

From: Cllr Smith <CllrSmith@uttlesford.gov.uk>

Sent: Thursday, February 23, 2023 3:20 PM

Subject: RE: 8 Feb 2023 Little Bardfield Parish Council meeting

UDC Budget

The District Council has its Budget meeting on Tuesday 21st February. The administration plan to increase the District Councils element of Council Tax by the maximum permitted level of 3%. This will raise about £195,000 as additional income which will be earmarked for a new Cost of Living scheme (which is part of a Government supported package). The Cost of Living scheme will be a support those living in the District who perhaps don't have access to the standard support mechanisms (Council Tax support, Universal Credit, etc.) the scheme will provide a rebate on Council Tax and is intended to have a relatively low bar for claimants to meet. Thereby providing access to a scheme that doesn't cost too much to administer.

The 2023/2024 budget is balanced through the drawdown of Reserves and comes with a 5 year (Medium Term) strategy. The strategy shows the Council exhausting our uncommitted reserves by 2025. The intention is that the Council will sell some of its commercial assets and use the income from the sale to reduce our borrowing and therefore increasing income. Council Finances have been under pressure for many years and the Council faces significant cuts in the future to get the budget back to a sustainable footing.

Housing

The District Council is conducting a full stock survey of our 2800 Council Houses. Contractually, this should be completed by our maintenance provider Uttlesford Norse but they do not have the resource, so UDC has hired Savills to complete the stock checks. This is intended highlight any problems with damp or mould or any other defects in the properties and we have completed about a third of the surveys to date. As we have had to outsource the work, the Council intends to recoup the cost from Uttlesford Norse.

Styles

Residents on Styles have been in correspondence with me about the state of the road and the consultation for the planned works, having been told 3 years ago that the works were going to be completed and had been budgeted for. Residents were then told that the works would mean those liable having to pay 1/16th of the cost (and that this was assumed to be about £400). The initial quotes came back much higher than anticipated suggesting an individual liability of £3,000. Officers have retendered and gotten the cost down to £2,000 per individual with liability – it should be noted that not all residents on Styles have a liability. I remain concerned at the impact this is having on those living on Styles and am working with the Cabinet member responsible with the support of our County Councillor to make the case for UDC to pick up the full cost.

Cllr George Smith
Uttlesford District Council
Member for the Sampfords
Leader of the Conservative Group