

# Constitution of the Uttlesford Youth Council

## Objectives

The Uttlesford Youth Council (the Council) exists to give the young people of Uttlesford a voice in the affairs of the Uttlesford District Council (UDC). It endeavours to represent specifically the views of young people, especially on those issues in which they have particular interest.

The Council will be recognised in the Constitution of the District Council, and its members will be invited to attend meetings of the Full Council and will be offered a suitable speaking slot to voice matters of concern to young people up to twice annually, and also exceptionally, by prior arrangement with the District Council.

The Council will engage with the District Council on any matters of concern and the District Council will in turn undertake to provide a response within ten working days of the matter first being raised.

## Electing councillors

### **Eligibility**

Candidates for the Council must

- (a) be aged at least 13 on the 31<sup>st</sup> of August in the calendar year in which the elections for which they are standing are held, and no older than 18 when they stand for election, and
- (b) be either
  - (i) living in the district, or
  - (ii) attending school, college, or sixth form in the district.

There is no limit on the number of terms that a councillor may serve, nor any restrictions on standing consecutively.

### **Election pools (constituencies)**

A number of seats on the council be available for each secondary school, college, and sixth form in the district, with weightings based upon their sizes thus:

<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Number of students (201601)</b>	<b>Number of seats</b>
Felsted School	~ 1,000	5
Forest Hall School	354	2
Helena Romanes School and Sixth Form Centre	1,263	5
Joyce Frankland Academy, Newport	853	4
Saffron Walden County High School	2,026	7
Residents not attending school in the district	-	3
	<b>Total:</b>	28

Three seats are available for residents of the district who meet the eligibility criteria but who do not attend school, college, or sixth form in the district (see table above). All of those interested in the Council will be invited to a

meeting on election day. Those who had submitted their candidacy will each be given five minutes to make a speech, and then all of those present will cast votes for the candidates, as per any other 'constituency'.

If the Council has any vacant seats following elections or after resignations, then it may, by majority vote, co-opt an eligible member to fill each seat. Substitutes who wish to be co-opted are to be considered for the seat first, before seeking to co-opt a member who did not stand for election.

## **Election**

Each educational institution is given the responsibility to hold its own elections. The Council will offer support to the institutions to hold campaigns, promote the elections, and hold the elections with the help of the incumbent councillors for that institution.

The candidates for each constituency will be ranked in descending order of preference after voting. The number of councillors to be elected for each school will be taken from the list of candidates in descending order of votes given to each candidate (beginning with the candidate with the highest number of votes). The remaining candidates, unless they decide to opt out, will become deputies. If a councillor cannot attend a meeting, then they are to nominate one of the deputies to attend as a substitute. The term of a deputy is one year. In the event of a councillor leaving the Council, the deputies are invited in order of lessening preference to fill the vacancy and become a councillor.

Any seats belonging to a councillor whose term has not expired and who is not standing down will not be filled by election.

Elections shall take on a Thursday in October or November annually, as agreed by the Council to fit best within school term times. The terms of the councillors-elect will begin on the day of election. The duration of each term shall be approximately two years, ending on the day of the second election after that in which they were elected.

Only those who would qualify as candidates may vote, and each school shall decide the eligibility to vote based upon the age criteria listed in the constitution.

## **General principles**

The Council will adhere to the following principles:

- (a) Although councillors are still permitted to be a member of a party whilst serving their term, the Council itself will always be strictly non-party political, and all meetings will be conducted on that fundamental principle.
- (b) Councillors will not miss school, college, or sixth form to undertake any duties for the Council, unless in exceptional circumstances where it has been permitted for the councillor in question by
  - (i) their school, and
  - (ii) their parent or guardian (if under 18 years of age).
- (c) All councillors shall endeavour constantly to remain aware of and represent the interests of their constituents.

## **Meetings**

- (a) The Council will hold a full meeting every other month, scheduled in the previous meeting to be
  - (i) either on the first Monday or Tuesday of the month,

- (ii) in a venue in Uttlesford to which either the Uttlesford District Council or the Essex Youth Services has access, and
  - (iii) from 17:30 to 19:30,
- unless otherwise agreed. Meetings may be held more frequently if necessitated by urgent business to be considered.
- (b) Meetings of the Council are open to members of the public, including district councillors and officers, by prior arrangement through contacting someone nominated by the Council. **Any young person whom the Council represents is permitted to attend the meetings and participate in discussions, but the Council may vote to expel any such person on the basis of disruptive behaviour.**
  - (c) Minutes will be taken at full council meetings, by a councillor confirmed for the role at the beginning of the meeting, comprising at least
    - (i) a list of all councillors present and all apologies received,
    - (ii) details of proposals made and the outcomes of votes upon them,
    - (iii) any significant contributions to discussions by a councillor, and
    - (iv) a list of the councillors present at the meeting and apologies received.If a councillor is not available to fulfill this role, the District Council will provide the services of an officer (usually from the Democratic Services team) to undertake this role. Minutes will be published on the Council's website.
  - (d) An agenda for each full council meeting will be produced and circulated with at least five full days before the meeting to which it pertains. The agenda will include the undermentioned standard items as well as any matters for discussion as agreed by the chairman. The standard items are:
    - (i) apologies made by councillors who cannot attend the meeting,
    - (ii) minutes of the last meeting to be signed off for accuracy,
    - (iii) any items of business specified on the agenda,
    - (iv) any other urgent business, and
    - (v) the date, time, and venue of the next meeting.
  - (e) A meeting of the Council will only be quorate if it comprises
    - (i) at least eight councillors, and
    - (ii) councillors representing at least three different constituencies.

## Proposals

### **Proposals**

Any councillor may make a proposal in a meeting. The proposer may withdraw their proposal at any time before voting. The procedure for motion to be considered is as follows:

- (a) The proposal must first be seconded.
- (b) The proposal is then opened for discussion and debate by the councillors present.
- (c) Whilst discussion is open, the proposer may agree to amend their proposal, or any councillor can propose an amendment. If either the original motion or any amendment proposed is seconded, it will be put to the vote and determined by a majority show of hands.

### **Majority show of hands**

First those in favour of the motion will be asked to raise their hands, and then those against. Each councillor may only vote once. Any hands which are not raised will be counted as abstentions. For the motion to be passed, a simple majority of councillors who voted must vote for the motion.

If the vote is tied, a second discussion period shall ensue, followed by a second vote. If this is also tied, the person acting as chairman will have a casting vote.

A councillor is only eligible to vote if they have been present for the entire discussion of the motion.

## Chairmanship

### **Chairman**

#### **Election**

A chairman will be elected with a term of six months, in the last full meeting under the chairmanship of the incumbent chairman. Any councillor may stand for the role of chairman, unless they are the incumbent chairman. Time will be allocated towards the end of the meeting for candidates to make a short speech, and for a vote to be taken. The chairman will be elected by secret ballot. The candidate with the plurality of votes (the most votes, whether or not by overall majority of those present) will be elected.

The chairman-elect's term will begin at the end of the meeting in which they are elected.

#### **Role**

The chairman will be responsible for

- (a) chairing full meetings during their term (including ensuring that minutes are taken, directing the Council through the agenda, and overseeing discussions and voting),
- (b) agreeing agenda items for full meetings during their term,
- (c) appointing councillors to working groups and appointing chairmen of working groups, and
- (d) communicating with the chairmen of the working groups to ensure that they have the resources needed.

After a second discussion period, the chairman receives a casting vote to determine the outcome of a tied vote. The chairman can delegate work as agreed to the vice chairman either at or outside of formal meetings, provided that a report back is made to the next meeting.

### **Vice Chairman**

#### **Election**

A vice chairman will be elected at the same time, and with the same term and method of election, as the chairman.

#### **Role**

The vice chairman will chair meetings in the absence of the chairman. They are expected to assist with the chairman's work outside of meetings.

## Working groups

A working group is a voluntary team of councillors which exists to research and make proposals relevant to the terms of reference on which it has been set up. A working group may be created by vote at a meeting. Upon the creation of a working group, the chairman will either before the conclusion of the meeting or immediately after the meeting has finished:

- (a) appoint councillors to serve on the working group — the chairman will ask for a show of hands for volunteers, and should appoint an appropriate number of councillors to the working group, taking into account the number of other working groups on which each councillor sits and the distribution of schools across the councillors —,
- (b) appoint a chairman, or two co-chairmen, of the working group — the chairman will ask the working group's members for a show of hands for volunteers, appointing the chairman or co-chairmen based upon suitability for the working group —, and
- (c) with the members of the working group, agree suitable terms of reference and a date by which the working group must report back, and set a date, time, and venue for the first meeting of the working group.

## Ceasing to be a councillor

A councillor will cease to be a councillor

- (a) at the end of their term of office, failing re-election,
- (b) upon formally resigning, by means of signed letter given to the chairman (or vice chairman if the resigning councillor is the chairman),
- (c) upon moving out of the area or school, college, or sixth form which they represent,
- (d) by failing to attend five meetings in a row, having received a warning letter after missing two in a row, or
- (e) by being expelled for poor attendance and poor performance. If a councillor misses two meetings in a row, their expulsion on the basis of poor attendance will be put forwards for discussion at the third meeting. The rest of the Council is to vote upon the matter, guided by evidence of how likely the councillor is to adequately improve their attendance in future meetings, and how useful the councillor has been to the Council outside of the Full Council meetings (such as in working groups).

## Constitutional review

A proposal can be made at any Council meeting to amend any part of the Constitution. The Constitution will be approved by the District Council and any amendment must be agreed by majority vote at a Council meeting.

## Financial matters

Any financial support to the Council is managed by the relevant Cabinet member as a part of any budget allocated to the District Council. The Council will report regularly to the District Council via Full Council meetings as set out in the preamble to this Constitution. Matters relevant to the Youth Council may also be forwarded for discussion to the Public Engagement Working Group of the District Council.