



UTTLESFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL
 Felsted & Stebbing Ward
 District Councillor John Evans



DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT: MAY 2023

I am pleased to submit my monthly Report 2023 to the Parish Council.

First, I wish to acknowledge the equal and very valued contribution made by Cllr. Merifield throughout the period of the last Council from 2019 until 2023, making for what I believe to have been a very effective collaborative partnership in representing our Ward. We both enjoyed working together, doing so in harmony and in mutual support, thereby I believe providing an efficient and considered representation of the Ward and the residents of both Felsted and Stebbing in equal measure.

Indeed, I would like to put on record my personal appreciation of Cllr Merifield's service to the District also, particularly as Chair of the Planning Committee - her experience as Parish Councillor leading the planning sub-committee of Stebbing Parish Council, prior to being elected to the District and the know-how gained as a result proved to have been invaluable for the benefit of all.

ELECTION – MAY 2023

You will have noted the outcome of the Election of District Councillors on 4 May 2023. I am very proud to have been re-elected by the electors of Felsted and Stebbing and thank all those who were able to support me. I warmly congratulate Cllr Richard Silcock on his election and with whom I look forward to working and collaborating.

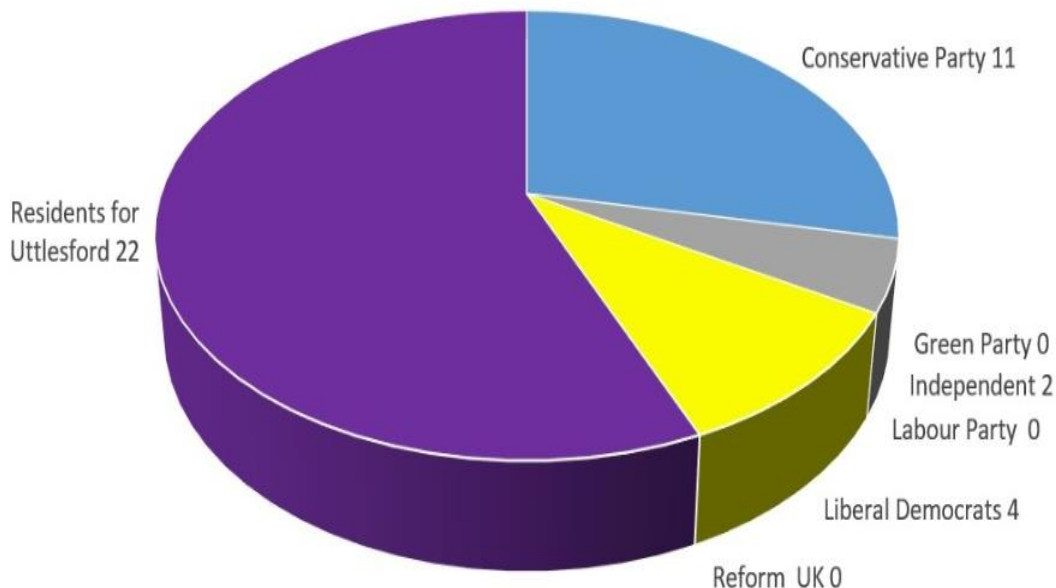
It was a hard fought election and interestingly, each of Cllrs Silcock, Merifield and I received some 25% each of the votes cast on a turn-out of 37.29%, an increase on 2019.

The District remains under the administration of R4U with the make up of 39 Councillors elected being from the following parties/members:

R4U	22
Conservative	11
Liberal Democrat	4
Independent	2

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Pie chart, as shown on UDC election site, identifying also the parties which fielded candidates but which were unsuccessful.

REPRESENTATIONS AND THE UDC CABINET

It might not be well known but the role of a District Councillor involves not only the day to day representation of the Ward and the interests of its residents but it extends also to a wider degree of commitment and collaboration with other Members throughout the District too and externally. During the last Council, Cllr Merifield and I were able by reason of being representatives on several UDC Committees and external bodies, to keep abreast of prospective changes and possible benefits available likely to affect the Ward and residents.

This is the list of these representative and/or membership functions undertaken by one or both of us during that time and in respect of those marked *, that representation by me will continue:

Chair of Planning Committee	Local Plan Leadership Group *
Cabinet Member *	Senior Appointments Committee *
Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group *	Stansted Airport Advisory Panel *
Transport East (Regional Body) *	Assets of Community Value & Local Heritage List Committee *

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Rural Services Network *	Planning Committee Working Group
Harlow & Gilston Garden Community Town Board *	Local Government Association – SPARSE Rural Assembly
Stansted Airport Consultative Committee *	Essex County Planning Portfolio Holders Group *
Essex Coastal Forum (we are within the protection designated area) *	Appeals Committee (Chair) *

So, as noted above, in the new Council and Administration, I have been appointed to continue service as Cabinet Member with Portfolio responsibilities for Planning and the Local Plan as well as Stansted Airport, in addition to serving on/representing UDC on the external bodies mentioned.

The Cabinet in this Council will be smaller in number than in 2019 - 2023, and is now to be made up of the Leader, Deputy Leader and four other Councillors, making a total of 6, all of us previously having served in the Cabinet also.

PLANNING MATTERS - UDC

It was very pleasing to learn this week of the outcome of two planning applications made by applicants to PINS directly under the section 62A Procedure (that being of designation of Uttlesford allowing for major planning applications to be submitted directly to the Planning Inspectorate). It has also been remarked upon in the professional planning trade press.

Both applications were rejected by the Inspectors. They will be of particular interest to your Planning sub-committee and I shall provide them with copies of the Decisions for ready reference and possible use in their future representations.

One application related to outline consent for 18 homes in the village of Elmdon. The Inspector set out a series of grounds for refusal, including that "having regard to its countryside location, agricultural land quality and accessibility, the site is not a suitable location for the development proposed, contrary to Policies S7 and ENV5 of the Uttlesford Local Plan, adopted January 2005 and government guidance set out in the National Planning Policy Framework" (NPPF), adding that the "proposal, by virtue of its location, the nature of the site, and its relationship to its surroundings would harm the established character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy GEN2 of the local plan and government guidance set out in the [NPPF]".

The outcome of the other application may also be relevant to Felsted, being faced by two solar applications anticipated in the Bartholomew Green/School Lane areas. The developer sought full planning consent for the creation of a 49.9MW solar farm spanning a 79-hectare site on agricultural land near Manuden.

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It was rejected with the Inspector finding "it would clearly result in wider benefits including the moderate contribution to the local and national aspirations to transition to a low carbon future, the significant benefit arising from the renewable energy creation and future energy mix, the modest weight to socio-economic benefits and the modest benefits to ecology and biodiversity".

However, he said that these would "fail to negate the harms identified to character and appearance, landscape and visual matters, the settings of designated heritage assets, archaeological remains, loss of [best and most versatile agricultural land], highway safety, biodiversity and noise" and that the benefits in were clearly outweighed by the harms identified.

CONSTITUENTS' SURGERY

The Surgery will continue as before, to be held in the URC Hall immediately prior to the Parish Council Meeting.

REPORTING

As was noted in the April 2023 Report, I was very pleased to hear at recent meetings that the format of the Reports and level of detail provided have proved to be of interest and value to Members and also those of the public who attend your meetings. Members of the electorate have expressed the same views. Through being available via the hyperlink included in your Meeting Minutes, it has been possible to provide a level of detailed reporting of District Council affairs to the Community which would not otherwise be as easily accessible or recorded and for which I thank you.

Finally, thanks are extended to your Members and in particular to your Clerk and Assistant Clerk, for all the help and advice given during the past year which has made the undertaking of the District Councillors' duties and actions pleasurable and the more effective.

Cllr John Evans

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