

**Councillor Freeman – Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services**  
**Council – 8 December 2020**

Being the ‘go to’ person for the services provided by Uttlesford both for councillors and for the public has turned out to be both interesting and surprisingly busy. Officers often find it helpful to have a councillor to help manage and deal with complaints or problems, since it allows them to get on with their main work. For my part, it is an extension of the casework in which every councillor engages, and which I have always found rewarding and worthwhile.

In the Ward I represent with Cllr Asker there have been a couple of very long-awaited and very welcome traffic changes. A new zebra crossing has just been commissioned in Ashdon Road, providing a safe pedestrian route from the new estates in the East to the town centre and the schools. This is the product of five years of hard work by councillors across the Parties. Children can now make their way to school unaided in much greater safety than before. Also, we have finally been given a crop of double-yellow lines on the Little Walden Road, which provide much needed junction protection and greatly improve lines of sight for the motorist and pedestrians alike. The new yellow lines are also 25mm wide – not the usual 50mm; which look much less ‘urban’ (and which recommended for Conservation Areas anyway).

On Planning, we are experimenting with officer-led ‘Pre-Application Meetings’ with developers. These are recommended best practice in the government’s National Planning Policy Framework, but only recently have they become routine rather than occasional here at Uttlesford. They are a forum whereby the developer gets robust pre-application guidance from the relevant councillors, including those representing the ward where the development is planned. It is still early days, but the intention is to make sure that applications are much better tailored to the needs of the local community and less formulaic than those we have seen in recent years. It reduces the risk of repeating earlier mistakes or missing opportunities – criticisms often made by those who live in the areas affected.

Cllr Richard Freeman  
Cabinet Member for Council and Public Services  
November 2020