



**UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**Felsted & Stebbing Ward**  
**District Councillors John Evans & Richard Silcock**



**DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' REPORT: JUNE 2024**

Please find attached below our monthly Report to the Parish Council.

We thought that this Month, we would commence our Report with some information as to the extent to which in financial terms UDC “gives back into and supports the Community which it serves, in distinction to the “collections” made by it in way of Council Tax collected. We think that as much awareness of this should be encouraged for the benefit of all.

As will be remembered, UDC acts as a collecting agent for the precepts levied by Essex County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Parish Councils in respect of their respective interests, but it is not always recalled by Residents that the proportion of Council Tax retained by and at the disposal of UDC for its own statutory and other purposes is a small proportion, less than 10%, of the collected whole.

In any event, however, while support provided for business and the community is not a statutory requirement and while representing in cost terms not the biggest item of expense for the Council by any means, it is regarded as of considerable importance for the economic benefit of the District, of many new and upcoming businesses and very importantly too the well-being of residents and the communities within which they live.

**BUSINESS SUPPORT IN UTTLESFORD**

The UDC Economic Business Team is the primary point of contact and a link to their informative web page is here: [Uttlesford Business - Uttlesford District Council](#). They hold a monthly in person/drop in advice service which is well attended and of use not only to established enterprises seeking to expand but also to start-ups and those looking to secure additional training opportunities.

Specifically, the Finance sub-page lists as many as six potential sources of grant funding administered by UDC, ranging from start-up finance to rural prosperity funding. A further twelve external funding sources are also identified as of potential relevance: [FINANCE - Uttlesford District Council](#)

One of the financial sources, which for the financial year just passed was fully utilised, was in respect of funding provided by Central Government under the Rural Prosperity Fund scheme, being administered on

its behalf by UDC at the local level. A successful application was made by local residents (from Station Road, Felsted) in respect of the boutique self-catering/hotel business to be established at Porter's Hall, Stebbing Green. You might be interested to learn further of this very good example of substantial financial support being applied for successfully and administered locally.

The scheme was advanced in way of farm and rural business diversification, to include the renovation and conversion of a redundant outbuilding into a 5\*/luxury holiday let, to be part of and complement the conversion of the principal building (a historic building and setting, being in fact one of the three manorial buildings in Stebbing Parish) and whose aim is to promote the visitor economy, providing 22 new bed spaces. The ground floor of the outbuilding is to be made wheelchair accessible with 2 x en suite bedrooms which is not possible to achieve (due to heritage considerations) for the main building, being Grade II\*.

The main former dwelling/building is already in the process of being converted (having been rather neglected for some considerable period and dilapidated) but this has been privately funded and was not part of the application. Full details of the application, which included supporting evidence of additional employment to be generated and projected/estimated tourism income was provided in support and considered by the awarding Members' Committee and included as one of six successful business schemes from around the District. The Government funding provided in this way on a "match funded basis", with the outbuilding conversion project cost being estimated at some £ 421,000 of which the Grant sought and awarded by UDC amounted to some £ 144,000.

### **COMMUNITY SUPPORT IN UTTLESFORD**

This is a topic to which we have referred in the past in the context of *Blue Print Uttlesford*, namely the three year programme presently underway concerning the review of the budgetary restraints to which UDC is subject. The programme is not one of "slashing costs" but does relate to understanding and reviewing all of the Council's discretionary expenditure and the means whereby efficiencies and best value for money spent might be secured. This does not of course extend to those services which by statute a district council is required to provide which will remain unaffected by this programme.

Review work for this reason will be undertaken in 2024/2025 in the context of the UDC grants awarded from its own resources which in the preceding financial year exceeded **£ 800,000** and it is this amount which is likely to be reduced in the future. This review will not extend to grants made by other bodies, such as ECC, NHS or paid by UDC from reimbursed government funding but they will be taken into account in describing the bigger funding picture. This level of UDC funding made historically compares favourably with that undertaken by our neighbouring Councils (John has calculated them to have been in 2023, in Braintree £ 590k; East Herts £ 470k; Chelmsford £ 400k and West Suffolk £ 750k). It is likely that rural authorities have a greater need for support requested or required from within their villages and hamlets, not least to seek to overcome isolation particularly among the older members of those communities.

However, funding has historically been made on an annual "bid basis" and it is likely that a move towards a "commissioning basis" on the part of applicants will be undertaken ie to secure a longer term view of what is the anticipated need, the reasons for it and how it might better be supported, whether in terms

of personnel (to support the vital work undertaken by the volunteer community whose service is much to be appreciated and acknowledged) or other technical support that could be provided. Different organisations in seeking support will perhaps be encouraged to collaborate together with a view to seeing if they can secure further mutual advantage through working together. To this end, contact will also be made with the Parish Councils to engage further with them in this area. It is foreseen that the Parish Councils will have perhaps a greater role to play in this respect in the future than in the past, given that the financial constraints upon them are not limited in way of precept raising powers, unlike that of the district council, whose ability to increase Council Tax is capped and is already operating at its maximum/ceiling. We will report further upon this topic and provide a great deal more detail in future.

Meanwhile, however, Members and residents might find it informative to be aware of one particular body which undertakes such excellent work throughout the District, namely Citizens Advice. Over £ 200 k is currently provided by UDC in way of grant support to CA who provide advice in the following areas (among others):

- welfare benefit support for Macmillan Cancer Support
- advice regarding homeless shelter, domestic violence, refuge and job centre need
- debt advice
- immigration advice
- practical support and reference to Uttlesford Food Bank

Notwithstanding the relative affluence of our Parish, Members will wish to know that CA supported 73 clients within the Ward in 2023, with 282 individual matters dealt with, the majority of 107 being in relation to benefit issues. While a greater take up of support requested from within the larger communities in the District is the case and as would be expected, nonetheless by comparison, there were fewer numbers of clients in some other wards of similar possible socio-economic profile to ours (Fritch Green & Lt Dunmow; 56, Ashdon; 47, Hatfield Heath; 44). A breakdown of issue type identified by Ward is available in case of interest.

We do not, for reasons of brevity only, underestimate the fantastic work and support provided by so many other agencies at work in the District and by omitting in this Report the further details of the financial support provided to them in any way intend to minimise their value and contributions. We will therefore, be pleased to expand upon the topic in future reports.

### **GENERAL ELECTION - PURDAH**

Since we last reported, a date has been announced for the Parliamentary (General) Election, namely of 4<sup>th</sup> July. As will be appreciated, elections give rise to periods of “purdah” for District (and other) Councils when it is considered that business of potentially a contentious nature is not advanced nor publicised, as appropriate. UDC’s ordinary business carries on as usual of course in the period between 23<sup>rd</sup> May and 4<sup>th</sup> July, but, potentially sensitive matters which might be perceived to have a political dimension are not discussed by members nor advised upon by officers.

Accordingly, in practical terms, UDC will not be broadcasting a live feed to meetings held in this period. There is in normal (non-election) periods no requirement for councils to broadcast either live or at a later

date either video or audio recordings of formal meetings but of course, UDC like most other authorities these days do broadcast a live video stream as an example of good practice and transparency. Of course, those meetings which are not to be broadcast in this period do remain physically open to the public to attend in person and after purdah is over, the recordings will be included in the record of meetings held in that period and be viewable on the usual links.

### **THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN – A FURTHER UPDATE**

It was the intention to first publish the Regulation 19 Plan at the end of June ready for a meeting on 2nd July for the Local Plan Panel, meeting in public, to consider it. Because of purdah, however, this is no longer appropriate and so, the Regulation 19 Plan will now be published immediately after the General Election, meaning that the subsequent programme will fall back slightly and the following are the revised important dates/events:

- Local Plan Panel papers / Reg19 Plan published **Friday 5 July**
- Local Plan Panel (moved from 2 July) to **Monday 15 July**.
- Cabinet (moved from 11 July) to **Thursday 18 July**
- Full Council (moved from 16 July) to **Tuesday 30 July**

Consultation upon the Regulation 19 Local Plan consultation would commence on 8<sup>th</sup> August and run for a 8 week period (greater than the regulation period of 6 weeks, to allow for Summer Holidays).

So, it will be on 30<sup>th</sup> July that Council will decide whether or not to proceed with the latest draft ie Regulation 19 Local Plan, and then after consultation, together with accompanying evidence base of course, to agree to its submission to The Planning Inspectorate to begin the formal process of Local Plan examination, culminating in its Examination in Public in the course of 2025.

### **STANSTED AIRPORT AND NIGHT FLIGHTS**

We referred in our last two Monthly Reports to the impending consultation by Department for Transport regarding the regime permitting night flights at the London airports with effect from October 2025.

This was considered by UDC's Stansted Airport Advisory Panel (John and County Councillor Foley are Chair and Deputy Chair of this body) ("STAAP") which is a working group of Cabinet and a response to the consultation was submitted to DfT, an extract from which is quoted here:

*"There has been no comprehensive review of the night flight regime since 2006, which is far too long ago. .... UDC welcome the night-time noise objective for the regime commencing in October 2025, restated following the 2023 consultation, whereby the abatement objectives will be: "To limit, and where possible reduce, the adverse effects of aviation noise at night on health and quality of life while supporting sustainable growth and recognising the importance to the UK of commercial passenger and freight services."*

It is the intention of STAAP to be more proactive in future as regards its awareness of developments at Stansted Airport, and will extend a challenging engagement with the management of the airport while appreciating the valid concerns of residents as to noise and other nuisances (eg airport fly-parking) but continuing to understand and acknowledge the significance of the airport in terms of providing local

employment and to the regional and national economy at large. In particular, engagement with the managers of the airport will be undertaken to understand the economic justification for the use of older and more noisy freight aircraft at Stansted and the means whereby they might be discouraged by means of pricing.

The recent STAAP meeting agenda, which led to the DfT response given above, might be found here:

<https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s35279/20240430%20STAAP%20Nightflight%20Consultation.pdf>

We will continue to keep you updated concerning this topic which remains of particular concern to those living in the northern part of the Parish.

### **EXTERNAL AWARDS**

Rural Services Network provides a very useful point of contact and is a good source of relevant information as to matters of relevance to the rural community and we provide information received from them periodically but their general webpage setting out their publications is here, for possible bookmarking:

<https://rsnonline.org.uk/page/publications>

They have recently publicised the forthcoming award programme organised by the for National Association of Local Councils, namely the **Star Council Awards**. These are the only awards in England that recognise local (parish and town) councils' contributions to their communities.

The long-running awards celebrate local councils, councillors, young councillors and clerks' positive impact on their communities. Nominations are called for by 6 September and might be of interest to you. This year, NALC has introduced a new award dedicated to climate response which will recognise the proactive efforts of councils in addressing climate change, emphasising the importance of their role in mitigating impacts, adapting to new conditions, and building resilience for both people and nature.

[NALC Opens Nominations for Its Star Council Awards 2024 - Rural Services Network \(rsnonline.org.uk\)](#)

The winners will be announced at a parliamentary reception in the House of Lords.

### **DISTRICT COUNCILLORS' AND CONSTITUENTS' SURGERY**

We will not be holding our usual monthly surgery this month given that we shall be meeting at Crix Green Mission Hall.

John, given his interest in Local History and the preservation of archival material will be very interested to view the Parish records facilities which have been recently established there by the Felsted Recorder.

We are always, of course, pleased to meet up elsewhere, by appointment as required, with any resident who wishes to discuss a matter of concern or indeed anything we have commented upon in our Monthly Reports.

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.

Finally, 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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