

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL CHAMBER - COUNCIL OFFICES,
LONDON ROAD, SAFFRON WALDEN, CB11 4ER, on TUESDAY, 30
SEPTEMBER 2025 at 7.00 pm**

Present: Councillor N Gregory (Chair)
Councillors M Ahmed, G Bagnall, B Donald, R Haynes, A Reeve
and G Sell.

Officers in attendance: R Auty (Director of Corporate Services), B Brown (Director of Environmental Services), B Burton (Interim Director of Property), C Claydon (Community Partnership Manager), C Edwards (Democratic Services Officer), A Greneski (Communities Safety Officer), D Hermitage (Strategic Director of Planning), V Reed (Climate Change Lead Project Officer) and S Russell (Strategic Director of Housing, Environment and Communities).

Also in attendance: Councillors J Evans (Portfolio Holder for Planning), A Coote (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Equalities) and M Sutton (Portfolio Holder for Communities and Local Partnerships). M Richards, (Chief Inspector/Braintree and Uttlesford District Commander), Inspector P Jackson (Neighbourhood Policing team) and K Rowson, (Community Safety Engagement Officer).

SC18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Moran.

Councillor Donald declared that she was a member of Sustainable Uttlesford and Peacock Community Energy.

SC19 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

SC20 CABINET FORWARD PLAN

The Cabinet Forward Plan was noted.

In response to questions from Members, Officers made the following comments:-

- The parishes and large villages with a requirement for housing identified within the Local Plan would receive some financial help with their neighbourhood plans of up to £5k. There would also be support from Officers for all neighbourhood plans being developed.

- When the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) became operative was a decision for Cabinet, however officers might recommend a timeframe of a couple of months from adoption.
- Primates licensing related to new legislation which required the Council to consider how to deal with different animal licences.

SC21 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Scrutiny Work Programme was noted.

SC22 **COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP PRESENTATION**

The Chair asked the Chief Inspector/Braintree and Uttlesford District Commander, Martin Richards, for any opening comments, he made the following points:-

- The importance of empowering community leaders. He said that he already engaged with Parishes and Town Councils but was also keen to engage with District Councillors.
- He introduced his two colleagues, Inspector Phil Jackson from the Neighbourhood Policing team and Kerry Rowson, the Community Safety Engagement Officer who was his link into the Parishes and Town Councils and his advisor around matters that related to them.
- He said that he wanted to focus on the priorities and achievements within the Community Safety Partnership.

In response to questions from Members he said that:-

- Resources were allocated based on crimes per hundred thousand people, therefore areas with high-crime received more officers.
- The Home Office set a model for resource deployment against certain criteria and he did not have the ability to move people around.
- He said that there was a failure to report some crime types mostly relating to anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse.
- He said it was important to report all crimes, even minor ones, as multiple reports could help to identify patterns and lead to action.
- The forums that dealt with specific policing and statistics were the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's meeting and the Councillors Forum. Councillor Sutton was the main contact within Uttlesford District Council (UDC).

Councillor Sell said that a written report on the mechanics of the Community Safety Partnership would be helpful to direct members as they had a limited knowledge of what the Community Safety Partnership involved.

The Community Partnership Manager and the Community Safety Officer presented the Community Safety Partnership. A copy of the presentation has been made available on the Scrutiny Committee's meeting page.

There was discussion about the lack of visibility of the Community Safety Partnership and the work they carried out, in response the Community Partnership Manager said that:-

- There were regular updates in the members bulletins and there had been councillor drop in sessions but these had not been well attended. This would be looked at again and a different format considered.
- The SOS hubs in Takeley and Saffron Walden were well attended and advertised through social media, newspapers and the Members bulletin, as well as through the parishes.

The Community Partnership Manager said she would share her contact details after the meeting.

Councillor Bagnall said that there had been a number of e-mails from Councillor Sutton recently about policing and the Community Safety Partnership, he said that Councillors were not necessarily reading all their e-mails. He said that it was important to note that these were being sent, but communication could always be improved.

In response to a question from Councillor Bagnall, the Community Partnership Manager said that J9 was domestic abuse awareness training. The training was named after a domestic abuse victim and was designed to help people recognise signs of domestic abuse and know who to contact. She said that training was available to Councillors, Officers, and Businesses. The training took about an hour and was available during lunchtime and in the evening. The goal was to make the Council an "accredited premises" in terms of domestic abuse awareness.

The Chief Inspector highlighted the importance of this training, noting that domestic abuse was the biggest crime type in the district and was life-threatening.

The Chief Inspector said there was great difficulty in getting messages across to the public and he said that was why it was important for Community Leaders, like Councillors to be passing this information through their day-to-day dealings with residents.

He said he was planning to set up an on-line forum, to replicate a similar one that took place in Braintree. He said that Parish, District and County Councillors would be invited for a 30-minute question and answer session and then other topics would be discussed to empower community leaders and give them an understanding of what they could do about certain topics for example speeding or car theft.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Local Partnerships said that she thought over the last few years the Community Safety Partnership was getting stronger. She said it was important to get this right and suggested a dedicated noticeboard so that anyone could look at what was happening in this area. She said that she would be happy for anyone to speak to her and send ideas.

In response to a question from a Member, the Chief Inspector said that youth crime was dealt with in a proportionate way. He said that any youth crime resolution had to go through a panel, and the focus was on understanding and redirecting behaviour rather than punishment.

He said that the Community Safety Partnership dealt specifically with such issues, including:

- Promoting healthy relationships
- Dealing with unhealthy relationship behaviours
- Working with schools
- Providing interventions for young people

Councillor Sell said that the parish magazine in Stansted, called the Link, was a hard copy magazine that was circulated around the area and therefore reached those who did not use social media. He said it was a way of getting important information out to residents. He said there were other parish magazines, and these could be a useful way of publicising issues other than through social media.

The Chair said that it had been very interesting and said that it showed that Councillors had an ignorance problem in terms of understanding the Community Safety Partnership, what was happening and day-to-day actions that they undertook. He said that it would be helpful in the future to have fuller and deeper briefings to rectify the lack of understanding.

The Chief Inspector said that he was committed to getting all six key partners (police, council, county council, NHS, fire and probation) together for a wider discussion and to make Uttlesford a safer place.

Councillor Sutton said that she recognised the need for her and the Community Safety team to get more information and contact opportunities to Councillors.

The meeting adjourned at 8:12pm and restarted at 8:17pm.

SC23

CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION PLAN - MID YEAR REVIEW

The Portfolio Holder for Planning presented the report, he thanked the Climate Change Lead Officer for her work in compiling the extensive report. He said that the report was an update of the climate change programme over the last 16 months and identified the important priorities and activities on climate change for the future as well as work on protecting and restoring nature. He said that progress had been made on the Council's own carbon emissions as well as the development of a strong climate change local plan policy. He said that effective leadership and support for local communities was key.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning noted that the Council had been recognised as one of the most improved Councils in the 2025 National Climate Emergency UK Action Scorecard.

He said that the Council had also secured £3.8 million from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund to upgrade energy-inefficient homes within the Council's housing stock.

In response to Members questions the following comments were made:-

- Better communication was needed to detail the breadth of work carried out.
- The Zero Carbon Communities Grant scheme had helped with engagement and networking across the district and led to the creation of the community organisation Sustainable UDC.
- A district wide green festival was planned and this would be an opportunity to bring more visibility to the work that was being carried out.
- Biodiversity within the report was looking at how the Council was driving forward climate action and did not say that biodiversity had improved.
- Electrifying the waste fleet had been investigated but was currently not practical in a large rural district. The next best option was to change to HVO fuel which would contribute to the net zero target.
- The action that would be taken to improve the monitoring of the carbon management plan and work to revisit the baseline data had been commissioned. The resulting report gave recommendations which were currently under review. The projects taking place were important for the work towards the net zero target by 2030 but there also needed to be thought given to whether the target was achievable and the 2030 target should be re-baselined.
The reporting of greenhouse gas emissions were published on the Council's website but would also be included in the next report to Scrutiny.
- The Association for Public Sector Excellence (APSE) report made recommendations for reducing carbon emissions throughout the Council's assets, excluding Social Housing, which would provide energy conservation and save money. The energy monitoring needed to be more systematic and consistent.
- There were on going funding challenges, the government Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) had closed and Uttlesford were one of only 2 successful beneficiaries in Essex. The Council was waiting to hear about potential new funding streams.
- There was a need to explore new funding models like blended finance and to investigate community energy partnerships. The Climate Change Lead Officer was currently preparing a growth bid to focus on priority areas.
- There were regular officer and Cabinet Member liaison meetings to swap knowledge and collaborate on projects. The Climate Team were involved in the Local Plan Climate Change policies as well as working together to develop renewable energy strategies and a tree strategy.
- It appeared that the Planning Inspector had also accepted the higher local energy efficiency standards within the Local Plan which if adopted would mean Uttlesford had the highest energy efficiency targets within the country.

The Chair reiterated that it would be helpful to have an idea of the progress of the net zero target in percentage terms if possible.

Councillor Donald said that Sustainable Stansted had done great work on biodiversity mapping of their area and Sustainable UDC were planning to scale up that work across the district.

The Chair said it was a very creditable, professional report and said that there were some issues of definitions, details and statistics which would be nice to see addressed in future reports.

SC24 **LOCAL PLAN POST EXAMINATION UPDATE**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning said that the Local Plan was on track to be adopted in the spring of next year.

The Chair congratulated the Portfolio Holder for Planning and the Planning Team for the work carried out.

SC25 **AXIS CONTRACT REVIEW**

The Chair said that the procurement and implementation of the contract seemed to have gone very smoothly and congratulated both the Interim Director of Property and the Strategic Director of Housing, Environment and Communities.

In response to questions from Members the following comments were made:

- There were concerns regarding the previous contract, and the works carried out by Uttlesford Norse Services Ltd (UNSL) which were being explored.
- There was one member of staff who was TUPE'd from UNSL to UDC. There were other staff who went through an interview process to be part of the property team and of those two members were originally from UNSL.
- The number of staff who transferred to Axis and remained on the contract were 6, some had been redeployed and others left as their trade and skillsets did not necessarily match with the staffing required in the new contract.
- The resource for reactive works was at the right level but there was a need for Axis to increase resources to deal with empty properties (voids).
- There were no direct TUPEs to the UDC customer service centre, however two employees from UNSL had interviewed successfully for new roles in that team including taking repairs calls.
- The turnaround time for voids would come down, there were formal processes within the contract to deal with non-delivery against the KPIs and there were already discussions with Axis to put in place improvement measures on the voids, these were being monitored on a daily basis.
- An audit had been carried out on the previous joint venture arrangement and this had raised some queries about the work carried out by UNSL. There would be without prejudice discussions. The focus of today's update report was about the new contract. A report regarding the

demobilisation of the UNSL contract and any relevant issues would come to this committee in the future.

The Chair said that the report was impressive and congratulated the team.

The meeting ended at 9.10pm