

Dear Town & Parish Councillors,

As a new district council administration, we have committed to sorting out the Local Plan issues which were left by the previous administration. It is vital that we construct a Local Plan with the broadest possible consultation and thus put an end to the decade long developer free-for-all.

Sorting out the Plan

In January the UDC councillor leadership team committed to driving a re-engineering programme through the council so that it is better able to properly plan for our district. It is imperative that this council is able to be a strategic 'place-maker' for the future of our towns and villages.

The Planning Inspectors stated their severe concerns about the Local Plan. They found many parts of it unsound. The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. That is what the previous administration did in 2014 and 2019, and they wasted more than £6 million of council taxpayers money. That is not what this one will do.

It is time to fix the plan and the Planning processes.

Bringing in Independent Experts

To that end we have moved decisively and swiftly. We are bringing in a highly experienced team of planning consultants through our relationship with the LGA. It is important that we do this through the LGA because they will be both independent and quality assured. The team includes people who have planned at the most strategic level as well as driven change through local authority planning functions. They are also able to tap into a network which includes former Planning Inspectors.

Our new external team will:

1. Review our position with respect to the Local Plan and recommend ways forward. These will be brought to an Extraordinary Meeting of the Full UDC Council in March.
2. Undertake a 360 degree review of both planning policy and development management at the council to recommend the staffing, process and technology changes required for the Chief Executive to re-engineer the Planning function.

Councillors in control

The previous administration seemed to do many things without proper consultation - that is not us. We demand higher levels of governance, transparency, and democracy from this council. During this process we expect the full council to be engaged and for the Scrutiny Committee to be completely involved. This is a different council; it is one that operates differently and expects better outcomes.

The council's Chief Executive has communicated the plan of action to her staff. She is 100% committed to implementing the will of this council and our recommended changes.

Already underway

The external consultant team has now been engaged and has started work. Implementing re-engineering in this measured way will ensure that councillors are informed, in control, and recommendations and changes will be based on evidence, experience, and best-practice.

We'll keep you updated as things progress.

Cllr John Lodge, Leader Uttlesford District Council