

District Councillors' Report June 2020

Since the last Parish Council meeting took place, the world has changed in such a short space of time. So has the way in which we work, rest and play.

The terrible consequences of the COVID 19 pandemic will mean that we may never go back to how it was before and will need to adapt. Tonight's meeting is a clear example. It is the first time a Stansted Parish Council has been conducted via Zoom. Uttlesford has been using Zoom regularly for formal and informal meetings. It's a technique that saves much travelling time. Carefully honed protocols are needed to get the best from it, including managing who speaks when.

During the crisis there has been a great deal of activity at Uttlesford District Council. Much of which has focused Officers time on making sure an effective community hub serving the district and coordinating efforts to help residents is in place and working.

Government has provided funding to UDC to help local businesses and 95% of these grants have been paid out. A new discretionary Grant has also been introduced for those businesses that did not qualify for the first round of payments. Further information can be found at www.uttlesford.gov.uk

It goes without saying that, as a group Stansted Councillor's, we are thankful for the work of the local community, which has pulled together to help one another during this time. The magnificent work of Stansted surgery, the coordination of volunteers delivering food and prescriptions. In addition, the local businesses that have adapted and continued to serve the community has been outstanding. We thank them and appreciate what they have done.

Local Plan

At UDC, council business still continues. Stansted residents will be interested to know that R4U has voted to withdraw the Local Plan. This has serious consequences for Stansted as well as the whole of Uttlesford. Stansted Councillors put forward an amendment that would have seen greater public engagement before a decision was taken. This was rejected by R4U and other Members who were intent on one outcome only. As it stands, R4U have still not provided any information on next steps. What we do know is that they have dithered and wasted council tax payer's money over the last year when they were given the opportunity to withdraw the plan by the Inspectors. This means we are now open to more speculative development and costly appeals. Cllr Dean has written more about this issue. You can access his blog at <https://alandean.mycouncillor.org.uk/2020/06/01/finally-the-populists-are-being-held-to-account-1/#page-content>.

Local Authority Funding

The COVID-19 crisis has put a burden on the UDC budget. Whilst it is true that Government has provided grants, it has not covered 100% of the costs. In addition, the loss of income from car parking fees and other areas of work means that there is

a £3.6m deficit. The Council has been purchasing commercial property as part of its investment strategy. Given the world economy has suffered and is unlikely recover fully for some time, there will be difficult times ahead. Cllr Sell and I are members of the Investment Committee and will continue to scrutinise the Officers' recommendations to ensure we get the maximum return and push for better governance arrangements to avoid reckless investments.

Locally, our intervention with Essex Highways has worked to help ensure the verge leading to Burton End along Church Road has been cleared. This had prevented residents from using the footpath and forcing them to use the road. In addition, Cllr Melvin Caton has raised with Officers at UDC the poor quality of work to the public land on the Mountfitchet Estate. We will continue to monitor and make sure that the area is maintained to highest level.

We are concerned with the ongoing issue of traffic at Grove Hill and want to see action to resolve this. What more can we do to help residents?

Good News at Stansted Park

We are delighted that construction of the long-awaited bridge across Stansted Brook was finished at the weekend. The network of permissive paths around Stansted Park opened on Sunday and the bridge now connects the network of splendid park walks to the right-of-way that runs besides the railway line from Church Road/Elms Farm to Elsenham, Burton End many places of interest.

Statement of Support.

Given the recent high profile events in the USA and the report published by Public Health on the impact of Corona Virus on the Black and ethnic minority population, Uttlesford Liberal Democrat and Green Party Cllrs have worked together to produce a statement and have called on the all Group Leaders at UDC to sign it.

The statement can be seen below. You may ask why this is in our interest? We have a duty to call out injustice where we see it. We have a duty to our BME community in Stansted and across Uttlesford to ensure that we address the structural inequalities that exist and work together with the relevant agencies and our MP to do so. We are asking that Stansted Parish Cllrs agree to endorse this statement.

Ayub Khan for Alan Dean, Melvin Caton and Geoffrey Sell
Uttlesford District Council Member for Stansted South and Birchanger

Council Statement

Council notes with serious concern and distress the death of George Floyd at the hands of police in America on 25 May 2020, and the subsequent protests and

demonstrations against police and state brutality towards black people in America and around the world, and the systemic racism that exists within society.

Council also notes with alarm the response of the President of the United States of America and his administration, using extreme force to crush and repel peaceful protesters.

Council further notes the release of the UK government report into the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on black, Asian and minority ethnic people and that it is of vital importance that action is taken as a result to alleviate the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on black, Asian and minority ethnic people.
Council resolves:

- To stand in complete solidarity with black people in America, in Britain, and around the world against racism
- To give its support to the Black Lives Matter movement.
- To lobby for immediate government action to address the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on black, Asian and minority ethnic people
- To call on the Government and our MP as Equality Minister to Make urgent changes to Government policy and guidance to protect BAME communities, as the report requested.
- Implement an action plan as requested by the Chair of the BMA (British Medical Association) to reduce the risk to BAME employees and to address the underlying issues.
- Carry out an independent BAME Covid-19 inquiry.
- Implement an immediate suspension of export licences of sales of arms to the US, including riot shields, tear gas, rubber bullets and small arms and an investigation into how British arms are being used in internal repression and violations of civil rights.