

Councillor John Evans

Portfolio Holder for Planning

Report to Council, 23 April 2024:

I provided a detailed Portfolio-holder Report at the Council meeting of 11 March. This provided details of the volume of work undertaken, income generated, and the various improvements made to the service over the course of the last municipal year.

Local Plan

Since my last update we have published the consultation responses received in response to the Regulation 18 consultation. Officers have sorted, reviewed, published, and began preparing responses to the 5,000 or so individual comments made. Many of the responses warrant the updating of evidence, the further consideration of certain matters, and then the drafting of proposed amendments to the plan itself. The Local Plan Panel (LPP) recently met to be updated on and discuss recent government advice with respect to the preparation of local climate change policies. As our emerging plan is a 'climate-led' plan this matter of great importance. Members of the LPP are being advised by leading consultants, who in turn are working with leading and junior Counsel on the matter.

We recently published the report following the review by Planning Advisory Service of our Local Plan project plan and resources. The review was positive. PAS states:

"The LDS timescales are challenging for the Council to achieve. It is noted that the programme plan is detailed, showing duration of individual tasks and resource requirements for each task...the planning policy team has frontloaded a considerable amount of work with the...Regulation 18, consulting on a full draft plan with detailed and well-advanced evidence base documents...[thus] enabling the council to progress to the [Reg19] stage quickly...Given the progress that has already been made in drafting [the] Local Plan and based on the resources within the team, the timescales presented within the LDS appear achievable."

We are on course to deliver a robust, and carefully prepared, final draft plan for consideration in July.

The team has also begun to scope work on a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Work is due to commence later this year and the programme will take approximately 18 months. This is considered appropriate, being that the government's proposals to replace CIL with an 'Infrastructure Levy' is not likely to be available to be administered by local authorities for a number of years.

Development Management

Performance in Development Management and Enforcement remains strong. The most recent statistics published by the Department of Levelling up, Housing & Communities show Uttlesford as having 11% of its major decisions overturned at

appeal in the most recent assessment period. This is a dramatic improvement and only 1% greater than the threshold at which de-designation will be considered.

Mandatory training for Planning Committee Members is now scheduled for 22 May 2024 and a training session for the wider Membership is also being arranged.

Building Control

I am pleased to report that at time of writing, three of our Building Control Officers are now accredited as Class 2 Registered Building Inspectors. This means they can continue to inspect a range of building projects. A fourth officer has registered and recently sat the higher Class 3 assessment. We await the outcome. A fifth member of the team has registered and can continue to work under the supervision of other officers. The team has achieved sufficient accreditation such that it will continue to offer the same high level of service it has done up to now. I am sure you will join me in congratulating the team on their success.

Consultations & Initiatives

There are often consultations in the planning arena launched by Government, other agencies and bodies upon which our officers and Cabinet are asked to comment or respond. Recent examples include the ECC Minerals Plan and Permitted Development Rights. Further consultations are pending regarding Accelerated treatment of planning applications (following Minister Gove's pre-Christmas "initiatives") and also amendments to the night flight regimes at the three London Airports. A meeting of STAAP, scheduled for later in April, has been arranged to enable discussion among its membership regarding the DfT proposals concerning this, with a view to responding to the consultation thereafter.

Work is continuing among members of the planning team and the members of the climate change team (with member input) regarding measures which might be possible/recommended to be taken for the retrofitting of listed buildings in the context of improving their thermal efficiency.

I have asked officers to consider the extent to which we can further improve the standards applied for the installation and future maintenance of SuDS (while noting that their design and specification etc are matters determined by ECC as LLFA), such prospective standards being intended to include "sign off" by professionally qualified and insured independent consultants.