

# Stansted Network

NEWS FROM YOUR LOCAL COUNCILS

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

to be held at

The Stansted Day Centre, Crafton Green, Chapel Hill,  
Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex

On WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH 2020 at 8.00pm

## A G E N D A

- 1 To receive apologies for absence
- 2 To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019
- 3 To receive the Parish Council's audited accounts to 31 March 2019
- 4 Financial Report
- 5 Chairman's Report
- 6 To welcome PCSO Nikki Morris
- 7 To receive an update on the Neighbourhood Development Plan - Simon Thompson
- 8 To receive a report on Neighbourhood Watch
- 9 Proposed resolutions
- 10 Open Forum

Ruth A Clifford  
Clerk to the Council

### NOTE

The Parish Meeting may, by law, discuss all parish affairs and pass resolutions about them. Such resolutions are not binding upon the Parish Council, but members usually consider them at their next available meeting and consider what action, if any, to take.

Anyone wishing to speak under the Open Forum must state their name and use the microphones provided. Please try not to repeat topics already discussed. The meeting will close at 10pm at the latest.

**Tea and coffee will be served after the meeting.**

CONTACT US: [parishcouncil@stansted.net](mailto:parishcouncil@stansted.net) or telephone 01279 813214

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - by Cllr Maureen Caton

We are now fully established in the Mountfitchet Exchange – our community hub building. This has been a major achievement having also battled through an assault course of obstacles, whilst prioritising attention on the routine issues of the Parish. Congratulations especially to our Clerk and the Councillors involved for their fortitude.

Parishioners come in to see the facilities on a daily basis and face to face work via reception has doubled. Likewise, the library has seen an influx of new borrowers and returners. The number of young people visiting the library has increased – using it to work/IT and photocopying. Rhyme Time has seen the biggest increase – so much so that an additional session may have to be planned! Thank you to all who supported us to keep and fund our Library – the battle continues to ensure we remain with qualified/experienced/paid staff.

Our PCSO, Nikki Morris, is now part of the team and although still without her car is able to get around the village hot spots. She has a base at the Exchange and she can have a quiet space to meet residents/colleagues etc. to discuss issues confidentially.

Uttlesford District Council have also confirmed that £30,000 has been allocated in their budget planning (to be set on February 29<sup>th</sup>) for a Community Information Officer to be available part-time to the Exchange and our community. We await news that the CAB have been allocated grant funding for the service they will also operate from the Exchange. By the time you read this report our consultation on the future of Crafton Green House should be completed and analysis of your responses begun. We are also undertaking a review of the Day Centre property, including energy efficiency.

You will be aware of the decision to refuse the airport planning application on the grounds of air quality, noise pollution and climate change- which were grounds also cited by the Parish Council. We await Manchester Airport Group's response. Likewise, Inspectors questioned whether the UDC submission of the Local Plan was viable, deliverable or sustainable. This makes the completion of our Neighbourhood Plan more important – focussing on what and where any development could take place – putting down a clear marker of what would be acceptable before any opportunistic development is foisted upon us. Consultation with the community is expected to take place in early Spring. We are also still seeking a plot of land for use to replace the Fuller's Alms Houses that were on Church Road.

Parking remains an issue and impacts on both businesses and parishioners. We continue to work with UDC to try to alleviate this issue. Enforcement Officers continue to respond to issues of illegal parking raised by yourselves and us, especially on Cambridge Road. Grove Hill and Church Road are areas where the Parish Council are in discussion with Essex County Council to review traffic management in particular.

The potential for flooding in Lower Street and Church Road – near the traffic calming measures-continues on the agenda with the Environment Agency. We aim to promote and seek funding for an acceptable Flood Management Scheme that would reduce any flooding in Lower Street.

Walpole Meadows and the Elms Farm developments are now established in the village and we have set up community working groups to help us deliver on their open space schemes. The SUDs and drainage issues on Walpole Meadows have been raised with planners at UDC and we await an outcome. We are looking to replace trees as a result of Ash Dieback on Newman's Plantation, near Foresthall Park, as well as planting additional trees in the public open spaces.

We are researching land availability and cost to provide appropriate additional burial plots in the village as St Mary's cemetery is reaching capacity. Discussion on the issue of Woodland Burials will be addressed once this immediate issue is resolved.

The Council has resolved to promote the participation of our youth in the decisions that affect our community. We are setting up a Youth Council to contribute to our discussions and debate; although they will not have voting rights as they have not been elected by the Parish. We are also hoping to promote and strengthen the work of our local youth club, here in the village, through a new service agreement. Additionally, we are discussing with ECC how we could possibly resource a facility for the under 13s to attend a youth club setting in the village.

You will hear from our Chair of Finance that we are increasing the precept by £12.51 per annum on a Band D property to £102.91 which still compares favourably to Dunmow at £148.91, Saffron Walden at £171.51 and Newport at £130.25. This increase this year will enable us to fund the completion of our Neighbourhood Plan, additional staff to manage the increasing workload of a growing community, and maintain the infrastructure of our village. The details of the budget plan are alongside this report.

Our paid staff are our strength and we thank them for their commitment to the Parish. Trevor Lloyd will be retiring this year after over 6 years with us. We wish him well and thank him for all the grant funding he has managed to secure over the years. I also thank my colleague councillors for their support and commitment to the work of the Parish.

#### **FINANCE REPORT by Cllr John O'Brien**

For the uninitiated, the "Precept" is the money we claim from the District Council to pay for services we deliver. Our current policy is to limit precept increases to 2%, (or rate of inflation). Under that policy we should have expected a precept for the 2020/21 fiscal year to be around £306,000 but, unfortunately, in the latter part of this year, a number of issues were identified which could not be financed through our reserves and it became clear that additional funds, (£43,137), would be required through a higher demand on the precept. Thus, at the Full Council meeting on Wednes-

day 8<sup>th</sup> January, the Parish Council approved a precept of £349,137 – an increase of 24p/wk, equating to an annual rise on Band D from £90.40 to £102.91, ie. £12.51, (13.84%).

Those elements requiring extra funding are as follows: -

**Cemetery** – We are almost at capacity – *contingency for additional land purchase* £10,000

**New Gate for the Recreation Ground** – *essential work* £ 1,000

**Additional staff member to Parish Clerk’s team** – contingency based on 20hrs/wk £15,000

*(With the new Mountfitchet Exchange there will be a need for cover on the Reception desk and at times cover in the absence of Library staff may be necessary.)*

**Unadopted Road Support** – to establish an earmarked Reserve £ 2,500

*(The Parish Council wishes to continue its policy to support residents in road repairs.)*

**Neighbourhood Plan** – contingency to complete its formulation. £ 6,000

**Day Centre** – windows and doors replacement, *(lowest quote)*. £ 8,637

Total £43,137

Works neglected by developers were identified in Foresthall Park, including consequences of Ash Dieback in Newman’s Plantation. In addition, the provision of an all-weather ‘permissible path’ at Elms Farm, will amount to a total cost of £25,000. Rather than adding to the precept, it was decided to claim back these costs from the respective S106 funds. *S106 funding is a levy on developers principally for maintenance of green spaces. The Parish Council will need to manage these funds so that, as the funds are depleted, the Council’s contributions will increase until eventually taking on the full cost of maintenance.*

The Parish Council has in its accounts two sets of reserves – ‘Earmarked’ and ‘Free’ reserves.

The earmarked reserves are those which are set aside and locked-in for specific purposes. For example, our street lighting stock is large and obsolete, dating from the 1960s. We are experiencing increasing levels of failure and therefore we have increased the Street Lighting reserve from £2,000 to £10,000. Free Reserves are there as a back up against unforeseen emergencies to bolster earmarked reserves as necessary. These have been depleted somewhat and the Parish Council has set an objective of maintaining these at a level of £100,000. Audit requirements recommend a minimum of 25% of the Precept.

It is anticipated that at the end of this fiscal year there will be an estimated surplus in the region of £53,000. The Parish Council has committed itself to repay the £200,000 borrowed from the Foresthall Park Community Fund as soon as possible. £25,000 of this surplus will be the first contribution towards that end. The remaining surplus will be transferred into our free reserves.

**The Future:** - This council is committed to return to its target of 2%, (or rate of inflation), annual precept increases and it is hoped we shall achieve this for the 2021/2022 fiscal year. However, there is uncertainty as Essex County Council has warned that it proposes to devolve certain responsibilities from Essex Highways down to Parish level. These may include repairing potholes and maintaining grass verges etc, yet we expect that any funding transferred for this will be insufficient to cover the full cost.

Copies of the approved budget and the Auditors’ Reports can be viewed on the Parish Council’s website.

## **NEWS FROM UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Cllr Ayub Khan writes**

For too long the spectre of two very big issues has dominated the thoughts of political and executive leadership at Uttlesford District Council (UDC). The start of the New Year has provided an outcome on both

#### **1) Stansted Airport.**

At an extraordinary meeting of the authority’s full council last year, planning officers at UDC were instructed not to issue a planning decision notice for the airport's application until the planning committee had considered the “adequacy” of the proposed section 106 agreements (obligations put on a developer which are attached to a planning permission being approved). As a new council was formed in May 2019, elected councillors also wanted to con-

sider any new “material considerations and/or changes in circumstances” since the 2018 decision had been made. Following extensive work by the planning committee and two days of public hearings where very powerful submissions were made, the outcome was that the decision was refused on the grounds of noise, air quality and climate change. The committee agreed these were material planning changes since the approval was originally granted.

In my view the decision was the right one. Climate change, noise and air pollution are all things that matter and we need to do all we can to mitigate the impact. This does not mean that we value Stansted Airport any less. They are important partner and our major employer. In the end, we need a mature relationship and constructive dialogue with Manchester Airport Group (owners of the airport) that provides mutual benefit for Stansted residents, and the district. So what next? MAG may decide to appeal directly to the Secretary of State and seek financial recompense. If this were to happen it would put further strain on the already stretched finances of UDC. I hope that this is not the case but watch this space....

## 2) The Local Plan.

The Uttlesford Local Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State in 2019. This proposed to deliver 18,000 homes and three garden communities by 2033. It set out a vision for the district over the next 15 years that would meet current and future needs of residents.

We now know that the Inspectors have severe concerns about the plan. In a letter providing feedback Inspectors concluded: "We are not persuaded that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the garden communities... have been justified. We therefore cannot conclude that these fundamental aspects of the plan are sound". They also commented on housing affordability across the district. The inspectors highlighted the fact that there are, and will be, many people in Uttlesford without their own home or living in unsuitable or inadequate housing and that this is unlikely to change without some help in the current housing market.

This is very disappointing news and in my view a failure of political leadership. It has taken a number of years and great expense to agree a submission, yet the basis of the needs analysis was found to be flawed. As a consequence, we are now having to revert to an out of date 2005 local plan. This leaves Stansted as well as the rest of Uttlesford open to more speculative development.

So what happens next? We have two choices. We either withdraw the plan and start again knowing the risk that this brings or retain the existing plan and amend it.

My view would be the latter as this would provide more protection from speculative development. We also have an opportunity to be bold and agree a more coherent spatial strategy. For Stansted, our own neighbourhood plan will need to be agreed quickly to provide a clear local view on any future development.

I'm not against house building because as country we need it. In Uttlesford it is said that homes cost more than 12 times the average wage and local families are being rapidly priced out of the area. We do need more homes but they must be truly affordable and have the right infrastructure to support a changing demographic.

I believe there is also an opportunity for UDC to make sound investment in adding to its stock and building new council homes providing individuals and families with secure tenancies.

It's never a dull moment. However, as a group of Stansted district councillors we will continue to ensure that there is a real voice for residents in this part of Uttlesford.

### THE MOUNTFITCHET EXCHANGE AND LIBRARY

Parish Council staff are available during the following hours:

Monday	09:00 - 16:00
Tuesday	09:00 - 16:00
Wednesday	09:00 - 13:00
Thursday	09:00 - 16:00
Friday	09:00 - 16:00

Essex Library staff are available at the following times:

Tuesday	9.00am - 1.00pm
Wednesday	2.00pm - 5.00pm
Thursday	2.00pm - 6.00pm
Saturday	9.30am - 5.00pm



Christopher Rumball was the first person to get books issued from the library after it's move into its new home.

