

IMPROVING LIFE IN UTTLESFORD AFTER MAY 2019

AN AMBITIOUS LIBERAL DEMOCRAT VISION FOR UTTLESFORD DISTRICT

Local Liberal Democrats want a greener, safer, fairer, caring and economically successful Uttlesford by:

- Growing local businesses and local employment
- Delivering housing that is truly affordable for everyone
- Protecting and enhancing the environment and cutting carbon emissions
- Being a Caring Council for people of all abilities and backgrounds
- Investing wisely to make local services affordable.

1. Growing local businesses and local employment

A Liberal Democrat Council will support new and existing businesses to adjust to the uncertainties of Brexit, in order to sustain and grow the Uttlesford economy and local employment. The council will work in cooperation with other agencies to achieve this, and will build on the economic benefits flowing in particular from Stansted Airport and the booming business zone in Cambridgeshire. The Council will invest in premises for business start-ups and business hubs in key locations. Superfast broadband across the district will be encouraged for all residents and workers, including home workers in rural areas. The Council will seek better, less polluting transport links along the M11 and A120 corridors into eastern and southern Essex, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. It will encourage modal changes towards more walking, cycling and integrated public transport solutions for journeys to work to serve our growing communities and the success of businesses. Uttlesford will be supportive of initiatives that create town centres fit for the future needs of the community and will increase the capacity of its public car parks where shortage of spaces is undermining the success of local communities and businesses.

2. Delivering truly affordable housing for the community's needs

A Liberal Democrat Council will borrow to build social housing for those in greatest need. Truly affordable housing should cost no more than 35% of household income. The high cost of housing means that owning or renting a home in Uttlesford is beyond the means of many people who work in the district. The Council will aim to deliver this truly affordable housing in many parts of the district through both the proposed Garden Communities contained in Uttlesford's Local Plan and through Community Land Trusts.

The Liberal Democrat Party is committed to giving Councils control over 'Right to Buy' of council housing, where there is a shortage of affordable housing.

A Liberal Democrat Council will demand that the Garden Communities are constructed to the highest, sustainable standards, with essential infrastructure being delivered before people take up residence. These Garden Communities will be designed as true communities from nursery to school, to work, to retirement home. They will not be just vast estates of houses.

A Liberal Democrat Council will give the environment and sustainability ^[Note 1] a high priority in its discussions with local people and promoters of new developments to ensure Uttlesford achieves places with a sense of community where people want to live.

The Liberal Democrats will work with the Planning Inspectorate for the adoption of the new Local Plan by the end of 2019, to minimise further speculative, poorly planned and badly located development in our towns and villages. Liberal Democrats will not play party politics with the Local Plan, as that would put the whole district at the mercy of developers.

A Liberal Democrat Council will seek to bring our divided communities together by backing sustainable and deliverable infrastructure and community amenities that will benefit both new and existing communities. The Liberal Democrats acknowledge that this will involve making difficult but necessary decisions. They will strive to make these decisions acceptable to the community as a whole, knowing that avoiding them would lead to further years of uncontrolled planning chaos beyond that suffered for the last 12 years.

[Note 1: See manifesto section below: **Protecting and enhancing the environment; cutting carbon emissions.**]

In support of better road infrastructure in existing communities, a Liberal Democrat Council will continue to support its funding initiative for local highways improvements in partnership with Essex Highways.

3. Protecting, enhancing the environment; cutting carbon emissions

A Liberal Democrat Uttlesford will take seriously climate change, and will protect and enhance the local environment through actions that bring long-term, sustainable benefits. Actions will include installing renewable technology systems on council properties, installing electric car charging points, and improving air quality. Measures to reduce the district's carbon footprint by cutting home energy use will be supported. Improving biodiversity in roadside verges and green corridors throughout the district, and making urban and rural walking and cycling routes safer will be a priority. The Liberal Democrat initiative in Saffron Walden for reducing pollution from the single use of plastics, through encouraging local businesses to support the use of Refill containers for drinks, and by installing drinking fountains, will be promoted across the district by a Liberal Democrat Uttlesford.

A Liberal Democrat Uttlesford will restore a mature but robust relationship with Stansted Airport in an endeavour to ensure that the Council is not seen by big business as a soft-touch in its role of protecting the local and global environment.

4. A Caring Council for people of all abilities, ages and backgrounds

A principle aim of a Liberal Democrat Uttlesford will be to ensure resilient new and old communities. To achieve this, the Council will listen to people of all abilities, ages and backgrounds when it plans its services. The Council will employ people of all abilities and backgrounds to ensure a skilled public sector workforce. The Council will encourage people from all backgrounds and origins to be active members of the district-wide community.

In caring for local people, a Liberal Democrat Uttlesford will express alarm at the loss of over 600 police officers in Essex to under 3,000 between 2010 and 2018. It will work with Essex Police to bring a greater police presence into our towns and villages to tackle growing concerns about drug gang crime and knife crime, as well as burglaries and other crimes. The Council will continue a Liberal Democrat initiative to part-fund, with parish/town councils, Police Community Support Officers.

A Liberal Democrat Uttlesford will ensure Council facilities are in place to give support to EU nationals living in Uttlesford - who are our family members, friends and colleagues - to ensure they can safeguard their rights in the UK through the Settled Status registration scheme. Our Continental fellow residents in Uttlesford must be able to carry on with their lives, if and when the United Kingdom leaves the European Union. The Liberal Democrats in Uttlesford will do what they can to make people from the remaining EU-27 member states - and from other overseas nations and cultures - feel welcome to remain living and working in Uttlesford.

The district council will work closely with other authorities and agencies to rebuild and enhance youth services, library services, day centre services and other amenities and services that support local people's health and wellbeing. The Liberal Democrats will do this to make Uttlesford a vibrant place fit for living, studying and working by present and future generations.

A Liberal Democrat Uttlesford will continue the party's local campaign to resist Essex County Council's proposal to close Stansted's and Thaxted's public libraries and to reduce the library service in Dunmow and Saffron Walden. A Liberal Democrat-controlled district council will instead work with the county council to widen the public usefulness of library premises.

Support will be given to parish and community environmental initiatives such as litter clearance task groups. A Liberal Democrat council will encourage the provision of accessible sporting facilities for the whole district in line with a much awaited District Sports Strategy. It will support progressive multi-agency/partnership funding models to support delivery of 21st century arts and sporting facilities for our community.

5. Planning & investing wisely for quality & affordable local services

A Liberal Democrat Council will challenge the way central government has been imposing austerity cuts on all local authorities. The Council will also take steps to make itself financially independent of control from a Westminster Government that seems incapable of running the country soundly and securely.

A Liberal Democrat Council will put in place democratic and skilled arrangements that are urgently required to oversee UDC's plans for borrowing significant sums of money for commercial investments. The Liberal Democrats recognise that sound investments may be needed to boost Council income to maintain local services put at risk by central government financial austerity cuts. The Liberal Democrats will introduce much more rigorous decision making controls on where money should and should not be invested, and will bring in tighter oversight and scrutiny of investments to reduce the risk of taxpayers' money being lost.

A Liberal Democrat Council will try to negotiate with other councils in Essex the creation of an Essex Sovereign Wealth Fund to spread the risks of individual council's investment plans and to raise the skills of those responsible for making investment decisions and overseeing the shared commercial investments.

A Liberal Democrat Council will also review Uttlesford's wider decision-making structures, including the abolition of the present Cabinet system and replacing it with a system that is more transparent, accountable, responsive and inclusive for members of the public and all councillors. Uttlesford must have decision making and service delivery arrangements that are fit for purpose in future and that have broad community acceptance.

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