

Corporate Plan Delivery Plan 2021/22 - Quarter 4 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
1. Be a council that listens to and acts for residents				
<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: As explained in previous Delivery Plan updates, a decision was taken, due to PAS being unable to complete its work, to progress the council's own review of the Stansted appeal process through the Scrutiny Committee. Terms of Reference were agreed by the committee and two independent people with appropriate professional backgrounds undertook the work. The final report is subject to the legal status of the appeal and cost discussions.</p> <p>A previous update of the Delivery Plan noted the planning obligations work is complete.</p> <p>The Developer Contributions supplementary planning guidance document was agreed by Cabinet in March 2022 for consultation. The guidance is now being used by the Development Management Team. A report to Planning Committee is programmed by the end of July to progress implementation of a protocol for parish and town councils for engagement with the Local Planning Authority and developers during the pre-application stage and when an application is under consideration.</p>				
<i>b. Administer public consultations that are effective, accessible, timely and high quality</i>	Undertake consultations and discussion groups as required throughout the year	Enables Members to take better informed decisions. Key consultations include on the draft local plan, budget	Within existing resources	Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services Assistant Director of Corporate Services

Putting Residents First

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		and Local Council Tax Support		

Comment: The budget consultation was completed according to schedule, giving the public and other stakeholders the opportunity to express their view on the relative priorities of different services the council provides. The results were incorporated into budget reports for Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Full Council in January and February 2022.

As noted in previous updates, the LCTS consultation was conducted according to timetable, and the council received a prestigious award for its innovative online Community Stakeholder Forum as part of the Local Plan process. Other consultative mechanisms include the reinvigorated Parish Forum, which met at the end of March 2022 and ongoing engagement with stakeholder groups in areas such as equalities, health and wellbeing and climate change.

<i>c. Provide opportunities for young people</i>	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 participation in the community.	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	Within existing resources	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
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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 cross-locality project in schools has been identified at the Children and Families Working Group to address concerns with young people's wellbeing and this is scheduled to start after the Spring half term. Specific issues include mental health, drugs & alcohol and safeguarding, specifically county lines.

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<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 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'	<p>Public launch of live chat facility by 31 August 2021 as part of Uttlesford Moving Forward</p> <p>As part of Uttlesford Moving Forward, a review of self-service facilities for customers will be undertaken. The detailed project plan is not yet complete to expand on precise timing of the review.</p>	Within existing resources	<p>Portfolio Holder for Council and Public Services</p> <p>Assistant Director of Corporate Services</p>
<p>Comment: In quarter 4 the council piloted a bookable appointments system for some council services, focusing on those where residents need specialist advice. A 6-week pilot was run from the end of January whereby residents could book to speak to a Duty Planning Officer about initial planning enquiries. The pilot has come to an end and it is being evaluated with a view to how the system can most effectively be deployed in 2022/23. It is anticipated that there will be a number of other services that can be provided in this way and 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.</p> <p>LiveChat continues to provide a valuable additional customer contact channel for residents after successful launch in the previous quarter.</p>				
<i>e. Actively and positively engage with and listen to our town and parish councils</i>	Quarterly Parish Forum meetings	Agreed priority areas for discussion are scheduled in, with appropriate guests	The Local Councils' Liaison Forum is now well embedded as is the Planning Forum with	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Youth, Public Safety, Emergency

Putting Residents First

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		arranged, and follow-up actions agreed as appropriate during those discussions.	Town and Parish Councils. Within existing resources.	Planning and liaison with the Police and Fire & Rescue Service Chief Executive

Comment: The Parish Forum has been relaunched, following meetings between the chief executive and 53 of the 57 parishes over six evenings during January and February. The first whole-district meeting has been successfully held under the new arrangements, focusing as agreed with Parishes on highways issues, and attended by the ECC cabinet member for highways and senior ECC officers. The next round of meetings – in person, in four patch-based groupings, is scheduled for early summer 2022.

<i>f. Support town and parish councils to better represent their communities</i>	Quarterly Parish Forum meetings	Mutual aid and support discussions are now intrinsic to the newly relaunched Parish Forum meetings	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
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Comment: Those alternate meetings of the newly relaunched Parish Forum held in local patches are specifically designed to be smaller and more intimate, and to better facilitate peer support between neighbouring parishes, as well as collectively with the district council. UDC has also played a focused role on stimulating initiatives at a Parish level, such as facilitating meetings between the Parish/Town Councils in Dunmow and the DWP, the NHS and ECC.

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 a Governance review of the Constitution	Proposed updates to Constitution	Within existing resources	Leader Chief Executive
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Comment: This work is underway, with a governance lawyer commissioned for the purpose, and is due to complete in summer 2022.

Putting Residents First

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<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

Comment: The cross-party Planning Committee Working Group was formally constituted by Full Council on 7 December 2021, thus completing the first milestone. It is progressing the recommendations from the EELGA Peer Review relating to Member Development and Planning Committee. It has considered matters such as committee templates, changes to the constitution relating to the scheme of delegation, training, call in periods and public speaking at Planning Committee. Council agreed all recommended changes to the constitution in March 2022. These are being actioned. The work of the PCWG is ongoing. In April the working group undertook to have the customer experience when viewing a committee remotely. Feedback from that together with recommended changes is being prepared.

<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
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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.

In addition, it has three levels of achievement, namely:
 'Developing' - understanding the importance of equality
 'Achieving' - delivering better outcomes
 'Excellent' - making a difference

At the end of 2021/22, the Council had reached the Achieving level. 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

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<p>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>				
<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

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 was reported to both Scrutiny and Cabinet in February 2022. The update contains progress on actions on each of the pathways for improvement. Pathways are due to be reported to Scrutiny in June 2022.

The Local Planning Authority was “designated” in February 2022 in relation to the quality of decision making on major applications. This means that too many major applications had been refused and the decision overturned at appeal. As a consequence, applicants may choose to have their major applications determined by the Planning Inspectorate. Resources are currently focussed on ensuring that officer reports are clear, explicit and deal with the lack of a 5 year housing land supply in a consistent manner. A Majors Action Plan is now required by DLUHC. This will be drawn from the actions already completed in the Peer Review pathways.

Putting Residents First

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<p>As mentioned elsewhere in this document, the Planning Advisory Service is unable to complete its work on major planning application processes and instead the council, through its Scrutiny Committee, has conducted 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: Member development and training continues in areas such as planning, with regular sessions for committee members and briefings on key matters for the wider council membership. A previous update of the Delivery Plan noted that the chief executive had spoken with members about the need to develop a new sense of ‘shared endeavour’ between officers and councillors. Further development of this ‘shared endeavour’ will flow from the prioritised governance review above.</p>				
<p>3. Be responsible with your money and mitigate the impact of government cuts</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>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</p>	Within existing resources	<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>

Putting Residents First

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		include ethical criteria for future acquisitions by 30 June 2021		

Comment: Changes to Government rules and the CIPFA Prudential Code mean that further new 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. The Commercial Strategy, approved in February 2022, identifies that consequently it may be possible that the Council will need to sell one asset by the end of 2022/23. The ethical investment protocol was agreed by the Investment Board in July, Cabinet in September and Full Council in December 2021. This protocol sets out the criteria the Council would use to ensure the ethical appropriateness of any future investment.

<i>b. Deliver cost-effective and efficient services that live within the Council's means</i>	<p>Actively monitor and report the cost effectiveness of the Council services</p> <p>Ongoing service reviews, including through Uttlesford Moving Forward (UMF) to ensure services are operating effectively and efficiently</p>	<p>Quarterly finance reports to Cabinet. Annual outturn report to Cabinet Outcome of the external audit</p> <p>UMF actions to improve existing operating methods and develop new ones</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget</p> <p>Assistant Director of Resources</p>
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Comment:

The final outturn reports for General Fund, Housing and the Capital programme for 2020/21 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 Quarterly 2021/22 forecast outturn budget positions were presented to Cabinet in November 2021 (Quarter 1), January 2022 (Quarter 2) and March 2022 (Quarter 3). The final outturn position for 2021/22 is being compiled and is scheduled to be presented to Cabinet in July 2022.

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 Blueprint Uttlesford, this is a detailed change programme covering a number of themes focusing on customer requirements and how we can continue to deliver high quality services within the financial constraints impacting the council due to reduced funding.

Putting Residents First

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<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
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.				
<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
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.				
<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>	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.	A revised MTFS ready for Council approval in February 2022	A MTFS that reflects the ambitions of the Council and the resources available to it is produced at least annually. Within existing resources	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Budget Assistant Director of Resources
Comment: The MTFS was reviewed during November 2021 and an updated strategy was 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				

Putting Residents First

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challenging financial position facing the council in the coming years. The MTFS and all associated papers were presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet and were approved by Council in February 2022.				
<i>f. Follow best practices for investment risk management and board composition</i>	Strengthen the governance of the Council's investment management to ensure it meets the objectives of the commercial strategy	<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>	Within existing resources	<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: 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 2021. 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. The Commercial Strategy, approved in February 2022, identifies that consequently it may be possible that the Council will need to sell one asset by the end of 2022/23.</p>				