



DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: February 2021

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to report to the PC and will be very happy to take questions on this report or anything else. I feel this particularly important during this period when physical meetings cannot be convened.

COUNCIL INVESTMENTS AND FINANCES

We have not previously provided an overview of the Council's investment activity in the past 12 months, but as this is now coming towards a conclusion and the Council Tax requirements for 2021/22 will be issued shortly, this is perhaps an opportune time to do so. The purpose of the programme is to be **income generating**, seeking to avoid the need for substantial increases in the part of the UDC element of the Council Tax precept. The investments have been/are to be made with the assistance of borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board and are the subject of detailed review by and approval of the UDC Investment Board (made up of 11 Members and two independent experts) before being considered and approved by the Full Council and all the sites purchased/to be purchased have been visited by Officers. The Investment Board was provided with professional expert reports and appraisals on each proposed investment.

Further explanation and justification for the Strategy will be found at:

[Commercial Strategy 2021 - 2025.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

UDC's commercial investment portfolio is now growing towards its target investment total of £300m and you may be interested to see a summary of the investments and the tenants:

Completed Investments	£
Chesterford Research Park (29 tenants - mostly pharma)	60,841,000
Stane Retail Park, Colchester (Aldi and B&Q as anchor tenants)	30,424,000
Vet Hospital, Livingston (Pets at Home)	5,925,000
Retail distribution centre Chorley (Waitrose - NW England and Scotland)	55,000,000
Skyway House, Takeley (Weston Homes)	20,000,000
	172,190,000

Further Committed Investments	£
Chesterford Research Park	13,400,000
Investment X	42,555,000
Investment Y	35,000,000
	90,955,000

Current Options	£	
Investment Z		35,000,000
Total	£	298,145,000

The investments which are not identified relate to purchases yet to complete and so remain commercially confidential.

The purchases are all freehold land and the buildings, not the businesses operating there. These investments result in the expansion and balancing-up of UDC's portfolio to correct the previous concentration in one asset ie Chesterford Research Park, so that when the portfolio is complete the that element will have reduced from 100% to about 25%. The capital value of investments within Uttlesford will be around 31% of the total.

The Council's investments generate a significant income servicing not only the capital and interest payments but vitally provide a surplus enabling council services to be fully supported including business Covid recovery initiatives, cover the costs to the council of the pandemic so far, sports provision, as well as £1m of green initiative/environmental work. This enables the inherited future funding gap of £5m pa for the provision of council services to be filled.

CORONAVIRUS

I attended a briefing on Tuesday 2nd February by the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group on the Vaccination Programme and will be happy to pass on any relevant information at the meeting.

The following link will take you to the webpage on the UDC website that gives the latest information on help and guidance for residents and businesses on all things Coronavirus related.

<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/coronavirus>

UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL ("UDC")

LOCAL PLAN & POLICY MATTERS

I will continue to update you regarding progress of the Local Plan and had hoped to see representatives of the PC at the Town & Parish Council Forum on Themes 1-5 of the Community Stakeholders Forum last week. This whole process is an important aspect of the first consultation on the new Local Plan (the Issues & Options Stage)

I would like to encourage the parish council to participate as well as encouraging your residents to comment and review the workings of the Community Stakeholder Forum . Their schedule of work may be found at:

<https://uttlesford-consult.objective.co.uk/kse/folder/20790>

<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/consultation-and-the-community-stakeholder-forum>

There are nine themes in total and submissions can be made on each of the themes up to 21st April 2021 this can be in block for themes 1 -5 adding 6 -9 as they are discussed and released.

The next forum meeting will be on Wednesday February 10, this will be discussing Biodiversity and will be streamed live at 7pm or as will the previous five available to watch on the link above.

Further, since our last Report, the Government has just put out a further consultation on planning policy including to NPPF and focussing on design policy looking to strengthen design quality in new developments including a proposed National Model Design Code. We shall be engaging in this consultation exercise.

STANSTED AIRPORT APPEAL

The Appeal Inquiry has commenced as you know and sits Tuesday – Friday each week (although not during the period 15 -19 February 2021) and proceedings are now being conducted virtually, with the Inspectors, the Parties’ representatives and experts all located remotely. Proceedings are being broadcast however on YouTube and can be followed “live”, as well as on catch up via:

http://stream-uk.venue-av.com/e/sai/live_stream

This week’s proceedings are focussed on Health & Well-being; Ecology and Socio-Economic Impacts further information is available including the Inquiry Programme on:

<https://programmeofficers.co.uk/ssairport/>

Whilst I am still unable to hold face to face councillor surgeries, I would be very happy to hear from any parish councillors or residents by email or phone should there be anything they think I can be of help with or answer any questions you may have on my report.

Cllr Sandi Merifield