



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Felsted & Stebbing Ward
District Councillors Sandi Merifield & John Evans



DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: JANUARY 2022

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

We wish Members a Healthy and Happy 2022. This month's report is rather shorter than usual, as there has been little business to bring to your attention, given the intervening Christmas and New Year break.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

Arising out of a recent planning application at Hartford End, it will be recalled that it appeared that the Five Year Supply of Housing for Uttlesford had declined, in comparison with the assessment published earlier in 2021 and had dropped below three years' supply. This is of significance, in the context of the weight to be given by officers in preparing their reports to the Planning Committee and thereafter by Planning Inspectors on any appeal, to a recently made Neighbourhood Plan (as in the case of that of Felsted).

A recasting of the five years' supply as at 1 April 2021 has now been prepared and just published on the UDC website. These figures are moving of course but are updated annually and the latest calculations which show a supply of **3.52 years** for the period 2021-2026 will come as some relief and useful to your Planning Committee when preparing their representations.

https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/11219/Housing-Trajectory-and-Five-Year-Land-Supply-1-April-2021-December-2021/pdf/Uttlesford_5YLS_Statement_1_April_2021_Dec_2021_A.pdf?m=637753570357730000

Several other Parishes in Uttlesford are also now looking to prepare Neighbourhood Plans and one recent one recently commenced is that for Little Easton. As you know, Stebbing has been working on their Neighbourhood Plan for some time and currently it is being examined under Regulation 16. It is hoped that it will be proceeding to a referendum in a few months' time.

TRAVELLER SITES

Another recently published document which will be of interest is an update regarding traveller sites in the District.

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Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015) requires local planning authorities to identify a 5-year supply against their locally set pitch and plot targets. This note summarises estimates of need and provision for permanent gypsy and traveller pitches at December 2021. If there are any comments or inaccuracies to address in relation to the ward, we shall be pleased to follow up with the relevant policy officer. The paper will be of relevance in the case of any future G&T applications in the parish.

https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/11216/Gypsy-Traveller-5-Year-Land-Supply-Position-December-2021/pdf/Gypsy_traveller_supply_position_Dec_2021A1.pdf?m=637751554624170000

KNIFE BIN - AMNESTY

The Uttlesford Community Safety Partnership is bringing the Op Sceptre knife amnesty bin to the locations in our Ward/neighbourhood, as listed below.



The Offensive Weapons Act 2019

- It is now illegal to possess certain weapons in private places, including your home. This includes items such as knuckledusters, flick knives and telescopic truncheons.
- There will also be changes to the process of buying knives online with enhanced age verification checks at point of sale and collection/delivery.
- Please store and dispose of knives safely to reduce the risk of them being used as weapons.
- Help prevent knife crime by reporting any concerns, including about how they are sold, to the Police or anonymously to Crimestoppers.



To find out more visit the National Business Crime Centre
www.nbcc.police.uk/knifeguidance



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The Partnership is providing a knife bin where all bladed items that people do not want or should not have can be disposed of safely and without fear of prosecution.

This is also an opportunity to raise awareness of new legislation which makes it illegal to possess certain weapons in private places, such as homes. This includes items such as knuckledusters, flick knives and telescopic truncheons (an image of the legislation is attached above). We shall be grateful if the scheme and the following dates could be publicised by the Parish Council.

30th March 2022

11.00-12.00 – Stebbing (Church Car Park)

12.30-13.30- Felsted (Memorial Hall)

14.00-15.00- Flitch Green/Little Dunmow (Community Centre Car Park)

LOCAL PLAN

Currently, Officers continue to evaluate against the criteria set the suitability (or not) of the large number (299) sites advanced in the Call for Sites exercise. This is a “cold towel” task and understandably takes some time. Nonetheless, when this exercise has been advanced, the refined site process will come back to the Local Plan Leadership Group for review and its consideration before moving on to the next stage of Regulation 18 consultation (now expected in May 2022).

In addition however to main draft policies, it is expected that more detailed policies of the Development Management type will also be prepared so that these might be available to be considered by the Inspectors at the time of the examination. This will enable (which was not the case in respect of previous draft plans) detailed policies to be up and running and provide the means for a full suite of policy considerations to be in place leading to the better development of the larger sites as may ultimately be included in the plan allocation.

We will continue to keep you updated.

UDC GENERAL NEWS

At Council level, a change of leadership was considered at full Council on 7 December 2021 and the former Deputy Leader, Cllr Petrina Lees (Member for Elsenham and Henham) will succeed Cllr Lodge and Cllr Neil Hargreaves (Member for Newport) will become Deputy Leader.

Our new Chief Executive, Mr Peter Holt, continues to address his role in positive and “inclusive” ways and as you will know, is planning to visit each Parish and also meet representatives of individual Parish Councils. He has brought this activity and significance of the relationship between the Parishes and the District Council to the attention of the UDC staff and his New Year message to them is found here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery&v=G8wntXkt4-c

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UDC PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Work continues at pace regarding the leadership and functional workings of the development management team within the Planning Department. This is being led by two very experienced and senior officers, who come to the task afresh from external appointment on an interim basis pending permanent appointments being made. John as portfolio Holder and Sandi as Chair of Planning Committee are being consulted and heavily engaged in this process. As part of the long term arrangements to be put in place for the planning function, recruitment of a permanent Director is under way. The appointment is being made at this senior grade level (ie that immediately below the Chief Executive) in order to demonstrate to all concerned the need and the importance of a successful candidate being appointed to fulfil this sensitive and influential role.

PLANNING WHITE PAPER

You will recall that UDC objected to the proposals contained in the Government's second August 2020 White Paper to the possibility that areas might be "zoned" for planning purposes and that once made, that would limit the ability of individuals and communities (including parish councils) to make submissions on individual planning applications. The Government's formal response to the consultation exercise is awaited but it would seem that this concept is unlikely (possibly, one wonders, following views taken as a result of recent by election results) to be progressed further. An initial press report is attached for those who might not have seen it.



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We will report further about this positive news when additional information is available.

FLOODING

We were pleased to secure in December 2021 a resolution of the very long standing blocked drains and flooding issue in way of the Flich Way/Stebbing Road. That followed lengthy correspondence with the relevant officer at ECC. Further discussions will continue as to the cause of the continuing egress of water from the field adjacent to the road, whose entrained soil and sand leads to the blockage of the sump and under-road rain.

OUR ASSISTANCE

While COVID limitations continue in terms of use of the URC Hall during the Winter months, we will not hold a person to person surgery but as ever, of course, we would be very happy to hear from any parish councillors or residents by email or phone and of course to meet them should there be anything they think we can help with or answer any questions both they or you may have on our report.

Cllr Sandi Merifield

Cllr John Evans