

## **Radwinter Annual Parish Meeting – 8 May 2018**

### **District Council Report**

It has been a busy year since my last Annual Report to your meeting on 15 May.

#### **Chesterford Research Park**

Perhaps the most significant development was the District Council's decision to purchase a 50% shareholding in Chesterford Research Park, in a joint venture with an Aviva pension fund. Our decision to make the investment was prompted by continuing year-on-year reductions in funding from Central Government. In the three years that I have been Cabinet Member for Finance, funding from Westminster has fallen from £7.65m to £5.1m, a reduction of £2.5m, roughly one third.

In its first year Chesterford Research Park has made a contribution of £2m to the Council's finances. Although any commercial venture brings with it new challenges, not least cultural, I firmly believe if we had not made this investment we would now be looking at making significant cuts in services.

#### **Additional investment in key areas**

As a result of the income from our investment, I am pleased to be able to report we have maintained front-line services. We have also been able to invest additional resources in some key areas, including litter picking, supporting our four Day Centres across the District and additional funding for extra Public Community Support Officers. We continue our rolling programme of investment in the running of the Council. For example, we will spend £600k this year on replacements to the fleet, part of a £2.9m programme over the next 5 years.

#### **Sheltered Accommodation**

The Council is in the middle of a major programme of investment in the Council's sheltered accommodation, investing £33m over 5 years, including significant investments in Reynolds Court, Hatherley Court and Walden Place in Saffron Walden.

#### **Council Housing**

I have reported in previous years that Uttlesford remains one of only a relatively small number of councils that continues to own its council houses and to build new council houses when it able. I am pleased that the Council have been able to purchase the eight affordable houses on the new development in Radwinter, using the money raised locally from 'right to buy' receipts and reinvested it in new council housing.

#### **Recycling**

One of the key services Uttlesford undertakes is the collection of household waste and recycling. Across the District, the recycling and composting rate continues to exceed 50% and I know that in many households locally the recycling rate is much higher than this.

Until recently China was one of the main markets for recycled materials from Europe. The decision by China to significantly reduce the import of raw recycled materials has had a major impact on the economics of the recycling industry, with sharp falls in the price of cardboard, paper, plastics etc. Where as in the past we have received money for what is recycled, we are increasingly having to pay for our recycling. We have reserves for just such an event this year. However, this may have a material impact on our budget in future years. I am watching this closely. In the meantime, I would

urge all neighbours to continue their efforts to recycle as much as possible. It is increasingly important to avoid 'contamination' of what is recycled.

### **The Local Plan**

The Local Plan continues to progress and I hope and believe we are in the final stages of what has been a painful process for all. It might be helpful to recap some of the key headlines concerning the Local Plan and the scale of the challenge:

Uttlesford's population is roughly 80,000 and we have approximately 31,700 households. The Council has effectively been told it should be planning for an additional 14,100 houses over the life of the Local Plan (to 2033). Rather worryingly, indications from Government suggest that if the Local Plan is delayed the Government's new methodology for calculating our 'housing need' is likely to increase the numbers from 14,100 to 16,200.

Of the 14,100 new houses we should be planning for within the Plan, 3,190 have been built, 3,960 have received planning permission and the Council has estimated an additional 1,120 houses will arise from infill, change of use and other similar events where planning permission is granted (eg. 70 houses per year over 16 years). This leaves a balance of 5,830 - far too many for our existing communities to absorb. For this reason, the Plan is looking to create three new settlements in North Uttlesford, Easton Park and West of Braintree, and it is intended these will be built on 'Garden Community' principles.

The Council went out to consultation on this proposal last summer, in what is called a Regulation 18 Consultation. It received 6,000 responses, which are being absorbed and the Plan is being revised where appropriate to take the comments received into account. Should the Council approve the revised plan in June, it will then go out to further consultation, in what is called Regulation 19 Consultation over this summer. The current timetable envisages the Plan can be submitted to the inspector this Autumn.

I well understand what a contentious subject the Local Plan is and I am very happy to meet with neighbours to discuss and understand concerns and issues.

### **Stansted Planning Application**

Another major issue currently facing the Council is the planning application received from the owners of Stansted Airport to increase passenger numbers from 35 million passengers per annum to 43 million per annum. The planning application will be considered by the Planning Committee in July. I, like all councillors, am determined that the planning process must allow residents, councillors and all interested parties sufficient time and opportunity to be heard and to fully discuss and understand the implications of the planning application.

### **Council Tax**

Uttlesford's share of your council tax bill is approximately 9% of the total and its council tax per household continues to be lower than 2010/11. The Council agreed a 2.99% increase in Council Tax for this year, raising an additional £165,000. For a Band D property Uttlesford's share of the Council tax bill is £147.21p per annum - an increase of £4.28p per annum.

**Cllr. Simon Howell**  
**The Sampford Ward, Uttlesford District Council**