

Corporate Plan Delivery Plan 2021/22 - Quarter 3 2021/22 CPDP Update

Vision: Making Uttlesford the best place to live, work and play

Putting Residents First				
We Will:	Activities	Outputs/Milestones	Resources	Lead CM/ Officer
<i>1. Be a council that listens to and acts for residents</i>				
<i>a. Increase the voice and influence of residents in planning and other Council matters</i>	Review the Scrutiny Committee's findings (when received) regarding major planning applications and planning obligations, pending completion of EELGA review	Planning Advisory Service (PAS) final report to Scrutiny by 30 June 2021 Planning Obligations final report to Scrutiny by 30 June 2021	Within existing resources	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Local Plan Interim Director of Planning Assistant Director of Corporate Services
<p>Comment: A decision was taken, due to PAS being unable to complete its work at the current time, to progress the council's own review of the Stansted appeal process through the Scrutiny Committee. The Terms of Reference have been agreed by the committee, as has a proposal to bring in two independent people with appropriate professional backgrounds to undertake the work. The final report is expected in Spring 2022. This is subject to the legal status of the appeal and cost discussions.</p> <p>The previous update of the delivery plan noted that the planning obligations work is complete. The recommendations were approved by Cabinet and they have now been incorporated into the wider planning service review.</p> <p>Also with regard to increasing the voice and influence of residents in planning, late last year the Council received a prestigious award for work on the Local Plan. The Issues and Options stage of the Local Plan comprised an innovative online Community Stakeholder Forum. This consultation engaged with residents and other stakeholders to inform the drafting of the Local Plan before a single word of the plan was written. This approach won the Royal Town Planning Institute East of England Regional Award for Excellence in Planning. The next stage of consultation on the Local Plan is planned for May-June 2022. Development Management remain committed to community engagement on emerging significant major planning applications, with appropriate engagement including with town and parish councils at the earliest stages of pre-applications discussions.</p>				

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<p><i>b. Administer public consultations that are effective, accessible, timely and high quality</i></p>	<p>Undertake consultations and discussion groups as required throughout the year</p>	<p>Enables Members to take better informed decisions. Key consultations include on the draft local plan, budget and Local Council Tax Support</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services Assistant Director of Corporate Services</p>
<p>Comment: The LCTS consultation was conducted according to timetable and the results reported back. The budget consultation has now also been completed, with the results being incorporated into budget reports for the early part of 2022.</p> <p>As described above, the Council received a prestigious award for its innovative online Community Stakeholder Forum. This consultation engaged with residents and other stakeholders to inform the drafting of the Local Plan before a single word of the plan was written. This approach won the Royal Town Planning Institute East of England Regional Award for Excellence in Planning. The awards highlight exceptional examples of how planning and planners have a positive impact on quality of life in creating exceptional places and protecting the environment. The head judge noted the initiative “demonstrated a novel approach to stakeholder engagement in the local plan process, producing high quality debate and public involvement during unprecedented times”.</p> <p>A residents’ survey will be brought forward as a proposal as part of the Uttlesford 2027 change programme, seeking an objective and statistically-significant opportunity to directly hear from residents about their priorities and perceptions of the council.</p>				
<p><i>c. Provide opportunities for young people</i></p>	<p>Provide positive opportunities for young people to engage with their local community and do things that keep them safe and support improved mental wellbeing. Work with Town and Parish Councils, voluntary sector partners, county youth service and schools etc. to encourage youth</p>	<p>As a result of the recent change to the Corporate Plan to expand the scope, the details of what is to be provided, when, etc. have not yet been scoped. The plan will evolve as the Covid19 related restrictions ease over time</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Communities, Youth, Public Safety, Emergency Planning and liaison with the Police and Fire & Rescue Service Assistant Director of Housing, Health and Communities</p>

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	participation in the community.			
<p>Comment: Existing Youth Council members continue to work with the Climate Change working group and recruit in schools and the community. Contact has been made with a new group of young people from Saffron Walden County High School and work continues to liaise with other schools and further recruit through their teacher/ school council networks. A potential cross locality project in schools has been identified at the Children and Families working group to address concerns with young people’s wellbeing. Specific issues to include are mental health, drugs & alcohol and safeguarding, specifically county lines. A working group is being set up to start work on this project.</p> <p>Work has been undertaken with consultants The Cultural Engine to provide information on young people’s activities particularly in relation to art and culture to enable mapping of youth activities for a report commissioned by UDC as part of the Local Plan process. Two young people-focussed community development projects are in progress in Stansted and Takeley and a third has been identified in Great Sampford. Work is being undertaken with Essex Children and Young People Service to engage young people with their parish councils with a view to create sustainable youth groups in existing facilities.</p> <p>The Waitrose stairwell project has been postponed until March 2022. The plan is to set up a group [eg some art students supported by a graffiti artist] to design and prepare artwork for the beginning of March. UDC will then paint over the existing graffiti a week before work starts to minimise the chance of the fresh paint being graffitied. TicBox (theatre group) has now delivered a “theatre experience” covering domestic abuse and healthy relationships to all year 10s/11s in two senior schools in the district with the remaining two schools booked in for project delivery within this financial year.</p> <p>The council is currently leading a discussion across Essex on how best authorities can provide dedicated priority access to jobs, apprenticeships and work experience opportunities to looked after children and care leavers.</p>				
<i>d. Improve the council’s use of the web and social media to increase communication with residents</i>	To provide enhanced customer contact opportunities including self-service facilities at remote site and extended opening hours through the introduction of ‘live chat’	Public launch of live chat facility by 31 August 2021 as part of Uttlesford Moving Forward As part of Uttlesford Moving Forward, a review of self-service facilities for customers will be undertaken. The detailed project plan is not yet	Within existing resources	Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services Assistant Director of Corporate Services

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		complete to expand on precise timing of the review.		

Comment: LiveChat has been successfully launched and is providing a valuable additional customer contact channel for our residents. On average the Customer Service Centre handles 11 enquiries through this channel each day.

The council is also well advanced in a project to introduce bookable appointments for some council services, focusing on those where residents need specialist advice. A 6 week pilot is being launched at the end of January whereby residents can book to speak to a Duty Planning Officer about initial planning enquiries. This service will initially be offered two days a week and while a full review of the use of the system will be undertaken before offering other appointment types to residents, it is anticipated that there will be a number of other services that can be provided in this way by the end of the year. It will give greater certainty to residents who need specialist advice that they will be able to speak to someone who can help them and provide a better level of customer service.

e. Actively and positively engage with and listen to our town and parish councils

The Local Councils' Liaison Forum is now well embedded as is the Planning Forum with Town and Parish Councils. Within existing resources.

Portfolio Holder for Communities, Youth, Public Safety, Emergency Planning and liaison with the Police and Fire & Rescue Service

Chief Executive

Comment: The new chief executive has visited and met with several parish council chairs and clerks in his early weeks in post, and has scheduled meetings with all parishes (in groups of 6-8) in January. The objectives of this outreach has been to listen to the parishes' perspectives, to understand their priorities, and to prepare for a relaunch of the Local Councils' Liaison Forum early in 2022.

f. Support town and parish councils to better represent their communities

Essex Association of Local Councils regularly attend the Local Councils' Liaison Forum and provide presentations on best practice. Within existing resources.

Portfolio Holder for Communities, Youth, Public Safety, Emergency Planning and liaison with the Police and Fire & Rescue Service

Chief Executive

Comment: The new chief executive has also met with the chief executive of the Essex Association of Local Councils to discuss liaison with (and supporting the development of) the sector generally. This development activity will follow as a second stage to the work outlined above, following the relaunch of the Local Councils' Liaison Forum.

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2. Deliver local government with outstanding levels of transparency and accountability				
<i>a. Implement a corporate change programme to increase accountability, transparency and democracy at the Council</i>	Complete work of Governance Working Group to review current and possible future governance structure	This action falls to the working group of council; any actions arising for Cabinet will be detailed at the appropriate time. GRWG are aiming to present a report of their findings to Council by 31 July 2021	Within existing resources	Leader Chief Executive
<p>Comment: The new chief executive paused the existing Uttlesford Moving Forward change management programme, and is preparing to relaunch it in early 2022, taking a more holistic approach to the challenges, opportunities and ambitions in Uttlesford over coming years. In the meantime, additional expert officer capacity has been recruited to support governance work, and a prioritised schedule of governance reviews is to be brought forward for member consideration in early 2022, and then delivered (in phases) throughout the year. In addition, the new chief executive has modelled an approach to transparency and democracy in his early months on some key issues – e.g. arranging an additional (reconvened) meeting of full Council in his first week in post, taking a paper to Members to decide on what next on the Stansted legal challenge [rather than taking the decision under powers delegated to officers]. A further example of this transparency has been the party group leader briefings and all member briefings, at an early stage and in full and frank detail, on key issues for the authority, such as changes to the investment and borrowing regime. Further such briefings are planned for January ahead of publication of the heavily-revised draft MTFS.</p>				
<i>a. Implement a corporate change programme to increase accountability, transparency and democracy at the Council</i>	Planning Committee working group to review arrangements for start time and/or geographical location of applications (north committee/south committee)	Review completed. Recommendations to be considered and adopted when possible, post COVID	Within existing resources	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Local Plan Interim Director of Planning
<p>Comment: The Planning Committee Working Group was formally constituted by Full Council on 7 December 2021, thus completing the first milestone. It is now considering matters around issues such as committee templates, and operational matters in line with the Planning Committee pathway of the Planning Service Review. A report is scheduled for March Governance, Audit and Performance Committee which will recommend changes to the constitution around the Planning</p>				

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Committee. Scrutiny Committee on 3 February will receive a substantial update on the planning service review which covers the above activities. This report will then go on to Cabinet.				
<i>a. Implement a corporate change programme to increase accountability, transparency and democracy at the Council</i>	Implement delivery of Equalities Policy	Local Government Equality Framework level 2 to be achieved by 31 March 22	Within existing resources	Portfolio Holder for Environment and Green Issues; Equalities Assistant Director of Housing, Health and Communities
<p>Comment: Uttlesford District Council has adopted the Equality Framework for Local Government (ELFG) as its key delivery tool. The EFLG details five performance areas. These are: knowing your communities, leadership, partnership, and organisational commitment, involving your communities responsive services and customer care and a skilled and committed workforce.</p> <p>In addition, it has three levels of achievement, namely: 'Developing' - understanding the importance of equality 'Achieving' - delivering better outcomes 'Excellent' - making a difference</p> <p>The Council is working towards the 'Achievement' level and will be assessed before the end of March 2022. Community listening events, to engage with our communities, have taken place and further events have been planned for each of the nine protected characteristics listed in the Equality Act. Feedback and data collected from these events help to increase knowledge of who our communities are and will ensure that we provide fair and accessible services and facilities, efficiently and effectively, to meet those diverse needs. We continue to celebrate equalities such as the Ageing Well Forum, International Day for Older People, LGBT History Month and Disability History Month through our website and social media platforms.</p> <p>The Equality & Health Impact Assessment (EqHIA) is a tool developed to ensure that all activity meets the needs of individuals and groups that use our services; whilst at the same time ensuring a person's chance of leading a healthy life is the same wherever they live and whoever they are. We want to ensure that the activities of the Council are 'fit for purpose' and meet the needs of Uttlesford's increasingly diverse communities and employees.</p> <p>The Council carries out an EqHIA on the services we deliver, our policies, functions, strategies, and procedures as part of the work on equality for local government. This includes existing policies, new policies or those which are being changed. They assess whether a proposed policy, procedure, service change or plan will affect people differently based on their protected characteristics and if it will affect their human rights.</p>				

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We Will:	Activities	Outputs/Milestones	Resources	Lead CM/ Officer
<i>b. Seek external review of and recognition for positive change achieved by the Council</i>	Planning Advisory Service reviewing the process of major planning applications	Action plans to be developed once the outcomes of the review have been presented to Scrutiny Committee by 30 June 2021	Within existing resources and pending completion of EELGA review	Portfolio Holder for Planning and Local Plan Interim Director of Planning
<p>Comment: A peer review of Planning was completed by consultants appointed by the East of England Local Government Association (EELGA). The review makes numerous recommendations, all of which were approved by Cabinet in October 2021, after the report was considered by the Scrutiny Committee earlier in that month. Scrutiny received a short report about the approach to implementation and some early progress in November 2021 and a progress update is due to go to both Scrutiny and Cabinet in February 2022. The update contains progress on actions on each pathway for improvement.</p> <p>As mentioned elsewhere in this document, the Planning Advisory Service is unable at this time to complete its work on major planning application processes and instead the council, through its Scrutiny Committee, has commenced a review of the Stansted appeal process.</p> <p>Also as mentioned elsewhere in this document, the Council received external recognition when the Planning team won a prestigious planning excellence award for its innovative approach to community stakeholder engagement in the preparation of the Local Plan.</p>				
<i>c. Deliver a comprehensive continuing member development programme</i>			Opportunities for further development continue to be identified within existing resources	Leader Chief Executive
<p>Comment: The new chief executive has spoken clearly and frankly with members of what he perceives as a substantial (and pressing) need to develop a new sense of ‘shared endeavour’ between UDC officers and councillors, particularly around (but not limited to) planning issues. Further development of this ‘shared endeavour’ will flow from the prioritised governance review detailed above. Further elements of ‘whole council’ development activity are also already in hand, such as the new approach to performance management and performance governance discussed with members at the last Governance, Audit and Performance (GAP) Committee (of which further details are scheduled to be shared at the January GAP meeting).</p>				
3. Be responsible with your money and mitigate the impact of government cuts				

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We Will:	Activities	Outputs/Milestones	Resources	Lead CM/ Officer
<p><i>a. Be a self-sufficient Council that generates its own resources from local taxation (Business Rates and Council Tax) and commercial investments thereby removing the reliance on Central Government grants</i></p>	<p>To actively source commercial investments to support the council revenue streams</p> <p>Strengthen the governance of the Council's investment management to ensure it meets the objectives of the commercial strategy</p>	<p>Complete the commercial investment portfolio of £300m, by end 2021/22.</p> <p>Quarterly reports to the Investment Board</p> <p>Development of a business plan for the portfolio as a whole and each asset individually by 31 December 2021</p> <p>Development of an Investment Protocol, to include ethical criteria for future acquisitions by 30 June 2021</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Portfolio holder for the Economy, Investment and Corporate Strategy</p> <p>Director of Finance and Corporate Services</p> <p>Assistant Director of ICT and Facilities</p>
<p>Comment: Changes to Government rules and the CIPFA Prudential Code mean that further investments are not possible, and the council will ultimately have invested in the region of £275m in establishing the portfolio. Quarterly reports are taken to the Investment Board. Changes to Government rules will have a significant negative impact on Council revenues and this will lead to a review of our portfolio with the possible need to sell one asset in 2022/23. Until the full impact of the Government changes is modelled the business plan process is suspended. The ethical investment protocol was agreed by the Investment Board in July, Cabinet in September and Full Council in December. This protocol sets out the criteria the council would use to ensure the ethical appropriateness of any future investment.</p>				
<p><i>b. Deliver cost-effective and efficient services that live within the Council's means</i></p>	<p>Actively monitor and report the cost effectiveness of the Council services</p>	<p>Quarterly finance reports to Cabinet.</p> <p>Annual outturn report to Cabinet</p> <p>Outcome of the external audit</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget</p> <p>Assistant Director of Resources</p>

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We Will:	Activities	Outputs/Milestones	Resources	Lead CM/ Officer
	Ongoing service reviews, including through Uttlesford Moving Forward (UMF) to ensure services are operating effectively and efficiently	UMF actions to improve existing operating methods and develop new ones		
<p>Comment: The final outturn reports for General Fund, Housing and the Capital programme were presented to Cabinet in July 2021. The Audit was delayed due to resource issues with our External Auditors and only started in January 2022. The Quarter 1 report for the current budget predicted position was presented to Cabinet in November 2021 and the Quarter 2 forecast outturn went to Cabinet in January 2022 along with the Mid Year Treasury Management report. As part of the budget monitoring and reporting, service delivery is constantly reviewed to identify more efficient and cost-effective ways of working whilst being mindful of maintaining a high quality of service. The UMF project has been cancelled and replaced with Uttlesford 2027, a change programme focusing on customer requirements in an ever-decreasing financial environment, so there have been no direct actions to implement.</p>				
<i>c. Constantly seek to improve the quality of contracted out services</i>			Contract monitoring is used to assure service quality, within existing resources	Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services Corporate Management Team
<p>Comment: Contract management varies on a case-by-case basis. Additional resources have been identified in the 22/23 budget to enable enhanced contract management. This will ensure a consistent approach to contract management across the council. The leisure PFI contract is an example of where dedicated council resource leads to high quality contract management. Uttlesford Norse Services Ltd is an example of where dedicated contract management is required.</p>				
<i>d. Apply for all relevant grants</i>			Grant applications are made regularly subject to the criteria, work required and likelihood of success, within existing resources	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget Assistant Director of Resources
<p>Comment: Officers work to ensure that the council applies for all relevant grants and external funding. Due to the Covid 19 emergency the grants are dominated by emergency funding packages to support the local economy, businesses, and the community as a whole. The Council has received a substantial amount of funding over the year and has allocated all the funding received to qualifying applicants. The Council is one of the top councils to 'spend' all its discretionary funding, ensuring that our local businesses and residents received the maximum support available. This funding is in excess of £20 million since the start of the pandemic.</p>				

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<p><i>e. Set a Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to fund council services by a prudent mix of investment, services and tax income, while maintaining adequate reserves</i></p>	<p>The MTFS is a working document and is constantly under review, when any financial risks or impacts are identified these will be assessed and if they have a significant impact on the current MTFS approved at Council in February 2021 a revised version will be produced and submitted to Members.</p>	<p>A revised MTFS ready for Council approval in February 2022</p>	<p>A MTFS that reflects the ambitions of the Council and the resources available to it is produced at least annually. Within existing resources</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget</p> <p>Assistant Director of Resources</p>
<p>Comment: The MTFS was reviewed during November 2021 and an updated strategy is being compiled along with all other associated financial reports and strategies. The Council carried out a budget consultation to help inform the priorities going forward. The MTFS for 2022 to 2027 has been substantially revised to reflect the challenging financial position facing the council in the coming years. The MTFS and all associated papers are scheduled to be presented to Scrutiny, Cabinet and for final approval by Council in February 2022.</p>				
<p><i>f. Follow best practices for investment risk management and board composition</i></p>	<p>Strengthen the governance of the Council's investment management to ensure it meets the objectives of the commercial strategy</p>	<p>Quarterly reports to the Investment Board</p> <p>Development of a business plan for the portfolio as a whole and each asset individually by 31 December 2021</p> <p>Development of an Investment Protocol, to include ethical criteria for future acquisitions by 30 June 2021</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Portfolio holder for the Economy, Investment and Corporate Strategy</p> <p>Director of Finance and Corporate Services</p> <p>Assistant Director of ICT and Facilities</p>

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Comment: The Council has carefully structured governance around its investment strategy and portfolio, including appointing independent members to the investment board, non-executive directors to the board of Aspire (CRP) Ltd and commissioning external due diligence on any potential investment. Quarterly reports are taken to the Investment Board. An ethical investment protocol was agreed by the Investment Board in July, Cabinet in September and Full Council in December. This protocol sets out the criteria the council would use to ensure the ethical appropriateness of any future investment. However, changes to Government rules will have a significant negative impact on Council revenues and this will lead to a review of our portfolio with the possible need to sell one asset in 2022/23. Until the full impact of the Government changes is modelled the business plan process is suspended.