

Annual Ugley Parish Meeting
Minutes of the Annual Ugley Parish Meeting,
held at 7.00pm on 22 May 2023 in the Village Hall.

Present:

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

Members of the Public: 1 plus

Cllr. Clayton Powter, Cllr. D Cross, Cllr. E Reay and Cllr. Janice Loughlin.

1. Welcome.

2. Apologies for Absence: Cllr. Nick Bowers, Cllr. Matt Francis, Cllr. Roger Pryor, County Cllr. Ray Gooding.

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2022 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

4. District Cllr. Janice Loughlin's report.

Local election for District and Parish Councils took place on Thursday 4 May 2023. As a result, R4U will continue to be the Administration at Uttlesford District Council for the next 4 years. I am delighted to say I was re-elected. I have been Stort Valley's representative at the District Council for 23 years and will continue to represent your interests with commitment and to the best of my ability. Thank you to all who supported me – it's good to be back!

Council Tax: Band D properties saw a rise in their current tax of £171.61 this year. This represents a £5 increase. Council tax is calculated using precept levels required by various authorities such as Essex County Council, Essex Police, Fire and Rescue authorities, the Fire and Crime Commissioner and Town and Parish Councils together with the council tax requirement set by UDC's budget. UDC's budget showed a tax requirement for 2023/2024 of £6,694,027.

Stansted Airport: Manchester Airport Group accepted the council's offer of over £2.5 million to cover its legal fees after winning their appeal against UDC. However, their decision was not defended at appeal. Instead, council-imposed Condition 15 was used by the Council's barrister to defend the appeal. The planning Inspector said "the appeal must be determined now on the basis of current circumstances and the proposed Condition 15 is not necessary or reasonable". At the subsequent Judicial Review, the council's reasons were deemed unarguable and cost the council £60,000. It is not known if the outcome would have been different had the planning committee's refused decision been defended because it was not tested. An independent review said the council decision was political.

Local Plan: Last year I told you that the draft regulation 18 of the Local Plan should be published sometime in the summer 2022. This was not the case and unfortunately, The Local Plan has been delayed four times. The delay has been the cause of complaints and criticism as, until sites are identified, the district is open to speculative development. The document will be the council's blueprint for

development up to the year 2040. The current local plan was approved in 2005!! It is hoped that an up-to-date Local Plan will be in place in 2024!!

Solar Farms: There have been several applications and decisions for solar farms throughout the district. In Stort Vally Ward the part of the Wickham Hall Estate application, which would have joined Uttlesford and East Herts, was refused by Uttlesford's planning department as it would have had a huge impact on the green belt around Farnham.

Unfortunately, despite massive opposition, hard work and many hours spent by residents on the appeal and reasons to refuse the application at Berden Hall Farm, it was allowed by the Planning Inspector. His decision and reason for approval can be found on the PINS website. S62A/22/0006.

The Inspector concluded that 'taking all relevant matters in the round, against the content of the Framework I find that the overall benefits of the development would outweigh all of the resultant harms' The appeal hearing was held at Uttlesford District Council's offices on 9 March 2023. I spoke against the application as did several residents. A very disappointing result.

On a happier note, the Maggots End solar farm application was refused by the Planning Inspector. Excellent and welcome news.

In 2019 Uttlesford District Council declared a climate emergency and introduced an interim climate change policy. This is mostly related to energy saving on new housing. There is no mention of solar farms. Another good reason for having an up-to-date local plan.

5. Ugley Parish Council's Chairman's Nick Shutes report.

The past year has been one in which certain issues have once again proved significant for the Parish and its residents.

Highways

Works in North Hall Road to repair damage caused by the road being undermined by the River Cam were finally completed in November, and the road was reopened to traffic. The road had been closed for two years with traffic diverted to the B1383 via Patmore End. The resulting high traffic levels through Patmore End with few places for vehicles to pass each other led to severe damage to the verges and potholes on the edge of the single-track road.

Essex County Council did some remedial work to restore the verges and the edge of the road in November. Now that the vegetation is re-growing on the verges and with 'normalised' traffic volumes I am hopeful that in time the appearance of the verges will return to normal.

Heavy goods vehicles continue to ignore the width restriction through Ugley Green. This is exacerbated by the fact that vehicles travelling south on the B1383 are advised of the width restriction on the approach to Pound Lane and that the route to Elsenham is via the A120 east. This sign pre-dates the building of the A120 Takeley by-pass and should refer to the B1256. Some of the main offenders of breaching the width limit are vehicles operated by Essex Waste based in Hall Road Elsenham

using Ugley Green as a short cut. There have been instances of their drivers being abusive to residents questioning why they are driving though Ugley Green.

Residents in Cambridge Road are generally of the opinion that HGV traffic on the B1383 is heavier than in the past. This is possibly due to excavated soil from building sites in Bishop's Stortford being transported north for disposal.

Possible solutions to HGVs abusing the current ineffective weight restriction on Grove Hill in Stansted may also inadvertently increase HGV traffic through Ugley.

Planning

Uttlesford District Council seem to approve applications which the Parish Council object to and refuse those which raise no objections.

A major application for housing on land south of Bedwell Road adjacent to Elsenham Parish is now with the Planning Inspectorate for determination.

A member of the public with land in North Hall Road together with a district councillor and consultant gave a presentation to the Parish Council on his aspirations to develop farming, biodiversity, eco-hub and social housing on the site. The Parish Council were generally supportive of the proposals, but we have not heard any more.

Community

Members of the community organised a party on Ugley Green to commemorate the platinum jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II in June 2022. This event was support by the Parish Council.

County Council

The main points Ray Gooding has highlighted through the year have been adult social care, highway maintenance and county lines drug issues.

District Council

Janice Loughlin has highlighted the ongoing lack of clarity as to what is happening with the local plan with District Councillors being kept in the dark. Also the Planning Inspectorate finding in favour of Stansted Airport in their appeal with costs awarded against the District Council.

Thanks

I would like to record my thanks to Ray Gooding and Janice Loughlin for keeping the Parish Council apprised of County and District matters, and Louise Johnson for her professional and efficient management of the Parish Council.

6. Finance Report Louise Johnson

We brought forward from 2021/2022 £6,806, we had a precept of £7,000 and ended the financial year with a healthy total of £8,683.

The Parish Clerk gave a copy of the payments during the year to each member.

The meeting finished at 7.25pm.