wildlife, ancient woodland and Hatfield Forest, not to mention residential amenity – yes, people do live there.

You acknowledge delays at the M11 J8 and say a “long term solution” is needed but present none as it is not in your remit. So increased traffic – some diverted from the A120 – does precisely what at Junction 8?

You intend to “upgrade” the Flitchway, whatever that means, but the whole length of the FlitchWay has been designated a Local Wildlife Site and a Local Nature Reserve and runs alongside Hatfield Forest. So mitigation and modal change really means destruction of our environment – hardly in keeping with sustainability.

Then there is the CPZ. You say that the “CPZ is partially successful” – what does that mean? Evidence? None. Not exactly an empirical term. You say removing it supports sustainable development. It does not. You admit “significant CPZ concerns”. You admit the CPZ “is highly valued by residents of Takeley” – but you intend to remove it. Hardly a community driven plan.

Poor infrastructure, limited water supply because of narrow pipes, the B1256 at a standstill is NOT sustainable development.

Developers will of course be happy. Houses at the new development in Takeley and Dunmow are targeted at Commuters as “close to the A120 and the M11 – and only a short distance to Hatfield Forest. Not far at all on an Ebike.

The removal of the Countryside Protection Zone south of the A120 in Takeley is significant.

You state the CPZ pre-dates the A120, when in fact the new A120 was in the planning stage and known about prior to the CPZ being introduced.

The 27ha site in Takeley '005EMP' is proposed for 15ha of 24/7 industrial usage - adjacent to a residential street, with scope to extend.

You state the site is screened with multiple entrances.....it isn't.

The site is screened from the A120, but not from Takeley Street or residential properties. It is only served by a field entrance.

In your own words there are significant constraints.

This site has three public footpaths on the definitive map.

You say we need green spaces...

Then you suggest developing the green spaces around our existing footpaths.

Your own LPLG member Cllr Reeve wrote to PINs regarding the Wren site.

He stated...

***"...this site is not needed for employment. I have checked with our Economic Development officer."***

He went on to say...

***"Land North of Stansted Airport was approved...."***

and that the Wrens site...

***"is not required for the upcoming Local Plan need"***

He called the Wrens site

***"A terrifying proposal.....in the linear village environment.... .....and in the CPZ"***

Please explain why the 5.3Ha site, that lies just inside the boundary of his and Cllr Driscolls ward is not required for the upcoming Local Plan need. Yet, just along the street in the neighboring ward 15Ha - in a residential street and the CPZ is deemed necessary....

Kicking the can along the road to another ward is not Master Planning.

It has been noted the Wrens site is the only parcel of land south of the A120 to remain in the CPZ – in complete contradiction to your draft proposal.

Your sustainability appraisal states ***“whilst there is clearly a need for long term solution to address delays which occur at M11 Jct8 the key driver for this is not the local plan – in this respect no proposed scheme has been identified.”***

- It is unsustainable to implement massive developments in the hope it will drive infrastructure.

Your Evidence states medium house prices are 67% above the national average...  
Yet you reduce affordable housing from 40 to 35%

The new £93m Railway Station for Cambridge South has not been raised anywhere.  
This surely affects Uttlesford.

Gypsy and Traveller analysis is not expected until 2024 - denying the public an opportunity to comment until Reg 19

- Where is the transparency?
- Why not disclose the sites put forward even if site selection has not taken place yet?

An officer stated changes to the draft can be ***“Substantial but not Fundamental”***.  
Therefore, what would he consider a change of site to be?

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The plan is unsound, and developer driven – in part, a cut and paste from developer proposals...  
To the extent you would think they have written the plan themselves.

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#### Hatfield Forest

There are no measures you can put in place to mitigate the harm to Hatfield Forest.

- The National Trust have locked gates along the Flichway for a mile stretch to stop the public using it from the Flichway. Is this what you are selling us as sustainable green open space?
- East Herts District Council Plan promotes Hatfield Forest as a local green space.
- New housing developments are using it to promote house sales
- A percentage of the predicted 1600 workforce for the Takeley Employment site will use Hatfield Forest for recreational breaks.

Shermore Brook runs directly through Takeley 005EMP whereby it enters Hatfield Forest SSSI. It is the ONLY feed for the lake. What untold damage will an industrial site built around this Brook do?

Having read the suite of evidence attempting to justify the blueprint I can't understand how in its present form this supports the site selection. This is clearly driven by commercial avarice without consideration of residents, Hatfield Forest SSSI, archaeological assessments or environmental concerns, not least the impact of nitrous oxide pollutants and noise from the A120 on kids attending the proposed school.

All of the transport assessments highlight how stressed the A120, B1256 corridor is. Yet there are NO infrastructure improvements proposed.

Since 2021 Mark Norman of National Highways has repeatedly expressed concerns that the road infrastructure can not cope, junction 8 of the m11 will require significant upgrade. UDCs own objections for the 1200 homes at Little Easton centred around traffic levels. NPPF 73 and 105 prescribe genuine choice of travel modes. This plan places transport exclusively on roads.

Transport is targeted to Stansted AirPort, yet there is no agreement with MAG. Proposed cycle ways don't comply with DfT's Gear Change specifications. Train fares from Stansted carry a significant premium.

The mitigation for all the additional traffic is unrealistic and can only increase traffic levels through Takeley village, welcome to Takeley lorry and car park

In their Preliminary Outline Strategy Report, September 2021, item CAB39 UDC cabinet endorsed the following statement "Development should avoid altering the Countryside Protection Zone (CPZ) boundaries, particularly where this would harm the purposes of the CPZ." Unelected officials choose to ignore this policy. The CPZ is not defined by a road. For nearly 40 years the CPZ is the countryside forming a barrier between the airport and local villages. Realigning the southern border removes that barrier. Promoting coalescence.

The opportunity to support the government's initiative to create a science hub around South Cambridge with high quality high paid jobs is rejected as being to challenging.

The consultation process includes all interested parties. Those same developers and landowners who benefit financially from this plan, will employ a team of experts to write their own justifications. Against which residents views will be drowned out.

R4U election manifesto pledges, included the following At any council there are many priorities, competing view points, and difficult decisions to be

made, but we will always seek to put residents first. We will work to a deliver a new local plan to protect our communities from predatory development. In all conscientious can you support this seriously flawed plan.

Statement of Mr Andrew Ketteridge:

Council, 30 October 2023

For seven years WeAreResidents and Residents4Uttlesford opposed all previous attempts at a Local Plan by this council, and then demanded that the council deliver a local plan based around one or more new settlements, repeatedly favouring land north-east of Great Chesterford when they had given up favouring Elsenham.

In early 2019, this council was given £750,000 by the government to cover costs of planning for new garden settlements.

There are no new settlements in this plan, garden or otherwise, only extensions of existing towns and villages, which is exactly what R4U opposed, but I guess that having left the district open to speculative development the economies of scale have been completely lost. Indeed, Cllr Neil Reeve recently publicly stated that he was happy that as a result of considerable speculative development, councillors would no longer have the difficulty of planning for a new town, after suggesting that nobody on the council really wants to build new houses.

With 299 sites of varying size and location coming forward in the call for sites, planning to build on the Countryside Protection Zone in Takeley and sending officers out to negotiate with other sites that did not come forward to the south of Saffron Walden, is indeed surprising.

“Don’t build on the east” of Saffron Walden was the slogan on posters and boards around 2013 and 2014. They objected to the three sites that were Linden Homes, Engelmann and at the time Kier Homes. They objected to the land that Kier wanted to make available for sports and leisure on the west side of Thaxted Road where development of new housing has now just begun.

And yet, we see plans for the further development of land to the east of Saffron Walden, nearer to Swards End, including a site for 450 homes that currently has no access to roads.

Your draft plan includes a drawing of a road from Thaxted Road through Debden Road to Newport Road, across land that was described as ‘an exciting new opportunity’ and ‘commercially confidential’ and secret until I worked it out and put in a Freedom of Information request. It was also inadvertently leaked by the council’s own consultants!

Despite the Sustainability Appraisal saying ‘it is understood that land might potentially be available’ (one has to ask who it is who understands that?), negotiations with the landowners to the south of Saffron Walden “came to nothing”, or so we are told, yet one landowner put in a planning application for a new agricultural field access off Newport Road a couple of hundred yards south of where they currently have had a field access for many decades, which just happens to be exactly where the road junction would have to be built.

The Beechy Ride or Fulfen valley is a beautiful heritage agricultural landscape, one of several that make Saffron Walden the place that it is, and it is assessed in the



Statement of Mr Andrew Ketteridge:

Council, 30 October 2023

evidence at the highest level value. Why then would anyone want to develop it or build a service road on it? So, this being the case, why would this council bizarrely pursue a plan to further develop the east side of Saffron Walden when the land for the road isn't available and R4U always opposed it? What is it, perhaps, about that site for 450 houses to the east that it is appraised for development when it should have been appraised as unsuitable and unsustainable?

We desperately need a plan, but Cllr Lees promised she would only deliver a plan if it was "absolutely right, done correctly and sound".

Details of this plan were leaked last year, but in February we were told that the rumours around sites were 'blatant lies'. Only, we now know the rumours were true. This plan was ready in the summer of 2022 but it was kept under wraps until after the election in May.

Will the final draft of the plan will be "substantially different" to this one? If so, I have no confidence in the process to date. We were once in control of the district's future, and yet after years of opposition from R4U, we are now completely at the mercy of landowners and developers!



# TAKELEY PARISH COUNCIL

UDC CABINET MEETING ON MONDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2023

Good evening, I am Cllr Jackie Cheetham and I am speaking on behalf of Takeley Parish Council.

The Parish Council appreciates the amount of hard work taken to produce the new draft Local Plan, and we are aware that the timetable is very time constrained.

To keep to the tight schedule, new heritage, landscape and transport evidence has only been published in the last 10 days. It is therefore reasonable to assume that members voting to approve the Reg 18 document are doing so **without** a full understanding of the recently released evidence and that the allocations **have not** been tested against the new evidence. This may lead to significant changes at the Reg 19 stage.

The one change we think cannot wait until Reg 19 is the removal of large areas of the CPZ. We have made representations at the LPLG and Cabinet meetings expressing our concern over the proposed removal of large area of the CPZ. It is minuted that the LPLG stated that they want to retain the CPZ.

The time to make changes to the draft document before releasing it to consultation would be minimal and the change would have no effect on the allocations because Priors Green was previously allocated in the CPZ, without changing the boundary.

Developers are already referring to allocations in the CPZ, even before the consultation has started. The CPZ has been the district's defence from industrial and urban sprawl around the airport ever since permission was given for Stansted to grow from a small regional airport. It was a key Government recommendation which accepted by UDC. It is what sets Stansted apart from the other major airports and the protection is arguably needed the most to the south of the airport.



## TAKELEY PARISH COUNCIL

In our view, tonight's decision would change UDC's stance on the CPZ and this is would create a major risk from speculative development from the moment the document goes out to consultation. It will impact all parishes surrounding the airport.

We therefore urge UDC to remove this small part of the draft document and retain the current CPZ boundary.

In most other respects, voting **for** the plan is to limit the damage from speculative development. However, removing part of the CPZ would have the opposite effect.

Turning to the strategic allocations, the main purpose is for them to provide more infrastructure, however, in Takeley the allocations do not bring benefits over and above those from speculative development. A small health facility was previously approved in Takeley, from approved housing development, and the walking and cycling route in Parsonage Road is already set out by Essex County Council, already attracting developer contributions.

The allocations would double the size of the village and build in the most sensitive landscape area. The outstanding feature is a secondary school that Takeley does not need or want. The plan hopes that traffic congestion will be reduced by upgraded foot and cycle paths and, interestingly, to buy an e-bike for every new household. There is no evidence this will make any difference to traffic congestion.

The proof of that is in Appendix 2 of Transport Evidence. It is seriously concerning to read that roads throughout the district will be over capacity by 2040, many at over 130% capacity at peak times.

The transport evidence suggests that delivering housing over and above the numbers required by the Government will be a **disaster** for Uttlesford. The Parish Council will **strongly** oppose the Reg 19 plan if those issues are not addressed.



## TAKELEY PARISH COUNCIL

However, for tonight, retaining a strong stance on the CPZ is essential for the Reg 18. We urge members to act now to avert the risk from speculative development in the south of the district.

## **Public Comments by Mike Marriage on Behalf of STOP The Warish Hall Development Group for the Uttlesford District Council Full Council Meeting, 31/10/23**

Good evening.

I'm Mike Marriage and I'm speaking on behalf of the 591 members of STOP The Warish Hall Development group. Our group is not opposed to development generally, or development in Takeley specifically.

Instead the group was formed to protect the rural heart of Takeley, namely the area around the Ancient Woodland of Prior's Wood, the Protected Lane of Warish Hall Road and Smiths Green, which will hopefully soon become a conservation area.

Development on these sites was unanimously refused by UDC's Planning Committee in December 2021 and then dismissed at a subsequent appeal. A further application for a smaller parcel known as "Jacks" was refused by a second inspector when submitted under S62A.

We were therefore shocked to see these sites, which this council has just spent many thousands of pounds defending at appeal, now designated for development in the emerging Local Plan.

Tonight, our group has one simple request, that these areas of land be removed from the Takeley Framework.

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In the recent Takeley Parish Plan Questionnaire, woodland was listed as THE most important landscape feature, prioritised by 95% of respondents.

Given that Prior's Wood is the only prominent woodland in the Parish, it can be reasonably assumed that it is one of, if not the, most valuable landscape asset to our community. The draft plan proposes built development tight in on three sides of this irreplaceable heritage asset.

To quote the NPPF:

*c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland...) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists*

The documents before you tonight provide zero evidence of "wholly exceptional reasons" for development in this location.

In fact, the Sustainability Appraisal actually says this of the allocations in Takeley:

*... there is not a clear strategic choice to the same extent as is the case for certain other settlements.*

The inspector from the Warish Hall Development appeal said that these sites, I quote:

*26. ... form part of the wider open countryside to the north of Takeley and Smiths Green, and are an integral part of the local landscape character. They share their affinity with the countryside. This gives this part of the appeal site a high susceptibility to change..."*

*He went on:*

*“27. In my judgement, the development would introduce an urban form of development that would not be sympathetic to the local character and landscape setting...”*

Please don't be fooled by the "Site Development Templates" document before you, which misleadingly promises a minimum 15m buffer around Priors Wood

A 15m buffer is physically impossible given the pinch point to the west of the wood. A new road would have to be build right next to the wood.

It is unarguable that this development would be detrimental to the Ancient Woodland.

No "wholly exceptional reasons" have been given.

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These sites are relatively minor in scale and could be removed without compromising the Plan's progress.

Please don't be fobbed off by excuses of "we can fix this later". This is clearly wrong and needs to be fixed before it progresses any further.

Thank you

Mike Marriage  
STOP The Warish Hall Development Group (591 members)

## Local plan Response      Edward Gildea      Green Party

I'm afraid this is a disappointing plan. It is intended to supplying housing needs until 2041 but I get **no sense of the VISION** the UDC has **for Uttlesford in 2040**.

It is also deficient in its approach to the climate crisis.

At the heart of any strategy for sustainability is infrastructure, but this plan consistently **confuses facilities with infrastructure**. Facilities include schools, clinics, social centres etc; Infrastructure is the *underlying* structure: roads, railways, sewage and water supply systems, internet connectivity, local community energy generation, electric car charging points....

The plan claims to present 'a comprehensive and coherent infrastructure strategy,' but really, instead of outlining a future vision of such infrastructure, we have **Pragmatism...** in the best tradition of Richie Sunak's approach to Net Zero!

### Transport

The most urgent **infrastructure requirement is a railway**. We have just one north-south line, but no east-west line. It is the constraint that has doomed successive plans to failure. While it is clear that this plan cannot be premised on a railway that doesn't exist yet, it should form part of Uttlesford's long term vision. Otherwise it will never happen.

Many of the thousands of new residents in the proposed homes, will be commuting to London and Cambridge, but we have almost exhausted the space for housing along that line. With one exception: **Wendens Ambo**.

At the heart of the pragmatism of this plan is the **flawed Hierarchy principle**, which merely means adding to the largest towns, however much this unbalances them, while small villages stay small.

'Smaller Villages' are described as those with 'a low level of services and facilities'. But this includes **Wendens Ambo, which has the best railway station in Uttlesford**. An outstanding facility! No justification is given for this anomaly, which lies at the heart of all the traffic congestion of Saffron Walden.

If building a railway is an unrealistic option in the short to medium term, then surely it is pragmatic to build houses close to **all** the railway stations for all the additional thousands of commuters to London and Cambridge that the Local Plan will attract.

Instead the plan proposes extensive housing in places like **Thaxted** where there is no possibility of commuters cycling to the nearest station.

On page 12 para 46 it says, 'In the long term we will need to give consideration to one or more **Garden Communities**.' I think 2040 is quite long term, so let me give you a vision of a sustainable future:

- **Break through the concrete wall** at the end of Stansted airport and extend the railway.
- Lead the **railway along a new green corridor** with cycle lanes alongside, in a sweeping arc towards Dunmow.
- At Dunmow, connect with the Flitch Way, restoring the line destroyed by Beeching, to **connect with Braintree**, Colchester and along existing railway lines to the ports of Harwich and Felixtowe.
- **Restore the ancient forest** in the Takeley and Little Easton parishes, and punctuate it with **Forest Villages**, connected by cycle and mobility scooter routes in the Velo City concept <https://journal.urbantranscripts.org/article/the-future-of-the-countryside-velocity-principles-in-a-post-pandemic-world-petra-marko/>, in which urban sprawl is replaced by sustainable communities with new and unique identities.
- Enable commuters to **cycle from their forest village to stations** along the route for swift commuter travel to London, Cambridge and the airport.
- **Build a bridge for cycles and pedestrians to connect the stranded Flitch Way** to Bishops Stortford. That is an anomaly that should have been resolved decades ago!
- Imagine the **economic possibilities** when this line connects Uttlesford with Oxford, Cambridge, Stansted Airport and the coast!

Of course such a railway is not in the gift of UDC, but **unless you have the vision and the passion, it will never happen.**

At the very least, **draw the line on a map** and ensure that nothing is built to prevent the line being built in the second half of this century when finally central government comes on board with your vision!

### Housing

Let me also suggest a vision that all homes should be **carbon negative** in both their construction and their operation. That is:

- Use building materials like cross laminated timber and hemp which have sequestered carbon as they grew and will hold it for centuries
- Use geothermal foundations
- Are insulated to ensure virtually **no energy loss**
- **Export their surplus electricity** to the grid.

All this is perfectly possible. A local company is pioneering it, and it should be part of a dynamic vision for Uttlesford. Of course developers' with vested interests will resist, but without the vision, we won't get there.

### Climate Change

1. This is Core policy 1, but there are **no calculations** to demonstrate how the policies will actually deliver Net Zero by 2030.
2. Para 4.8 cites 2050. Have the goalposts been moved?
3. There is no mention of local, **community energy**.
4. What is the position on Solar energy during the lifetime of this plan? What plan for wind farms? Solar panels over car parks, industrial estates and shopping centres? Schools and farm buildings?



5. We will not get to Net Zero without generating our own clean energy.

### **Economy**

1. Economic development is cited at **Chesterford Research Park, but there are no strategic housing allocations proposed** at Great Chesterford, still less at Little Chesterford, which flies in the face of the policy for active or sustainable travel to workplaces.
2. The plan is severely lacking in **a vision for a post fossil fuel economy** and the immense opportunities for growth in new, sustainable technologies.
3. Instead, the plan focuses on largely low or semi-skilled employment in and around the **airport**, even though air travel has yet to develop a feasible plan for a zero carbon world. The airport is a major employer now, mostly of low skilled jobs, but UDC should express **a vision for the inevitable low carbon economy.**
4. We are amazingly well located close to Cambridge, the **crucible of scientific innovation** and so are remarkably well placed to bring those ideas into production and thereby create exciting, high skilled jobs in a new, sustainable economy.

### **Final points**

1. Saffron Walden: once again there is no housing allocation on transport infrastructure side of town. Instead, the old problem prevails of **housing on the wrong side of town.**
2. The new link between Radwinter Road and Thaxted Road will simply concentrate traffic up Mount Pleasant Road, across the narrow lights on the Debden Road, down Borough Lane, before **adding massively to the traffic jams on the London Road** outside these offices.
3. The affordable housing reduction from 40% to 35% flies in the face of a massive societal need for homes people can afford. Why compromise our ambitions at this stage? When the word 'appropriate', is used, for whom is the reduction 'appropriate'? Let's learn from international examples such as Vienna.
4. As a former teacher and headteacher I have grave reservations about the plan to split the County High. How intimidated do we want children to feel when they start life in a 14 form entry school? Are we expecting teachers to travel between sites? Or do we want to deprive children in the lower school of the expertise of A level teachers?  
**Industrial scale education should have no place in this plan.**

## **Uttlesford District Council**

### **Extraordinary Council Meeting, 30 October 2023**

My name is Patricia Barber. I am a long-time Takeley resident. The proposal in the draft plan to remove the Countryside Protection Zone from the whole of the village means that Takeley could have continuous development from Takeley Street through to Priors Green, with an industrial site in the west to housing development to the east and north. The village has already more than doubled in size in the last decade and if this proposal is adopted it will become Takeley Newtown! Takeley should not be taken out of the CPZ. Please do not do this!

I have concerns about the proposal to put over 1,600 houses in the area between Takeley and Priors Green. The LUC report on Landscape Sensitivity, October 2023, describes the whole of this area as having high sensitivity to mixed use development. It provides separation between the two settlements of Takeley and Priors Green and the rural approach along Smith's Green is sensitive to change. Smith's Green Lane is a Protected Lane with verges which are registered village green. The suggestion that this can be part of a cycle route is unrealistic. It is a narrow road which cannot be widened because of the verges.

**Warish Hall** is a Grade 1 Listed Building and the site of a scheduled ancient monument. A report by Oxford Archaeological, dated October 2021, given to the October 2021 Local Plan Leadership Group meeting says, and I quote "This area is a highly sensitive historic and archaeological landscape, which has been afforded the highest levels of protection. This area contains designated heritage assets of national significance. Development in this area could have both direct and/or indirect (setting) impacts upon both a Grade 1 listed building and a scheduled monument."

To put a large number of houses and a secondary and primary school in this area would completely destroy its character and could do immeasurable harm.

**Schools** – I cannot believe the location of these schools. The noise from the A120 is constant and loud. Buildings can be soundproofed and air-conditioned as the windows will need to be kept closed. Playgrounds and playing fields cannot be soundproofed. There will be pollution from the A120. Not a good location.

The increase in traffic around Takeley which this plan would bring is obviously very great and as the Transport Experts have admitted will bring problems which will be hard to overcome. There is a suggestion in the Transport Evidence that some traffic would re-route on the B1256 to avoid increased traffic on the A120, and this would relieve the A120 a certain amount! The new A120 gave Takeley relief from the queues of traffic that were commonplace in Takeley before it opened. Please do not take us back there!

I ask you to think again about these matters.

Thank you

Patricia Barber

## **Summaries of Public Statements: Council, 30 October 2023**

*Summaries of public statements made at Council, 30 October 2023 (no electronic copy provided):*

### H Johnson

Ms Johnson spoke on the draft Local Plan and said it was a work of “fantasy” and she highlighted the main issues she saw in the document. She said the traffic in Elsenham was appalling and the congestion would get much worse if the proposed developments went ahead. Infrastructure was of particular concern, and she referenced the problems with water supply in Takeley. She said the proposed developments would be of benefit only to commuters, not existing residents as the properties would be too expensive and she could not understand why settlements such as Great Chesterford had been spared proposed development. Furthermore, she said environmental damage would be caused by developing the Flich Way at a time when the council should be protecting the countryside.

### S Merifield

Mrs Merifield congratulated the Council for producing a draft Local Plan; she said the earlier comments and strength of feeling demonstrated how difficult this was, in addition to the fact that the district had failed in approving the past two draft local plans. She said the Local Plan before members presented objective site allocations as based on evidence and officer expertise, and that if different sites had been chosen, there would still be contention and challenge. She said members could not play political games and had to progress the Local Plan beyond Regulation 18 in order to give residents and communities their say. She said comments provided during the consultation will be used for the purposes of the local plan process, and things could be changed due to the evidence provided. The district desperately needed an updated Local Plan and she urged members to proceed with the public consultation.

### G Bagnall

Councillor Bagnall said he had been excluded from the meeting due to “20 meters” and said he would be making a complaint about how the advice had been handled. He urged members to reject the draft Local Plan and to refer it back to the LPLG. He said there would be a windfall allowance of 8,500 houses that would be delivered in existing settlements over the next 10 years. The second phase of the Plan would be for 5,500 houses and this was where the allocations needed to be reconsidered. He said a strategic site should be selected in order to take the pressure off existing settlements and which would allow for growth in the future. Furthermore, he said potential strategic sites had not been properly explored as officers had not had the time to do so. He said the council needed to determine whether such sites would have been more beneficial and provide better connectivity for the district. He said LPLG and Scrutiny committee members had voted to recommend the draft if the evidence base supported the allocations. He said the evidence did not sufficiently support the allocations and, therefore, it was right not to rush this decision through. He asked members to look at paragraph 9 of the inspector’s letter dated 10 January

2020 which called out the need to assess one or two options for a new settlement. The decision before members would be the most important decision the council would make and quality had been sacrificed for expediency. Finally, he said officers should have been taking the evidence base to LPLG throughout the process.

**Written representations relating to Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation Council, 30 October 2023**

**Proposed development around Taylors Farm, Takeley Street:  
Mr and Mrs Fish - Takeley.**

I am writing to ask you to vote NO to carrying forward draft planning to the next stage unless there are written guarantees that the Countryside Protection Zone will be reinstated. Reassurances and consultation is not enough. Consultation is likely to be a box ticking exercise.

If the plan goes ahead to put a 37 acre industrial site in Takeley Street, this will most likely operate 24/7. This could affect us as follows:

Loss of amenity

Increased noise pollution

Light pollution

More air pollution as well as heavy road traffic

Traffic congestion - M11 is already at capacity -- B1256 will be 170% capacity within 5 years - according to Uttlesford's own evidence for the plan

Houses also suffer from poor water supply already. A huge industrial estate - with employment expected to be 1600 to start with - will make it worse

Any upgrade in infrastructure such as mains drainage, water and roads will take years if at all - there are no guarantees.

If this site goes ahead, the Developer has the option on all the land from Thremhall, to the airport balancing pond just behind Street Farm and The Green Man. This is only the start. Please vote NO to this Plan

**Proposed commercial site on land around Taylors Farm**

**Gordon & Margaret Silvester**

We strongly object to proposed commercial site being built on good agricultural land. It would create more heavy goods vehicles on B1256 which has already a high volume of traffic due to vast housing developments having been built in Takeley and surrounding areas. The roundabout at junction 8 of M11 is often at a standstill as is M11 north bound with only 2 lanes for the vehicles heading towards Cambridge and beyond.

The infrastructure in the particular area mentioned above is below present-day expectations with no sewer connections and very low water pressure.

Please think about the residents who have seen enough development and changes to Takeley and all the meadows and green belts that have been lost for development and now you want to take the last open ground on B1256 for commercial units.

### **Representation from Malcolm Ireland, Takeley**

My house backs onto the East end of the agricultural land on which the proposed industrial development will extend. Despite being within a mile of the side of the airport runway, the outlook over the fields is quiet and dark at night. The powerful illumination at an industrial complex as planned will cause permanent light pollution, and night time noise will travel across the fields unhindered, to disturb the tranquillity of the night.

My house fronts onto the B1256 which is plagued by heavy lorry traffic thundering both ways. At present there are not high numbers of lorries, but when they do come past they make the house shake and when walking on the pavement it is a frightening experience to have them drive past fast less than 1M from the centre of the path. This proposed development will certainly increase the lorry traffic and make it 24x7 which will be intolerable for local residents for noise, vibration and pollution. A total ban on HGV traffic through The Street on the B1256 24x7 would be a welcome restriction in any case, but that would appease residents to some degree if the proposal for the Industrial Area should be approved. An exemption would be necessary only for public transport and vehicles making deliveries/ maintenance work in The Street. All other heavy vehicles should use the A120 and Thremhall Avenue roads which were built to take commercial traffic.

### **Statement Submitted to Council by Daniel Brett, 30 October 2023**

#### **Time-Wasting has Damaged this District**

The local plan process has left this council with little room for manoeuvre in terms of scheduling. R4U was elected in May 2019 with a mandate to withdraw the local plan, but decided to submit it then run a campaign against it at the hearing, and eventually withdrawing it over criticism by planning inspectors. A year was wasted.

Instead of amending the plan or improving the evidence base, the council decided to go right back to the beginning of the process with a new call for sites, that simply yielded very similar results. More time and money wasted.

Stakeholders forums were held, but they appear to have very little input into the new draft plan. More time and money wasted.

Then last year, just as the draft was being prepared and polished for Reg 18 consultation, the process was frozen while the council officers chased up an “exciting opportunity” with an undisclosed landholder. This came to nothing. At least 18 months was wasted.

#### **R4U Failing to Uphold Election Mandate**

A redrafted plan could have been submitted to Planning Inspectors before the May 2023 elections, if there had been the political will to proceed. The time-wasting has been hugely damaging for this district, leading to massive speculative development that lacks the infrastructural leverage we would have had if a plan had been in place in R4U’s first term – as it had pledged to do in May 2019. A single new settlement,

which R4U had rightly always pushed for, is now off the table due to prevarication and tardiness – and with it goes the opportunity for decent town planning. Now, existing settlements will have bolt-on developments even as they creak under existing infrastructure strain.

In May, R4U was re-elected for a second term on a planning mandate based on “four key principles”:

1. **Evidence-led:** Can we seriously consider that Takeley Street, with the biggest allocation of housing in a settlement lacking rail access and already under strain, or east of Saffron Walden, with all the problems R4U has highlighted in the past with congestion, or Thaxted, which totally lacks public transport and other infrastructure, have greater evidence than Great Chesterford?
2. **Infrastructure First:** Does the draft actually provide the infrastructure to ensure sustainability? In the case of Saffron Walden, the infrastructure looks overly ambitious and it is hard to see how such facilities can be justified by the level of development – unless there are still plans for the “exciting opportunity” to be delivered after the Reg 18 consultation.
3. **Local Control:** The promise of local development corporations has been dropped. The R4U leadership would have known that these would not have been preferred or viable before the election, so why make this promise?
4. **Housing Affordability:** Despite the council acknowledging the severe rise in poverty in our district as well as the vast imbalance between local wages and local house prices, the draft plan has slashed the proportion of affordable housing from 40% to 35%. Developers have largely been willing to offer 40% affordable in order to get plans passed, so why would the council decide that 40% would not make new developments viable?

The Chief Executive has stated that the Reg 19 could be “substantially different” from the Reg 18 draft. Indeed, the approval of the Highwood Quarry site is a game-changer and this draft is already too high in terms of numbers. This will lead to competitive Nimbyism with each settlement identified for growth seeking to have its numbers reduced as a result of successful appeals.

However, if councillors have fundamental problems with the plan, they will have to go back to redrafting and consultation on a new Reg 18 – and there simply isn’t the time. There are significant fundamental problems that should prompt councillors to delay and fix, with speed, in order to avert a bad plan being adopted or one that needs a total rewrite.

### **Protect the CPZ**

One of the main issues is the erosion of the Countryside Protection Zone at Takeley. The CPZ has been a central policy of UDC in order to maintain Stansted Airport’s position as an “airport in the countryside”. UDC spent vast sums in a failed bid to stop airport expansion, partly because of the impact on residents. Now it is putting forward a fundamental change to the policy that builds closer to the airport boundary,



just as it is expanding. This is a complete contradiction in the principles R4U – and other parties – have adopted over the years towards the airport. Erosion of this policy not only encumbers Takeley with yet more unsustainable development, it urbanises and erodes the quality of life in that area. If the CPZ policy is not sustained, in its current form, it may not be reversed in a Reg 19 because that would constitute a “fundamental” and not a “substantial” change.

### **Vote to Delay and Amend**

I ask the council to vote against going to Reg 18 in order to amend some of the flaws, contradictions and lack of evidence in this draft and resubmit in January. Although this uses up more time, the alternatives could be even more damaging, including: the need for another Reg 18 consultation this time next year, rejection by Planning Inspectors, or the adoption of a plan that goes against the will of the public – and against the manifesto mandate on which R4U has won two successive elections.

Councillors should not believe that just because their wards are not allocated housing, they can breathe a sigh of relief. If this plan goes awry – and it looks like it may do so, based on the current draft – they could face an onslaught of unsustainable speculative development in their communities, without sufficient infrastructure, and over the tops of their heads.

This is not a call to waste more time, it is a call to avert further problems arising from an inadequate draft plan.

### **Statement for Council, 30 October 2023 - Dr Zanna Voysey**

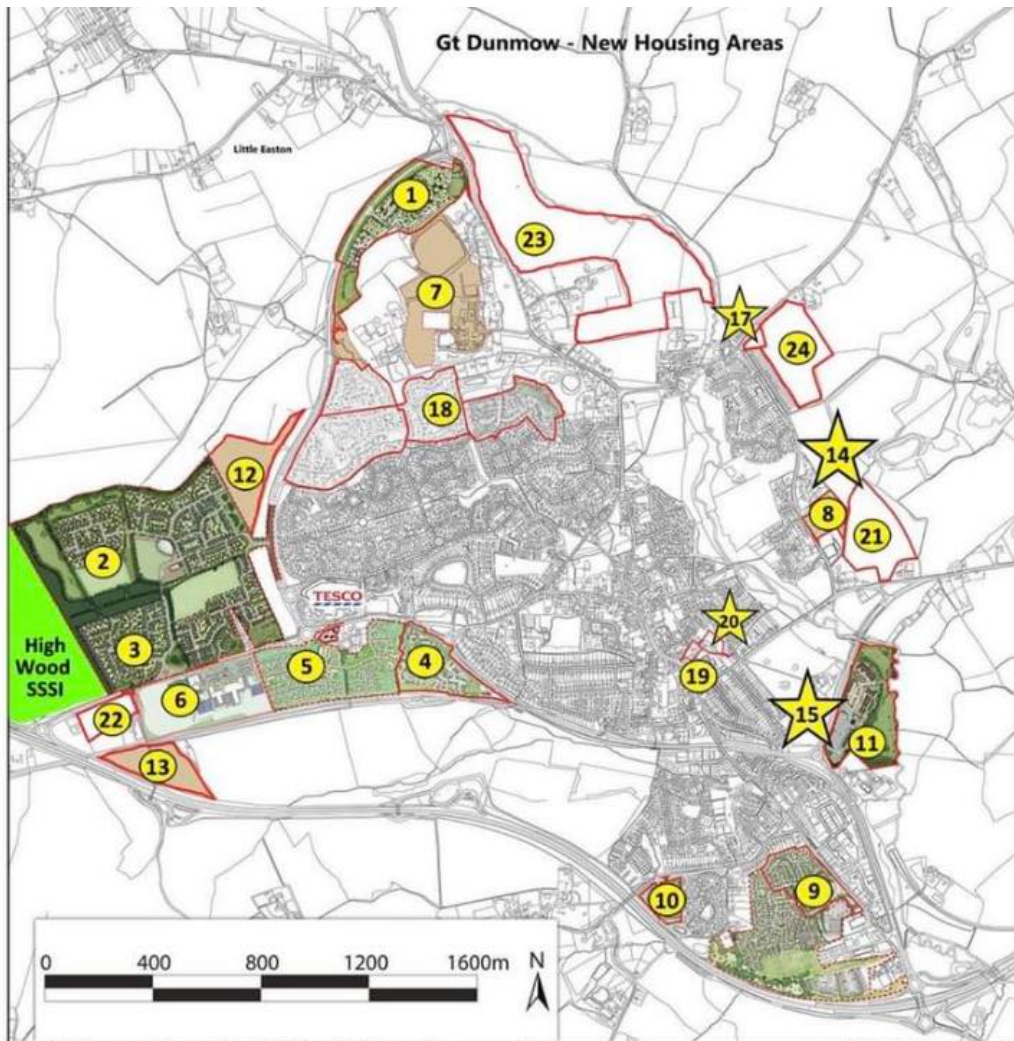
I am writing to express my profound concern and objection regarding the planned housing developments around Great Dunmow.

I would like to express in particular my profound concerns regarding the planned development between the **B1008 and the Chelmer River near Bigods Lane** (numbered 23 on the provided map, below). Bigods Lane is a rural lane of exquisite beauty, providing a lifeline to 100s of walkers, cyclists and horseriders in our community as a peaceful recreation spot every single day, treasured by so many. It is also a crucial wildlife corridor - home to egrets, herons, owls, hedgehogs and many more. Church End is one of the few areas of town that has not already been spoilt by newbuild estates, with significant treasured old buildings in and around St Mary's Church. As a conservation area, building directly behind this area will completely destroy the atmosphere of the conservation area, and our heritage will be lost forever.

This is not to mention the obvious fact that the amenities of the town cannot possibly support the planned development, given the existing unacceptable pressure on school places, GPs, supermarkets and road infrastructure. Moreover, the junction

between Bigods Lane and St Edmunds Lane is already an accident blackspot, with one recent fatality. Adding further traffic to this area puts our community at risk.

Please, do NOT build on site 23.



**Statement for Council, 30 October 2023 - Michael O'Reily**

I am writing to raise objection regarding the planned housing developments around Great Dunmow. It is a real concern since there has already been a huge amount of development and disruption for the town. Not to mention the increased pressures on surgeries, schools, grocery shops etc. I understand and appreciate the need for some select development sites but now the town just seems hemmed in and rapidly losing its identity. The few that have gone up in recent years are just about bearable

but enough is enough, further additions to this already weighty scheme just seems irresponsible.

I understand that spaces for speaking publicly at the council meeting (Mon 30th) are now closed, but I hope you are still able to add my voice to the meeting/minutes.

In the past I have raised issues with road safety, council tax and fly tipping in Dunmow. All of these were long drawn out communications where I had to repeatedly prod when emails were not responded to. Our personal council tax issue was not dealt with for over a year and only in the past few months was it finally rectified. So as I write this, I can't help but already feel a bit defeated, unheard and ignored. That's not how we should feel about our council. I'm of course not blaming an individual but rather feeling somewhat let down by the whole. And these developments are just further evidence of that.

Myself and other residences of Church End feel profound concerns regarding the planned development between the B1008 and the Chelmer River near Bigods Lane (numbered 23 on the provided map, above). We are of course concerned about the others too but it is especially alarming when said site smacks bang into Bigods Lane - a rural area of exquisite beauty, providing a lifeline to 100s of walkers, cyclists and horseriders in our community as a peaceful recreation spot every single day, treasured by so many. It is also a crucial wildlife corridor - home to egrets, herons, owls, hedgehogs and many more. Church End is one of the few areas of town that has not already been spoilt by newbuild estates, with significant treasured old buildings in and around St Mary's Church. As a conservation area, building directly behind this area will completely destroy the atmosphere of the conservation area, and our heritage will be lost forever.

And also to reiterate-the obvious fact that the amenities of the town cannot possibly support the planned development, given the existing unacceptable pressure on school places, GPs, supermarkets and road infrastructure. Moreover, the junction between Bigods Lane and St Edmunds Lane is already an accident blackspot, with one recent fatality. Adding further traffic to this area puts our community at risk.

Please, do NOT build on site 23.

## **Draft Uttlesford Local Plan 2021 – 2041 (Regulation 18) Consultation**

### **Public statement by: Mr Roderick Jones, Great Dunmow**

For the purpose of transparency, I am a Great Dunmow Town Councillor, my statement is a personal one and does not reflect the views or opinions of the Town Council or its members.

A local plan isn't to prevent development, rather control it. No draft local plan is perfect, every draft local plan can be modified and improved.

We have all seen the effects of piecemeal and speculative development in Uttlesford. It doesn't provide: the necessary school places, the necessary uplift in health care provision and other essential services. It does not lead to better infrastructure in the short or medium term. It does not lead to 'greener' and more sustainable development and does not allow for co-ordinated strategic planning between the LPA and other public authorities.

I hope that you have placed your trust in the Director of Planning and the Interim Planning Policy Manager recommendations; as I will trust that you have read and understood the report, the draft local plan, the suite of evidence-based documents and my statement. It is a lot to read and process, however, it is your responsibility to make informed decisions. I ask that any challenges to the recommendations will be substantiated and objective. Conjecture and subjective challenges will not improve the draft local plan.

As a Councillor you have agreed to uphold the 7 Nolan Principles of public life, three of them are: Selflessness, Objectivity and Leadership. I ask you to think of the district as a whole and put aside ward and party politics, and your own predisposed subjective opinions of why the housing allocation is or isn't in the right place.

The purpose of having consultation (Reg 18) on a draft local plan is to allow people to have their say and for this to be considered<sup>1</sup>. The draft Local plan will not please everyone, it is your responsibility to improve the draft local plan following the consultation.

It is for you, to decide, to take back control of the piecemeal and speculative development occurring in Uttlesford on behalf of the residents of Uttlesford.

Please publish the draft local plan to allow the residents and other consultees in Uttlesford to make their representations.

Thank you for your time.

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<sup>1</sup> The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 No. 767 Part 6 Reg 18.

### **Mr & Mrs Colocasidou: Statement for Council – 30 October 2023**

Dear Councillors & Committee,

We are outraged to see the potential shrinking of our Countryside Protection Zone in the latest Uttlesford local plan.

Uttlesford council commissioned their own study of the CPZ back in 2016, [report](#) attached. The study comprehensively found the CPZ should be maintained and in particular to CPZ Parcel Section 3 north of Takeley Street (around Taylor's Farm) should be extended. Quote "Consider extending the boundary of the CPZ to Flitch Way to the south of Takeley Street, which would help to prevent further consolidation of the hamlet and maintain its rural character".

The recent failed attempt by FKY Ltd at the land at Tilekiln Green, Start Hill (S62A Planning Application Number: S62A/2023/0017) proves this type of development is unsuited to our village and surrounding areas under the Countryside Protection Zone. The CPZ was a major factor in preventing this development from proceeding, and was referenced many times in this planning case.

Quote "The CPZ helps to maintain the openness of the countryside and protects its rural character and restrict the spread of development from the airport. For some parcels, particularly to the south of the airport, the CPZ plays an essential role in protecting the separate identity of individual settlements. In summary, therefore, the CPZ is helping to maintain the vision of the 'airport in the countryside'. Unless other planning policy considerations suggest otherwise, we recommend that the CPZ is carried forward into the new Local Plan."

As our councillors we urge you to consider the impact of your new plan to remove the CPZ North of Takeley Street, which will have dramatic negative effects upon the lives of existing residents of Takeley Street. The CPZ north of Takeley Street is not suitable for large scale 24/7 industrial enterprises so close to our existing village. You will be wiping out village life for many families.

The CPZ is unique to our district, we must fight to ensure the protection of the CPZ, and as such we urge you to make the correct decision in maintaining the CPZ.

### **Mr & Mrs Knight: Statement for Council – 30 October 2023**

Dear Councillors & Committee,

We are outraged and feel very disappointed to see the potential shrinking of our Countryside Protection Zone in the latest Uttlesford local plan.

Uttlesford council commissioned their own study of the CPZ back in 2016. The study comprehensively found the CPZ should be maintained and in particular to CPZ Parcel Section 3 north of Takeley Street (around Taylor's Farm) should be extended. Quote "Consider extending the boundary of the CPZ to Flitch Way to the

south of Takeley Street, which would help to prevent further consolidation of the hamlet and maintain its rural character".

The recent failed attempt by FKY Ltd at the land at Tilekiln Green, Start Hill (S62A Planning Application Number: S62A/2023/0017) proves this type of development is unsuited to our village and surrounding areas under the Countryside Protection Zone. The CPZ was a major factor in preventing this development from proceeding, and was referenced many times in this planning case.

Quote "The CPZ helps to maintain the openness of the countryside and protects its rural character and restrict the spread of development from the airport. For some parcels, particularly to the south of the airport, the CPZ plays an essential role in protecting the separate identity of individual settlements. In summary, therefore, the CPZ is helping to maintain the vision of the 'airport in the countryside'. Unless other planning policy considerations suggest otherwise, we recommend that the CPZ is carried forward into the new Local Plan."

As our councillors we urge you to consider the impact of your new plan to remove the CPZ North of Takeley Street, which will have dramatic negative effects upon the lives of existing residents of Takeley Street. The CPZ north of Takeley Street is not suitable for large scale 24/7 industrial enterprises so close to our existing village. You will be wiping out village life for many families.

As the owner and residents of one of the oldest buildings in Takeley (dated circa 1350), Rayleigh Cottage is A GRADE II listed property, and our former owners did own much of the land in the surrounding areas and were reputedly involved in the formation of the Bank of England. As the current custodians of this property, we must most strongly protest at any further development in the vicinity. As it is, we have recently had large houses developed right in front of us, opposite and next to Hatfield Forrest. This has already eroded our rural normality and significantly increased the level of traffic and associated noise. We feel the A20 is a reasonable boundary from the Airport and any future development should be refused.

The CPZ is unique to our district, we must fight to ensure the protection of the CPZ, and as such we urge you to make the correct decision in maintaining the CPZ.

### **Mr Tracey Statement for Council Meeting - 30 October 2023**

Please recognise this correspondence as a registration to **Oppose** the Proposed Housing Development, Church End, Great Dunmow which may potentially be included in the Town Plan.

I have been a resident in Church Street for over 35 years and have witnessed a huge expanse in the residential size and population of Great Dunmow.

Unfortunately, due to the document plan file size I cannot download the larger documents as this has repeatedly crashed my computer, and the legend on the map is not legible and distorts further when enlarged.

To this end I can only confirm that myself and potentially others are not furnished with all the information required to make a full response.

Despite these limitations I would draw your attention to the following points of opposition to the proposal

## **5. Conservation**

The last enclave to maintain the picturesque “Historic Flitch Town” element of the brown tourist signs of Great Dunmow is Church End which has a significant conservation area and many grade II listed buildings. Residents occupying these premises must abide by many restrictions and limitations to maintain the quaint image for the enjoyment of local’s parishioners and all visitors.

The age of the buildings means the buildings are close to the roadside and already have a high level of traffic noise and pollution exacerbated by the fact that double glazing is not permitted.

Heavy traffic also makes the windows reverberate and the house shake as there is no substantive footings to some of the properties due to age. An increase in traffic would only worsen this issue for the residents and potentially make maintenance of some listed buildings more difficult.

## **2. Public Footpaths**

Public footpaths accessed from Bigod’s Lane and off of St Edmonds Lane are used regularly by individuals and walking groups and are accessed by local pedestrians that have no need to use a car to access them.

The footpaths provide panoramic views of Dunmow and St Marys Church from **ALL** perspectives which need to be preserved.

It appears some public footpaths would now be through a housing estate and the wonderful views would be lost forever.

## **3. Road Infrastructure and Weak Bridge**

Bigod’s Lane, the Broadway and Church Street and Lime Tree Hill roads are lanes and are not a suitable road infrastructure for a further increase in traffic that the proposed additional housing and a school will create.

Long traffic queuing is already prevalent down Lime Tree Hill at the T junction The Causeway and Beaumont Hill at peak times.

Furthermore, this is coupled with a narrow weight restricted bridge at Church End which causes a bottle neck.

In the 35 years of residence the traffic has never been so bad. Motorists sounding their horns daily as the road narrowing on the “S Bend” by the Angel & Harp public house and due to the dangerous parking of those using the public house and recreation ground.

Additionally, since the development on Brick Kiln Farm land off St Edmonds Lane the traffic has significantly worsened with all drivers using St Edmonds Lane having to pause and navigate in and out parked cars to give way to oncoming traffic.

Again, this road is not suitable for additional traffic.

### **Statement from Cathryn Blades, Council 30 October 2023**

I am contacting you with regards to the proposed plan to remove the Countryside Protection Zone from the fields and green space around Takeley.

All we hear about on the news and in every day life from the Government, the Mayor and the powers that be are how pollution and the daily congestion is harming our environment and our health. Twenty miles down the road you have to pay to enter to Ultra Low Emission Zone, and slightly further on from that is the Congestion Charge. They are trying to keep cars and diesel engines out or penalising the ones that have no choice. Yet here we are today asking you to reconsider your decision on creating more pollution and congestion!

Please please please help the residents of Takeley keep it how it is, which is a beautiful piece of the English countryside surrounded by trees and open space that is low in emissions and pollution so our children and grandchildren can enjoy it for years to come and not the concrete jungle they want to create.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

### **Representation from Dave Spragg, Takeley**

I'm emailing to lodge my strong objection and to express my absolute horror upon hearing of the proposal to do away with the Countryside Protection Zone around Taylor's Farm, Takeley and replace it with an "industrial land" classification.

The roads around here already cannot cope, the A120/M11 interchange is a joke, the current works ongoing to replace the Birchanger roundabout seem to be an enormous "solution" to a very small problem, and how on earth businesses can survive in Bishop's Stortford when it is much of the time so difficult to get in or out of the town is beyond me.

I have lived on Takeley Street, the B1256, for over 20 years, and it was a great relief when the new A120 dual carriageway opened and slashed the traffic volumes - but the relief didn't last long, and we got only half the so-called traffic calming width restrictions we were promised, with "build-outs" on only one side, not the both sides we voted for, creating a quite dangerous "slalom" that does little to slow the traffic. You could offer cash prizes to drivers doing less than 30 mph - it won't cost you much I can assure you!

The A-road became a B-road and there has since been a significant increase in the number of residential properties along "The Street" and yet traffic volumes have been increasing significantly over the last 10 - 15 years, the volume varying significantly versus time of day and week-day versus weekend.



During the week I am woken early by a lot of commuter traffic that builds up from 5:30am onwards, joined by the heavy tipper lorries from 6:30/7:00 onwards that then run up and down the road all day long - I'm not sure whether they are related to the landfill site near Elsenham Golf club, or Highwood Quarry at Dunmow, or something else, but the same big, heavy and noisy tipper trucks are back and fore, back and fore all day long, usually in pairs, often in convoy, and woe betide anyone trying to drive through at close to the 30 mph speed limit as you just get a tipper truck seemingly trying to get in your boot and trying to intimidate drivers into going faster. How on earth we haven't yet had a major accident I don't know, but these days it can take 5 - 10 minutes just to be able to pull out of my own driveway whilst trying to get a safe gap in the traffic, especially when going right toward the Post Office and pharmacy. Even the buses rarely do less than 40, but the lorry drivers are probably paid per load, so are keen to get in as many trips as possible during the day and 50mph+ is their preferred speed, whether up or down, laden or unladen, continuous through the day into early evening.

Then we have the return of commuter traffic from 4:45 through to 6:45pm, but in the evenings and at weekends, and during occasional quieter spells during the day, I am left wondering whether I am in Takeley or have landed on the straight at Silverstone race circuit, as we have cars and vans belting through at motorway speeds. In the summer when mowing the grass on the verge at the front of my home (Thorncroft) despite the pavement separation I at times feel I am in danger of being sucked into the road by speeding vans and lorries, and I'm no lightweight. Residents certainly cannot risk allowing their children anywhere near the road.

We are losing countryside around here at a quite alarming rate, farmland lost forever to housing estate after housing estate and Takeley becoming a small town with hopelessly inadequate amenities, excessive amounts of housing, inadequate school facilities, no Doctor's surgery, poorly maintained and pot-hole plagued roads, loads of traffic noise, increasing exhaust and light pollution, loss of habitat for foxes, deer, badgers, slow-worms, bats and birds.

We don't need or want more industrial land, we do need to preserve some of our green space, and if this plan does go ahead the access should never be via the B1256 when the A120 dual carriageway is available to connect to on the other side.

### **Representation from Michael and Becky Taylor, Takeley**

I have been informed that there is a decision pending on a sizeable development between the B1256 and the A120.

From my understanding the size of the proposal is considerable and will result in 24/7 light and noise pollution behind a residential area - not least with the constant traffic of articulated lorries on the B1256. There are more houses being built with even more residents therefore that will be considerably adversely affected by an industrial development in this residential space. This will also add to the pressure on an already inadequate infrastructure as the residential traffic increases with the new housing developments.

The loss of green space, habitat and woodland and removing a Countryside Protection Zone around Taylor's Farm make this proposal unacceptable and unreasonable (this is an area with public footpaths which were particularly well used during lockdown by us and many other local families).

Local residents should be properly kept informed of all such developments that have such an impact rather than almost by chance. We did not know about this, nor about today's meeting.

**COUNCIL held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES, LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 10 OCTOBER 2023 at 7.00 pm**

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

Officers in attendance: P Holt (Chief Executive), B Ferguson (Democratic Services Manager) and N Katevu (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer).

Public

Speakers: D Ashton (Uttlesford Foodbank) and D Perry (on behalf of Walden Place residents)

**C41 MINUTE'S SILENCE**

The Chair called for a minute's silence as a mark of respect for all those affected by the recent violence in Israel.

**C42 ALDERWOMAN PRESENTATION**

The Chair congratulated former Councillor Cheetham on her appointment as Honorary Alderwomen of Uttlesford District Council.

Councillor Barker praised former Councillor Cheetham's long and exemplary history in local government. She had held senior roles during her time as councillor, including deputy Leader of the Council and Chair of the Planning Committee.

She was presented with a certificate of office for her distinguished service to the public and the Council.

**C43 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong, Asker, Bagnall, Emanuel, Moran, Pavitt, Haynes, Dean and Loveday.

There were no declarations of interest.

**C44 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 July and 24 August 2023 were approved as correct records.

**C45 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair said he had been on two engagements since the previous meeting.

He had attended the Mayor of Rochford's dinner and a Civic Service for the High Sheriff of Essex.

**C46 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE**

The Leader provided an update on the Mortimer's Gate electricity sub-station issue and said Bloor Homes' representatives had agreed to contribute to the noise mitigation works. She said the Ukrainian scheme was now up and running and the first Ukrainian guest was receiving their rent guarantee and were in their own home. She provided further updates in relation to the Electric Car scheme, which would allow people to rent an electric car and was going live next month.

Councillor Coote asked Scrutiny Committee to review the matters raised by Mr Perry relating to Walden Place. Councillor Gregory said he was happy to do so.

**C47 QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER, MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS (UP TO 30 MINUTES)**

In respect of Question 1, Councillor Loughlin said her question was separate from Councillor Dean's query and warranted a separate answer. She said she had not implied that there had been any reputational damage to the Council. She asked that if any debtors reneged on their debts in future, that members be informed.

In respect of Question 3, Councillor Silcock asked that the minutes of the Norse Partnership Board meetings be made available to members in a confidential manner, such as through the Scrutiny or Audit and Standards Committee.

In respect of Question 4, Councillor Sell asked that members were kept informed of any operation difficulties in respect of waste collection.

In response to Councillor Barker's question, asked on behalf of Councillor Moran, Councillor Evans said maximum effort was being put into clear the backlog of enforcement cases.

In response to Councillor Martin's clarification question, Councillor Hargreaves said the CBRE report had been published with the written answer papers. He explained that the asset was valued differently depending on whether one was looking at the Aspire or Council accounts.

C48 **MATTERS REFERRED FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES**

No matters were received from the Executive or the Council's Committees.

C49 **MATTERS RECEIVED ABOUT JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

No matters were received regarding Joint Arrangements.

C50 **APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS TO THE AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Councillor Oliver presented the report regarding the appointment of an Independent Person under s28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 to fulfil the various roles that could be required in the event of Code of Conduct complaint 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. He proposed approval of the recommendation set out in the report.

Councillor Barker seconded the proposal.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to appoint 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.

C51 **LOCAL JOINT PANEL - PROVISION FOR SUBSTITUTES**

Councillor Coote presented the report regarding the provision and appointment of substitutes to the Local Joint Panel, a working group of Council. He proposed approval of the recommendations set-out in the report.

Councillor Hargreaves seconded the proposal.

The proposal was approved unanimously.

RESOLVED to:

- I. Amend 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. Appoint Councillors Lees (Residents for Uttlesford), Barker (Conservative) and Sell (Liberal Democrat) as the nominated substitute members.

C52

## MEMBER MOTION: COST OF LIVING CRISIS

Councillor Fiddy spoke to her motion regarding the Cost of Living Crisis and the impact it was having on low and medium income households in the district. She said national data demonstrated the fall in disposable income experienced by households, and this was also true of local data from the Uttlesford Food Bank which showed the rise in struggling families. She said high interest rates and inflation were eroding resilience in the community and people were utilising savings to get by. She called on the Government to tackle these issues and proposed her motion as set out in the agenda papers.

Councillor Sutton seconded the motion.

Councillor Barker had given notice of an amendment and was invited to speak. She thanked Councillor Fiddy for the motion and commended the research behind it. She said the issue with the motion was that the Government had no additional monies to fund local authorities and therefore it was up to the Council to reprioritise its own budget to support struggling residents, rather than calling for more funding. She also asked for the motion to call for assistance for families across the UK. She moved the following amendment:

*“Council therefore resolves:*

***To reprioritise our Budget to free up additional funds to support those most in need.***

*To call on the UK Government and our local Members of Parliament to effectively tackle the cost-of-living crisis facing Uttlesford families **and those across the United Kingdom** 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.”~~*

-  
Councillor Gooding seconded the amendment. He said Uttlesford was often held up as a comparably wealthy district, as shown by comparative deprivation indices, but he was aware of pockets of deprivation. He said the motion was well intended but the Government would not single out Uttlesford for preferential treatment and the amendment would enhance the motion.

Councillor Tayler said he was puzzled by the amendment; it was central Government that had failed to tackle the Cost of Living Crisis, not local councils. Uttlesford already had the most generous Local Council Tax Support Scheme in Essex, and provided additional cost of living support grants for those in need. He said he could not support an amendment which struck out the motion's call for adequate funding for local authorities in order to maintain services.

Councillor Sell said he could not support the amendment and asked how it enhanced the original proposal. He said even Conservative Leaders of local authorities had called for adequate and fair funding from Government.

Councillor Coote spoke against the amendment; fair funding was critical if local government services were to be maintained.

Councillor Criscione said more could always be done to help those in need and the amendment called for assistance to all those in need across the country. Furthermore, the amendment was not calling on Westminster to fix problems but put the emphasis on what the Council could control.

Councillor Hargreaves said he could find no good reason for removing the proposal calling on Government to implement adequate funding for local authorities. He would not support the amendment.

Councillors Criscione and Barker asked the Chair whether the motion could be altered to only include reference to "and those across the United Kingdom."

Councillor Fiddy said she was willing to alter her motion to include this wording. The meeting consented to the alteration and debate was held on the substantive motion as altered:

*"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 those across the United Kingdom 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.”*

Councillor Sell said the motion could have gone further and could have cited specific examples of what the Council was doing to help those in need.

The Leader commended Councillor Fiddy’s hardwork and detailed research into the subject of her motion. She said the next Portfolio Holder’s report for Communities would set-out what the Council was already doing to help low income and struggling families.

Councillor Sutton endorsed the motion and the earlier comments from Uttlesford Foodbank. She said while Uttlesford was an affluent district there were families who were struggling. She highlighted recent data that showed that 7/10 of children living below the poverty line in Uttlesford were from working families.

Councillor Fiddy summarised the debate and said deprivation had a huge impact on an individual’s physical and mental health. She said it was vital that councillors continued to advocate on behalf of those residents in need of support.

The proposal was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

**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 Library 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.

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.

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.

The number of people on UDC's housing register rose 17% from 1,145 in September 2019 to 1,338 in June 2022.

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

The meeting was closed at 8.04pm.

### Summaries of Public Statements: Council 10 October 2023

#### Des Ashton

Ms Ashton said she was the Advocacy & Campaigns Officer for Uttlesford Foodbank and that she had previously addressed Council to highlight concerns regarding the growing level of need across the District. She had called on Councillors to help identify and promote support that would strengthen the local safety net for the most vulnerable in the community.

She said that in the period since she had dedicated a large proportion of time to collating and sharing data with various partners, including UDC, which repeatedly showed that foodbank use was on the increase. Foodbank data in particular was a lagging indicator of need as those that used the service had often endured weeks or even months of extreme hardship.

More recently, she said she had been grateful for the support from a number of Councillors, who had campaigned alongside the Foodbank to call for an Essentials Guarantee – including an increase to the standard rate of Universal Credit. She said that currently it did not offer enough money to cover life's essentials, and peoples living situations were exacerbated by the way in which sanctions were applied.

She said she had been hugely encouraged by the support from Councillors who campaigned on the National Day of Action on 9 September, which secured an impressive record of public support within the Saffron Walden constituency, in the form of 125 signatures for the Essentials Guarantee petition. She said this was a strong signal that the wider community wanted to see greater equity for all. She asked Councillors: how well did they know their wards and to what extent were they informed on what was impacting most on those they represented.

#### Doug Perry

Mr Perry spoke on the situation at Walden Place, a sheltered housing complex of 26 units that facilitated assisted living arrangements for local residents. He said complaints relating to high service charges, limited visitor access and ongoing building works had been ignored and representatives of the Council had not attended meetings to discuss such problems.

Mr Perry presented a list of issues petitioning the Council to resolve matters such as easement, noise, dust, access (including disabled access), lighting,

drainage and health and safety at Walden Place, and said compensation should be considered for those affected. He said that residents felt ignored and he urged the Council to take remedial action.

## **Councillor Arthur Coote – Portfolio Holder for Housing**

### **Report to Council:**

#### **General Summary**

##### **Repairs and Maintenance**

Firstly, in asset management, UDC have been continuing to work with UNSL to agree the capital works programme for this year and next. We have made significant progress over the last four weeks as our property services client team have been driving this forward, but we are still in a position where we are waiting for data from UNSL to be able to fully recommend the programme for sign-off.

UDC have directly procured damp and mould contractors to complete the mould washes on severe and moderate cases identified by the stock condition surveys undertaken at the start of the year. We expect to complete these by mid-January. We have requested reports from UNSL on how quickly that are able to deliver any additional works and are reviewing that on a weekly basis. The KPI related to damp and mould relates to new cases of damp and mould reported to UNSL, who are responsible for scheduling an inspection and mould wash. We are working with them to improve the current level of performance, which is below what we would expect.

All other areas of compliance are currently in hand, we are at 98.75% on our gas servicing, our 5-year electrical programme is at 92% and our 10-year electrical testing programme is at 99.86%. Asbestos, Legionella and LOLER all remain at 100%.

Void turnaround times have reduced to 30 days, which is still under the industry standard but significant progress from an average of 55 days has been made.

The boilers at Reynolds Court were identified as not functioning correctly on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023. On investigation, heat exchanges had been damaged, resulting in a loss of hot water to residents. This was remediated by installing new boilers on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The issues caused an inconvenience to residents', but Mark Dyer, Judith Snares, Fergus Simmonds and Heather Duncan all made sure that residents were kept updated and also ensured contractors remained on track. All residents now have hot water re-instated. We will continue to monitor the system and Lovells will do a final commission of the system w/c 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The boiler manufacturer will also attend to check that the boilers are operating correctly and confirm warranty.

Further to the media attention in relation to reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), UDC surveyors have completed an assessment of UDC properties and have referred one for specialist assessment.

Negotiation of the service level agreement with UNSL and Norse is progressing and will be updated to Housing Board on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 and subsequently to Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023.

## **Housing Management**

The Tenant Satisfaction Measure Survey results for 2023-2024 have been received and I am pleased to report that our overall score for satisfaction, **'taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by Uttlesford DC'** has risen by 5% year on year to place UDC firmly in the upper quartile at 81%. 77% of respondents were either fairly or very satisfied with the service that they receive. This is extremely positive and testament to the hard work and commitment of the Housing and Client Services Teams. When broken down further, our sheltered scheme residents were 91% satisfied.

The housing management team continues to work extremely hard to respond to urgent safeguarding and complex needs whilst also maintaining their business-as-usual activities.

## **Housing Options**

A Housing Options Duty Officer will be available on site in Saffron Walden, daily during working hours. This re-instates our pre-covid levels of service and underlines our commitment to assist those in need of help and support.

## **Housing Development**

Works have commenced to build a four bedroom property on a garden reduction site in Tye Green, Wimbish and we are hoping to complete this property before September 2024.

We have also started a two bed fully wheelchair user adapted bungalow in The Mead at Thaxted.

We are completing a scrutiny exercise on our Walden Place development further to a complaint that was brought before the last Cabinet. The development is progressing extremely positively, and we are continuing to engage with our residents.

We have been engaging with Parish Councillors to highlight the role that Rural Exception Sites and Community Land Trusts can make to delivering much-needed affordable housing to meet locally identified need. We have been supported by the Rural Housing and Community Led Housing Enabler from the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) for the series of presentations to the Parish Council Forums.

10 more properties from Phase 2 of Great Dunmow Grange development, in collaboration with Barratts, are due for handover in March 2024. This development comprises of 9 one bedroom flats and 1 two bed roomed flat.

**Councillor Evans,**

**Portfolio Holder for Planning**

**Report for Council 5 December 2023**

### **Local Plan & Planning Policy**

Since my last update, the Council voted to publish the Regulation 18 Draft Local for public consultation. The consultation commenced on 3<sup>rd</sup> November and runs until 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023. This is in excess of the six-week consultation period required by law. The consultation was advertised in the local press by way of full page advertisements, on the council's website and via social media. Copies of the documents were placed in the district's libraries and published online. Our Local Plans Team also held four exhibitions in different locations across the District from 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> November. These were attended by some 700 residents in total. The officers, and a number of district councillors, attended and spoke with residents. Senior officers have also attended Area Parish Forums to speak with Parish colleagues about the draft Plan.

In the week of 20<sup>th</sup> November, and in order to sustain further communications on the local plan, we sent out an information booklet to every registered address in the district. Further newspaper advertisements will now follow along with a series of consultation reminders provided online.

By the time of my next quarterly update, we will have reviewed the responses to the consultation. This will be a huge task and will take place throughout January and into February. The council must then consider what changes need to be made to the plan before publishing a final draft (Regulation 19) for consultation next summer.

Our newly appointed Urban Design Officer is currently reviewing responses to the recent Design Code consultation. We are working with the Department of Levelling up, Housing & Communities to secure further central grant funding to further refine the Code and put it to practical use.

### **Development Management**

Over the last quarter our Planning Business & Administration Team registered and validated more than 700 planning applications and issued decision paperwork for more than 800. This small team also supported two s62a hearings, a number of appeal hearings, a public inquiry and dealt with an estimated 2,400 emails, letters and phone calls. The team also supports our Building Control and Street Naming & Numbering services.

It is also the responsibility of this team to ensure our internal systems are updated to reflect the national changes to planning application fees. Fees for major planning applications increase 35% and 25% for minor applications from 6<sup>th</sup> December.

In terms of performance the Development Management Team is issuing 83% of major and 85% of non-major planning applications within target timescales (far

above the government's target of 60% and 70% respectively). It has also further improved on its 'quality of decisions' metric for non-major applications, with only 1.67% of appeals being allowed by inspectors.

In terms of quality of decisions for major planning applications (the metric for which we are designated) the latest statistics place us at 12%; over the 10% threshold for designation. As far as perception by government is concerned, the council is still losing too many of its major planning appeals. In other words, refusing applications that government considers should have been granted permission. While we remain above the threshold, it seems less likely that the Secretary of State will de-designate the council and re-instate its full planning powers. Moreover, Uttlesford receives a high number of major planning appeals compared to similar councils. Defending appeals also brings with it significant resourcing implications. In the last 24 months, we have defended 17 major appeals compared to Braintree's 11, Sevenoaks, Kent's 9 and South Cambridgeshire (with a population almost twice ours) defending 14.

In October we published our updated five year housing land supply position. The council can demonstrate a 5.14 year supply of new homes. This will assist decision making and our position on appeal.

In November, our officers, led by our in-house Conservation Officer, supported the council in designating our 34<sup>th</sup> conservation area at Smith's Green, Takeley. We will now move on to supporting progress on a CA for Stebbing Green.

### **Enforcement**

Since September the Planning Enforcement team has successfully defended two enforcement notices at appeal. It recently issued a 'stop notice' on a major developer on a site Saffron Walden as it appeared the developer was proceeding with works without first discharging its planning conditions. It issued a further notice on another developer pursuant to the creation of earth bunds seemingly without planning permission.

The Planning Enforcement Team was also involved in the recent Off-Airport Parking Summit which was attended by nine parish councils, and various agencies such as Essex Highways, NEPP, Trading standards, Essex Police and UDC Licensing, and Economic Development. The team is currently contributing to the council's call for a multi-agency response to the problem of unauthorised off-airport car parking by enforcing against car park operators acting unlawfully.

### **Building Control**

Over the past quarter we have received more than 2,000 building regulations applications and initial notices and continue to exceed performance targets in responding to and dealing with them. So far this quarter our experienced team has also processed a record number of 'Partnership Applications' (applications for work on sites outside our district) amounting to 242 fee paying applications. These assist in bringing additional revenue into the council.



As ever, the team will be on call over the Christmas period (including Christmas Day) should there be any incidents resulting in dangerous structures (e.g. bridge strikes, house fires, building collapses etc) in order to help keep our residents safe.

**Councillor Hargreaves,**

**Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy**

**Report for Council 5 December 2023**

**The Autumn Statement**

it was disappointing that the Autumn Statement failed to address the now chronic under provision of funding needed to protect the services the people in our communities rely on every day.

There is a proposed new planning service allowing local authorities to recover the full costs of major business planning applications, as long as faster timelines are met. It appears this is only for business applications, not housing, so this would be of little benefit to this council. The Chancellor also pledged £32m to clear the planning backlog to develop housing in Cambridge, London, and Leeds. Why just these areas is unclear, but it will not be of use to us and the rest of the UK, and possibly a disadvantage if it sucks planning resource away from neighbouring authorities.

A further tranche of £450m is being allocated to the Local Authority Housing Fund. This is for local authorities to obtain accommodation for families with housing needs who have arrived in the UK via Ukrainian and Afghan resettlement and relocation schemes. In the Round 2 Determination (31 August 2023, Tranche 1) UDC received £305,256 from this fund.

The cut of 2% in National Insurance for employees is welcome for council staff, but there is no reduction in the burden on employers, which is 13.8% on salaries above the £175 a week threshold. Staff costs are a major part of all councils expenditure.

The government is adding another £3 billion of loan guarantees to the existing Affordable Homes Guarantee Scheme 'which will help the scheme deliver 20,000 new homes, as well as improving the quality and efficiency of thousands.' This is for Housing Associations not local authorities and so does not benefit our social housing provision. Although interest rates have recently fallen slightly, they still remain around 5.5% from the PwLB, at which level it makes new council house building financially unviable if it is to be funded from borrowing.

Councils have for many years had their finances very largely controlled by government, which sets business rates, restricts council tax rises, and provides annual settlements much too late for the budget cycle, instead of setting out finances on a long-term basis. It micromanages, for example, what can be charged for most planning application fees, prevents councils charging for planning applications on listed buildings, and determines how much parking fines can be. The various levelling up schemes, which councils apply for and administer, and distribute according to the rules and what is applied for, are not for the support of essential council services.

**Devolution**

In a letter on Devolution, 21<sup>st</sup> November, from the Levelling Up Minister Jacob Young, there is stated an intent to set up a new body, the Greater Essex Combined

County Authority (CCA). The admin would be funded by £1m from the government and its function it appears would be to allocate funds devolved to it for capital purposes. £24m is proposed in 24/25 although it is not stated if this is new money or a reallocation of existing funds. The government has announced that it will cease core funding of Local Enterprise Partnerships from April 2024 and for the LEP functions to be delivered by local authorities. SELEP is also based at the ECC office in Chelmsford, and it is not clear if the offered funding is a reallocation of funding which would have gone to SELEP. In the latest published accounts for 2020 SELEP spent £88 million, funded from government grants.

Lower tier authorities would be consultees on CCA spending but the decisions would be taken by Essex, Thurrock and Southend councils.

### **Parking**

A forum was facilitated in November by UDC and brought together representatives from key partners including Essex Police, Essex Highways, Trading Standards, North Essex Parking Partnership, a representative of our Member of Parliament, the parishes most affected, and the airport, as well as a number of senior officers from the council.

The purpose was to discuss the nature and scale of the air-airport parking problems, the enforcement and regulatory tools available across agencies to tackle the problems, and to talk about options to resolve them. The area where UDC has direct powers is planning enforcement and officers reported on their actions to stop the use of unauthorised parking lots.

This is a long-running and complex set of issues and there is no magic solution – if you crack down on one aspect, the problem pops up elsewhere. But I'm hopeful we and the parishes can work with the various agencies to make some improvement in the situation for our residents. Good news revealed at the forum is that Stansted Airport has £200k available to spend on projects. Although attention has currently moved to our off-street parking, and indeed the Local Plan, the intention is to go back to the parishes, to see if wider schemes, supported with the airport funding, can get community support and fit the NEPP criteria.

Cllr Neil Hargreaves

## **Councillor Reeve, Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change**

### **Report to Full Council 5 December 2023**

**This report reflects the highlights of the Portfolio from Early October to Late November 2023**

A general activity has been to absorb the Regulation 18 Consultation on the Local Plan.

I have attended various meetings of the Herts and Essex Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) which aims to improve our digital connectivity. This includes chairing the Digital Sustainability Special Interest Group.

Regular scheduled meetings are being held with Officers. Cllr Pavitt is invited to those that address biodiversity matters.

Below are summaries of some key activities of the Environmental Services, Climate Change, and Biodiversity, and Air Quality work.

#### **Environmental Services**

The main strategic activity is that the Director is developing the medium (and long) term strategy to address the resource issues in the Waste Collection service.

ECC Waste Strategy 2024-2054: The Consultation for this has ended on 22 Nov 2023.

Recycling Centre Bookings: The ECC Consultation on this ended mid-Nov 2023. The results of this are awaited. Note Uttlesford are in a small minority regarding proposed changes, since most Local Authorities are reporting severe queuing and other problems.

Landfill site, South of the Flich way on the border of Great and Little Canfield: As previously reported, there are a number of open enforcement issues relating to this site. There are also a range of Authorities/Agencies involved. Coordination of the various bodies is improving. The Environment Agency has issued an External Briefing Note dated August 2023 requiring the Landowner to take certain actions, including securing the boundary fence against public access. It has been brought to the attention of the Health and Safety Executive. Apparently, the fence is now secure, but this is being checked.

The Environmental Health team is checking the status of a new 'Animal Sanctuary' that is causing disturbance to its neighbours.

The next meeting of the Essex Waste Partnership - Member Advisory Board will be held on 12 December.

#### **Climate Change**

The Climate and biodiversity team have been very active working through their work programme.

On 31 October 2023 I attended the ECC Autumn Climate Summit, which focused on Restoring Nature and Building Resilience. Three officers from the Climate Change and Biodiversity Team also attended (they used the new EV for hire to drive to Chelmsford!). It was a very good event. Stimulating talks and Q/As with Tony Juniper (Natural England) and Lord Deben (alias John Gummer for the more ancient of us, who had led the UK's national Committee for Climate Change until recently). There were not many punches held. There were also us many other more local speakers and panelists, and overall about 100 plus attendees. One big take-away for me was the fact that a series of Local Farm Clusters have been set up (along the main river courses and watersheds). These are aimed at focusing on actions that the farming community can take. This is very important for our very rural environment.

A recording of the summit is available on [you tube here](#), so if you have time I recommend listening to the key note speakers, particularly Lord Deben (approx. 6minutes in).

We will be working on the follow-up actions arising from this. One thing where Uttlesford is now ahead of the Essex pack is having set a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 20% in our recently released Reg 18 Local Plan Consultation. This was met with pleasure by the ECC staff and a number of the key partners present.

On 9 November, a very positive meeting focusing on Uttlesford Community Energy was held in the UDC Saffron Walden offices. It was attended by Ollie Pendered, from Community Energy South, Chris Dodge from Saffron Walden Community Energy (for the Littlebury Project), ECC, UK Power Network, key representatives from UDC's climate change, planning (including heritage), economic development, housing, communities, and other departments; and councillors (in total about 30 people). The outcome focused on how to further develop the concept (in depth and breadth) including its financing.

On 21 November a meeting of the Saffron Walden Clean Air Project was convened. This meeting focused on the transport aspects. The coordination of the work on this project, the Local Plan and the emerging Local Walking Cycling Infrastructure Project (LCWIP) was central to the meeting. Fortunately, the same individuals are working on the various strands. The deliverable will be proposals for improvement projects.

On Friday 1 December 2023, a meeting of the ECC Air Quality Summit is scheduled.

#### **Zero Carbon Communities grant scheme:**

- We are now open for applications for Round 2 of the Zero Carbon Communities Grant Scheme.
- Scheme open to community groups, town and parish councils. Grants from £1k up to £35k
- Projects that will reduce carbon emissions, or can be for nature/biodiversity

- Closing date midday 4<sup>th</sup> December. A well-attended webinar was held on Thurs, 12<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Mobility Schemes**

- The EV Car Club Contract awarded to CoWheels - a community interest company
- 1<sup>st</sup> vehicle bay @ London Rd – **was launched on 16 October.**
- 2<sup>nd</sup> vehicle bay @ Common Car Park – due to launch Jan 2024.
- All encouraged to sign up now and get free membership plus £25 driving credit.

### **Community Cargo Bike:**

- Contract awarded to Peddle My Wheels 'Our Bike' scheme.
- Bike due to launch imminently. Residents and businesses able to book via app.

### **A personal climate change note**

On 24 October 2023 I attended a meeting hosted by the German Standardization Institute (DIN) in Berlin 'Coordination of the European Hydrogen Standardization'. This was attended by the Chairs and Secretariats of all the relevant technical committees involved in the hydrogen industries.

I still Chair the European Committee for Standardization Technical Committee for the Oil and Gas and Lower Carbon Energy Industries (CEN/TC 12). This is the daughter of the identically named International Standardization Organization Technical Committee (ISO/TC 67- which I previously chaired). At the European level, we primarily adopt the International Standards into Europe, having ensured strong European input. These standards in turn become the National Standard in all the European countries including the UK via the British Standards Institute (BSI). To date the suite of documents in our committee have some 40,000 pages of detailed technical text. i.e. one document for each subject that is International but also European and hence a British Standard.

What has this got to do with Climate Change? The answer is that the companies that had been the world's oil and gas companies, are rapidly transitioning to integrated energy companies. They have to, as the world transitions from a hydrocarbon to a renewable energy system. All the bright minds are wanting to work on the renewables. Industry works by using technical specifications, and these should be standardized (into 'standards') as much as possible and sensible. Work on standards for the renewables industry (e.g. wind, solar, hydrogen, carbon capture and storage, ammonia etc) is accelerating. As an example, our work on offshore wind concentrates on reducing the costs, by focusing on appropriate safety factors, which can be lower than similar structures used for oil and gas, due to lower risks to humans and the environment.

The meeting on 24 October, included the hydrogen producers, transporters and users of hydrogen, and the associated safety and quality systems. Present therefore were those from the car and large road vehicle industry; rail; marine and inland water; pipeline transportation/gas distribution industries (but not aviation, nor cement/steel producers, who were absent); and producers including the electrolysis designers/researchers. An underlying driver is the move from blue to green

hydrogen. The outcome of this particular meeting was that better coordination across the sectors is required, and that this should be fully integrated/promoted at the international level. I left the meeting feeling positive/motivated. Hydrogen is (slowly) coming.

## **Councillor Maggie Sutton – Portfolio Holder for Communities**

**Report to Full Council: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023**

### **Uttlesford Health & Wellbeing Board**

The priority leads had a meeting on the 11th of October 2023 to begin to scope themes for workshops so we can build the evidence base to form delivery plans for each priority. The Health and Wellbeing board meetings are paused until the action planning has been completed.

5 Key Priorities are:

- Improve and support mental wellbeing.
- Enable people to live healthy, active lifestyles throughout their lives.
- Build healthy, resilient, active communities.
- Alleviate pressures associated with increased costs of living.
- Improve access to services and facilities.

### **Dementia Action Alliance now Dementia Friendly Communities**

The first meeting was held on 21st September which coincided with World Alzheimer's Day. Main areas of discussion were centered on Dementia Awareness Training and organising community awareness events. Next meeting early December.

### **Community Development Food share Takeley**

Work continues to develop Takeley Old School Community Hub and to integrate Touchpoint food share with the community café. Numbers are growing every week and there are now local volunteers helping with food distribution as well as a new team in the café. We are also trying to improve access to the Citizens Advice remote access point and working with Saffron Hall, looking to introduce their Dementia project Together in Sound run in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University. Saffron Hall are also planning a community engagement event in February 2024.

### **Ukraine Community Grant**

As part of our ongoing support for our Ukraine guests and hosts, we have set up a community grant scheme to promote the further integration of Ukrainian guests into the Uttlesford community. This will help fund and support activities, events and projects being run by a range of Parish Councils, community groups, hosts and guests.

Up to £300 grant can be awarded per activity / event / project

The grant could cover the cost of such things as venue hire, equipment, transport, instructor time, refreshments.



### **Refugee support – Asylum dispersal funding**

Discussions are ongoing with partners and stakeholders to develop a clear process to ensure that available funding is utilised and best serves the needs of the individuals and families residing in the IBIS and Great Hallingbury Hotels to prevent Homelessness and

### **Voluntary and Community Grants**

We have been engaging with key stakeholders regarding how UDC delivers grants to the voluntary sector and well as to the community. We will work up some proposals under Blueprint Uttlesford Programme once all of the consultations have taken place. Next years' funding rounds are now open and have been publicized throughout the sector.

### **Motorwise Lead Officer AG**

The Community Safety Partnership are in discussions with Carver Barracks as a venue for hosting a Motorwise project in March 2024, aimed at school years 12/13 to raise awareness of the four most prevalent causes of death and injury when driving; speeding, mobile phone use, drink/drug driving, no seatbelt.

Early indication is that schools are supportive of this valuable project.

### **Violence Against Women and Girls**

The CSP have been awarded £6300 via the Op Minerva funding from the PFCC which is to be used for reducing Violence Against Women and Girls. A project incorporating women's FREE self-defense classes, a theatre production to tackle misogynistic viewpoints will commence November/December 2023.

End

**Saffron Walden Museum’s new exhibition Evacuee: A Wartime Childhood has opened and runs until March.**

It features the original artwork of artist and author Brian Sanders, whose decades-long career includes working on books, magazines, stamp and coin designs and editorial and advertising. He’s worked on the American TV show Mad Men and he’s worked with Stanley Kubrick.

However, of particularly local interest are his two beautifully illustrated books Evacuee: A Wartime Childhood and Return of Evacuee: A Post-war Childhood which chronicle his own experiences of coming to Saffron Walden as an evacuee. The exhibition features his original artwork along with photographs and more from the museum’s collections. It is a fantastic exhibition and I encourage everyone to visit it.

# Uttlesford District Council Meeting 5 December 2023

## Written Questions to Members of the Executive and Committee Chairs

### Written responses to be published on 4 December 2023

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

“Please provide a progress update on Reynolds Court, the cost of remediation and recovery of costs relating to Reynolds Court?”

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

“Was any consultation held with town/parish councils or representatives of local business before the decision was made to slash the number of days allocated for free Christmas parking?”

**3. By Councillor Sell to Councillor Evans – Portfolio Holder for Planning:**

“What was the rationale for not holding a local plan exhibition at Stansted (the district’s third principal settlement) and holding the exhibitions only in the evenings and not during the hours of daylight?”

**4. By Councillor Silcock to the Councillor Lees – Leader of the Council and Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy:**

“When is the car parking review likely to be completed?”

**5. By Councillor Silcock to the Councillor Lees – Leader of the Council and Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy:**

“What sub lets have taken place at Canfield Business Park?”

**6. By Councillor Fiddy to Councillor Evans – Portfolio Holder for Planning**

“Planning conditions can enhance the quality of development and enable development to proceed where it would otherwise have been necessary to refuse planning permission, by mitigating the adverse effects. In the year ending 31.03.23 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman upheld just two complaints made against Uttlesford District Council, both of which were related to failures of the planning conditions process, one wholly and one partially. When the planning conditions process fails, the risk to the

council is high both in taxpayers' money and reputation. The Ombudsman letter says that complaints offer organisations a 'rich source of intelligence and insight that has the potential to be transformational'. Good corporate governance requires a review of the actions that resulted in these complaints so as to reduce future risk. Has such a thing been carried out? Specifically:

- i) Does UDC follow a documented, standardised process, preferably benchmarked against best practice, for writing and discharging planning conditions?
- ii) If so, have the actions that resulted in complaints been investigated against this process and has any remedial action (e.g. a review of process, or additional training) been put in place to ensure that these mistakes are less likely to reoccur elsewhere?"

#### **7. By Councillor Barker to Councillor Evans – Portfolio Holder for Planning**

"Can I please ask for the number of Planning permissions granted since 1/4/2023 which have not been counted in the Local Plan numbers?"

These should be presented in the form of a table with the Parish/ Town identified as well as a split between Market and Affordable. The table should include permissions granted on appeal, granted by the inspector, granted by Committee or granted under officer delegation."

#### **8. By Councillor Barker to Councillor Reeve – Portfolio Holder for Environment and Climate Change**

"I understand that a number of Villages that purchase a Village Green Waste skip have been let down in recent weeks. Barnston, Newport, Hatfield Heath and White Roding have been reported to me.

Can I ask the Cabinet member for details of how many visits have been missed since August, what his plans are to rectify this situation and to confirm that Parishes will not be charged for visits not made.

Can I further ask him to confirm the timetable for the replacement of the ageing fleet that seems to be at the root of the problem and to confirm that this will be a fleet run on renewable energy?"

#### **9. By Councillor Gooding to Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy**

"We note that the intention of the investment in commercial property is intended to provide a revenue income for the benefit of the Council. However, it is evident that the balance of short and long-term borrowing to fund this investment will be significantly affected by the recent rises in interest rates and the unlikely hood that these rates will decrease in the foreseeable future. Given this reality together with the fact that some of the investments will require upfront expenditure, funded by borrowing, that will take some considerable time to yield an income, will the Cabinet Member provide this Council with a fully costed cash flow forecast over the next five years setting out the times and dates for the cost of borrowing balanced with the revenue

income derived from that borrowing based on the best estimates of interest costs over that period.”

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

“Can you inform me what the current credit score of Uttlesford District Council is and where does it sit in regard to the national average and the eastern region average score for district councils?”

**11. By Councillor Church to Councillor Evans – Portfolio Holder for Planning**

“Can I please ask for the intended level and frequency of planning training for members of the committee?”

**12. By Councillor Church to Councillor Lees – Leader of the Council**

“Can I please ask the expected timelines for the completion of the 2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 External Audit?”

**13. By Councillor Oliver to Councillor Hargreaves – Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Economy**

“The Chancellor's Autumn Statement extended the 75% business rates discount in the Hospitality and Leisure sector. Can you tell me how much this will save in rates for our Leisure Centres and reassure the Council that this will be covered by a Government grant?”

**14. By Councillor Regan to Councillor Evans – Portfolio Holder for Planning**

“Why did the Council hold four Consultation Events about the Local Plan the week before distributing a leaflet explaining the proposals were delivered to Households?”

# Agenda Item 8

**Committee:** Council

**Date:**

**Title:** Member Allowance Scheme Review 2024-25

Tuesday,  
5 December 2023

**Report Author:** The Independent Remuneration Panel:  
Brigid Dyson (Chair), Steve Dale and James Dodson; assisted by  
Clare Edwards, Democratic Services Officer  
[cedwards@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:cedwards@uttlesford.gov.uk)  
Ben Ferguson, Democratic Services Manager  
[bferguson@uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:bferguson@uttlesford.gov.uk)

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## Summary

1. The Council is required to maintain an Independent Remuneration Panel to make annual recommendations as to the level of the Basic Allowance and the type and level of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs).
2. In making a scheme of allowances, the Council is required to have regard to the recommendations of an independent panel but is not bound by them.
3. This report sets out the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for the Members' Scheme of Allowances for the municipal year 2024/25.

## Recommendations

That the Council:

- I. Agrees to a rise of 4.00% to the current level of basic allowance.
- II. Adopts the changes to the individual SRAs as set out in Appendix A and detailed in the report, for the municipal year 2024/25.
- III. Notes the addition of details relating to the remuneration for Parish and Town Councils.

## Financial Implications

4. There would be additional cost to the Council due to the 4% increase in the level of the basic allowance and the changes made to the special responsibility allowances. The estimated cost of implementing this rise is an increase of £18,764.86.

**Background Papers**

None.

**Impact**

Communication/Consultation	Members had the opportunity to complete a short survey circulated on behalf of the IRP regarding the average weekly hours undertaken in their role as a Councillor.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Health and Safety	None
Human Rights/Legal Implications	None
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	All wards
Workforce/Workplace	None

**Situation**

**The Independent Remuneration Panel**

- 5. The Panel this year consists of Brigid Dyson (Chair), Steve Dale and James Dodson both of whom were recruited in the summer and joined the Panel for this review.
  
- 5. In conducting its appraisal, the Panel wanted to ensure that the increase to the basic allowance was proportionate without losing sight of the rate of inflation, as well as taking into account the rise in basic living costs and the financial difficulties facing residents in the district. The Panel were also mindful of the challenge within the Council to reduce the budget in order to maintain services. The Panel have attempted to balance these factors whilst trying to ensure that the remuneration did not act as a disincentive to residents from

different backgrounds in coming forward to be Councillors. Finally, consideration was given to simplifying existing payment formulas for certain SRA's where they were considered to be unduly complex, to provide greater transparency and clarity on amounts payable.

### Summary of the Review

- The IRP requested that a survey was sent out to all Councillors with questions relating to how many hours on average they worked as a Councillor, specifically relating to meeting preparation, attendance at meetings and time engaging with their constituents. The full survey questions can be found in Appendix B.

17 out of 39 Councillors completed the survey, and whilst it was difficult for the Panel to draw definitive conclusions from an incomplete suite of data, it was noted that the total number of hours worked and workload remained high and some Councillors worked in excess of 30 hours a week. The Panel would like to thank those members who completed the survey as this data helped inform the review.

The IRP asked for data relating to the frequency and length of meetings. The data below shows a comparison of the municipal year of May 2018 to April 2019 and the most recent full year from May 2022 to April 2023. Please note that this does not include working group meetings.

	May 2018 to April 2019		May 2022 to April 2023	
	No. of meetings	Duration in hours	No. of meetings	Duration in hours
Council	8	21	9	17
Cabinet	9	10	8	10
GAP and Standards	8	9	6	11
Licensing and Environmental Health	6	6	3	3
Licensing Panels	14	48	7	9
Planning	14	42	18	76
Scrutiny	7	10	10	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>144</b>

The Panel noted that while most meetings have stayed roughly the same in terms of frequency and duration, Planning Committee stands out as having an increase in the number of meetings and their duration. This was due to the recent designation of the Planning Committee and the need to formally comment on Section 62a applications in a statutory timeframe.

### Basic Allowance

- The aim of the basic allowance is to acknowledge that while some element of the Councillors role continues to be voluntary, there is financial recompense available in order to not discourage people coming forward to serve their local community.



9. The basic allowance takes account of the duties and responsibilities of an elected Councillor and acts as the starting point for the calculation of all SRAs. The SRA's are expressed as multiples of the basic allowance.
10. Uttlesford District Council's (UDC) basic allowance is in the middle range of the Local Authorities that were used for the benchmarking exercise. For consistency, the same councils that have been used in previous reviews were selected:

- a. Benchmarking for the basic allowance was undertaken.

<b>Authority</b>	<b>Basic Allowance</b>
Epping Forest	£4,300.00
Braintree	£5,154.00
South Cambridgeshire	£5,501.00
<b>Uttlesford</b>	<b>£5,506.88</b>
East Herts (Executive)	£5,678.79
Hertsmere (Executive)	£6,601.00
Chelmsford	£6,645.00
Stevenage (Executive)	£8,490.00

The Local Government staff pay award is a helpful measure for the Panel to consider when setting the basic allowance, although the link to the staff pay award has not been formalised to maintain flexibility. The staff pay award for 2023-24 has been agreed with an increase of £1,925 on spinal column points 7 to 43 and an increase of 3.88% from 44 to 63.

11. The Panel looked at data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) regarding the cost of living when considering their decision in respect of the basic allowance. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) fell from August 2022 9.9% to 6.7% in August 2023 and there was a further fall to 4.7% in October. However the ONS data shows that although the price of food and non alcoholic beverages is easing it was still 12.2% in September 2023 and 10.1% in October 2023 and 50% of adults when asked In September 2023 said that they were spending more money on their normal shopping than usual.
12. After consideration the Panel decided that a rise of 4.00% was justified. The following factors contributed to their decision:
- The economic climate remained volatile and the Panel were aware that they could not fall too far behind the rate of inflation in order to avoid larger increases in the future. They also gave consideration to the financial struggles that many residents faced. Therefore, the Panel agreed the basic allowance should not be raised any higher than the 4.00% proposed.
  - The Panel did not want the Basic Allowance to be a barrier or disincentive to people considering standing as Councillors, therefore an uplift was required.

- c. The Panel noted that with the 4% increase, the basic allowance would still be in the mid-range in comparison to benchmarked Local Authorities.
- d. The proposed staff pay award differed from last year with the higher grades awarded 3.88% compared to last year's 1.6%.

### **Portfolio Holder's Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)**

- 13. After the elections in May 2023 the Cabinet was reduced to 6 members compared to the 9 and 10 it had been in the last administration. It was noted that the previous voluntary reduction of 45% no longer stood.
- 14. Further benchmarking data was requested by the IRP to assist with their recommendations:

- a. Benchmarking for the Portfolio Holders allowance was carried out: -

<u>Authority</u>	<u>Number of Portfolio Holders</u>	<u>Portfolio Holders Allowance</u>
Epping Forest	8	£6,450.00
Uttlesford	6	£6,608.27
South Cambridgeshire	8	£8,402.00
East Herts (Executive)	6	£9,780.96
Braintree	7 (+5 deputies)	£10,308 (£5,154)
Stevenage (Executive)	8	£11,671.00
Chelmsford	6 (+3 deputies)	£13,035 (£6,519)
Hertsmere (Executive)	8	£14,601.00

- 15. The Panel considered the results of the benchmarking data and noted that Uttlesford District Council (UDC) were one of the lowest allowances for Portfolio Holders and paid significantly less than all but one of the other Councils. It was also noted that all but East Herts had more Portfolio Holders than the 6 at UDC.
- 16. The Panel felt that in view of the benchmarking data and taking into account the extra workload Portfolio Holders carried out that their allowance should be raised by 6%.

### **Other Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA)**

- 17. The Panel looked at the SRA's and came to the following conclusions:-
  - a. The Chair of Planning Committee would receive 100% of the basic allowance, in view of the increase in meetings and their duration as well as the amount of preparation required, including site visits. This should be reviewed next year and if the number of meetings decrease once the designation period has ended, it should be reconsidered.

- b. Members of Planning Committee had previously had a complicated calculation to do with the number of days worked, the Panel decided that to make it simpler and to give the Members of Planning Committee a similar raise to that of the Chair it was decided that they should have 20% of the basic allowance. This would also be reviewed next year along with the Chair.
- c. Substitutes of Planning Committee would receive the standard uplift to their allowance and again in order to simplify how it was calculated it would be calculated as a percentage of the basic allowance which equated to 2.31%. This allowance would only be received if a substitute attended 50% of the Planning Committee meetings or 5 meetings in the municipal year whichever threshold was reached first.
- d. The Chair of the Licensing and Environmental Committee would have a slight reduction to bring the payment in line with the other Committee Chair's but the payment for the Licensing Panels would be paid to the Chair if the threshold was met (see below). The panel note that both the number of Licensing Committee and Licensing Panel meetings had halved, which has contributed to their decision to reduce the Chair's allowance. It should be noted that the Chair of Licensing and Environmental Health Committee does not necessarily Chair the Panel meetings.
- e. The Licensing Panels are ad-hoc meetings which are called primarily when taxi and premises licences are considered or reviewed and are therefore separate from the Committee meetings. In order to differentiate the Panel felt that the payment should be given to all Members of the Panel including the Chair if the threshold was met. This will again become a percentage of the basic allowance, which equates to 4.62%. This allowance would be paid in addition to other SRA's but would only be paid if there were more than 10 Panels within the municipal year and a payment will be made to members attending at least 50% of those meetings.
- f. All other SRA's would receive the standard uplift in accordance with the basic allowance.

In summary, when making this recommendation the Panel stressed that the increases:-

- gave Councillors recompense for the work that they carried out;
- would not provide a disincentive for other people in the community to feel able to come forward and;
- for those Councillors who did not need or want the allowances they noted the provision to forgo an allowance, partially or in full, and felt that this decision remained in the gift of each individual member.

### **Parish and Town Councils Remuneration**

18. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, regulation 25 state that a Parish or Town Council is able to pay a basic

allowance for each year to its Chair only, or to each of its elected members. Regulation 27 further states that a parish remuneration panel may be established by a responsible authority which is defined as a district or unitary authority. It is the case that in some areas parish panels will not be set up as there is no duty to do so, rather a power. A Parish or Town Council must consider a Panel's recommendation before setting an Allowances Scheme. It should be noted that UDC are not responsible for any payments to Parish and Town Councils and any remuneration paid is taken from the Parish or Town Councils budget.

19. There are 53 Town and Parish councils in Uttlesford, of various size, scope, and budget.
20. Due to the variables involved, the Panel have provided a general recommendation that Parish and Town Councils could use as a starting point of their review. If a Parish or Town Council opt to formally review their Members Allowance Scheme the Panel will convene to provide a recommendation.

Please see Appendix C for the full report.

### **Looking forward**

21. The Panel expressed interest in reviewing the SRAs relating to the Vice-Chair of Council and Opposition Leaders in next year's review. There was agreement that, in the example of the vice-chair, the number of hours required to deputise for the chair would change year-on-year and would be largely dependent on circumstance. Further information was required directly from members with relevant experience before an informed recommendation could be made. In regards to Opposition Leaders, there was a question as to whether the number of members in each leader's group had any correlation to the number of hours worked. Again, it was felt that direct qualitative and quantitative data would be required to make an informed recommendation to Council. This would likely take the form of interviews and targeted surveys of relevant members in order to provide a more comprehensive evidence base.
22. Linda Riley who had been an IRP member since 2019 took the decision to stand down for this review and the Democratic Services Manager would like to put on record his thanks to Linda for her commitment and dedication to the previous reviews she was involved with.

**Risk Analysis**

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
<p>Member allowances do not continue to be set at a realistic level reflecting duties undertaken, which may deter future prospective councillors.</p>	<p>2 – allowances paid to elected members do not reflect the time commitment and level of responsibility demanded.</p>	<p>3 – the Council may not be able to attract a diverse range of councillors that reflect the makeup of the community they serve.</p>	<p>Adoption of suitable levels of allowances taking account of relevant commitment and responsibility of members.</p>
<p>Member allowances are set too high causing strain on the budget and potentially bringing the public service discount into question.</p>	<p>2 – allowances paid to elected members are perceived to be too high for the public service they carry out.</p>	<p>2 – best value is not achieved and the issue is politicised; the role being mainly voluntary is no longer considered valid.</p>	<p>There must be a balance between remuneration for the work carried out by Councillors whilst still taking account of the public service discount expected of members.</p>

- 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

### PROPOSED MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2024/25

All councillors receive the basic allowance unless they request otherwise. Special responsibility allowances are paid to those who hold responsibility for those positions.

Allowance	Amount
Basic Allowance	£5,727.16
Chair of the Council	£4,581.73 + civic expenses
Vice Chair of the Council	£2,290.86
Leader of the Council	£14,031.54
Deputy Leader of the Council	£7,445.31
Portfolio Holders	£7,004.89
Overview/Scrutiny and Ordinary Committee Chairs	£4,009.01
Chair of Licensing and Environmental Health Committee	£4,009.01
Licensing Panel*	£264.59 (to be paid in a municipal year when at least ten meetings of the Committee take place in a purely regulatory capacity; a payment will be made to members attending at least 50% of those meetings).
Chair of Planning Committee	£5,727.16
Members of Planning Committee	£1,145.43
Substitute Members of Planning Committee*	£132.30 subject to attending 5 meetings per municipal year, or 50% of meetings in a municipal year.
Main Opposition Group Leader	£4,009.01
Other Opposition Group Leaders	£2290.86
Independent representatives on the Standards Committee	£572.72
Independent representatives on the	£572.72

Statutory Officer Discipline and Dismissal Committee	
Panel members of Independent Remuneration Panel	£572.72

**Explanatory notes about how the Special Responsibility Allowances are calculated:**

Chair of the Council - 80% of the basic allowance

Vice-Chair – 40% of the basic allowance

Leader of the Council - 245% of the basic allowance

Deputy Leader of the Council - 130% of the basic allowance

Members of the Executive – 122.31% of the basic allowance

Chair of Overview, Scrutiny and Ordinary committees - 70% of the basic allowance

Chair of Licensing and Environmental Health Committee - 70% of the basic allowance

Licensing Panel Members – 4.62% of the basic allowance, to be paid in a municipal year when at least ten meetings of the Committee take place in a purely regulatory capacity; a payment will be made to members attending at least 50% of those meetings. \*

Chair of Planning Committee - 100% of the basic allowance

Members of the Planning Committee – 20% of the basic allowance

Substitute Members of the Planning Committee – 2.31% of the basic allowance, subject to the substitute member attending 50% of Planning Committee meetings, or 5 meetings in the municipal year whichever threshold was reached first. \*

Leader of the largest opposition group - 70% of the basic allowance

Leader of all other opposition groups - 40% of the basic allowance

Independent members of the Standards Committee - benchmarked to 10% of the basic allowance

Independent members of the Statutory Officer Discipline and Dismissal Committees - benchmarked to 10% of the basic allowance

Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel - benchmarked to 10% of the basic allowance (although this allowance is not reviewed by the Panel and is agreed independently by the Council)

\* Paid in addition to other SRAs.

## Appendix B

### Copy of Survey sent to Councillors

#### **Average weekly hours involved in carrying out your role as a District Councillor**

*Please can you answer the following questions based on an approximation of average weekly hours you spend carrying out your duties as a District Councillor.*

- 1. Please list any special responsibility roles (i.e. Committee Chair, Opposition Group Leader) and your Committee Membership.
  
- 2. Please give an approximation of the weekly hours you spend in attendance at Council and Committee Meetings, splitting the hours into separate meetings if you can.
  
- 3. As above please give an approximation of the weekly hours you spend in preparation for those meetings, again splitting the hours by meeting if you can.
  
- 4. How many hours on average per week you spend engaging with Constituents.
  
- 5. How many hours on average per week you spend working with Community Groups including Parishes and Town Councils.
  
- 6. Any other comments that you wish to make.



## Appendix C

### Parish Remuneration Report

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#### Background

1. A parish or town council is able to pay a parish basic allowance for each year to its chair only, or to each of its elected members ([The Local Authorities \(Members' Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2003](#) regulation 25). The amount payable to the chair may differ from that of other members (i.e. a higher sum could be paid because of the extra duties that may be required of the chair) but otherwise the sum shall be the same for each member.
2. In order to establish a basic allowance, the parish or town council has to make reference to a **parish remuneration panel**. A parish remuneration panel will consist of those persons who are also members of the independent remuneration panel but cannot consist of parish or town councillors of councils in respect of which recommendations are to be made.
3. The Regulations (27) state that a parish remuneration panel may be established by a responsible authority which is defined as a district or unitary authority. It is the case that in some areas parish panels will not be set up as there is no duty to do so, rather a power. The implication is that the panel is established when a request to do so is made by an appropriate parish or town council.
4. The Panel must express its recommendation as to the level of parish basic allowance both as a percentage of the sum that the Independent Remuneration Panel has recommended to the district council (this figure can be one hundred per cent) and as a monetary figure.

#### Situation

5. The work of a parish councillor is mainly voluntary and it is not commonplace for them to receive remuneration. There is very little data locally or nationally to assist in the Panel's deliberations. The allowance, if set, is not a salary, but is a figure calculated to cover expenses, which are normally associated with the basic duties of being a Parish Councillor and would include stationery, IT and printing costs.

#### Recommendations

6. The Panel having reviewed the guidance and information that is available, are minded to recommend an annual Basic Allowance of £85.91 for the Chair of the Parish Council, in acknowledgement of their extra duties, and £57.27 for elected members. This equates to 1.5% and 1% of the proposed UDC members' allowance 2024-25, respectively.

7. The Panel recommend that subsistence claims should only be made in exceptional circumstances and are to be approved by the council in connection with the discharge of the functions of the authority, outside of the parish boundary. However, the Panel appreciate that parish councillors will be required to travel from time to time in order to fulfil their necessary duties and are minded to recommend setting travel expenses at the HMRC approved rate of 45p per mile for journeys outside of the Parish boundary. The approved duties list applicable for travel claims are:-
  - a. The attendance at a meeting of any association of authorities of which the council is a member, if held outside the Parish or Town Council's boundary.
  - b. The performance of duties in connection with a tender process which requires travel outside the Parish or Town Council's boundary.
  - c. The performance of any duty (outside the Parish or Town Council's boundary) which requires the inspection of any premises.
  - d. the carrying out of any other duty approved by the council, or any duty of a class so approved, or in connection with, the discharge of the functions of the authority or of any of its committees or sub committees.
8. Parish and Town Council's must consider the Panel's recommendations when considering the establishment of an Allowance Scheme, but they are not bound by the recommendation. They are able to accept the recommendations, in whole or in part, or approve an alternative scheme. In the event that a Basic Allowance scheme is established, it should be noted that individual Parish Councillors may forgo the basic allowance.
9. It should also be noted that the parish's administration of a scheme, if adopted, will need to adhere to [The Local Authorities \(Members' Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2003 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#). This includes the conspicuous publication of reports, recommendations and established schemes in accordance with the legislation, as well as the administration of payments to members who are entitled to payments. Receipts will be required for all claims.
10. No expenses will be paid for subsistence except in exceptional circumstances, to be approved by the council, in connection with the discharge of the functions of the authority or of any of its committees or sub committees, outside the Parish or Town Council's boundary.

# Agenda Item 9

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Council	<b>Date:</b>
		Tuesday, 5 December 2023
<b>Title:</b>	Local Council Tax Support Scheme Proposals 2024/25 and Consultation Responses	
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economy Cllr Neil Hargreaves	
<b>Report Author:</b>	Angela Knight, Director – Business Performance and People aknight@uttlesford.gov.uk	

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## Summary

1. There is a requirement to annually review the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme and propose changes to the scheme for the following financial year. The decisions made, even if no change is proposed, must then be consulted upon before a decision is taken at Full Council in December on the final scheme for the following financial year.
2. A consultation was carried out during the summer of 2023 on the scheme proposals to set a contribution rate and continue to protect Vulnerable and Disabled residents and Carer's on a low income.
3. The consultation ran from 3 July to 4 September 2023 and received the highest number of responses compared to previous years. A total of 70 responses were received, which gives a 46% increase on the number of responses received in 2022.
4. The responses show that 62.8% of respondents fully or partly support the proposed scheme.
5. As can be seen from the table in paragraph 16 Uttlesford has administered the scheme with the lowest percentage contribution requirement of any authority in Essex for ten years. This demonstrates that whilst the council has had sufficient funds to support the scheme it has done so.
6. In 2013/14 when the original scheme was introduced the contribution rate was set at 8.5%. This increased in 2014/15 to 12.5% and it has remained at this rate for each subsequent year.
7. The Exceptional Hardship Fund is available to support residents and claimants who are suffering financial hardship. For 2023/24 the Council has set up a new one year, Cost of Living Support Fund providing financial assistance to those who are struggling with increased costs and inflation.
8. Cabinet reviewed the LCTS scheme proposals and consultation responses on the 2 November and agreed the proposals as set out in this report were submitted to Council for approval.

## Recommendations

9. Council is requested to approve the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2024/25 as set out below:
  - I. The contribution rate is frozen at 12.5% for 2024/25.
  - II. The Council continues to protect Pensioners, Vulnerable and Disabled Residents and their Carer's on a low income.

## Financial Implications

10. Detailed in the main body of this report.

## Background Papers

11. None

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	Proposals subject to public consultation and discussions with major preceptors
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	An equalities impact assessment has been attached as Appendix B to this report
Health and Safety	None.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	Compliance with relevant legislation.
Sustainability	The objective is to achieve a financially sustainable set of arrangements.
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	Ongoing demands on the Revenues & Benefits, Housing and Customer Service teams

## Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) current scheme

12. LCTS replaced Council Tax Benefit (CTB) from 1 April 2013. The Council has adopted a scheme which has the following key elements:
  - a) Pensioners on low income protected from adverse changes (as required by Government)

- b) Disabled people, Carer's and blind people on a low income receive discretionary protection from adverse changes
- c) Working age people previously on full CTB pay no more than 12.5% of the council tax bill
- d) £25 per week of earned wages income disregarded from assessment (to provide a work incentive)
- e) Child Benefit and Child Maintenance disregarded from assessment (to minimise exacerbation of child poverty, or accusations of same)
- f) Hardship Policy to enable additional support for genuine extreme hardship cases.

### **Essex Sharing Agreement**

13. An Essex wide income sharing agreement was entered into with all billing authorities and major preceptors at the time of implementation of the new LCTS scheme.
14. The main principles of the agreement are to ensure a joint approach in maximising income collection, reduce fraud, ensure compliance, and increase the taxbase.
15. By working proactively on fraud this ensures that our tax base is maintained at the maximum level generating extra revenue for both the major preceptors and billing authorities.
16. Preceptors receive a share of all income generated for Council Tax and this is allocated through the Collection Fund at year end.
17. The increased income generated specifically from these activities and internal decisions made by UDC each year is monitored by ECC, and the preceptors have agreed to share their element of the increased income with the Local Authorities.
18. The major preceptors also provide funding through this agreement for;
  - an officer to ensure the efficient administration of the LCTS scheme and provide claimants with dedicated support in debt management.
  - two officers to work directly on all areas of fraud and compliance within Council Tax.
  - contributions towards the Exceptional Hardship Scheme which has a £17,000 annual budget (£10,000 UDC element), plus Essex County Council provide an additional £5,000 for admin support.

### **Contribution Rates across Essex**

19. The council has the lowest percentage contribution rate within Essex with the highest being set at 30%. Colchester reduced their contribution rate for 2023/24 from 20% to 15%.
20. It is too early to tell if any other Local Authorities will reduce their contribution rates for the next financial year, this information should be available for the November Cabinet report along with the main consultation responses.

<b>Contribution Rates 2023/24</b>			
	<b>%</b>		<b>%</b>
Basildon	25	Harlow	24
Braintree	24	Maldon	20
Brentwood	25	Rochford	25
Castle Point	30	Southend-on-Sea	25
Chelmsford	23	Tendring	20
Colchester	15	Thurrock	25
Epping Forest	25	Uttlesford	12.5

## Consultation

21. The consultation ran for the period 3 July to 4 September 2023 and the full consultation report is attached as Appendix A.
22. The survey was run online through the Uttlesford District Council “Let’s talk” consultation platform. This could be accessed via the main council website home page, from the consultation platform home page, or from direct links sent out in various promotions, publicity and newsletters. A paper copy of the survey was also available on request.
23. At the start of the consultation period emails inviting participation in the survey were sent directly to all preceptors. The survey was widely publicised to the citizens of Uttlesford who were encouraged to take part. A press release was distributed to all local media and newspapers on 4 July. It was included in the *District News* e-newsletter on 28 July that was sent to a total of 10,349 recipients. Social media promotion via Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram went on throughout the consultation period reaching some 824 people.
24. A total of 70 responses were received (compared to 48 in 2022), giving a 46% increase, and all responses were received electronically. Of the total responses 68 included commentary and all the comments received have been included in the full report (Appendix A).
25. A breakdown of the responses is shown in the table below.

<b>Responses</b>	<b>Number received</b>
Fully or partly support the proposed scheme	44 (62.8%)
Do not support the proposed scheme	16 (22.9%)
Comments received on other related matters including suggesting additional support/widening the scheme	8 (11.4%)
Responses containing no comments	2 (2.9%)

26. There were no responses from any preceptors this year although we did receive a number of responses from Local Organisations and Charities.
27. A number of the responses referenced the current cost of living crisis and commented on whether the council could provide additional support to not only those on low incomes but also middle income families and households.

28. The council provides a range of additional support which is available to all residents suffering financial hardship

- Two dedicated officers who provide a range of support including early intervention and advice on debt management
- Council Tax Support Fund and Exceptional Hardship Fund (further details of these funds are set out in paragraphs 37- 41)

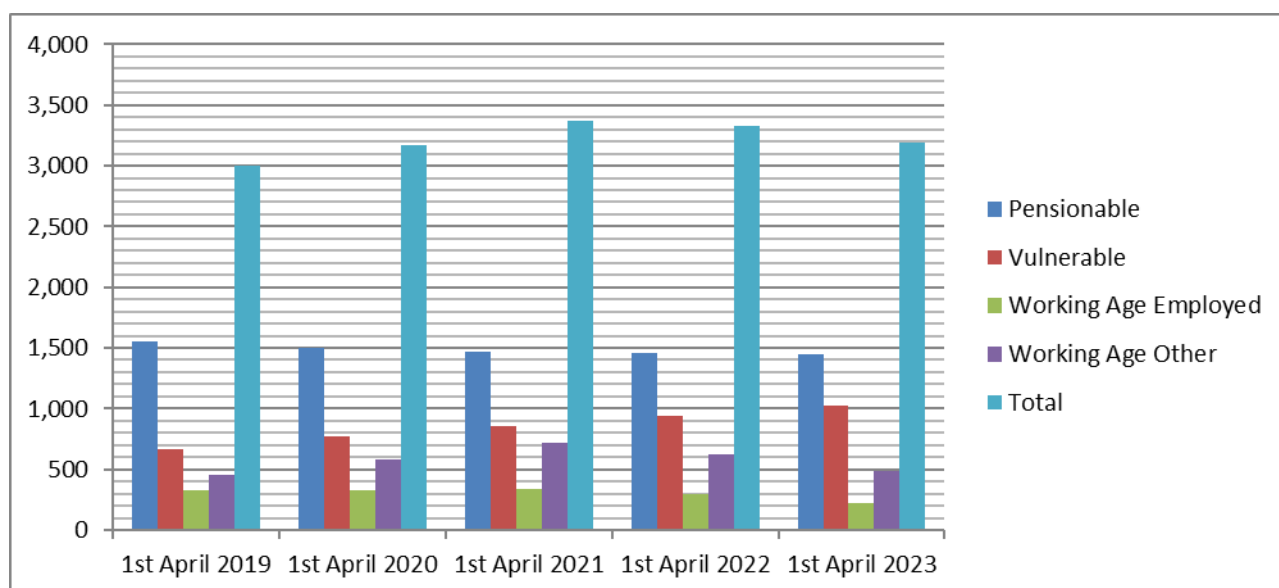
### Claimant Caseload

29. The data and figures used in the following tables are based on 2023/24 caseload information on 1 April 2023.

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

	1st April 2019	1st April 2020	1st April 2021	1st April 2022	1st April 2023
Pensionable	1,557	1,497	1,466	1,458	1,452
Vulnerable	664	766	851	943	1,027
Working Age Employed	323	331	337	297	223
Working Age Other	452	577	714	627	485
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,996</b>	<b>3,171</b>	<b>3,368</b>	<b>3,325</b>	<b>3,187</b>

	1/4/19	1/4/20	In year movement	1/4/21	In year movement	1/4/22	In year movement	1/4/23	In year movement
Pensionable	1,557	1,497	-60	1,466	-31	1,458	-8	1,452	-6
Vulnerable/Disabled	664	766	102	851	85	943	92	1,027	84
Working Age - Employed	323	331	8	337	6	297	-40	223	-74
Working Age - unemployed	452	577	125	714	137	627	-87	485	-142
<b>Total Claimants</b>	<b>2,996</b>	<b>3,171</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>3,368</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>3,325</b>	<b>-43</b>	<b>3,187</b>	<b>-138</b>



31. The overall number of claimants has reduced for the second year in a row, with the biggest decrease seen in the working age category. This category was expected to decrease as we came out of the Pandemic and people were able to engage with businesses and organisations to gain employment.

32. The overall decrease in caseload is offset by the vulnerable and disabled category where there is a further increase this year in the numbers of people requiring support. This category has shown an annual increase year on year for five years.

### Contribution Rate

33. The contribution rate at 12.5% currently generates approximately £188,191 per year for the Council and the major preceptors, of the total income generated the council receives approximately £26,347 in line with their percentage share of the overall council tax income. This calculation uses an average award, so depending on caseload this income figure could increase or decrease over the year.
34. The table below sets out the additional income of an increase to the contribution rate to preceptors and is shown in 2.5% increments. Each 2.5% increase will generate additional income of £37,638, of which the council will receive £5,269 in line with their percentage share of the overall council tax income.

### Income increases to preceptors.

Percentage Contribution	Average liability income due £'000	Increased income @ 2.5% increments £'000	UDC share of increased income @ 2.5% increment £'000
12.50%	£188,191	-	-
15%	£225,830	£37,638	£5,269
17.50%	£263,468	£75,277	£10,539
20%	£301,106	£112,915	£15,808

\*Income collection ranges from 87% to 90% so the actual income received is likely to be lower than the figures in the above table.

### Cost impact to claimants.

35. It is impossible to identify and calculate precise figures for each claimant as the contribution level varies dependant on the claimant's financial circumstances and this can change multiple times during the year.
36. The figures in the table below are shown for a working age unemployed person in receipt of full LCTS support, 87.5% discount. So this is the impact of the minimum payment that would be required to be made.

Percentage Contribution	Total cost per year £	Total cost per week £	Increase @ 2.5% per year £	Increase @ 2.5% per week £
12.50%	265.81	5.11	-	-
15%	318.97	6.13	£53.16	£1.02
17.50%	372.13	7.16	£106.32	£2.04
20%	425.29	8.18	£159.48	£3.07



37. The table in paragraph 29 shows the number of people in receipt of LCTS support, for the working age categories, 485 unemployed compared to 223 in work (low income and/or part time). The increase in the contribution rate will affect both working age categories.

### Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF) and Cost of Living Support

38. The Council holds a ring-fenced budget specifically to support all residents who are suffering financial hardship due to unforeseen circumstances, and you do not have to be eligible for LCTS to make an EHF claim. The EHF is supported by the major preceptors as part of the Essex Sharing Agreement.

39. The annual budget held for this fund is £17,000 with UDC contributing £10,000 and the major preceptors contributing £7,000, Essex County Council also provide a further £5,000 to support the administration of the fund.

40. The EHF is subject to award criteria and supports all residents who find themselves in financial difficulties, you do not have to be in receipt of LCTS to qualify, making this scheme fully inclusive to all residents. Full details can be found using the following link: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/ehf>

41. It is recommended that the EHF fund is used to provide additional financial support to residents rather than reducing the contribution rate.

42. In addition the Council has set up a specific one year Cost of Living Support Fund providing £195,000 additional financial support to residents who are struggling financially, again this scheme is not limited to those already in receipt of benefits. The scheme is inclusive for all residents who find themselves in financial hardship during this difficult period of increased costs and inflation. Full details of the fund can be found using the following link: [Cost of living support fund - Uttlesford District Council](#)

### Full cost of LCTS scheme (estimated)

43. The following table shows that the forecast financial position for UDC in 2024/25 will be an estimated net cost of £315,335. The costing has been based on the current caseload expenditure as of 1 April 2023 and the preceptor share back estimate on 2023/24 predicted collection rates.

44. The expenditure figure in the table is based on the contribution rate of 12.5%.

LCTS Expenditure 2022/23 £'000	County, Fire and Police Share 2022/23 £'000	UDC Share 2022/23 £'000		LCTS Expenditure 2023/24 £'000	County, Fire and Police Share 2023/24 £'000	UDC Share 2023/24 £'000
3,975,729	3,419,127	556,602	LCTS Discounts	4,015,237	3,453,104	562,133
0	0	(210,049)	Major Preceptors Income share back (12%)	0	0	(246,820)
<b>3,975,729</b>	<b>3,419,127</b>	<b>346,553</b>	<b>Net of LCTS Scheme &amp; Discounts</b>	<b>4,015,237</b>	<b>3,453,104</b>	<b>315,313</b>
120	103	17	Staff support costs (Fraud, Compliance and Recovery)	120	103	17
17	7	10	LCTS Hardship Scheme	17	7	10
0	0	(5)	LCTS Hardship Scheme - ECC Admin support	0	0	(5)
<b>3,975,866</b>	<b>3,419,237</b>	<b>346,575</b>	<b>Total Net Cost</b>	<b>4,015,374</b>	<b>3,453,214</b>	<b>315,335</b>

## Risk Analysis

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

1 = Little or no risk or impact

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

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

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



**Uttlesford District Council September 2023**

# **Local Council Tax Support (LCTS)**

A summary report of the survey about the proposed Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme for Uttlesford for the financial year 2024/2025.

In April 2013 Council Tax Benefit was abolished and replaced by the Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. The government required councils to protect pensioners so that they would receive the same level of support as they did under Council Tax Benefit.

## **The proposed scheme**

Uttlesford District Council has been consulting local residents on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Uttlesford since 2012 during which time the scheme has undergone various changes. For the financial year 2024/2025 the council has proposed that the scheme is set on the same basis as that for 2023/2024, namely to:

- freeze the contribution rate so that the amount that LCTS claimants pay towards their Council Tax bill will be kept at 12.5%. This remains the lowest contribution rate in Essex
- continue to protect pensioners, the vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

## **Consultation**

As in previous consultations, respondents were asked to consider the proposals and provide their views in an 'open text box'.

The survey also invited (but did not require) participants to provide their name and a contact email address so that they



can be kept up to date with the results and the final decision on the proposed scheme. Participants were also asked to state if their response was on behalf of an organisation (such as a town or parish council).

The survey was run online through the Uttlesford District Council “Let’s talk” consultation platform. This could be accessed via the main council website home page, from the consultation platform home page, or from direct links sent out in various promotions, publicity and newsletters. A paper copy of the survey was also available on request.

## Promotion

The survey ran from 3 July to 4 September 2023.

At the start of the consultation period emails inviting participation in the survey were sent directly to:

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority
- Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner for Essex - Policing and Community Safety
- all town and parish councils in the district

The survey was widely publicised to the citizens of Uttlesford who were encouraged to take part.

A press release was distributed to all local media and newspapers on 4 July. It was included in the *District News* e-newsletter on 28 July that was sent to a total of 10,349 recipients. Social media promotion via Facebook, X (Twitter) and Instagram went on throughout the consultation period reaching some 824 people.

Those people who do not use digital services were offered the option of asking for a paper copy of the survey and proposals to be sent to them by post (details were provided on the website, in the press releases and in all publicity).



**Uttlesford District Council**  
26 July · 🌐

Uttlesford residents are being invited to have their say on how much support the council should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support which is designed to help the most vulnerable. For 2025/25, we are proposing to maintain the current scheme on the same basis as this year.

This means that we... See more

## Proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Uttlesford 2024-25

We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

[letstalk.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts-scheme](https://letstalk.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts-scheme)

### Uttlesford Local Council Tax Support - have your say!

We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) which is designed to help the most vulnerable.

#### The 2024/25 scheme

The pandemic has left us facing some very big financial challenges. Our population is growing, people are generally living longer and the type of services that people need is changing. The cost of living is going up and as things become more expensive, we also have higher costs.

That's why we want to help to protect the most vulnerable people in our district. For 2024/25, we are proposing to maintain the scheme on the same basis as this year.

This means that we are proposing to:

- freeze the contribution rate so that the amount that LCTS claimants pay towards their Council Tax bill will be kept at 12.5%. This remains the lowest contribution rate in Essex
- continue to protect pensioners, vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

#### How to have your say

You can now give your views on the proposals using this form, or online at <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/lcts-consultation>

#### Looking after your data

All the information you provide in this questionnaire will be treated in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679. Your contact details will be used solely for the purpose of this consultation. You should refer to our privacy notice for more information.

**DISTRICT NEWS**

Uttlesford District Council

Keep me posted

### Annual canvass is underway

Every year we contact residents to check the details on the electoral register are correct as part of the annual canvass.

We have sent out 37,000 emails and 30,000 letters so far. If you have received either from us, please follow the instructions carefully.

The annual canvass is in progress!

The Electoral Commission

▶ [Find out more about the annual canvass](#)



### Council Tax Support scheme consultation

There is still time for Uttlesford residents to have their say on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

The Local Council Tax Support scheme (LCTS) is designed to help the most vulnerable. For 2025/25, we're proposing to maintain the current scheme on the same basis as this year.

This means that we:

- freeze the contribution rate so the amount that LCTS claimants pay towards their Council Tax bill will be kept at 12.5%. This remains the lowest contribution rate in Essex
- continue to protect pensioners, the vulnerable and disabled residents and their carers on a low income

The consultation closes 4 September.

▶ [Find out more about the LCTS scheme and how to have your say](#)

### Proposed LCTS 2024/25 scheme for Uttlesford



We're asking you for your views on how much support we should give to people who might struggle to pay their Council Tax bill.

Councils run a scheme called Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) which is designed to help the most vulnerable.



**Key dates**

- 📅 Consultation starts  
03 July 2023
- 📅 Consultation closes  
04 September 2023



## Results: overall submission rate

The overall response rate for the survey was up 41.6% on that undertaken in 2022.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2023 (percentage)	Result counts 2022 (percentage)
Total number of paper forms returned	0	3 (6.25% of total responses)
Total number of web forms / direct emails submitted	70 (100% of total responses)	45 (93.75% of total responses)
Total number of comments received	<b>70</b>	<b>48</b>



## Results: submitted comments summary

Of the submitted comments, 44 (or 62.8% of all the comments received) either directly supported the proposals for 2024/2025 or could clearly be interpreted as such. This is slight increase on the 58.3% support registered for the 2023/2024 scheme in the 2022 survey.

Overall submissions	Result counts 2023 (percentage)
Fully or partly support the proposed scheme	44 (62.8%)
Do not support the proposed scheme	16 (22.9%)
Comments received on other related matters including suggesting additional support/widening the scheme	8 (11.4%)
Responses containing no comments	2 (2.9%)

Notable this year are the number of references to the cost of living crisis and suggestions for providing additional support to a wider range of people in the district.

### Preceptors and identified local organisations

No preceptors responded to the consultation this year. Local organisations who did respond include Uttlesford Foodbank, St James Church Swards End and local charities.



## Comments received

### Comments generally in favour of the proposed scheme

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1. On paper, the proposals on paper seem to be fair and a positive step.
2. I think it should stay at the 12.5%
3. To continue the support as it is now
4. Fully approve the scheme.
5. All pensioners should qualify for reduced council tax
6. I feel disabled and also pensioners should receive help and a reduction but not people on benefits that don't work who can work just because they have children as it is unfair on those who do work and still have to pay full tax
7. Freeze at 12%
8. This county can afford to support more of those in need than it is currently doing, but overall this plan seems to provide some support.
9. I welcome the fact that the council is maintaining the scheme. The cost of living crisis is hitting so many people in so many ways. This initiative, although limited in its scope, can at least help some of the most vulnerable in the district.
10. I believe that those most in need - the unemployed, those of limited means, carers, etc. - should receive the maximum support possible.
11. People need support in these difficult times. Let's try and keep the level of support as high as can be afforded.
12. Good, continue
13. Makes sense to me
14. Everyone (bar property investors etc.) has faced falling real incomes; those on benefits, the long-term sick, and the disabled significantly more so than the population as a whole (see, for example, research by The Joseph Rowntree Foundation). These groups desperately need all the help they can get.
15. I support totally the scheme. I wish you could do more, I understand the limitations. Please ask the Government for more help.
16. Remain as previous years
17. I would be happy to contribute more, to help those who are vulnerable, caring for others.





18. In these difficult times I would be prepared to pay more council tax if it helps people who are really in need.

19. Support should be at least the same level, and preferably higher. Not all pensioners need support.

20. I support the scheme to give as much as practical support where required

21. Confirm my total support on the councils proposals to continue support to the low income groups

22. At this time of serious hardship caused by the 'Cost of Living Crisis', exacerbated by high interest rates, there is an urgent need to support those in financial distress. The net is widening with the threat of negative equity looming.

It is not just those with mortgages, but also those in private rented accommodation who are in desperate need of financial help. Landlords are passing on their mortgage liabilities on to their tenants who are now facing the prospect of becoming homeless.

Those who are in need of care, or who are hanging on to an independent life in their twilight years, are being bombarded by ever increasing bad news of issues beyond their control.

The need for Council properties for rent is becoming of a contentious topic with many such buildings in serious disrepair, leaving a safety net missing for those in desperate need.

I believe that the above situation has created a vicious circle of high interests breeding greater levels of debt and that any assistance on Council Tax will make a valuable contribution to the mental, and physical, wellbeing of those caught in this financial trap.

I am willing to support the continuance of the LCTS scheme at 12.5% but, if matters get worse prior to April 2024, then I believe a reduction to 10% should be considered as a possibility.

23. I agree the UDC proposal to keep at the same rate as this year.

24. I am in agreement with the proposal to maintain the scheme at its current level

25. I think that continuing this scheme is the right thing to do. Every civilised society should support its more vulnerable/less able members.

26. As a higher rate tax payer I fully support this scheme.

27. This is great help for those that can access it, but how will folk find out about the support and apply for it if they don't have the technology needed? Also, they have to prove their financial situation and this is ok for those who have ordered lives, but many struggling won't have and therefore won't be able to provided the necessary documentation needed? Reaching the most vulnerable and needy is always difficult - would the CAB &/or libraries &/or charities such as Touchpoint be able to help?



28. I agree in principle.

However, I fail to see how young renters on low wages can be expected to pay high council tax bands on ridiculously small apartments.

Please reexamine Flat 5 The Pines, Wendens Ambo as an example.

This has been appealed by the managing agent but not been successful.

On top of £995 rent, the tenants have to pay over £200 council tax... for what?! Pure madness that needs addressing.

29. As long as the help is properly targeted to those most in need, I am fine with the scheme.

30. It should be retained

31. The on-going support is welcome.

While 12.5% reflects a substantial reduction, there are other Districts across the UK where this has been reduced to zero. The rural nature of Uttlesford means that many household costs are consuming an ever larger portion of residents' household income, for example travel, access to services, access to affordable supermarkets.

DWP data relating to Child Poverty in Uttlesford (StatXplore) indicates that 7 in 10 children living in relative poverty are in working families. According to the Uttlesford Health and Wellbeing Strategy, the total number of children in this position = 3270. Schools across the district are noting increased use of discretionary bursaries (beyond those families already in receipt of PPG and free school meals) to support families who are struggling. Again the rural nature of our district means that working families often bear increasing costs related to attending work. Hyper local employment opportunities are limited, meaning that more money needs to be spent on getting to work - via public or private transport. This same challenge is encountered by older children who may be seeking part-time weekend employment. Rurality adds a level of complexity for working families and this can go unnoticed. Creating a protocol to support the challenges of 'in-work poverty' would mean more money in pockets to address other costs.

In summary, the rural nature of our District brings an additional challenge in relation to the financial wellbeing of households. It amplifies existing pressures and this is something which is important when developing local welfare protocols.

32. I fully support the proposals. The more help that can be given to people on benefits the better.

33. I agree



34. I realise UDC has more aspirations than funding to pay for them. However, ideally, I'd like the 12.5% to be reduced to 0%. I certainly would not support an increase of the 12.5%.

I congratulate the UDC on the exceptional hardship fund, and cost of living support fund

35. If it's been satisfactory previously, I think it should be continued similarly. You know your financial position and if it is still affordable, go ahead.

36. Agree proposal - maintain levels as they currently stand

37. Maintain the current level of support as a minimum, but consider a council tax holiday for 1 year for people eligible for the scheme given the cost of living crisis, energy inflation and delays to the welfare payment system.

38. I wholeheartedly agree with supporting the vulnerable in our community and wish the LCTS scheme to continue for 2024/25

39. I am happy with the levels put forward

40. Maintain scheme as present

41. I would support maintaining the current level of LCTS into 2024/25. As an adviser at Citizens Advice, I am very aware that the scheme is a good way of targeting support at the most vulnerable in Uttlesford. It is particularly helpful in supporting those on very low incomes/pensions who do not have access to other means tested benefits e.g. housing benefit.

42. Fully support the proposal.

43. I support it

44. It should be available for everyone that is unemployed and on low income



## Comments generally not supporting the proposed scheme

Comments opposing the proposals for 2024-2025 or making suggestions for amendments to the scheme.

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1. I feel that central government via universal credit should be supporting those unable to pay council tax. A charge of 25% would be more appropriate given the burden the current rate places on other council tax payers and given the other financial pressures on current council finances to maintain statutory support in other areas.
2. The cost of living is squeezing everybody, more help needs to be available for middle earners, not just lower who often end up with more disposable income after benefits and tax are taken into account.
3. I do not agree, what percentage of my full paying council tax is paying for this subsidy?
4. Council should consider increasing the level. Inflation is still at a high level and although it is hopeful it will be lower next year it will still impact on those in greatest need. Keeping the benefit at the same level would represent a decrease in its value.
5. Where is the support for working people who are not entitled to working tax credits etc?
6. Reduce Council Tax instead. The top tier of managers are paid far too much. Chief Executive £130k is criminal plus other senior managers. The quality of the management and staff is very low and productivity non-existent.
7. Don't give the scroungers anything. Make them pay like the rest of us.
8. It will end up costing everyone else more to cover those that cannot pay, so not happy to pay more.
9. The lowest rate of council tax should be 15%. This will still be lower than any other council except Colchester. It would also be a modest increase of roughly £1 per week. Council tax rates for other residents in Uttlesford are very high and I believe that the lower rate should be increased slightly. If people in other areas can afford 25% I'm not sure why people in Uttlesford are different. A £1 a week increase is very modest.
10. 12.5% seems too low, perhaps increase by rpi.
11. I think the scheme should only be for carers and the disabled. The government and councils do not have the money to spend and something has to give. If I were the owner of this policy, I would be stating that it's a shame that everyone cannot be helped, but hard choices require hard decisions. The elderly are already advantaged by the triple lock pension. The youngsters need to know how hard life truly is, but the carers and disabled will struggle to find employment and/or further employment.
12. They do not take into consideration people's individual circumstances.
13. No support should be provided as the priority should be essential services and road maintenance.
14. Same old same old can't work in these inflammatory inflationary times working families must be included into LCTS.



15. I would increase the rate and support for those on low incomes and the elderly

16. Why does Uttlesford only give 12.5% surely it should be more. This is a rich area and prices are high for people who do an ordinary job. Come on be more generous and spend money where it is really needed rather than on wasteful vanity projects.



## Comments received making general points

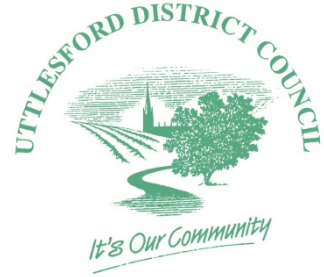
Comments on the cost of living crisis, making general points or querying some other support provided by Uttlesford District Council.

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1. It is difficult to judge the proposal without other information such as how many claimants Uttlesford has, the ratio of claimants to full payers etc. The information that Uttlesford is more generous than the rest of Essex is difficult to interpret - is Essex in line with the national average, for example. It seems good that Uttlesford has a scheme, and it also seems good that the claimants still pay something. I cannot judge if the proposed level of support is a fair balance between the needs of the claimants and Uttlesford's overall needs.
2. I have not been aware of the LCTS until now, and it appears quite a complex set of means tested criteria. 12.5% seems very low and appears to be more generous compared to other local authorities. It could be steadily raised to 20 and 25% over a number of years. It is not obvious whether owning property would stop a person being eligible (previous comments suggest it doesn't), but property owners should certainly be excluded.
3. I do not claim any benefits and so do not receive help other than the 25% discount as a single person. I'm 80 years old, live on my own and believe that because of the reduced services that I need, this discount should be more. My bins are not even half full on collection day and yet apart from the 25% discount my council tax is the same as a much larger family pays.
4. I am 77 yrs old, married and a home owner with paid off mortgage and in good health I but now living off a diminishing pension.
5. I wish somebody would give me a load of money we all have to make sacrifices and judgement on what we spend our cash on it sickens me to see some people asking for money when they're fancy mobiles contracts on their phones contracts on their TV is going on holidays plenty of kids that I can't afford to keep fancy carThe list could go on
6. Refer to World Bank reports from 1947 to up to date. And you will find an answer.
7. Whilst I understand the LCTS scheme and who it is trying to support I have to say my finances are dwindling rapidly due increasing electric/gas/water and many other costs.I am not alone in this however on the horizon their is a time not to far away where my wife and I have got to seriously think of away to a cheaper area,wherever that is. We have lived in THX for 38yrs.



8. Does this scheme support people from Ukraine or refugees from Afghanistan? It makes no mention of these vulnerable groups so I suspect not. There are also other refugees in the district who need help. I think that it should be expanded to help as many people as possible and there are enough well-off tax payers who can afford to give a bit extra. And what is the Government doing to support these groups. They make a lot of fuss and then just abandon people. This leaves people like us to step up and help when millions of pounds are wasted on vanity projects.



# Uttlesford District Council

## Equality & Health Impact Assessment (EqHIA)

### Document control

<b>Title of activity:</b>	<i>Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25</i>
<b>Lead officer:</b>	<i>Angela Knight, Director – Business Performance and People</i>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<i>Adrian Webb, Director of Finance and Corporate Services (S151 Officer)</i>
<b>Date completed:</b>	<i>25 September 2023</i>
<b>Scheduled date for review:</b>	<i>Reviewed annually in line with the annual consultation and scheme proposals</i>

<b>Does the EqHIA contain any confidential or exempt information that would prevent you publishing it on the Council's website?</b>	No
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Please note that EqHIAs are **public** documents and must be made available on the Council's [EqHIA webpage](#).

When completed, a copy of this form should be saved with the activity a policy, strategy, procedure, project, new or change in service, initiative or other's file for audit purposes and in case it is requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

**When the EqHIA is completed send a copy to the following email address - [EqHIA@Uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:EqHIA@Uttlesford.gov.uk)**



# 1. Equality & Health Impact Assessment Checklist

Please complete the following checklist to determine whether or not you will need to complete an EqHIA and ensure you keep this section for your audit trail. If you have any questions, please contact your Divisional Equality Lead. Please refer to the Guidance in Appendix 1 on how to complete this form. **When EqHIA is completed send a copy to the following email address [EqHIA@Uttlesford.gov.uk](mailto:EqHIA@Uttlesford.gov.uk)**

## About your activity

1	<b>Title of activity</b>	Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25		
2	<b>Type of activity</b>	To set the annual criteria for the scheme		
3	<b>Scope of activity</b>	The scheme criteria are reviewed annually, and proposals are subject to consultation with all residents and preceptors in the district.		
4a	<b>Are you changing, introducing a new, or removing a service, policy, strategy or function?</b>	No	If the answer to <u>any</u> of these questions is 'YES', please continue to question 5.	If the answer to <u>all</u> of the questions (4a, 4b & 4c) is 'NO', please go to question 6.
4b	<b>Does this activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon people (9 protected characteristics)?</b>	Yes		
4c	<b>Does the activity have the potential to impact (either positively or negatively) upon any factors which determine people's health and wellbeing?</b>	Yes		
5	<b>If you answered YES:</b>	<b>Please complete the EqHIA in Section 2 of this document.</b> Please see Appendix 1 for Guidance.		
6	<b>If you answered NO:</b>	<p><i>Please provide a clear and robust explanation on why your activity does not require an EqHIA. This is essential in case the activity is challenged under the Equality Act 2010.</i></p> <p><i>Please keep this checklist for your audit trail.</i></p>		

<b>Completed by:</b>	Angela Knight, Director – Business Performance and People
<b>Date:</b>	21 October 2022

## 2. The EqHIA – How will the strategy, policy, plan, procedure and/or service impact on people?

### Background/context:

The Local Council Tax Support Scheme sets the criteria for reduced payments of council tax for households on low incomes. It also includes additional support for pensioners, vulnerable and disabled residents, and their carer's.

### Who will be affected by the activity?

The scheme is available to all households in the district subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.

### Protected Characteristic - Age: Consider the full range of age groups

Please tick (✓) the relevant box:

Positive

Neutral

Negative

**Overall impact:**

*\*Expand box as required*

#### Evidence:

The scheme is available to all ages who are liable for payment of council tax.

*\*Expand box as required*

#### Sources used:

*\*Expand box as required*

### Protected Characteristic - Disability: Consider the full range of disabilities; including physical mental, sensory and progressive conditions

Please tick (✓) the relevant box:

Positive

Neutral

**Overall impact:**

<b>Negative</b>		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
<b>Evidence:</b>		
The scheme is available to all vulnerable and disabled residents who are liable for payment of council tax.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
<b>Sources used:</b>		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		

<b>Protected Characteristic - Sex/gender:</b> Consider both men and women		
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>		<b>Overall impact:</b>
<b>Positive</b>		
<b>Neutral</b>	✓	
<b>Negative</b>		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
<b>Evidence:</b>		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to sex or gender.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
<b>Sources used:</b>		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		

<b>Protected Characteristic - Ethnicity/race:</b> Consider the impact on different ethnic groups and nationalities		
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>		<b>Overall impact:</b>
<b>Positive</b>		
<b>Neutral</b>	✓	
<b>Negative</b>		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
<b>Evidence:</b>		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to Ethnicity or race.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
<b>Sources used:</b>		

*\*Expand box as required*

**Protected Characteristic - Religion/faith:** Consider people from different religions or beliefs including those with no religion or belief

*Please tick (✓)  
the relevant box:*

**Overall impact:**

**Positive**

**Neutral**

✓

**Negative**

*\*Expand box as required*

**Evidence:**

The scheme does not include any criteria relating to Religion or Faith.

*\*Expand box as required*

**Sources used:**

*\*Expand box as required*

**Protected Characteristic - Sexual orientation:** Consider people who are heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual

*Please tick (✓)  
the relevant box:*

**Overall impact:**

**Positive**

**Neutral**

✓

**Negative**

*\*Expand box as required*

**Evidence:**

The scheme does not include any criteria relating to Religion or Faith.

*\*Expand box as required*

**Sources used:**

*\*Expand box as required*

**Protected Characteristic - Gender reassignment:** Consider people who are seeking, undergoing or have received gender reassignment surgery, as well as people whose gender identity is different from their gender at birth

*Please tick (✓)  
the relevant box:*

**Overall impact:**

**Positive**

**Neutral**

✓

<b>Negative</b>		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
<b>Evidence:</b>		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to Religion or Faith.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
<b>Sources used:</b>		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		

<b>Protected Characteristic - Marriage/civil partnership: Consider people in a marriage or civil partnership</b>		
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>		<b>Overall impact:</b>
<b>Positive</b>		
<b>Neutral</b>	✓	
<b>Negative</b>		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
<b>Evidence:</b>		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to marriage or civil partnerships.		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
<b>Sources used:</b>		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		

<b>Protected Characteristic - Pregnancy, maternity and paternity: Consider those who are pregnant and those who are undertaking maternity or paternity leave</b>		
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>		<b>Overall impact:</b>
<b>Positive</b>		
<b>Neutral</b>	✓	
<b>Negative</b>		
		<i>*Expand box as required</i>
<b>Evidence:</b>		
The scheme does not include any criteria relating to pregnancy, maternity or paternity		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		
<b>Sources used:</b>		
<i>*Expand box as required</i>		




<b>Socio-economic status:</b> Consider those who are from low income or financially excluded backgrounds	
<i>Please tick (✓) the relevant box:</i>	<b>Overall impact:</b>
<b>Positive</b>	
<b>Neutral</b>	✓
<b>Negative</b>	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
<b>Evidence:</b>	
<p>The scheme is focused on supporting households who are on low incomes.</p> <p>The cost of living crisis is causing more households in the middle income bracket to suffer financial hardship. To help address this the council has set up a new one year Council Tax Support Fund, this runs alongside the current Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF), both funds are open to <b>all</b> residents who find themselves struggling financially.</p>	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
<b>Sources used:</b>	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	

<b>Health &amp; Wellbeing Impact:</b> Consider both short and long-term impacts of the activity on a person's physical and mental health, particularly for disadvantaged, vulnerable or at-risk groups. Can health and wellbeing be positively promoted through this activity? Please use the Health and Wellbeing Impact Tool in Appendix 2 to help you answer this question.	
<i>Please tick (✓) all the relevant boxes that apply:</i>	<b>Overall impact:</b>
<b>Positive</b>	✓
<b>Neutral</b>	
<b>Negative</b>	✓
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
<p><b>Do you consider that a more in-depth HIA is required as a result of this brief assessment?</b> Please tick (✓) the relevant box</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	
<b>Evidence:</b>	
<p>The scheme provides financial support to low-income households which is aimed at reducing the financial burden and stress on households who are struggling financially.</p>	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	
<b>Sources used:</b>	
<i>*Expand box as required</i>	

### 3. Outcome of the Assessment

The EqHIA assessment is intended to be used as an improvement tool to make sure the activity maximises the positive impacts and eliminates or minimises the negative impacts. The possible outcomes of the assessment are listed below and what the next steps to take are:

Please tick (✓) what the overall outcome of your assessment was:

	1. The EqHIA identified <u>no significant concerns</u> OR the identified <u>negative concerns</u> have already been <u>addressed</u>		<b>Proceed with implementation</b> of your activity
	2. The EqHIA identified some <u>negative impact</u> which still needs to be <u>addressed</u>		<b>COMPLETE SECTION 4:</b> <b>Complete action plan</b> and finalise the EqHIA
	3. The EqHIA identified some <u>major concerns</u> and showed that it is <u>impossible to diminish negative impacts</u> from the activity to an acceptable or even lawful level		<b>Stop and remove</b> the activity or <b>revise</b> the activity <b>thoroughly</b> . <b>Complete an EqHIA on the revised proposal.</b>

## 4. Action Plan

The real value of completing an EqHIA comes from the identifying the actions that can be taken to eliminate/minimise negative impacts and enhance/optimize positive impacts. In this section you should list the specific actions that set out how you will address any negative equality and health & wellbeing impacts you have identified in this assessment. Please ensure that your action plan is: more than just a list of proposals and good intentions; sets ambitious yet achievable outcomes and timescales; and is clear about resource implications.

Protected characteristic / health & wellbeing impact	Identified Negative or Positive impact	Recommended actions to mitigate Negative impact* or further promote Positive impact	Outcomes and monitoring**	Timescale	Lead officer
Health & Wellbeing Impact	Both positive and negative	<p>The scheme aims to support households on low income, so provides a positive impact although there are some households who do not qualify but may still be struggling financially</p> <p>The council has set up a new one year Council Tax</p>	<p>The outcome is to support low income households in payment of council tax and minimise council tax arrears and residents' debt levels.</p> <p>This is monitored quarterly by the KPI/PI's on collection rates and debt levels. Also, data on the number of claims for additional support.</p>	The indicators are monitored quarterly and the scheme is reviewed annually.	Angela Knight – Director – Business Performance and People



		Support Fund to run alongside the current Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF) which is open to all households who find themselves struggling financially.			
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**Add further rows as necessary**

\* You should include details of any future consultations and any actions to be undertaken to mitigate negative impacts

\*\* Monitoring: You should state how the impact (positive or negative) will be monitored; what outcome measures will be used; the known (or likely) data source for outcome measurements; how regularly it will be monitored; and who will be monitoring it (if this is different from the lead officer).

## 5. Review

In this section you should identify how frequently the EqHIA will be reviewed; the date for next review; and who will be reviewing it.

**Review:**

The review will be conducted annually in line with the review of the scheme proposals and consultation process.

**Scheduled date of review:**

October 2023

**Lead Officer conducting the review:**

Angela Knight – Assistant Director – Business and Change Management

## DRAFT COMMITTEE TIMETABLE 2024/25

Committee	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
<b>Council</b>	21 <small>Annual</small>		16			8		17		25 <small>Budget</small>	4 <small>Reserve</small>	22	20 <small>Annual</small>
<b>Cabinet</b>		13	11		5	24		5	16	13	27		8
<b>Scrutiny (for call in)</b>		28	26			9	8	20	31	28			23
<b>Scrutiny</b>		4	4		24		21		28		6		
<b>Audit and Standards</b>		27			26		28			4	25		
<b>Planning</b>	1, 29	26	24	21	18	16	13	11	15	12	12	9	7
<b>Licensing &amp; Environmental Health</b>		18				3			21				

***Please note the following:***

- 1) Scrutiny (for call-in) refers to Scrutiny Committee meetings which might happen, depending on whether the Committee decides to examine a decision made by Cabinet.
- 2) Meetings are nominally held in the Council Offices, London Road, Saffron Walden, CB11 4ER but are subject to change.

2024									2025					
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	
Mo			1											Mo
Tu			2			1						1		Tu
We	1 Planning		3			2			1 New Year's Day			2		We
Th	2		4 Scrutiny	1 Summer Hol		3 L&EH			2 Xmas Hol			3	1	Th
Fr	3		5	2 Summer Hol		4	1 Half Term		3 Xmas Hol			4	2	Fr
Sa	4	1	6	3		5	2		4	1	1	5	3	Sa
Su	5	2	7	4	1	6	3	1	5	2	2	6	4	Su
Mo	6 Early May Bank Holiday	3	8	5 Summer Hol	2	7	4	2	6	3	3	7 Easter Hol	5 Early May Bank Holiday	Mo
Tu	7	4 Scrutiny	9	6 Summer Hol	3	8 Council	5	3	7	4 A&S	4 Council (Reserve)	8 Easter Hol	6	Tu
We	8	5	10	7 Summer Hol	4	9 Scrutiny C-I	6	4	8	5	5	9 Planning	7 Planning	We
Th	9	6	11 Cabinet	8 Summer Hol	5 Cabinet	10	7	5 Cabinet	9	6	6 Scrutiny	10 Easter Hol	8 Cabinet	Th
Fr	10	7	12	9 Summer Hol	6	11	8 Scrutiny C-I	6	10	7	7	11 Easter Hol	9	Fr
Sa	11	8	13	10	7	12	9	7	11	8	8	12	10	Sa
Su	12	9	14	11	8	13	10	8	12	9	9	13	11	Su
Mo	13	10	15	12 Summer Hol	9	14	11	9	13	10	10	14 Easter Hol	12	Mo
Tu	14	11	16 Council	13 Summer Hol	10	15	12	10	14	11	11	15 Easter Hol	13	Tu
We	15	12	17	14 Summer Hol	11	16 Planning	13 Planning	11 Planning	15 Planning	12 Planning	12 Planning	16 Easter Hol	14	We
Th	16	13 Cabinet	18	15 Summer Hol	12	17	14	12	16 Cabinet	13 Cabinet	13	17 Easter Hol	15	Th
Fr	17	14	19	16 Summer Hol	13	18	15	13	17	14	14	18 Good Friday	16	Fr
Sa	18	15	20	17	14	19	16	14	18	15	15	19	17	Sa
Su	19	16	21	18	15	20	17	15	19	16	16	20	18	Su
Mo	20	17	22	19 Summer Hol	16	21	18	16	20	17 Half Term	17	21 Easter Monday	19	Mo
Tu	21 Annual Council	18 L&EH	23	20 Summer Hol	17	22	19	17 Council	21 L&EH	18 Half Term	18	22 Council	20 Annual Council	Tu
We	22	19	24 Planning	21 Planning	18 Planning	23	20	18	22	19 Half Term	19	23	21	We
Th	23	20	25 Summer Hol	22 Summer Hol	19	24 Cabinet	21 Scrutiny	19	23	20 Half Term	20	24	22	Th
Fr	24	21	26 Scrutiny C-I	23 Summer Hol	20	25	22	20 Scrutiny C-I	24	21 Half Term	21	25	23 Scrutiny C-I	Fr
Sa	25	22	27	24	21	26	23	21	25	22	22	26	24	Sa
Su	26	23	28	25	22	27	24	22	26	23	23	27	25	Su
Mo	27 Spring Bank Holiday	24	29 Summer Hol	26 August Bank Holiday	23	28 Half Term	25	23 Xmas Hol	27	24	24	28	26 Spring Bank Holiday	Mo
Tu	28 Half Term	25	30 Summer Hol	27 Summer Hol	24 Scrutiny	29 Half Term	26	24 Xmas Hol	28 Scrutiny	25 Council (Budget)	25 A&S	29	27 Half Term	Tu
We	29 Planning	26 Planning	31 Summer Hol	28 Summer Hol	25	30 Half Term	27	25 Christmas Day	29	26	26	30	28 Half Term	We
Th	30 Half Term	27 A&S		29 Summer Hol	26 A&S	31 Half Term	28 A&S	26 Boxing Day	30	27	27 Cabinet		29 Half Term	Th
Fr	31 Half Term	28 Scrutiny C-I		30 Summer Hol	27		29	27 Xmas Hol	31 Scrutiny C-I	28 Scrutiny C-I	28		30 Half Term	Fr
Sa		29		31	28		30	28			29			Sa
Su		30			29			29			30			Su
Mo					30			30 Xmas Hol			31			Mo
Tu								31 Xmas Hol						Tu

Key
Council
Cabinet
Audit and Standards
L&EH
Planning
Scrutiny
Scrutiny C-I

# Agenda Item 11

Two proposed changes to committee appointments from the Conservative Group:  
replacement appointments for Councillor Criscione highlighted in bold

## APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE (7 SEATS)

Chair:

Cllr Lees
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Vice- Chair:

Cllr Hargreaves
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Cllr Emanuel	Cllr Evans
Cllr Barker	<b>Cllr Moran</b>
Cllr Sell	

Substitutes:

Cllr N Reeve

Cllr M Lemon

## INVESTIGATORY DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE (5 SEATS)

Chair:

Cllr N Reeve
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Vice- Chair:

Cllr McBirnie
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Cllr Donald	<b>Cllr Regan</b>
Cllr Loveday	

Substitutes:

Cllr A Reeve

Cllr Oliver

# Agenda Item 12

Member Motion on Sewage: Council, 5 December as proposed by Councillor Sell and seconded by Councillor Dean

**Council notes that** despite repeated calls to put a stop to the dumping of raw sewage into our precious rivers and chalk streams, the latest annual assessment by the Environment Agency showed “totally unacceptable” performance on pollution for most of England’s water and sewage companies. Thames Water was given just 2 stars for performance for 2022, meaning that they require significant improvement.

**Council therefore resolves** to call on the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for the Environment to strengthen the legislation on the discharging of raw sewage into our rivers by:

- 1) Tightening and clarifying the regulations and law on the circumstances in which discharge of sewage might be permitted.
- 2) Requiring prompt prosecution and fining of all offending companies.
- 3) Requiring the Environment Agency to audit the Water and sewerage companies regularly, every year, to ensure that they are reporting their operations accurately.
- 4) The Council also requests the Government to bring forward the date by which Water Companies are required to reduce their discharges by 50% -to bring it forward from 2048 to 2030.
- 5) This Council authorises the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment and to our Member of Parliament to make these four requests.

## **Explanatory Notes:**

*The Environment Agency reported that in 2022 raw sewage was released into open water in Uttlesford hundreds of times in 2022.*

*Figures from the Environment Agency show storm overflows were used 321 times within Uttlesford's local authority boundaries in 2022, discharging for a total of around 3,045 hours.*

*Of these, 185 were from Thames Water's network, while 136 were from facilities operated by Anglian Water.*

*The Environment Agency has called on Thames Water and all the other Water Companies together to invest £56 billion to upgrade their sewage treatment plants and storm overflows, but it is allowing them 25 years in which to do this. We welcome that the Stansted and Takeley sewage works are to be upgraded by Thames Water.*