

Councillor Richard Freeman,

Portfolio Holder for Council And Public Services

Full Council, 20 July 2021

THE FORMER DAY CENTRES:

There are two active programmes concerning the former Day Centres in Uttlesford. In their original pre-Covid form these catered almost exclusively for the elderly and involved a commitment of nearly £100k a year from UDC. They were severely curtailed during the Covid pandemic, with services to the elderly being suspended completely.

As we enter what is hopefully the post-Covid era, we are re-starting our Day Centres. One programme concentrates on simply getting them functioning as soon as possible. A parallel programme seeks to 're-imagine' what they could be, and the enhanced functions they could deliver. These could include

- Employment and mental health support
- Debt management
- Counselling
- Drinks and snacks
- A comfortable, safe and attractive environment in which to spend time and socialise

We have convened a 'Task and Finish Group' to address these issues; it comprises Cllr Day (as Portfolio Holder for Communities), Cllr Lavelle, Cllr Kahn, Cllrs Tayler and Foley, Cllr Coote and myself as its Chairperson. They represent the people of Great Dunmow, Stansted, Thaxted and Saffron Walden respectively.

The precise mix of services will be decided according to local needs. Food and drinks could also be provided, but their primary purpose would be to provide a good and supportive environment for those wishing to share company or benefit from community services.

These re-imagined units offering an enhanced range of services will more appropriately become 'Community Hubs'.

Two of the former centres may be re-started with local and volunteer labour. These are Stansted and Great Dunmow. Thaxted will require some work and investment before it can re-commence service. None of these involve UDC employees (other than limited inputs from our existing Community Services and the CVSU teams as appropriate).

Saffron Walden will be dealt with differently. There exists a perfectly serviceable centre, in the form of the Garden Rooms in Jubilee Gardens in the middle of the town. This is owned by UDC and housed the former local day centre for which it is fully equipped. However, in its original form it was not a success. The town has

numerous food outlets, and a council-run day centre cannot provide a competitive food service without a substantial subsidy. The way forward for Saffron Walden has yet to be identified. It may involve arrangements with existing commercial facilities or with national charity-run facilities.

The premises at Great Dunmow and Thaxted are also owned by UDC; those at Stansted are owned by Stansted Mountfitchet Parish Council with which we had an arrangement before its day centre was closed due to Covid.

The formation of 'Community Hubs' to replace and expand upon the work of the former day centres will be a worthwhile step forward in our community involvement and a valuable addition our public services.

ON-STREET PARKING:

The North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) is a not-for-profit organization owned by six Essex councils: Epping Forest District Council (DC), Harlow Council, Uttlesford DC, Braintree DC, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring DC. It replaces our former in-house parking team. The UDC officer involved is Linda Howells, and we attended the AGM of the Joint Committee in Colchester on 24th June.

Issues sometimes come to me for resolution. Many are long-standing – for example, fly parking around Stansted Airport and on the verges around Hatfield Forest.

Parking and its management can never satisfy everyone. I am looking closely at the issue of airport-associated fly parking. Residents affected by the airport generally want the problem solved, but they do not want the associated inconveniences which may come with the solution! We are actively working with NEPP to discover options which might be more acceptable to residents. Fellow councillors are welcome to share with me their ideas and experiences on this matter!

The NEPP implements and manages Residents' Parking schemes and zones, as well as 73 car parks around Uttlesford. It is an efficient organization, and I welcome being involved in an 'operational' side of council work.

CUSTOMER SERVICES:

We are about to introduce a new phone system for handling incoming calls. I am part of the team testing it. Let me know if you would like to try it out. It will form an important part of our new "distributed working system". A commonplace issue is that people may become difficult to contact. Hopefully the new "8x8" telephone system will help. Let me know if you would like to give it a try before it 'goes live'.

Distributed working can only succeed if staff are easy to contact; I would like to hear your suggestions and experiences in this!

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