

District News

Neil and I would like to take this opportunity to say how much we have enjoyed being your District Councillors over the last four years and are looking forward to continuing that honour after the upcoming elections, should we be lucky enough to be re-elected. The duties of a District Councillor are many and varied, some dull and some exciting but all to support you the residents, a task we hope we have managed to do.

Owing to the upcoming election there have been very few meetings over the last month so news is scarce this month.

New-look council website

The site, which was launched at the end of March, has a new homepage using a crisp, bright, eye-catching and simple design to make it much easier to use and much more customer focused.

Other improvements include new feature panels to publicise projects, drop down navigation lists giving visitors an alternative and quicker method to find information and a districtwide silhouette skyline added to footer.

UDC have also made some changes to the way the site works to make it more accessible to all users and to improve security.

<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk>

Managing Emergency Alerts on your phone to stay safe if you're experiencing domestic abuse

The government is rolling out a new Emergency Alerts system and a test alert will be sent on the 23rd April 2023.

The alerts will be used to let you know about emergency situations (like severe flooding) through your mobile phone. **However, the alert will be accompanied by a loud sound even if your phone is on silent, if you are living with an abuser, the alert, could put you at risk because it might let your abuser know you have another separate or secret phone.**

If you are worried that the alerts will put you at risk, Refuge have put together two videos on how to turn alerts off, both on Android phones and on iPhones.

If you're afraid of your partner, the helpline team are here to support you. You can call them for free 24 hours a day on 0808 2000 247, or live chat with them Monday-Friday, 3-10pm by going to nationaldahelpline.org.uk.

BE FRAUD SMART - Booking a holiday online?

Planning to book a holiday or maybe a short break away, remember to do your research. If something looks too good to be true it probably is.

Stay scam savvy by reading online reviews from reputable sources before making any bookings.

You can also confirm if an accommodation really exists by verifying the address through web searches and online maps.

Always check that travel company is a member of a trade body e.g., ATOL

For more fraud prevention advice, please visit our website.

If you are still unsure as to how to contact Essex Police, you can find help and advice here - <https://www.essex.police.uk/police-forces/essex-police/areas/essex-police/au/about-us/help-us-help-you/>

For advice on steps, you can take to help secure your belongings, protect yourself and prevent yourself from becoming a victim of crime, visit www.essex.police.uk/cp

Can't pay your Council Tax

If you are having any difficulty in paying your Council Tax don't just stop paying! Get in touch with the Council Tax team immediately so that they can offer you advice.

If you can make any payment at all, pay as much as you can, even if it's not the full instalment amount. Get in touch with the Council Tax team immediately so that we can offer you advice and discuss your circumstances. We will guide you through what might happen next and will always try to make an affordable payment plan to prevent you from falling further behind and into even more arrears. Our team can discuss your circumstances to see if you may be entitled to claim a Council Tax discount, exemption or reduction.

If you're on a low income you may qualify for Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) which is administered by our benefits team.

Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF)

This fund has been set up to support our most vulnerable customers who have seen a reduction in the Government support which helped to pay their Council Tax Liability or for those who are suffering financial hardship due to unforeseen circumstances.

Exceptional Hardship Fund (EHF) support payments are set up to provide short term relief and therefore should not be seen as a long-term solution to debt problems.

Applicants will need to ensure they have taken all reasonable steps to resolve their own situation prior to application. You may already qualify for certain

benefits and the following pages may contain some useful information: If you are struggling to pay your Council Tax and other bills please visit: the UDC website for

- ▶ Debt management advice
- ▶ Housing Benefits
- ▶ Local Council Tax Scheme (LCTS)

Main features of the fund

EHF payments are discretionary

Customers do not have a statutory right to a payment

The Revenue Service will administer the fund

EHF payments cannot be awarded to settle arrears of Council Tax

UDC will consider awarding the fund from the date of application but not prior to the 1 April 2013

It is outside the main Council Tax Support Scheme and is not a payment of Council Tax Support

More information is available in our Council Tax Support Exceptional Hardship Policy (PDF) [160KB].

Who can apply to the EHF?

Anyone who is facing unexpected changes to their circumstances that have led to them facing financial hardship.

Examples of applications or households who may potentially be awarded help from the fund are (this list is not exhaustive):

Recently bereaved and income disrupted due to suspension of other benefits

Those who have left care or under 25 years old and unable to live at home

Recovering from a serious illness and unable to contribute to the household income

Lone parents with children under the age of 5 in the household

Other exceptional circumstances that have placed the applicant in unexpected financial hardship

Those who have been directly affected by the COVID-19 outbreak and government response

How to apply

You will have to complete an application form to apply for help from the fund and provide documents to support your application.

<https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk>

Ward surgeries

Should Neil and I remain as your Ward Councillors after the May election, the surgeries will continue in the same pattern:

First Tuesday of each month at Great Hallingbury Village Hall. 2 – 4pm

Third Friday of each month at the Dukes Head PH, Hatfield Broad Oak,
2 – 4PM.

All welcome and appointments are not necessary.

And the normal reminder. that should you need to contact us, you can email us on the following addresses.

clldriscoll@uttlesford.gov.uk or cllrreeve@uttlesford.gov.uk