

Report of Alan Storah to Little Bardfield Parish Council

11th November 2019

1. Local Plan

There are still no further updates with regard to the issue as previously reported. After recent communication, the Inspectors' letter is now expected imminently.

2. Stansted Airport

Whilst a great deal of work is on-going, there is, as yet, no further update on this issue such that when the matter goes back to the Planning Committee has not yet been determined.

3. Changes to Planning Committee processes

At its meeting of 16th October UDC's Planning Committee considered the extent to which the trial of proposed changes to the extent to which Parish Councils and residents may make submissions to the Planning Committee (as reported to 9th September meeting) had been successful. It was agreed that they had indeed been successful and would therefore now be taken forward to the Governance, Audit & Performance Committee with a view to their incorporation into the council's Constitution such that they would become permanent.

It is envisaged that further changes to the committee's processes will be considered in the near future. This will entail the Planning Committee Working Group that has been set up by the current administration looking into the decision-making process with a view to delivering 'better' and/or 'better justified' planning decisions.

4. Group defections

Three of R4U's former 26 district councillors have decided to move to the Green Party. Two of those represent Saffron Walden and one Newport. R4U's majority remains healthy and solid allowing the group to implement its programme of delivering benefits for residents.

The three, who had all been UDC councillors prior to last May, became 'Green' because their personal objectives and those of R4U are, apparently, no longer the same. They have publicly said "The current climate emergency is of such importance to us all ... we believe it is right to focus our time strongly on this issue and we can better do this through a closer alignment with the ... national Green Party."

R4U's focus remains that of delivering policies to put residents first on a wide range of issues. That is the mandate that R4U was given at the election and which it will continue to pursue. That of the 'Green' councillors is to now focus and campaign solely on a green agenda. While environmental issues are very important to R4U, there are many other local priorities that need to be delivered and upon which UDC will therefore continue to concentrate.

I do not anticipate any further such defections taking place such that the impact upon UDC will have been only to create another minority party within the overall mix with that having no impact upon the overall control of R4U.

5. Corporate Plan

UDC's new administration is making solid progress with the preparation of its new Corporate Plan. R4U councillors have discussed a wide range of potential initiatives and agreed those to be progressed. They will form the basis of the new UDC Corporate Plan which will help to 'reset the tone' as to the way UDC functions.

Adoption of the plan will first necessitate it being reviewed by Scrutiny Committee, followed by approval by Cabinet after which it will warrant approval by Full Council. Current thinking is that the plan will be submitted to the December meeting of the council.

The budget for 2020 will also need to be produced, in parallel, and then approved by council over the next few months.

6. Ward Councillors' Initiative

Following the council's previous discussions, it is my intention to seek a donation of £500 towards the defibrillator for the parish. This will entail seeking confirmation that it would meet with UDC's specified criteria.