



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Felsted & Stebbing Ward

District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: DECEMBER 2023

We are pleased to submit our monthly Report to the Parish Council, which is relatively short on this occasion.

THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN – AN UPDATE AND COUNTDOWN

Last month's Report was dedicated to the draft Regulation 18 Local Plan and perhaps enough has now been written by us about its significance and long-term strategic importance, covering the development prospects for the entire District until **2041** and thus affecting not only the present generations of residents but those to follow.

However, it is worth noting that the consultation upon it runs until **1700 on Monday 18th December** and all residents, business and other organisations are encouraged to submit their views, representations, objections, support and comments by that time. Reminders of the consultation process and the response deadline will continue to be sent by UDC in the coming days to all those who have signed up to receive electronic updates, which are available via www.uttlesford.gov.uk/local-plan-news.

The link to the draft Plan and supporting evidence etc can be followed via the consultation exercise portal which is reached via <https://uttlesford-consult.objective.co.uk/kse/event/37646>.

We do encourage as many residents as possible to respond to the consultation.

FELSTED NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – THE REVIEW

We were very pleased to learn of the reconstitution/composition of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and are sure that it will provide the most productive input to the planning policy team at UDC as they consider the review of the post Regulation 18 draft Local Plan responses and the work to be undertaken by them jointly. For our two Parishes, this will initially relate to the consideration of the proposed allocation of housing sites being part of the allocations identified across the District for the

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individual larger villages, of which Felsted and Stebbing are two examples, and which we described in detail in last month's Report.

It would seem that Neighbourhood Planning will continue to have the policy importance in the future that it has to date, in that detailed reference to the principles was contained in the very recently enacted Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023. Funding towards technical work required to support neighbourhood planning has also continued via *Locality*, the relevant agency of the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The concept was, as will be recalled, first introduced by the Localism Act 2011, legislation passed by the coalition Government then in power. Should there be a change of Government in 2024, one wonders if this semi-devolved approach towards land use/allocation and extensive community participation will be recognised as the valuable process that it is. One hopes so.

Neighbourhood Plans cannot "trump" the strategic policies contained in Local Plans – they have to be consistent with them - and in any event they are not intended to be "outright blockers" to development but they are of great importance and have real application (as has been found to be the case in the recent past in this Parish) in fine tuning and setting development and policy principles at a local level. Recognition of this philosophy and policy was as recently as in October further recognised by the relevant Minister while considering a "called in" Planning Appeal, when he upheld the approach of a Planning Inspector who expressly approved the weight in that case of the relevant Neighbourhood Plan policies, refusing the appeal.

As an Administration (and John is the relevant Cabinet Member responsible for the policy) UDC will continue to support neighbourhood planning in way of officer input and further support as required and additional support will continue to be available in way of the excellent materials and input provided by Rural Community Council of Essex.

There are eight Neighbourhood Plans made in Uttlesford and eleven other Parishes are currently undertaking work on theirs for the first time. Newport, Quendon and Rickling NPSG are also reviewing their Neighbourhood Plan.

BIN COLLECTION SERVICE

We wrote previously about the difficulties which had been experienced in way of bin collections. This arose and has continued as a result of the extended journeys consequent upon closure by ECC of the waste transfer station in Great Dunmow, necessitating the tipping of domestic waste in Braintree and garden waste in Ongar or Haverhill. This results in journey/round time being extended by 45 minutes and 1 hour 15 minutes respectively, reducing the time available for completion of the scheduled rounds and which results in a back log in collections from time to time and disruption to the planned schedules, which is regrettable as it can be very inconvenient to residents.

Additionally, vehicle and manpower capacity was set some years ago prior to the expansion in housing numbers. This factor coupled with the ageing of some vehicles has led to the commissioning of a Waste Resources Action Plan which will lead to improved service levels and performance. It will include the

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redrawing of rounds, recruitment of additional operatives and the acquisition of new vehicles, the largest of which cost the substantial sum of £ 285,000. Budget provision for 2024/25 will be made accordingly.

Residents will wish to know that this is being accorded great priority and importance and improvements to service levels are expected by Spring 2024. Logistical planning to secure the greatest time and cost efficient rearrangement of rounds, vehicle use (there are two sized vehicles deployed which take into account lesser access in some locations), fuel consumption and manpower allocation is presently underway.

Further information will also be provided to residents with a view to securing a long-term improvement in effective recycling rates. UDC's performance in this respect is measured by the Administration and compared with the statistics in other Essex districts/boroughs. Green Bin content recycling is the highest in the County, which is pleasing while Uttlesford lies mid-point in respect of the rates of effective recycling of black bin and food waste material.

We will report further once the Waste Resources Action Plan has been completed and considered by Cabinet. It is a matter sitting very high on the list of spending and other administrative priorities.

PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY REVIEW

We have been asked by residents about boundary reviews and whether there are moves afoot to "disband" Uttlesford District Council. The answer is **NO**.

Some of us are old enough to remember the local government arrangements prior to 1972 (we sat under the jurisdiction of Great Dunmow Rural Council, until then, of course!) and there is no suggestion that those boundaries and arrangements for district councils will change.

The only change which will however be noticed by residents is that new parliamentary constituencies will take effect at the next Parliamentary General Election. We are directly affected in that two wards within our district will now come under Braintree Parliamentary Constituency (Felsted & Stebbing and The Sampfords) and two will come under Harlow (Broad Oak & the Hallingburys and Hatfield Heath).

Electors within these four wards will vote for the parliamentary candidates in these two constituencies and not as the rest as the district will do for the renamed North West Essex constituency (hitherto Saffron Walden).

There is no other impact on electors or householders in regard to their council services, which will of course remain the responsibility of Uttlesford District Council.

For those interested in these constitutional affairs, there is more to read at:

[See Parliamentary Constituencies Boundary Review 2023](#)

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There are however moves afoot from Central Government to “devolve” greater powers and funding from Central Government and transfer these to local Government. The debate is on going and the extent to which such devolution is transferred to Essex County Council (on behalf of all districts in the County) remains to be considered and agreed. There would be a natural reluctance we believe to agree to any diminution in the responsibilities and funding of Uttlesford by its membership. The ink is still in the bottle in this particular and we shall keep you advised of suggestions as they arise in future and any possible impact on our Parishes.

Additionally, County Councillor Foley will be in a position to discuss further any changes resulting from separate prospective changes in County Council representation at the next County Council election.

DISTRICT COUNCILLORS’ AND CONSTITUENTS’ SURGERY

We continue to hold our joint Surgery in the URC Hall immediately prior to the monthly Parish Council Meeting and we look forward to meeting any resident who wishes to discuss a matter of concern or indeed anything we have commented upon in our Monthly Reports. As usual, no appointment is necessary.

If any resident would like to receive a personal copy of our Monthly Reports, we shall be pleased to send one directly to them by e mail.

Of course, we remain very happy to consider requests for financial support, utilising our Members’ Initiative Grant as appropriate and which can be made available to community groups for suitable purposes.

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