

Annual Ugley Parish Meeting
Minutes of the Annual Ugley Parish Meeting,
held at 7.00pm on 11 April 2022 in the Village Hall.

Present:

Cllr. Nick Shutes (Chairman) and Mrs. Louise Johnson (Parish Clerk).

Members of the Public: 5 including,
Cllr. Nick Bowers, Cllr. Matt Francis, Cllr. Roger Pryor,
County Cllr. Ray Gooding.

1. **Welcome.**
2. **Apologies for Absence** Cllr. Clayton Powter, Cllr. D Cross, Cllr. E Reay and Cllr. Janice Loughlin.
3. The minutes of the meeting held on 29 March 2021 were confirmed and signed as a true record.
4. **District Cllr. Janice Loughlin's report**
The past year has seen many challenges and changes at UDC. Covid continued to affect council meetings which had to take place on ZOOM or TEAMS and many officers worked from home. Some officers continue to work from home and this is likely to become a permanent arrangement although details aren't yet known. In person meetings for councillors began again last July. Working groups continue to use Zoom and this has proved to be very successful. Any meetings that require a vote must take place in person.

STANSTED AIRPORT.

MAG appealed against the council's decision to refuse planning permission to go to 43mppa. The appeal, which was by public inquiry and was held virtually, began on 12th January 2021 and lasted until 12th March. As you will probably be aware the appeal was allowed. After making their decision to refuse the application the planning committee played no further part and the appeal was handled by officers, the legal department and a QC. (Philip Coppel).

NEW LOCAL PLAN

The new local plan is required to allocate sites to meet the housing, employment, and other needs of the district. 299 sites were submitted, and the council is currently assessing these sites. Not all sites submitted will be considered suitable. The draft, regulation 18, Local Plan is scheduled for consultation soon. It was considered that there is a need for further work to explore variations on the emerging strategy.

The council is required by government to build 17,000 + houses in the next 20 years. The Local Plan will determine where the houses are built. Details of the call for sites and maps can be found on the council's website.

DESIGNATION.

In a letter to the Chief Executive dated 7th February 2022 from Christopher Pincher MP, (Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities) he said 'he had concluded that the evidence presented (by the council) does not adequately justify exceptional circumstances and it is appropriate to designate Uttlesford District Council under the powers conferred by section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The consequence of designation is that applications for major development can be made directly to the Planning Inspectorate, which is under the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities, although applicants will have the option of continuing to apply to the local authority in the usual way should they wish.'

A major application includes those of over 10 houses or over 1 hectare. Large applications earn a substantial fee income for the council which will be lost if applicants bypass the council and go directly to the Planning Inspectorate.

The period of concern was from April 2018 until March 2020. 2018 was a Tory administration and, of course, since 2019 R4U have been the administration. The government will review the designation in 12 months' time.

The criteria relate to the speed of decisions and the quality of decisions measured by the proportion of decisions on applications that are subsequently overturned at appeal. UDC is above the government's set 10% threshold. This included Stansted Airport. I believe the council's figure is about 16.5% overturned at appeal either by officers or the planning committee. This seems to mean that around 84% were won at appeal. If an applicant submits a major application to the Planning Inspectorate the council will act as a consultee which will run parallel with other statutory consultations with a timescale of 21 days. Any consultation responses by the council in this way will have to be reported to the planning committee. This will mean that the committee will meet more often than the present 4 weekly cycle, probably fortnightly, depending on the workload.

There has been a mixed response from residents on designation. Many of the comments I've received have been on the concern regarding the loss of a democratic function of elected members of the council and the non-political planning committee in favour of central government. Some felt that government don't know or care about our district or the concerns of the residents that live here. Others have said that the government should put its own house in order. I made a rule when I was first elected to keep politics out of my role as a representative of Stort Valley. This has not always been easy so it's probably better if I don't express a personal opinion on designation and stick to that rule although I think it is a very sad situation.

SOLAR FARMS

There have been several applications for solar farms throughout the district. These have caused a great deal of controversy and varying opinions. As a member of the Planning Committee. I have been unable to take part in any meetings or pass any opinion on the applications in my ward. This is

because of the laws of probity in planning. I can do so if I recuse myself from the committee for an application in my ward which means I will get a short speaking slot and I would forfeit my vote. I have found this very difficult and at times stressful. The planning committee is a quasi-judicial, non-political committee. It is also cross party.

The Government and the Local Government Association have published excellent documents on probity in planning which can be found on the internet. It says under the heading Impartiality and avoiding bias heading: 'Planning issues must be assessed fairly and on their planning merits, even when there is a predisposition in favour of one side of the argument or the other. Avoiding predetermination and the impression of it is essential. The decision-making process must be seen to be fair and impartial from the perspective of an external observer.'

Where a decision maker is biased or has pre-determined a decision they will not be acting fairly. The decision will have been taken in bad faith and is liable to being quashed if challenged by way of judicial or statutory review.

You will be aware of the tragic situation in Ukraine. Essex County council has released figures of refugees arriving at Stansted Airport which on average is 200 per day. There is a welcome point in the arrivals hall for all Ukrainians and also host families to visit should they wish to do so. There is some Government funding and it is assumed that the bulk of the grant will be used on staffing and facility costs, humanitarian assistance costs (food, clothing, emergency accommodation, onward travel, emergency cash, etc.) More details can be found on the council's website.

5. Essex County Councillor's report

Essex County Council have raised their taxes by 4.5% for the coming year. £834 million is collected from residents living in Essex. Out of that money £670 million goes to social care in the county, which serves 17,000 people, with 43% having leaning difficulties.

Many patients in hospital are blocking beds because there is no one to look after them. The government needs to give more money to Social Care to help people live independently in their own homes, while leaving the beds in hospital for patients requiring medical attention.

When children in care reach 16-year-old, they have the choice to stay with their foster families or to move out. However, most of the accommodation they are offered are in dreadful condition. Uttlesford District Council are responsible for finding these young people places to live.

There is new legislation for domestic violence. Domestic violence increased during lock down and remained at the same level after lock down. 70% of domestic violence is aimed at women, with 30% at men.

5% are children carrying out the violence. Everybody needs to be aware of the signs to look for; training for councillors is available.

6. Ugley Parish Council's Chairman Nick Shutes report

2021-2022 seemed like a more normal year compared to the previous one with all meetings being held in the village hall despite varying levels of lockdown being in place for much of the year.

The biggest problem affecting the Parish during the year has once again been the closure of North Hall Road and the resulting much increased traffic levels through Patmore End.

Earlier in the year a request was made to Essex County Council for a 30mph speed limit to be introduced. Unfortunately, the built-up part of Patmore End does not meet Essex's minimum length requirement to impose a lower speed limit. An electronic survey was carried out to establish traffic levels and speed travelled, and this showed that speeding was not actually an issue.

We understand that a design for the re-instatement of the riverbank alongside North Hall Road has now been completed and submitted to the Environment Agency for their approval, but there is still no indication of when the work will start or how long it will take.

I can honestly say that I have never seen a country lane where the verges are as wrecked as those on the lane beyond Patmore End. Essex County Council need to come up with a proper design for how they are to be restored once North Hall Road re-opens and traffic levels return to normal. We need to keep pressure on for this to be done.

On a brighter note, an application has been submitted to make Patmore End a quiet lane, and if this is approved will hopefully make drivers more respectful of other road users.

It was disappointing to learn that in Uttlesford District Council's call for sites for version three of the Local Plan, land at Bollington Hall had been proposed for a major development of many thousand homes. If this were ever to proceed it would completely change the character of the area whilst creating impossible traffic levels through Stansted.

The only significant planning issue during the year was a renewed application for nine homes on land at The Chequers, Cambridge Road. Once again the proposed access was onto Patmore End Lane. Whilst the application was made in December no decision has yet been made.

I would like to thank Councillors Ray Gooding and Janice Loughlin for keeping us up to date on County and District matter respectively, and Louise Johnson for doing such an efficient job as Parish Clerk.

7. Finance Report Louise Johnson

We purchased some expensive items this year. A defibrillator at a cost of £2,230.80, a marquee £939 and 130 jubilee mugs at £1021.20.

I would like to thank again Cllr. Ray Gooding and ECC for their donation of £1,751, of which £1,000 went towards the defibrillator and £751 towards the

marquee. I would also like to thank Janice and UDC for the £500 which was put towards the defibrillator.

Without these contributions these items could not have been purchased.

We ended the financial year 2021/2022 with £6,806, a total of £1,042 less than the previous year.

The reason being we are still awaiting the outcome of the grant applied for from UDC for the purchase of the Queen's Jubilee mugs. The grant could be anywhere in the range between £0 to £700; the decision is not made until the middle of April 2022.

Receipts		
Precept		£6,300
Grants Received		£3,282
Balance B/F 01/04/2020		£7,848
Totals		£17,430
Payments		
Insurance		£262
Subscriptions & Membership		£335
Grass cutting		£668
Maintenance		£422
Hire of Hall		£90
Salaries		£2,440
Administration		£60
Audit		£50
Chairman's Allowance		£37
Tax & NI		£609
Marquee and mugs		£1,960
Defibrillation		£2,230
Sub total		£9,163
Maint St Peters		£700
Magazine		£30
Sub total		£730
Total		£10,623
Full Council Payments		£10,623
Full Council Receipts		£17,430
Net Payments over Receipts		-£6,807

The meeting finished at 7.45pm.