



## UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors Sandi Merifield & John Evans



### DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: APRIL 2022

Cllrs Sandi Merifield and John Evans are pleased to present their Monthly Report to the Parish Council.

### UKRAINE AND ASSISTANCE/REFUGEES



We are aware of the very generous assistance being provided by members of the Parish to those in need, including for refugees emerging from Ukraine, and we would like to congratulate and commend them heartily for it.

Uttlesford as a council has responsibilities in way of dealing with homelessness for those arriving in its area (including at/through Stansted Airport) who are not already supported by existing family or friends. We all have great sympathy for those coming to our district to escape the conflict in their homelands. As of last week, there were some 130+ host families expected within the District.

Residents keen to help further are encouraged to register with CVSU so that they can be called on as and when needed. CVSU's contact details are to be found via:

[CVS Uttlesford – Working for the Community and Voluntary Sector in Uttlesford](#)

CVSU and the Red Cross are both actively supporting the work of UDC which is also working closely with Essex County Council, and other agencies, to accommodate and support refugees being resettled within Essex. Matters are being led, as is normally the case, at County level and the following links will perhaps

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provide a ready means for residents to learn more about the work being done in the context of the “Homes for Ukraine Scheme”.

Essex County Council has the following pages on their website:

- ▶ [Welcome to Essex: packs for sponsors](#)
- ▶ [Information for sponsors welcoming a Ukrainian person or family](#)

General information and updates are also available on the county council website: [Essex stands with Ukraine: what you can do to help](#).

Further information on how you can get involved, donate and show your support is available on the [Essex is United for Ukraine Facebook page](#).

Businesses wishing to help can find resources on the [Essex Chambers of Commerce website](#).

### **ENERGY BILLS**

Uttlesford residents living in a property in Council Tax bands A to D are likely to receive a £150 rebate from the government to help with the cost of energy bills. This will be paid straight into the householder’s bank account if they pay their council tax by direct debit.

This link may be of assistance:

- ▶ [Get more information about the energy bills payment](#)

### **ON DEMAND TRAVEL - DigiGo**

We have been very pleased, on behalf of the residents of Felsted (but not so far for those in Stebbing Parish where the scheme does not extend!) that the on demand electric mini bus service is now established by ECC. The full details are included in the following link:

[DigiGo - Transport on demand | Essex County Council \(essexhighways.org\)](#)

This shows how bookings may be made – up to 7 days in advance – and the prices are very competitive/reasonable indeed:

DigiGo fares offer three ticket options - Adult, Young person and Concession.

Distance	Adult	Young person (under 18)	Concession*
0 to 2 miles	£2.50	£1.87	Free
2 to 4 miles	£4.00	£3.00	Free
4 to 6 miles	£6.00	£4.50	Free
7+ miles	£8.00	£6.00	Free

\*Concession's travel for free after 9am on weekdays and at all times at weekends. Before 9am on weekdays the standard fares apply.

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We would be most interested to hear from Felsted residents as to the take up and usefulness of this service and John, in his Infrastructure Portfolio capacity, considers that such a facility should be made available district wide so as to assist particularly those living off bus routes/in the remoter rural areas. Further attempts will be made to engage with ECC on this topic.

### **UDC PLANNING FUNCTION**

As a further update on the planning service, an important appointment has been announced. A new Director of Planning has now been appointed, namely Mr Dean Hermitage who will be joining UDC at the end of June.

Mr Hermitage has lived in Essex all his life – presently residing in Chelmsford – and is formerly chief planner in Southend – so is rather familiar with our district. He is currently in a senior post, reporting to the Secretary of State and Under-Secretary, being Deputy Director of Planning at DLUHC in Whitehall. Sandi and John in their respective roles as Chair of the Planning Committee and planning etc Portfolio Holder were included in the appointment selection process and consider that, from a strong candidates' field, Mr Hermitage will bring much needed leadership, management and experience to the planning function and service.

### **PLANNING AND THE LOCAL PLAN**

Work by the officers and of course the Local Plan Leadership Group (“LPLG”) continues unabated and the latter will be recommending “spatial options” (ie the location of the most suitable and sustainable places for future development district wide between now and 2040).

Residents may wish to watch previous LPLG meetings and read the minutes, as well find out what's coming up next, on the this link on the [UDC website](#).

All this work is against the backdrop of being **required** by the Government to “find” land to provide for in excess of 700 dwellings every year between now and 2040. This number can only be departed from in “exceptional circumstances” and the LPLG has examined the evidence and guidance to establish whether this might be possible but unfortunately, this has not proved to be the case.

Residents might have read in the national press about certain local authorities (eg Basildon, Hertsmere and Welwyn Hatfield) having decided to withdraw their respective draft plans from examination in light of the Government’s long awaited and intended planning reforms and indications as to a possible re-evaluation of the way it calculates housing needs (which directly leads to the figure of 700+ mentioned above). The position taken by Basildon however, has resulted in the Minister advising that Council that he is considering intervening and taking over making the Local Plan ie direct intervention by the Planning Inspectorate.

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Pausing the Local Plan making process is certainly not a step which UDC is considering. However, last week, it was announced that the proposed reforms to the planning system (upon which the Government originally consulted in August-November 2020 and to which UDC contributed detailed responses) will be included in the Queen's Speech on **10 May**. Further reforms to s106 and CIL (Developer Contributions) are then likely to be announced also as to which we shall report further, when details are known.

The Local Plan Leadership Group is of course continuing to review further technical evidence and conducting workshops to assist its members in their work before recommending options to the Cabinet for the spatial strategy of the District. A draft plan will be prepared (including policies and spatial allocations) and the formal step in the timetable will be the Regulation 18 consultation to which Parish Councils, the public, other interested parties can provide comments, and of course residents will be urged to respond, during the weeks prior to commencement of the Summer holidays. UDC continues to aim to have a new local plan in place by summer 2024.

For those especially interested in planning matters and house values in the context of planning policy and their wide range across the district, this paper may be of value:

[https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/10936/Uttlesford-Housing-Market-Data-March-2021/pdf/Housing\\_Market\\_Report\\_March\\_2021\(A\).pdf?m=637592671221670000](https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/10936/Uttlesford-Housing-Market-Data-March-2021/pdf/Housing_Market_Report_March_2021(A).pdf?m=637592671221670000)

It contains median house values in each ward and those for Felsted and Stebbing appear at position 8 in the list and well above the Uttlesford average. The observation as to the reported decline in average new house prices might tend to support the proposition (often heard in planning and building circles) that new housing developments **do** lead to greater availability of homes for home ownership entrants.

On a different local plan theme, a consultation as to shopfront design is underway and the UDC planning policy team has developed a new draft Uttlesford Shopfront Design Guide and are asking people to comment. This guide, which will support a policy within the emerging local plan, will be used by applicants who want to make planning applications that will affect shopfronts in the district.

It is driven by a push to improve design quality in the built environment and is intended to make sure shopfronts in Uttlesford are well designed, sustainable, have a distinctive character and identity and fit in with their surroundings. This consultation closes on 27 April.

[View the Shopfront Design Guide document](#)

## **WASTE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING**

It may not come as a surprise to readers to learn that in a recent survey (in the context of setting a budget for 2022/2023) undertaken by UDC as to the value attributed to services provided by it, the importance of the waste collection and services was ranked highly. We think it is universally regarded as providing a

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good service to the community and in our personal experience (taking into account also the total absence of any complaints received by us) the operatives are helpful and of a community minded disposition.

It might be interesting for residents to see the extent of the work undertaken by the UDC team in the past 4 years (it is to be noted that the 2021/22 statistics run only until December 2021 and will be updated at municipal year end). The quantity of waste handled during the first complete year of COVID lock-down was not surprisingly considerably greater than in previous years. The percentage of recycled waste, as part of the whole, seems to be on the increase but if it remains so, that would be a very positive trend.

2020/21 Total % waste types	Tons	% of total
Food Waste	3298	9.56%
Garden Waste	3959	11.47%
Recycling (Green bin)	11075	32.10%
Residual (Grey bin)	15599	45.21%
Street Sweepings	574	1.66%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>34505</b>	100.00%

2021/22 Total % waste types	Tons	% of total
Food Waste	3069	11.04%
Garden Waste	4300	15.47%
Recycling (Green bin)	7416	26.68%
Residual (Grey bin)	12272	44.16%
Street Sweepings	734	2.64%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>27791</b>	100.00%

2019/20 Total % waste types	Tons	% of total
Food Waste	2948	9.62%
Garden Waste	3382	11.04%
Recycling (Green bin)	9245	30.17%
Residual (Grey bin)	14644	47.79%
Street Sweepings	425	1.39%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>30644</b>	100.00%

2018/19 Total % waste types	Tons	% of total
Food Waste	2920	9.34%
Garden Waste	3285	10.51%
Recycling (Green bin)	9915	31.72%
Residual (Grey bin)	14277	45.67%
Street Sweepings	864	2.76%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>31261</b>	100.00%

#### **UDC PREMISES AT LITTLE CANFIELD AND LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN**

As we reported last month, but to provide an update, the refuse vehicle site in New Street, Great Dunmow will be closing in 2022/23 and relocated, as will the majority of the UDC refuse vehicle fleet, to its new location at Little Canfield (the former "Banana Factory"). The site was purchased by UDC in 2021 from the Administrators of the former owners. This decision was taken partly to enable the removal of refuse vehicles from narrow streets and what had become an inconvenient (small) site in the town for the large vehicles now being deployed, which had very limited facilities for the operatives, but also to provide both office space for UDC personnel and commercial tenants and additionally a substantial volume of warehousing to be rented in the open market.

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Refurbishment of the premises is well advanced and extends to facilities for maintenance of UDC refuse vehicles and cleaning. Positive interest has already been expressed by potential tenants for the warehousing and so the project will be justified in financial and operational terms.

The additional office space to become available will permit some UDC personnel to work from there instead of at London Road, Saffron Walden, as required, freeing up space at the latter. It is intended that such office space will be let and again positive interest has been expressed by potential tenants, adding to the amount of space within the building already let to commercial interests.

After described before, following completion of staff and user surveys and the consideration of working requirements in the future, as a result of the remote working experience which evolved during and post COVID, it has been decided that UDC staff will continue to work partly on a remote basis and partly physically in UDC premises in London Road and Little Canfield. Attendance will be organised on a “team basis” so as to enable proper knowledge transference in way of colleague networking but it means that personnel will not in future have their personal desk space and so in common with many organisations, “hot desking and remote working” will be the operational way forward. Naturally, a reception/help desk facility will continue to be available at the London Road premises for “walk in” assistance.

### **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING**

Members of Felsted Planning Committee might like to learn of the progress made by Stebbing PC whose Neighbourhood Plan was examined in February and was found to meet the Basic Conditions. It passed through Cabinet last week and will come before Full Council at its April Meeting and then proceed to Referendum on 23 June 2022. It has already been given weight at the determination of a recent planning application heard by the UDC Planning Committee (relating to 60 houses in the heart of the village). The application was refused and in the event of it proceeding to appeal, we shall advise you of the outcome in case of use to be added to your local planning precedent data base.

### **HIGHWAYS SCHEMES**

County Cllr Foley has we know reported recently regarding his recent work with you at County level and by way of supplement to it and so as to have a ready point of reference, the following links might be helpful as they contain a summary of the work being undertaken and considered across the District by the Highways Panel.

[Uttesford LHP Schemes List \(essexhighways.org\)](https://www.essexhighways.org/Uttesford-LHP-Schemes-List)

The attached document which is included in the link and available in excel form (and thus easily searchable as to each Parish in alphabetical order) may be useful:

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Uttlesford LHP  
Schemes List.xlsx

### **OUR ASSISTANCE AND MEMBERS' INITIATIVE**

We have not been approached since our last report for any assistance which might be possible using funds jointly available from our UDC Councillors' Initiative Allocation and so will be carrying over to 2022/23 any underutilised sums. As you know, we are always ready to consider requests for financial support for appropriate projects.

We shall be pleased to resume our pre-COVID use of the URC Hall on the occasion of this month's meeting and look forward to joining you for the informal gathering beforehand. Of course, we would be very happy to hear from any parish councillors or residents on that occasion and to meet them separately should there be anything they think we can help with or answer any questions.

Cllr Sandi Merifield

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